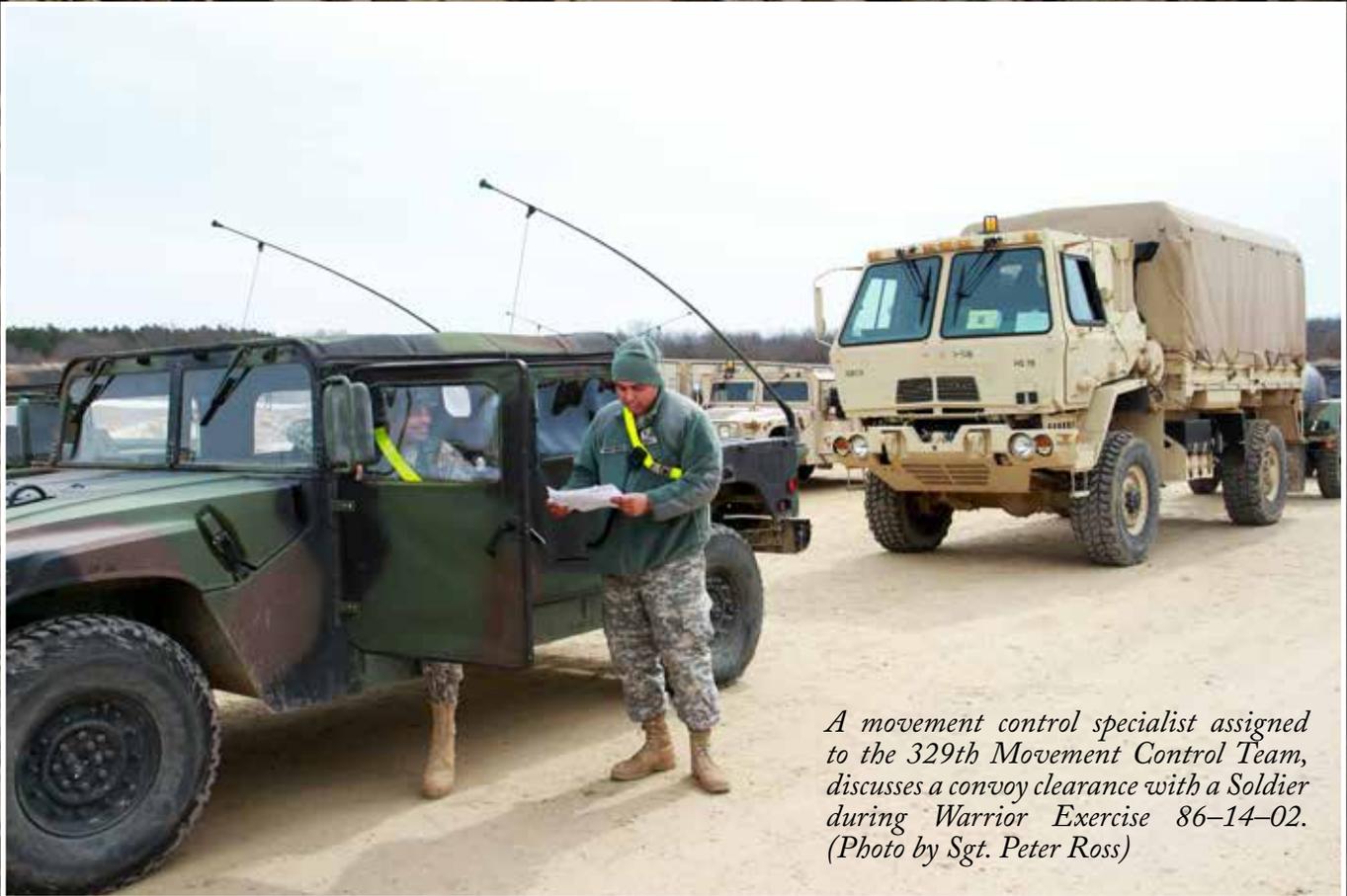


THE MOVEMENT CONTROL BATTALION IN THEATER

Movement control battalions regularly provide mission command for more movement control teams than they are doctrinally capable of leading.

■ By Lt. Col. Joseph D. Blanding



A movement control specialist assigned to the 329th Movement Control Team, discusses a convoy clearance with a Soldier during Warrior Exercise 86-14-02. (Photo by Sgt. Peter Ross)

Movement control is a critical function in both garrison and combat operations; however, its role becomes even more essential during combat. It provides sustainers and warfighters with in-transit visibility (ITV) of cargo, equipment, and personnel along lines of communication into and out of the theater of operations.

