



Observer coach trainers from the Bronco team at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., prepare, advise, counsel, and train rotational Soldiers Aug. 21, 2017. The National Training Center provides a tough, realistic, joint and combined arms training that focuses on the battalion task force and brigade levels. NTC has been used as the premiere training center and has continued the legacy to ensure the U.S. Army remains prepared to face any adversary. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Sarah K. Anwar)



Early results testing the new CASL at NTC improves readiness

■ By Lt. Col. Fenicia L. Jackson, Capt. Karina Cuenca, and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Daniel Austin

Recently, the National Training Center (NTC) witnessed the first armored brigade combat teams (ABCTs) deploy with their common authorized stockage listing (CASL), the way Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) intended deployed brigades to fight. The following observation reflects data from a total of ten ABCTs, to include seven active duty units and three National Guard units. To date, five ABCTs arrived and trained to win utilizing their CASL, with over 4,000-line items, instead of drawing the

NTC rotational authorized stockage listings (ASL) as was standard with units for years prior to CASL employment. The objective of implementing CASL was to increase overall readiness and guarantee mobility of a system designed to enable units to fight and win in austere environments.

The observations of observer, coach trainers (OC/Ts) at the NTC are mostly positive, but some challenges present opportunities for units to develop in future rotations. Furthermore, the units in future rotations will continue to provide ad-

ditional data points for comparison, enabling OC/Ts to refine current observations.

Findings

Since implementation, a combination of five active duty and National Guard units arrived and trained at the NTC utilizing their CASL. While operational readiness (OR) rates for those five units trend higher, when compared to five similar units who drew the NTC ASL, the analysis will benefit from an expanded sample size. Those five units who arrived to the

NTC with their CASL started the rotations with an average OR rate 8 percent higher and culminated their 14-day rotation with an average OR rate 9 percent higher than ABCTs who did not employ CASL.

OC/Ts at the NTC additionally observed other impacts of the CASL on unit readiness prior to the start of training. Reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) can be just as stressful as the decisive action fight that the units are preparing for. During RSOI the brigade support battalion (BSB) prepares themselves for a 14-day force-on-force and live fire rotation, while still providing support to the BCT.

BSBs that bring CASL gain efficiencies by eliminating the need to inventory the NTC ASL, which takes up to a week to complete. Supply support activities (SSA) that save themselves the additional time of inventorying the NTC ASL apply that time more productively to build readiness within their formations.

Prior to CASL deployment, BCTs were required to sign for one of the two NTC forward rotational Authorized Stockage Listings (SLOC: WDP1 or W0B1), but this requirement was a burden on time and it did not allow units to capture consumption history for future stockage determination. Deployment Exercise (DEPEX) DODAACs were used to requisition parts and they were sterilized after each rotation.

During the regeneration phase, the SSA is not required to inventory the CASL. Inventories of the CASL during regeneration, while highly encouraged, are conducted at the commander's discretion. When they draw the NTC ASL, they are required to inventory it prior to turn in, which takes up to an additional week. In total, bringing home station CASL can save the SSA two weeks, which they can use instead to conduct maintenance and other readiness enhancing actions for the brigade.

Another positive impact units experience when they bring their CASL to the NTC, is that they can

fill most, if not all, of their shortages when they arrive. At home station, units may face budgetary constraints or may not be a priority unit to fill requisitions, but as the rotational unit at the NTC they are likely to fill their authorized to forecast zero balance lines at one of the several Fort Irwin SSAs, significantly reducing the transportation costs and time associated with those replenishment items. This benefit allows units to redeploy to home station or forward deploy to a follow-on mission with close to 100% percent of their CASL. Units may even be able to fill documents opened prior to arriving at the NTC. With use of the CASL, a unit can forward deploy from the NTC without having to cancel document numbers for items ordered prior to rotation. Units maintain open documents and, once processed, the Class IX will ship wherever the CASL is located. Previously, if units were deploying following an NTC rotation, they needed to cancel and reorder parts in order to receive them at their new Department of Defense Activity Address Code. This extended equipment downtime, and negatively affecting equipment readiness.

The CASL offers commanders proximity reach of available items required to supply and sustain the BCT. This reach allows commanders to accept more tactical risk with the confidence that the sustainment enterprise can maintain readiness and keep up with the operational tempo.

Training at the NTC with the BCT's organic assets gives leaders at echelon the opportunity to assess how well the CASL supports their mission and its performance in austere environments. Units cannot replicate the training offered at the NTC at home station. Most ASL performance metrics and data collection are based on home station demands. Use of CASL at the NTC gives commanders a better idea of how their equipment and their SSAs will perform in a deployed environment. The implementation and use of CASL at the NTC encourages

readiness, by forcing units to train as they fight. It also creates an opportunity for data collection as the Army continues annual reviews for future stockage determinations and impacts to overall readiness.

