

Train as We Fight: Using Sustainment Vehicles for Convoy Protection

Brigade support battalions should be using authorized equipment to protect their convoys in training to prepare for future deployments.

■ By Lt. Col. William Kepley and Stephen Harper

The Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Capability Manager—Armored Brigade Combat Team (TCM—ABCT) at Fort Benning, Ga., observes ABCT training at combat training centers to ensure they are meeting doctrine, organizations, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities requirements. TCM—ABCT and the observer-controller/trainers at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, Ca., have noted some nondoctrinal use of vehicles that are not part of the brigade support battalion (BSB) modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) during recent rotations.

Soldiers started using vehicles nondoctrinally during Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, when they lived on forward operating bases and contingency operating bases, received their mission orders, and moved out to conduct their missions.

The mission set for the ABCT formation today centers on a decisive action mission set of offense or defense, stability operations, and defense support to civilian authorities. None of these operations can be successful unless the forward support companies deliver the daily logistics package resupply on time, every time.

Current practice has units using nondoctrinal security vehicles to protect logistics convoys and recovery operations at home station and during NTC rotations. Units man these security vehicles with Soldiers from resupply wheeled vehicles,

which means that fewer vehicles are hauling class I (subsistence), III (petroleum, oils, and lubricants), and V (ammunition).

When Soldiers man these security vehicles, they do not maintain their regularly assigned vehicles and maintenance skills deteriorate. Units also use unforecasted class IX (repair parts) funds to maintain these security vehicles.

The Way Forward

We recommend units stop using vehicles that are not part of their MTOE and instead use what is assigned to accomplish the mission. Units need to use their own convoy vehicles to provide convoy protection.

The MTOE shows commanders the number of ring mounts and weapons within each section. It is up to the commander to match the ring mount and weapon to the proper wheeled platform. Commanders should ensure that authorized ring mounts are installed and used on their BSB vehicles and other wheeled-vehicle fleets. This will allow their convoys to protect themselves if attacked. This skill does not just happen in convoy operations.

Convoy security, convoy operations, and wheeled-vehicle crew gunnery need to be trained beginning at home station, rehearsed at the combat training centers, and then executed when units deploy.

Convoy Security

The ABCT must train with and prepare to use the equipment it is authorized and has on hand. If an

ABCT is ordered to deploy, the odds are that it will deploy with its own equipment. Units will not likely draw and sign for a fleet of mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles (MRAPs) if they are not authorized on the MTOE, and the BSBs are not manned to operate them. Some vehicles will not be manned because a crew is “double-slotted” in two vehicles—their own vehicle and the MRAP.

It is difficult enough for a crew to properly maintain one vehicle, let alone two or more. This extra maintenance requirement will force units to protect their heavy expanded-mobility tactical truck (HEMTT) and medium tactical vehicle (MTV) convoys on resupply and recovery missions—on their own without the assurance of an Abrams tank or Bradley fighting vehicle shepherding the wheeled vehicles. Before they deploy, units need to train with their own equipment to provide convoy security.

Tactical Convoy Operations

In January 2009, the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force published Field Manual (FM) 4–01.45, Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Tactical Convoy Operations. FM 4–01.45 is a pocket-sized publication that every convoy commander should have and use in planning his individual and collective training programs.

The FM covers the basics: troop leading procedures, general planning, route selection, and convoy organization. This manual needs to become a

basic issue item for every leader in an ABCT BSB.

The following are some tenets of convoy security covered in FM 4-01.45:

- Administrative moves do not exist in a combat zone.
- A tactical convoy has no passengers.
- Security must cover 360 degrees.
- Convoy battle drills and rehearsals must be conducted.

Crew Gunnery Training NCO

In his article, “Master Driver Trainer (MDT) in Action,” published in the January–March 2013 *Division Transportation Officer & Mobility Officer Newsletter*, Command Sgt. Maj. Allen B. Offord Jr., the 11th Transportation Corps regimental command sergeant major, proposed a military occupational specialty (MOS) 88M30/40 transportation noncommissioned officer

(NCO) position. This NCO would advise commanders on developing and maintaining a driver’s training program and standardizing the program across the unit. This would be a position for only the best Transportation Corps NCOs.

An NCO from this subset would be ideal to manage convoy security or unstabilized gunnery live-fire training. This NCO also would be responsible for forecasting the class V (ammunition) requirements and coordinating the use of gunnery ranges for a convoy live-fire exercise.