The movement control battalion (MCB) provides this capability through its subordinate movement control teams (MCTs). Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 4-16,

Movement Control, defines an MCB as a functional transportation battalion that executes movement control by way of four to 10 assigned MCTs over which it provides mission command.

MCT Responsibilities

According to Maj. Michael Ashton, Maj. Daniel Tone, and Dr. Eric Morrison in their case study, "Increase In-Transit Visibility for the 'Last Sustainment Mile,'" which was published in the *Division Transportation Officer & Mobility Officer*

Newsletter, Vol. 10 (1), "MCTs are designed to execute the five movement control missions which are intermodal, area, movement regulation, documentation and division support. This includes reporting ITV of personnel and equipment moving through distribution nodes."

Ashton, Tone, and Morrison profess that an "MCB and [its] subordinate MCTs are key components in the distribution pipeline and provide area support for all units in their operational area.

Both units are responsible for pro-

viding ITV to the tactical, operational, [and] strategic levels.”

To support a division, the MCT may be attached to the division transportation officer shop. However, typically the MCB, through its MCT, provides ITV support to a specific mode of transportation and provides area support in a theater of operations.

MCB Responsibilities

The MCB is a theater asset normally aligned to a theater sustainment command (TSC) or expeditionary sustainment command (ESC) responsible for regulating Army movement on main supply routes and alternate supply routes using common-user transportation assets.

Additional requirements placed on the MCB by doctrine include the

following:

- ❑ Validate or select mode for movement requirements.
- ❑ Coordinate with higher, parallel, adjacent, and subordinate units for transportation support.
- ❑ Coordinate with the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command and Joint Deployment Distribution Operations Center when authorized by the TSC.
- ❑ Provide oversight of arrival/departure airfield control group operations.
- ❑ Provide assistance with reception, staging, onward movement, and retrograde of personnel, equipment, and supplies.

These requirements reinforce the

criticality of the MCB and MCT during combat operations. Historically, the MCB has been required to perform non doctrinal functions out of necessity, such as managing large contracts.

Currently, the MCB manages contracts to provide critical transportation support using host-nation trucks, national Afghan trucks (NAT), XE-LESS contractor trucks, and short take-off and landing (STOL) aircraft assets. By modified table of organization and equipment, the MCB is not designed to provide contract management support.

The MCB's requirement to perform non doctrinal tasks is not unique to operations in Afghanistan. In Operation Iraqi Freedom, it was routinely underresourced for doctrinal and



Lt. Col. Michael S. Knapp, commander of the 39th Joint Movement Control Battalion, and Command Sgt. Maj. Gussie Bernard Bellingher case their battalion's colors during a transfer of authority ceremony at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, on Nov. 18, 2013. The battalion, home stationed at Kaiserslautern, Germany, was replaced by the 330th Movement Control Battalion from Fort Bragg, North Carolina. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Wayne Rush)

nondoctrinal missions.

Charles H. Blumenfeld articulates this in his thesis for the Command and General Staff College entitled, "Resourcing Movement Control Battalions During Operation Iraqi Freedom 07–09."

In this thesis, he describes a study in which the MCB was directed to serve as the ESC's support operations transportation section while providing mission command of almost 30 MCTs during combat operations in Iraq.

From this study, Blumenfeld concluded that "the MCB in Iraq was not resourced with a sufficient number of personnel to perform the multiple missions they were required to perform."

Contract Management

In Afghanistan, individuals from other organizations must augment the MCB to perform the contract management mission. These supplements are arranged into a contracting officer representative (COR) cell.

The MCB headquarters is not designed to manage contracts. In spite of this, operational realities demand that the MCB manage the NAT, XELESS, and STOL contracts.

The collective value of these contracts exceeds \$1.3 billion. In order to properly manage the contracts, personnel who are not certified contract experts augment the MCB's staff to fulfill the requirement.

The COR cell is responsible for ensuring the performance work statements and statements of work for the NAT contract are fully enforced. In other words, the COR cell is the reach-back element to the Army Contracting Command, which provides oversight of all contracts within the assigned area of operations.

This relationship is invaluable because all penalties, investigations, adjudications, and disputes for poor performance are rectified by the contracting officer through the COR cell.

