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By LTC Daniel Misigoy

Introduction

The decisions on how to organize a unit for operations is among the most important made by command teams. Brigade Support Battalions have always balanced manning based on Modified Table of Organization & Equipment (MTOE) authorization and how to effectively organize the formation from Battalion and Company Headquarters down to special teams and sections required to sustain the Brigade in Decisive Action.

The purpose of this article is to describe how the 225th Brigade Support Battalion organized its forces to support Task Force Warrior during JRTC 17-04. The article will focus on how the unit's organization deviated from the MTOE, and what risks were assumed and why. During the rotation, 20-25% of the Soldiers in the Battalion were task organized outside of their MTOE assigned position, resulting in a 20-30% reduction in sustainment capability compared to the MTOE. These decisions were made deliberately to balance requirements to exercise Mission Command, defend the support area & convoys, and perform non-doctrinal or non-force structure supported sustainment tasks.

Support Battalions have always had to balance sustainment of the Brigade Task Force with the security and defense of support areas and ground movements (convoys and medical evacuation). This balance has always required Battalions to identify capability shortfalls in the MTOE, decide how to organize their formations, and what capabilities to assume risk on. An example of this are Convoy Escort Teams in Operation Iraq Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). During OIF/OEF, Support Battalions organized multiple Convoy Escort Teams (CET) requiring a significant amount of Soldiers to provide security for distribution convoys travelling extended distances. To form CETs, Battalions assumed risk in supply support activities, maintenance, and field feeding operations. This risk was mitigated through contracting, and external support. CET have never been part of the MTOE, but were viewed as a critical capability for Support Battalions that were resourced with non-MTOE equipment and became the focus of long range training plans for Battalions.

Context

225th Brigade Support Battalion deployed below MTOE authorization strength. Most of the non-deploying Soldiers that held MTOE authorized slots were in the rank of Staff Sergeant and below. Over 90% of senior Non-Commissioned Officer positions were filled. Based on timing, the Battalion had an excess of senior Lieutenants that were critical to filling out key positions in the S3 and Liaison Officers which made the Battalion successful.

During JRTC Rotation 17-04, Task Force Warrior consisted of 2d IBCT, 225 AV (Aviation Task Force), 1st Duke of Lancaster (UK Battle Group- Battalion equivalent), A/2-1 IN (Stryker Company), and 6 separate Companies/Detachments. 495th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion (CSSB) supported Task Force Warrior from Intermediate Staging Base (ISB) Alexandria with supply distribution, troop and cargo transportation, movement control, and services (water production, laundry & bath). To support the 1st Duke of Lancaster, 251D resourced a Forward Logistics Element (FLE) from 3d Brigade to provide fuel, water, distribution, and field feeding capability to support 1st LANC and A/2-1 IN (Stryker Company).

The capacity of all sustainment capabilities was reduced across the Battalion due to a combination of manning shortages and decisions to man and organize differently than the MTOE. The Distribution Company manned 20 of 27 authorized HEMTT LHS Trucks. The Supply Support Activity (SSA) deployed with 30% of the Authorized Stockage Listing (ASL). The Automotive Maintenance Platoon performed 33 jobs over 14 days, less than three a day. The Medical Company manned all ambulances by reducing the Treatment Platoon to minimal manning with only two of four trauma beds fully manned.

Rear Detachment and Liaison Officers

The first manning decision made was the identification of the Rear Detachment Commander. By position, we designated a Captain in the S3 shop as the Rear Detachment Commander. The officer would be a Captain with command potential that had already completed the Logistics Captain's Career Course (LOGCCC). For JRTC 17-04, the Rear Detachment Commander was identified eight months prior, when the Captain arrived at the unit. He served as the Rear Detachment Commander for two exercises prior to JRTC. The advantages of the Rear Detachment Commander serving in the S3 shop is situational awareness of Brigade and Battalion operations, understanding and ownership of systems to run the Battalion, and the ability for the Battalion to continue planning & coordination for future operations while executing JRTC.

The Battalion provided three Liaison Officers to two headquarters; the Brigade Headquarters and 495 CSSB Headquarters. The LNO to the CSSB Headquarters was identified initially as the Transportation Officer from the Support Operations (SPO) Section based on direct coordination that would occur daily between the SPO and the CSSB and Sustainment Brigade. The LNOs to Brigade were split between the S3 and the SPO. The SPO planner was the primary LNO to Brigade. This ensured the SPO was tied into planning and the targeting cycle at Brigade.

Mission Command Nodes

To enable the TOC and the S3 Shop to execute the six TOC functions, the S3 shop was resourced with six additional Leaders from across the Battalion. The augmentation of the S3 shop is essential for both garrison and deployed operations based on the MTOE authorization of eight personnel in the S3. Based on the one Captain serving as the

Rear Detachment Commander, only two Captains by MTOE remained. The authorized captains served as the S3 OIC and the night battle captain. Due to excess, a Second Lieutenant awaiting a platoon served as the day battle captain and a pre-LOGCCC Captain served as the plans officer. Without the excess officers, the Battalion was prepared to assume risk in the ALOC and utilize the S1 and S4 as battle captains or plans officers. By MTOE, the S3 is authorized a total of five enlisted Soldiers, only two – the NCOIC and Master Driver- are sustainment MOS's. Within the battalion, the S3 shop was resourced with six additional Soldiers- a Sergeant First Class, two Staff Sergeants, and two Sergeants. The additional Soldiers enabled the TOC to execute current operations which required operating and monitoring two to four FM nets (Brigade Command, Brigade O&I, Battalion Command, Base Defense), JCR, and CPOF with a day and night shift. For future operations, we would consider adding two Specialists to serve as RTOs. This would add flexibility to execute split operations and further free up CBRN and EW NCOs to execute their enabling MOS functions.