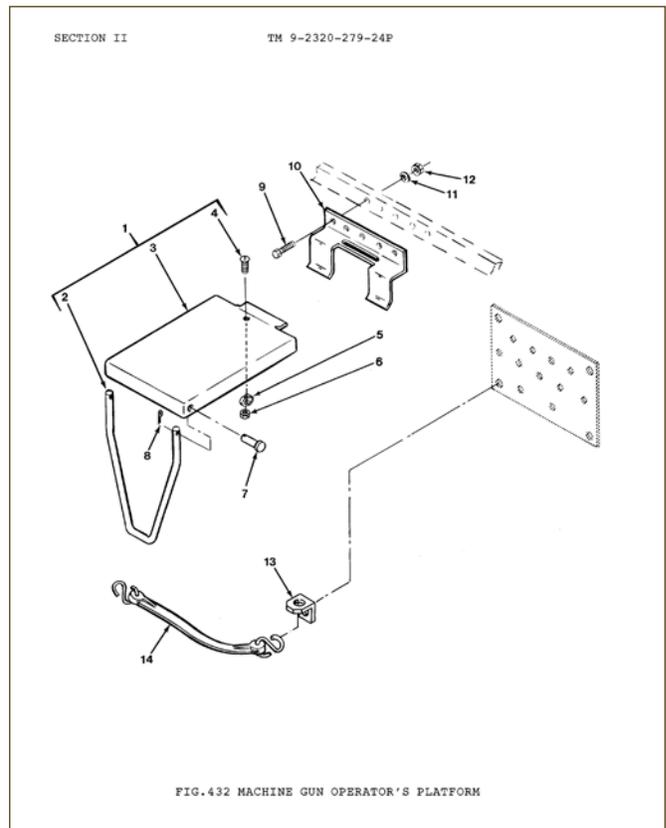
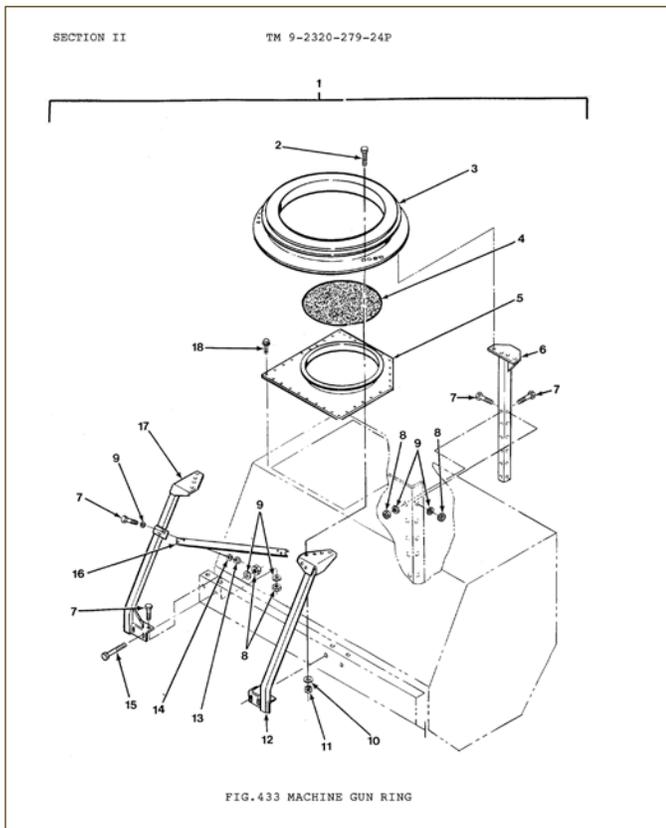
The Army National Guard Warrior Training Center at Fort Benning, Ga., offers a course called the Senior Gunner Course. This course trains Soldiers to be subject matter experts in unstabilized systems. The course is open to Soldiers in the ranks of sergeant (promotable) to master sergeant in all MOSs.

After completing the 14-day

course, graduates will be able to assist commanders at all levels in planning, executing, and evaluating crew and collective unstabilized, direct-fire, platform gunneries. The instruction includes gunnery skills testing on the M249, M240B, M2, and MK19 crew-served weapons, their capabilities, ammunition, optics, training devices engagement process, live-fire exercise prerequisites, unstabilized crew evaluation range operations, and gunnery training management. Further details are available at <http://www.benning.army.mil/tenant/wtc/sgc.html>.