While most observations on the effectiveness of CASL are positive, the biggest challenge units face with the implementation is the mobility and lift capacity shortfalls associated with the addition of the equipment in the BSB. Units have little to no issues getting CASL to the NTC by rail or line haul, despite substantial transportation costs, but they experience significant challenges displacing the brigade support area (BSA) with up to 18 field pack-up containers and 35 container roll-in/out platforms for the CASL, in addition to all the other classes of supplies BSBs are expected to haul and distribute. Designed to be a single lift system, BCTs are not equipped, according to their modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE), to transport the CASL in a single lift. CASL transportation requires very deliberate planning on behalf of the BSB staff.

The BSB can move its CASL and supplies but not in a single lift, and the process is inefficient because of the BSB's MTOE shortfall. BSB organic transport would require multiple turns by the distribution company. Units at the NTC rely heavily on external support from combat sustainment support battalions (CSSB) and the support brigade, however unit planning and coordination of transportation movement requests (TMR) are usually reactionary. Delayed planning of CASL movements result in SSA downtimes of up to 24 hours. These timelines affect the BSBs' responsiveness to CL IX flow and regeneration of combat power. When the CASL stays behind because the BSB staff failed to adequately plan, they incur the responsibility to plan for additional security and life support as the SSA waits on transportation from the CSSB to echelon them forward to the new BSA.

A general analysis of the mobility index, utilizing FY19 MTOE for an ABCT, BSB, or distribution company, suggests that it would require three trips by the general supply platoon to move the entire CASL with organic assets. The analysis includes a few basic assumptions. The analysis assumes that the unit is at full strength, both on personnel and equipment, and that the element responsible for transporting all general supplies is not also responsible for transporting other commodities concurrently. The three trips include two trips requiring all 12 load handling systems with trailers and the third trip only requires three systems with trailer.

Observations at the NTC are that Soldiers who make up the general supply platoon and operate the SSA are responsible for more than just the transportation of CASL. They are usually also responsible for transport of CL IV and other miscellaneous items, which vary greatly depending on the phase of the operation the BSB is preparing to support. Also, BSBs generally arrive to the NTC between 70-80 percent strength on personnel, which further exacerbates transportation shortfalls.

Recommended TTPs

Planners within the BSB should always consider the additional support requirements incurred with the CASL and retain it as a planning factor during the mission analysis step of the military decision-making process (MDMP). Planners should anticipate a displacement of the BSA and communicate their needs with the CSSB/SB early and often. They should submit TMRs in anticipation of a planned movement and later change the destination if necessary, but they should not wait until the BSA starts to displace to coordinate additional support. When requesting external support, units should consider how many other units the CSSB is supporting and who the main effort is. At the NTC, rotational BCTs are usually never the main

effort, and BSBs must be aware that even CSSBs have capability shortfalls within their organizations.

Transportation coordinators within the support operations section with the assistance of the distribution company commander, should maintain accurate running estimates of the BSBs transportation assets and have a good understanding of the BCT's priority of supplies. Even when CSSBs support BSA displacements, BSBs typically must conduct more than one turn with organic assets.

Units should set priorities when considering what equipment to move first. Even with the best-laid plans, the BSB may encounter transportation shortfalls. Knowing what supplies and CASL containers are priority for movement ahead of time is important. If the entire CASL cannot move in a single lift, identifying a combination of the most important supplies and fast-moving parts will alleviate stress to the maintenance process and to the SSA.

Units should switch logistics modernization program search matrix to search Fort Irwin SSAs first in order to reduce customer wait times while at the NTC. This will enable the system to search local SSAs before searching on the national level.

While an expanded sample size is necessary to confirm correlational use of the CASL and higher OR rates, OC/Ts look forward to coaching and training future rotational units on ways to optimize use of their CASL. With plans to expand use of CASL across the Army, OC/Ts will make more discoveries alongside their BCT counterparts and get the opportunity to coach BSB staffs through MDMP, reminding them of all the planning factors associated with the CASL lift requirement. Units will inevitably rise to the occasion and continue to develop solutions to their commanders' problems, but the principal improvement the Army should make is addressing BCT transportation shortfalls. The

single, but monumental, task of adjusting BCT personnel and equipment MTOEs to support the single lift of CASL will round out HQDAs mission "to increase readiness and ensure mobility, which will allow the Army to fight and win in austere environments."

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