



*Spc. Caden Hanrahan, a transportation specialist with the 15th Sustainment Brigade, loosens a binder in order to unload a vehicle from a heavy equipment transporter during a network integrated evaluation at Fort Bliss, Texas. (Photo by Sgt. Adam Hinman)*

## Providing Movement Support for Two Training Exercises Simultaneously

■ By Capt. John H. Stanczak

In April 2014, the 15th Sustainment Brigade support operations mobility section (SPO Mobility) set up at Logistics Support Area (LSA) Wagonmaster at Fort Bliss, Texas, to provide transportation support for the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, network integrated evaluation (NIE) and the 4th Brigade, 1st Armored Division, brigade gunnery. SPO Mobility conducted all transportation movement releases (TMRs), including emergency

TMRs, for the units participating in the NIE. This was the first time in more than 10 years that the 15th Sustainment Brigade had participated in an exercise of this magnitude at LSA Wagonmaster.

### Planning

Planning for the NIE started on March 3, 2014, and the first movement of 32 amphibious assault vehicles took place a month later. Both the 2nd Brigade and the 15th Sustain-

ment Brigade conducted rehearsal of concept drills to review transportation operations, applying the eight Army troop leading procedures. Planning drills identified main supply routes and alternate supply routes.

The sustainment brigade held weekly meetings with customer and subordinate units to identify movement issues and address projected shortfalls. Most shortfalls resulted from not having enough personnel to complete the brigade's move-

ment operations within a short time frame because of last minute movement changes. The 15th Sustainment Brigade had 84 fully mission capable heavy equipment transporters (HETs) on hand and 39 HET crews to support the NIE and the brigade gunnery from April to July.

The next step in planning was route

## Execution

The NIE kicked off on April 3, 2014, at the Fort Bliss rail yard. The 15th Sustainment Brigade supported the NIE in the movement of classes I (subsistence), III (petroleum, oils, and lubricants), VII (major end items), VIII (medical materiel), and IX (repair parts). Pushes for most

facilitated communication with customer units and enabled last-minute changes regarding movement operations came to unexpected halts when the network went down.

Many sections in the 15th Sustainment Brigade would slow overall productivity while waiting for the network to come back on line. SPO Mobility did not have that luxury. Its alternative plan when faced with a downed network was to conduct reconnaissance to identify new pickup sites on the training field. This allowed SPO Mobility Soldiers to see and understand how they enabled the ground movement of company-level Soldiers and their equipment.

Reconnaissance also allowed SPO Mobility Soldiers to talk with commanders and transportation officers on the ground from the 2nd Brigade to ensure everyone was on the same page for movement operations. Communicating without email, phones, or Internet was an essential learning tool. Information collected on the training field was briefed to the 15th Sustainment Brigade commander and his staff.

**Cost effectiveness.** As the military continues to cut costs, when reviewing TMRs, leaders need to ask if it makes sense to take action. For example, a not mission capable Bradley fighting vehicle that has been secured at the brigade support area should be left where it is and moved back with the tracked vehicles when the main body returns to the rear.

Two emergency movement requests to move not mission capable vehicles were postponed, and instead, the vehicles were moved with the main body. This action saved fuel, manpower, and wear and tear on military equipment. This lesson learned caused a new battle drill to be established and placed in SPO Mobility's standard operating procedure.

Another lesson learned from the NIE and 4th Brigade gunnery was to maximize crews and take only one convoy to complete a mission rather than building multiple convoys.

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reconnaissance. The reconnaissance consisted of truck masters, convoy commanders, and a motor transport operator who had driven the routes the year before. The reconnaissance team took one HET with it to ensure roads were wide enough for movement.

After collecting the data regarding distance and time estimates, the information was sent to the 15th Sustainment Brigade, the 2nd Brigade, and the 4th Brigade. Next SPO Mobility selected a site, coordinated, and secured for a rest overnight at Rhodes Canyon. SPO Mobility coordinated latrines and created a TMR for a 5,000-gallon fuel truck, which provided fuel for the HETs at Rhodes Canyon before they returned to the LSA.

Next, the 2nd Brigade arranged for its military police to provide support for the HETs when they crossed Highway 70. The last part of planning consisted of spot checking all convoy commanders to ensure they had permits allowing the HETs to travel on the designated routes.

Before the execution phase, the project was briefed to the 15th Sustainment Brigade commander and the Army chief of transportation, who asked many questions ranging from permits for vehicles traveling on main supply routes to in-depth questions about the TMR process. When all questions were answered satisfactorily, the senior officers approved the movement plan.

classes of supply were scheduled for Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. After the 2nd Brigade established its tactical operations center, movement of supplies slowed to emergency re-supply only.

Between April 3 and May 22, SPO Mobility conducted 75 missions, moving 454 tracked vehicles. During the last phase of the NIE, SPO Mobility moved units 188 miles from LSA Wagonmaster to White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico.