Unstabilized Platform Crew Gunnery

Training Circular 4-11.46, Convoy Protection Platform Gunnery, provides doctrinal guidance for commanders and their staffs when planning and executing this training. The circular provides the tasks, conditions, and standards of unstabilized



Drawings from Technical Manual 9-2320-279-24P-2 show the HEMTT installation kit, NSN 1005-01-519-2126 (left) and HEMTT machine gun operator’s platform, NSN 2510-01-155-5750 (right).

gunnery training, which includes training and certifying leaders, individual gunnery skills (such as familiarization and testing with a Soldier's crew-served weapon), and multiple live and virtual gunnery lanes. The suggested training culminates with the convoy live-fire exercise for multiple vehicle crews with their mounted crew-served weapons.

ABCT BSBs that can successfully train with their weapons mounted on their vehicles will become more comfortable in executing resupply operations without the "crutch" of additional security vehicles like MRAPs, which the ABCT is not yet authorized. The Army's ABCTs must get used to training to provide security with their own wheeled vehicles.

Wheeled Vehicle Ring Mounts

The ABCT BSB is authorized at least 125 M66 .50-caliber machine gun ring mounts (line item number [LIN] M74364), and at least 125 MK93 40-millimeter machine gun mounts (LIN M12647). Maneuver line company headquarters elements within the ABCT are authorized one M66 or MK93 for the company MTV.

The M66 will mount to the MTV cab, and the MK93 attaches to the ring mount. The M66 and MK93 can be mounted directly to the roof of the A0, A1, and A1P2 versions of the MTV.

The M66 and MK93 can be mounted on the HEMTT A0 and A2 and the palletized load system (PLS) A0. Units must order the HEMTT installation kit, national stock number

(NSN) 1005-01-519-2126, and the machine gun operator's platform to stand on, NSN 2510-01-155-5750.

These mounts do not mount to the HEMTT A4 or PLS A1 variants, and there is currently no requirement or funding to develop M66 and MK93 kits for those models. Program Manager-Heavy Tactical Vehicles (PM-HTV) is working with the Department of the Army staff to secure that funding.

Installing the mounts will provide the best current protection for the vehicle crew and allow them to protect their own convoys throughout the battlefield. Units should also order and install gunner restraint systems. The gunner restraint system for the HEMTT and PLS is NSN 2540-01-582-5139; for the MTV, use NSN 2510-01-567-8727.

Since the ABCT has wheeled platforms that can mount a weapon system, TCM-ABCT recommends that units install the ring mount kits. Once the weapons are mounted, crew gunnery and convoy security can be trained and executed. The more units train with their vehicles, the easier it becomes to execute the missions to standard.

The wheeled vehicle draw fleet at NTC does not have ring mounts installed. NTC should be resourced for ring mounts—properly laterally transferred to the NTC property book—and the man-hours to maintain the vehicles with the mounts.

If the Army is serious about training as we fight and requiring deploying BCTs to use their own equipment,

it should resource their training. The rotational training of units will maximize their valuable training time working toward collective training tasks of convoy security and convoy fire distribution rather than the individual tasks of unstabilized gunnery and weapon employment.

Units may contact PM-HTV by telephone at (586) 282-8679 or Program Manager-Medium Tactical Vehicles (PM-MTV) at (586) 282-3905 with any questions regarding HTV or MTV products.

Great sources of additional information are the wheel platform -20 manual and the TCM-ABCT mil-Wiki on milSuite: <https://www.mil-suite.mil/book/groups/t>.

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Convoy Security Articles

Army Logistician and *Army Sustainment* have published several excellent articles on how to conduct convoy operations in Operations Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, and Enduring Freedom. The following articles are highly recommended to increase your knowledge of convoy security operations.

"The Logistics Convoy: A Combat Operation," by Capt. Daniel T. Rossi, *Army Logistician*, January-February

2005. <http://www.almc.army.mil/alog/issues/JanFeb05/combat.html>

"Convoy, Not CLP: Defining a Logistics Core Competency," by Maj. Gen. James E. Chambers, *Army Logistician*, March-April 2009. <http://www.almc.army.mil/alog/issues/MarApr09/convoynotclp.html>

"Convoy Operations in Afghanistan," by Maj. Timothy S. Moon,

Army Sustainment, March-April 2012. http://www.almc.army.mil/alog/issues/MarApril12/Convoy_Operations_Afghanistan.html

"Training and Certification for Convoy Escort Teams," by Capt. Jeffrey B. Frembling, *Army Sustainment*, September-October 2012. http://www.alu.army.mil/alog/issues/SepOct12/Training_Certification.html