The XELESS and STOL contracts

are an additional challenge that must be assigned to a nonorganic element and an MCT that executes a nondoctrinal role (contract management).

The TMCA

The MCB may report directly to either the TSC or the ESC in accordance with doctrinal procedures. The transportation movement control agency (TMCA) used to be the headquarters element responsible for directly reporting to the TSC and ESC, which allowed the MCB to have uninterrupted oversight of its assigned MCTs.

As early as 1998, the Army began to change its organizational structure to a more expeditionary force capable of rapid deployment. The chief of staff of the Army's guidance was to create a modular brigade-based Army that is more responsive to regional combatant commanders' needs, better employs joint capabilities, facilitates force packaging and rapid deployment, and fights as self-contained units in nonlinear, noncontiguous battlespaces.

As part of the Army's evolution into an agile reactionary force, the TMCA was deactivated and integrated into the mobility sections of the TSC's and ESC's distribution management centers.

The initial transition occurred across several periods of transformation, which included Force XXI (1998 to 2002) and modularity (2003 to present). Force XXI converted the TMCA into the transportation command element, which later evolved into subordinate elements of the TSC and its forward deployable element, the ESC.

The TMCA performed seven main missions:

- Acting as the executive agent for movement control.
- Providing mission planning for strategic deployment, sustainment, and redeployment.
- Providing theater-level liaisons to host nations and for contracted assets (rail, barge, sea, and road).

- Participating with task force staffs to provide a movement control system.
- Assisting corps and division staffs in movement planning and execution.
- Coordinating and interacting with NATO, the United Nations, and nongovernmental organizations.
- Providing movement tracking and ITV for the Army service component command commander.

The TTOE

An important function of the TMCA was to execute mission command of the MCB. Currently, MCBs may align under sustainment brigades but deploy as separate headquarters elements providing mission command of several MCTs.

Because of transformation or the overreliance on contract support, many of the transportation organizations within the Army are either underused or have been realigned. The transportation theater opening element (TTOE) is one example of an organization that is underused because of more than 13 years of constant war within the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

According to ATP 4–93, Sustainment Brigade, the TTOE is assigned to a TSC and attached to a sustainment brigade. It is a 54-person element similar to the MCB headquarters and consists of three sections: terminal operations, transportation branch, and movements branch.

The ATP highlights three important functions of the TTOE:

- Establish the initial distribution network and provide support to assigned customers.
- Conduct minimum essential early-entry operations before employing full theater-opening capabilities.
- Provide mission command for employed units.

The TTOE is structured to provide mission command for up to four MCTs until the arrival of an

MCB. According to the Combined Arms Support Command's Army Logistics Quick Reference Book, the Army has 18 TTOEs; all are in the Army Reserve. The TTOE was invaluable in the beginnings of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The military has not needed a TTOE since then.

Contract Support

More and more, the requirement for transportation support during conflict is being contracted to civilian entities, reducing the need for Active and Reserve units that primarily fulfill this requirement according to the Total Force Concept, also known as the Abrams Doctrine.

In his 2013 *Truthout* article, "Troops or Private Contractors: Who Does Better in Supplying Our Troops During War?" Charles M. Smith wrote, "The use of contractor support appears to obviate what has been called the Abrams' [sic] Doctrine. Gen. Creighton Abrams restructured military forces to closely integrate the Army Reserve and National Guard with regular Army units. For example, a combat division could not deploy and operate without a reserve transportation unit to move their supplies and a reserve water unit to produce and transport water."

To a greater extent, civilian agencies have replaced the need for Active and Reserve component transportation Soldiers and units. The Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) provides much of the Army's transportation support before and during combat operations.

LOGCAP is a Department of the Army regulatory program to augment the force by providing services to meet externally driven operational requirements for rapid contingency augmentation. LOGCAP plans for and executes contracted support services in conjunction with the Army field support brigade and contracting support brigade for deployed forces performing missions directed or supported by the Department of

Defense during global contingency operations.

The decision to use contractors instead of Soldiers for logistics support may be driven by cost. In his article, Smith describes a study on the use of contractor support in combat. The study was conducted in 2005 by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which concluded that "the cost of troop support would be \$78.4 billion for the 20 year period. LOGCAP support is calculated to cost \$41.4 billion for this period. Based upon the CBO calculations, the cost difference over a 20-year period would be \$37 billion dollars."