## Challenges

SPO Mobility encountered multiple challenges throughout the NIE and the brigade gunnery. The top three challenges were a limited network at LSA Wagonmaster, cost effectiveness in movement operations, and having to use secondary courses of action because of last-minute changes.

**Network.** The communications network (telephone and Internet) at LSA Wagonmaster was limited throughout all operational phases. SPO Mobility had one secret Internet protocol router network computer and one nonsecure Internet protocol router network computer. Only two Soldiers were authorized to access each computer. Once SPO Mobility identified this situation, some of its Soldiers returned to the rear to be more effective in supporting daily movement operations.

A limited telephone and Internet network is a challenge but also a great training opportunity. Daily Defense Connect Online meetings that

Each convoy requires a tractor and a wrecker with a contact team.

Cost effectiveness favored moving all vehicles in one push and establishing a minimal Soldier crew to provide security until the mission required further action. On two occasions, HET crews were not maximized because of last-minute location and time changes.

**Last-minute changes.** Time is of the essence. It takes time to plan and more time to change plans when locations change. Even with careful planning, SPO mobility overlooked a few objectives.

The NIE was scheduled to end on the first day of the four-day Memorial Day weekend. The SPO decided that because of the limited number of crews, movement operations would continue through Friday and Soldiers would receive Tuesday off instead of Friday. However, the division G-4 notified SPO Mobility that all Soldiers would be out of the field before the beginning of the holiday weekend.

SPO Mobility had to change its main course of action to ensure all Soldiers were home on Thursday. Because of last-minute changes, SPO Mobility had to build extra convoys and movement started earlier than expected. The 4th Brigade decided to road march back to the wash rack to meet the new suspense.

### Meeting the Challenges

The lessons learned from the NIE and the brigade gunnery include communicating with limited resources available, collecting transportation data, and using the data for future training missions. The lessons learned were easily adopted when the SPO Mobility team was educated on the 15th Sustainment Brigade's mission essential task list, which provided training objective guidance for both exercises.

**Communication.** The biggest challenge SPO Mobility faced in the two exercises was communication. With limited Internet and telephone reception, SPO Mobility could not rely

on the network. The section proved during the exercises that it can function and carry on the mission without the network. It was successful in executing a secondary plan of action, which included face-to-face communication and reconnaissance using military vehicles. These actions proved to be highly effective in addressing a downed network.

Consistently throughout the exercise, the status of SPO Mobility's convoy was unknown. Without Joint Capabilities Release on the HETs and palletized load systems, a real-time picture of movement operations was not available. Technology is a great advantage, but the Army should be prepared to deal without it. The Army needs to train its units in secondary communication methods they can use if the network is unavailable.

SPO Mobility's secondary option for the NIE, though not always effective, was a Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio System FM radio with a speaker. This allowed information to be collected when the convoy commander called in rally points and when the convoy reached the final destination. Going back to the basics with radio communication and direct conversations proved effective and allowed SPO Mobility to support the 15th Sustainment Brigade throughout the exercises.

**Collecting data.** Before planning for the exercises, SPO Mobility did not have a continuity book and was just beginning to collect and archive data. The TMR records dated back to Jan. 6, 2014. The first priority for SPO Mobility before the NIE and the brigade gunnery was to develop a continuity book and a standard operating procedure.

SPO Mobility also built a logbook for TMRs and logistics support requests (LSRs). The logbook dates back one month and holds all future TMRs and LSRs. Documents over a month old were filed in the SPO Mobility office by month and year. A backup method was implemented, which included placing all data

from TMRs and LSRs into a word document and then burning it onto a compact disc. A master tracker was built to track and list TMRs and LSRs monthly.

The next step in collecting data is placing movement data in the Defense Training Management System (DTMS). Currently, DTMS tracks Soldier readiness, the unit mission essential task list, and unit training, which can be tracked on the DTMS calendar.

It would be ideal to place movement data on the network and allow leaders throughout the Army to see movement operations. A hyperlink could allow military members to see archived transportation movements in a calendar format. It also would be beneficial to highlight key training events and provide detail about how many TMRs were executed and what assets and crews were needed to execute the training event.

The 15th Sustainment Brigade began preparing to support the NIE and brigade gunnery at the beginning of March. SPO Mobility provided transportation support for the events simultaneously, with the NIE concluding at the end of May and the brigade gunnery ending the first of July. These events provided training not only for the 2nd Brigade and 4th Brigade but also for the 15th Sustainment Brigade, particularly the SPO Mobility section. The 15th Sustainment Brigade will use the lessons it learned in supporting these events to improve its operations and thus its ability to support future operations.

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Capt. John H. Stanczak is the transportation officer for the 15th Sustainment Brigade, 1st Armored Division. He holds a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in public policy from the University of Michigan. He is a graduate of the Unit Movement Officer Course, Joint Logistics Course, and the Combined Logistics Captains Career Course.