At the company level, all company headquarters resourced their command posts internally with an operations NCO and two RTOs. These additional Soldiers make up their orderly rooms in garrison as well. The Battalion resourced an Executive Officer, operations NCO, and RTOs for Headquarters Company- none are authorized by MTOE, but essential to give HHC the capability to serve as a company headquarters and execute operations directed by the Battalion. At JRTC, the primary mission was the Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC). In addition, HHC was given "be prepared to" missions to (1) serve as the FLE (Forward Logistics Element) Headquarters and operate an operational or strategic deployment node. HHC executed the FLE Headquarters mission during the Joint Forced Entry and operated the multi-nodal deployment facility during a previous operation.

Base Defense- BDOC, ECP, R&S/QRF, LP/OP Teams

Defense of the Brigade Support Area was a training focus for the Battalion in the year leading up to JRTC. The Battalion focused on aggressively defending the BSA and task organizing the right teams to defeat a level I or II threat. The HHC Headquarters was utilized as the Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC). The BDOC was responsible for integrating the perimeter defense, providing MC for guard mount for all fighting positions, and synchronizing the Entry Control Point (ECP), The Patrol/Reaction Force Team, and LP/OP Teams. The Battalion organized a nine Soldier Patrol Team with the Automotive Maintenance Platoon Leader as the OIC. The Soldiers in the Patrol Team were personally selected by the First Sergeants with the Patrol Teams as their primary duty during BSA operations. The Patrol Team spent most of its time outside of the BSA. The Maintenance Company was responsible for manning and operating the ECP, which required six to ten Soldiers per shift. The Distribution and Maintenance Companies were required to provide an LP/OP Teams of three Soldiers each depending on METT-TC.

Special Teams- Tasks without Force Structure

The Battalion created two special teams that remained task organized throughout the rotation. The first was a Troop Transport Team of five FMTVs (Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles) required to rapidly move rifle companies, the dismounted reconnaissance troop, and scout platoons. This capability was essential to the freedom of action and operational reach of the Brigade. In contrast to the Troop Transport in the CSSB, this team was responsive in both proximity (in the Brigade area versus at the Intermediate Staging Base) and authority (supported commander could mission immediately). Additionally, this team was integrated into the supported unit's mission preparation and rehearsals.

The second set of special teams were two Ground Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) Escorts. This consisted of an FMTV with ring mount and crew served weapon that was also prepared to execute non-standard Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC). The FMTV was paired with two Forward Line Ambulances (FLAs) from the Medical Company to provide both security and increased evacuation capability. The evacuation teams of one FMTV and two FLAs were positioned forward with Battalion Aid Stations to evacuate casualties from Role I to Role II. This partially addressed the shortfall in security escort for FLAs from Role I to Role II. However, the Brigade did not have a consistent, successful procedure for FLA escort throughout the rotation.

The Brigade Support Battalion additionally organized teams and executed the following operations:

- AirLand Joint Inspection Team
- Convoy Staging & Movement Control
- Arrival & Departure Airfield Control Group (ADACG) during Joint Entry
- Downed Aircraft Recovery Team (DART)
- Personnel Replacement

Support Battalions are routinely required to execute mobility operations as part of decisive action. These operations were conducted as required and involved both a mission command element capable of coordinating with multiple Battalions and a technical sustainment component that incorporated elements of the 18th Movement Control Team. During the Joint Entry, 225th BSB simultaneously operated the AirLand Joint Inspection Team, the Convoy Staging & Movement from the ISB, and ADACG operation forward at Geronimo DZ.

Risk - Capacity, Maintenance, Mobility of BSA,

The Battalion assumed risk in sustainment capacity, internal maintenance, and for periods of time mobility of the Brigade Support Area (BSA). These risks were taken to increase the survivability of the BSA and increase the freedom of maneuver of the Brigade- survivability and flexibility.

The appropriate manning of Mission Command (MC) nodes (Battalion TOC, Company Headquarters, and Liaison Officers) was the most effective means of mitigating the risk to sustainment capacity. Strong MC nodes and systems enabled the Battalion to make better decisions on the efficient employment of sustainment capabilities and level of security of the BSA. Over 80% of the Brigade's Class IV (barrier material) was issued out to Battalions and the Engineer Companies, thus reducing both the requirement on the Distribution Company to carry and distribute the Class IV. The smaller vehicle fleet reduced the maintenance requirement on the Auto Maintenance Platoon. The mobility of the BSA while employing the troop transport team was the most significant risk, adding an additional 12-24 hours and multiple turns to displace the BSA. When employing troop transport and reducing the mobility of the BSA, the Brigade Commander was briefed on the risk and capabilities were echeloned to minimize any black outs in available support.

Conclusion:

In order to effectively and efficiently sustain the Task Force Warrior, 225th BSB organized the Battalion to first be capable of providing mission command of all operations, second to secure all operations, and third to fill the capabilities gaps. The prioritization of manning in this order produced second and third order effects that allowed the Battalion to successfully sustain the Brigade even with a reduced sustainment capacity. Effective mission command systems (well-resourced staff, the right liaison officers) were capable of providing shared understanding, produce mission orders, and enabled rapid, informed decision making. This enabled the sustainment of the Brigade in a proactive and efficient manner. An aggressive defense and security operation (patrol team, LP/OP) that got outside of the BSA prevented the disruption of sustainment, saving resources and time. The task organization of sustainment capability (troop transport, ground evacuation escort, DART) created options and flexibility extending the operational reach and increasing the endurance and tempo of the Brigade.

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