

Communicating to Enable Decisive Action

The author suggests changing the modified table of organization and equipment for brigade combat teams to improve communication capabilities.

■ By Chief Warrant Officer 3 Juan C. Morales

Technology advancements in recent years have improved the ability of combat units to communicate with logisticians across the area of operations in order to provide them with accurate data needed to sustain combat power.

Two items that have greatly improved communication and enhanced the capabilities of the Army's logistics information systems are the very small aperture terminal (VSAT) and the Combat Service Support Automated Information System Interface (CAISI). However, in a brigade combat team's modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE), the VSAT is found only in maintenance control sections, the support operations office, and the supply support activity. As for the CAISI, distance and terrain limit its use in the brigade.

Communication among logisticians and maintainers has improved, but there are gaps that can be filled to improve reliability, responsiveness, and flexibility.

Communication Problems

In the decisive action rotations that I have observed at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., combat repair teams and field maintenance teams often cannot communicate accurately and quickly with maintenance managers at unit maintenance collection points (UMCPs). Logistics information systems and the VSAT are consolidated within the maintenance control section at the UMCP in the field trains.

Not having access to a VSAT re-

quires maintenance managers, combat repair teams (CRTs), and field maintenance teams (FMTs) to communicate using FM radios, which are limited by distance and terrain. Using radios often increases the time it takes to get equipment back into the fight.

Company trains have only one Force XXI Battle Command and Below Blue Force Tracking (FBCB2 BFT) system for extended communications. It is with the company first sergeant and is usually not accessible to CRTs or FMTs.

Recommendation

The Army should change the brigade support battalion's MTOE to add the FBCB2 BFT to the maintenance control section and FMTs in the forward support company and the CRTs in the field maintenance company.

The FBCB2 BFT system is the digitized battle command information system for mounted and dismounted units, which provides real-time information for brigade and below units. It provides a common operational picture with the enhanced ability to request maintenance support, resulting in a more effective and efficient use of repair parts, CRTs, and FMTs.

Adding the capabilities of the FBCB2 BFT system will ultimately provide a reduced footprint for sustainment operations in the operational area and greatly improve the accuracy and reliability of communicating information between CRTs and FMTs and maintenance managers at the UMCPs. This will enable the maintenance managers to make

sound decisions and set priorities of work.

The sustainment warfighting function is essential to conducting operations and providing resources for generating and maintaining combat power to support decisive action, which is the continuous, simultaneous combination of offensive, defensive, and stability operations or defense support of civil authorities. Communicating needs and requirements accurately and quickly is critical to the decisions maintainers and logisticians will make in order to prioritize work and maintain combat power.

Adding the FBCB2 BFT to the MTOE for the maintenance control section, CRTs, and FMTs will enable accurate and timely data communication among the maintenance managers at the UMCPs in the field trains and the maintainers in the company trains, which will reduce equipment downtime and return it to the fight to sustain combat power.

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