According to the CBO, it is more financially responsible to use civilian entities because of the associated costs of training, mobilizing, and deploying military forces. As a military officer currently on active duty in a combat area, I can attest that many problems are associated with relying heavily on contracted support.

Problem Statement

The MCB, contrary to doctrine, has habitually been required to provide mission command for more than 10 MCTs within a specified theater of operations during combat. Doctrinally, an MCB is capable of providing mission command of four to 10 MCTs, in both garrison and combat operations. The MCB is not equipped to provide mission command of more than 10 MCTs.

I posit, in the event that there are more than 10 MCTs, an additional MCB headquarters, and possibly a brigade-level element similar to the headquarters element of the TMCA, must be deployed to that specific theater of operations.

In certain theaters of operations, the MCB's span of control covers the entire area of operations. That span may require the MCB to have mission command of 20 MCTs and a headquarters element.

In such a situation, the challenges of command, such as leader misconduct, Soldier misconduct, sexual harassment, equal opportunity vio-

lations, personnel issues, property issues, and maintenance shortfalls, are doubled for the MCB commander and staff. However, the number of personnel on the battalion staff remains consistent with that of an element capable of providing mission command of four to 10 teams and a headquarters element.

I have experienced firsthand several issues related to the challenges of excessive units dispersed over a large area of operations. I assert that many MCTs are necessary in order to provide ITV in any theater of operations.

Furthermore, I believe that in future conflicts, 15 to 30 MCTs will continue to be required, as they were in Operations Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, and Enduring Freedom.

Many of these MCTs, both Active and Reserve, will be brought into theater from around the world to fall under MCBs with which they have no habitual relationship. Without a habitual relationship, the assigned units do not have a previous working relationship with their higher headquarters.

Personnel and property issues, coupled with the span of control and complexity of the mission, call for the creation of a headquarters element similar to that of a TMCA. This problem deserves further attention because of the criticality of movement control operations in combat.

Recommendations

I recommend that the Army create a brigade headquarters to provide mission command of MCBs within geographic locations. The Army should create two brigade-level commands, one located in the continental United States (CONUS), preferably at Fort Bragg, N.C., and another located in Germany.

The CONUS brigade headquarters would have mission command of three active duty MCBs: the 330th MCB, the 49th MCB, and the 53rd MCB. The brigade headquarters in Germany would have



Soldiers from the 53rd Movement Control Battalion, 7th Sustainment Brigade, prepare a humvee for hook up to a Chinook helicopter during sling-load training at Felker Army Airfield. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brian G. Rhodes)

mission command of the 25th MCB and the 39th MCB. Additional opportunities to fill this role could be available within the Reserve component.

During combat operations, the brigade headquarters would deploy to the theater of operations in the event that it must have mission command of more than 10 MCTs within the theater.

The proposed recommendation does two things for the Army: It provides the MCB with the necessary oversight by a transportation brigade-level organization when the number of MCTs exceeds the MCB's doctrinal capabilities, and it provides aspiring transporters with additional command opportunities and leadership positions at the brigade level.

I realize that if my recommendation were to be approved, a number of other challenges would exist. First, the TMCA no longer ex-

ists. Second, the Army would have to create a headquarters element during a period in which the Army is looking to reduce the force.

A possible solution is to employ the underutilized TTOE to serve as a transportation brigade-level command during contingency operations deployments.

I recommend the following positions for this proposed brigade headquarters be allocated to the Active component: brigade commanding officer, brigade deputy commanding officer, brigade command sergeant major, brigade executive officer, and all primary staff officers-in-charge and noncommissioned officers-in-charge. All other positions would belong to the Reserve component.

In summary, MCBs have regularly been required to provide mission command for more MCTs than their doctrinal ceiling of 10. When

the theater of operations requires more than 10 MCTs, an additional MCB headquarters should be deployed to provide mission command for the additional units. The Army should create two brigade headquarters to provide mission command of MCBs on a geographic basis.

Lt. Col. Joseph D. Blanding is the commander of the 330th Transportation Battalion. He holds a bachelor's degree from Morris College, master's degrees from the University of Oklahoma, Old Dominion University, and Troy University, and a doctorate degree in education from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. He is a graduate of the Transportation Officer Basic Course, Combined Logistics Officer Advanced Course, Support Operations Course Phase II, Joint Planning Course, Intermediate Level Education, and Combined Arms and Services Staff School.