

NEWS FROM THE CTC

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The Brigade Engineer Battalion Role at the Joint Readiness Training Center



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Executive Summary

This article is intended for all units conducting home station training to prepare themselves for a combat training center (CTC) rotation. The author discusses a recurring trend at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) that finds the brigade engineer battalion (BEB) consistently conducting additional tasks beyond its functional role to provide engineer coordination for combined arms maneuver, countermobility and survivability, as well as the requisite military intelligence, signal, and chemical reconnaissance support to the brigade combat team (BCT). In a sense, the term "Brigade Enabler Battalion" seems to apply, especially when the BCT commander relies on the BEB to serve as his mission command "problem solver" as external attachments arrive to enhance the capabilities of the BCT.

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Task Force 5 is often asked, “How are brigade engineer battalions (BEBs) employed at the Joint Training Readiness Center (JRTC)?” The Army has completed the active component transition from the special troops battalion (STB) to the BEB; nonetheless, many BEBs are still treated as legacy STBs and assigned missions according to the battalion leadership’s strength and the brigade combat team (BCT) commander’s confidence level in the organization. According to doctrine, the BEB may perform non-functional roles such as area security and terrain management in extreme circumstances; however, the reality finds the BEB consistently conducting additional tasks beyond its functional role to provide engineer coordination for combined arms maneuver, countermobility and survivability as well as the requisite military intelligence, signal, and chemical reconnaissance support to the BCT. These additional tasks vary according to each BCT and rotation; recurring tasks are rear area security, BCT command post and base cluster defense, as well as key leader engagement (KLE) with U.S. government and host nation partners, non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO), and establishing the detainee collection point (DCP) to name a few. In a sense, the term “Brigade Enabler Battalion” seems to apply, especially when the BCT commander relies on the BEB to serve as his mission command “problem solver” as external attachments arrive to enhance the capabilities of the BCT.

Given the probability that this trend will continue, BEB leaders must develop and train their staff to manage these multiple roles and rapidly transition between them. How? It begins with clear guidance and expectations from the battalion commander and reinforced by the following:

1. Integrate recurring staff processes (established battle rhythms, incorporation of MDMP, working TOCSOP/PSOP, conduct rehearsals, etc.) both in garrison and in the field.
2. Develop an effective common operational picture (COP) through numerous repetitions – how does this compare with the BCT COP? Understand that the battalion is the divide between digital and analog COPs.
3. Develop and validate a reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) SOP to aid in the integration of external enablers.
4. Understand the applicable on-the-ground command or support relationships with your enablers. Who are the subject matter experts on the staff?
5. Practice and develop countermobility/survivability synchronization matrices along with effective reporting and tracking systems to feed into the COP.

Units should not wait until they are tagged for a Combat Training Center (CTC) rotation to begin training their staff. Instead, leaders should leverage every working day as an opportunity to hone their systems and processes, but it requires guidance, organization and prioritization.

Lastly, there are a couple of other first-hand learning opportunities to help understand the employment of the BEB during CTC rotations by either sending personnel to JRTC as Guest Observer, Coach, Trainers (OCTs) or requesting a short Ride-Along with the Task Force 5 Team to gain first-hand experience during an actual rotation – just contact us for more information.