



# A Strategic Solution to Bridging the Gap in Operational Movement Control

■ By Maj. Gen. Edward F. Dorman III, Brig. Gen. Stephen E. Farnen,  
and Col. Sean M. Herron



*Trucks carrying 25th Infantry Division equipment enter Warrior Base, New Mexico Range, Republic of Korea, on March 6, 2015. The trucks were part of a convoy transporting equipment for joint training exercise Fowl Eagle 2015. (Photo by Spc. Steven Hitchcock)*

# TWICE

## FEATURES

The theater movement control element can enable more precise movement control and bridge the gap between doctrine and the ability to integrate that doctrine with other nations' systems.

An Army's ability to close with and destroy an adversary has always depended on how well it sustains troops in the field and conserves combat power to be applied on the enemy. Key to applying that power is the ability to get the right forces to the right place at the right time.

Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest described the key to warfare as "getting there the firstest with the mostest." Achieving Forrest's method requires a movement control element with the authority to ensure that combat units and sustainment units are integrated on a finite number of routes.

Moving large armies in a theater of operations requires a complex and intricate blend of combat units and sustainment movements. This intricacy requires some form of theater-level movement control to make it all happen on time.

### **Movement Control**

As the Army transitions from a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, we must reevaluate our ability to fight against other likely adversaries and ask how these potential combat environments compare to our recent experiences. The Army operating concept, *Win in a Complex World*, directs leaders to do exactly that by examining how we fight and how we develop the force to provide strategic leaders with multiple options to achieve our strategic goals.

Although we must capitalize on the lessons learned from the experiences of our recent past, we must also identify capability gaps that may impede our ability to win decisively in future scenarios. Theater movement control is one of the gaps that may have a significant impact on many of these scenarios.

Current Army doctrine on movement control places the responsibility for theater movement control on the Army service component command. This command usually exercises this responsibility through the assigned theater sustainment command (TSC)

or expeditionary sustainment command (ESC).

Army Techniques Publication 4-16, *Movement Control*, clearly spells out the movement control structure and the procedures to link movement control from the strategic to the tactical levels. It does not, however, articulate how to integrate that movement control structure with those of other services or nations in joint, combined, or coalition environments.

### **Integration With Host Nations**

In Iraq and Afghanistan, there was little need to integrate U.S. movement control with host-nation movement control structures. In the early years, there simply was no host-nation structure. We did as we pleased and moved whenever and wherever we wanted. As time went on, we developed a fledgling host-nation system that was already integrated with our movement control structure and normally did not compete with U.S. forces' movements.

This would not be the case if we were to operate in many other parts of the world. In fact, the National Military Strategy and Defense Strategic Guidance both highlight the importance of U.S. forces operating in conjunction with other partner nations to meet our security objectives.

The implied task is that we will have to work closely within the framework of someone else's established systems to accomplish our objectives. Movement control is one of those systems, and it can halt all operations if it is not fostered carefully.

The most likely scenario would be in Korea, where U.S. movements would need to be synchronized and integrated into a very complex and constricted road network. Unlike Iraq or Afghanistan, the Republic of Korea (ROK) has very robust and modern movement control structures that have the authority to control all combined movement requests.

The ROK Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) is a general officer headquarters that integrates military and civilian movements throughout the country. In order

to move anything in that environment, the United States and other sending states will have to coordinate their movements through ROK TRANSCOM. This situation would be the same if U.S. forces were operating in most European, African, or Asian countries.

On closer examination, one can see a gap between our movement control doctrine and our ability to integrate that doctrine with a host nation or coalition of nations. The recommended solution is a low-cost concept that uses existing force structure. This solution combines the efforts of several organizations to synchronize effects and achieve results exponentially greater than the sum of the parts.

### The Movement Control Gap

The mobility branch of the TSC or ESC is charged with managing the movement control functions for the theater. It can conduct movement tracking and management for U.S. forces in an operational area. It is assisted in this effort by the assigned movement control battalion (MCB) headquarters and its organic movement control teams (MCTs), which are spread throughout the battlespace, occupying critical transportation nodes.

The MCB is a very capable organization for executing the movement control plan at the tactical level, but it is not staffed to interface at the operational or theater-strategic level of the host-nation government, where movement priorities are decided and movement control plans are approved.

The term “theater-strategic” describes the Korean environment in which U.S. Forces Korea is a sub-unified command operating at the U.S. theater level while being congruent with the ROK strategic level. This term describes the mismatch between levels of war that occur in the combined arena. The MCB, commanded by a lieutenant colonel and staffed by mostly junior officers and midgrade noncommissioned officers, is out of its experience and capability depth when

trying to influence decision-making at this level.

In Korea, during armistice or “normal” conditions, the organic MCB operates with ROK TRANSCOM across the spectrum, from tactical movement control to theater-strategic interface. It can do this because the volume of movement requirements is small compared to during contingency operations, when the entire ROK military mobilizes at the same time that forces are flowing into theater from the United States and more than 17 other sending states.

The MCB is well-built to execute the movement control plan at the tactical level, but it cannot span the gap from the tactical to the theater-strategic level in a contingency.

The mobility section of the TSC or ESC, operating at the operational level, also interfaces with the theater-strategic level, but it is only a staff section with fewer than a dozen people, military and civilian. The section can track movements and provide input but lacks the authority or rank structure commensurate with the host nation’s strategic movement headquarters to have a serious influence on the combined movement priorities.

Put simply, during a coalition contingency in a nation with an established and functional government and military, the U.S. doctrinal movement control system is likely to be overtasked and unable to successfully integrate U.S. movement requirements with host-nation movement control structures.

### Bridging the Gap

There is a definite gap in movement control capability between the operational and strategic levels. The risk associated with this gap is a lack of synchronization of movements in a complex contingency environment. If the transportation network is constricted or the total requirements exceed transportation network capacity, the commander has a significant operational risk.

To bridge this gap, a movement control element must be available to

plug into the host-nation or coalition movement control structure at the decision-making level. It must have senior leaders who can provide the right level of influence to represent U.S. movement requirements as a facet of the overall theater movement program. Fortunately, this capability already exists within the Army force structure. This capability is the theater transportation opening element (TTOE).

The TTOE, assigned to the TSC or ESC and positioned with the host-nation strategic movement control nodes, can bridge the gap by translating U.S. unit and sustainment movement requirements, which are provided by the MCTs, into transportation-specific language for inclusion in the overall theater movement plan.

The TTOE ensures U.S. equities are represented in the movement decision boards and lowers the risk of unsynchronized movement plans, which likely result in clogged transportation networks and risk of mission failure caused by late unit moves or a lack of sustainment.

The TTOE was developed to close the movement control gap, which was an unintended side effect of the Army’s transformation to a modular force. It was designed precisely for this mission but has not been used in the capacity for which it was designed. While deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan under sustainment brigades, the TTOEs were often broken up and their personnel used to fill other units and staff sections.

A TTOE is also a command, not a staff section of the TSC or ESC. This gives it the ability to operate alone to execute the movement control mission and report directly to the TSC or ESC commanding general. It is commanded by a lieutenant colonel and is composed of 55 movement control specialists, 21 of whom are senior noncommissioned officers or field-grade officers.

Another capability that is required for theater movement planning is the expeditionary rail team (ERT). This 34-person unit is designed to deploy

## Theater Movement Control Element Concept

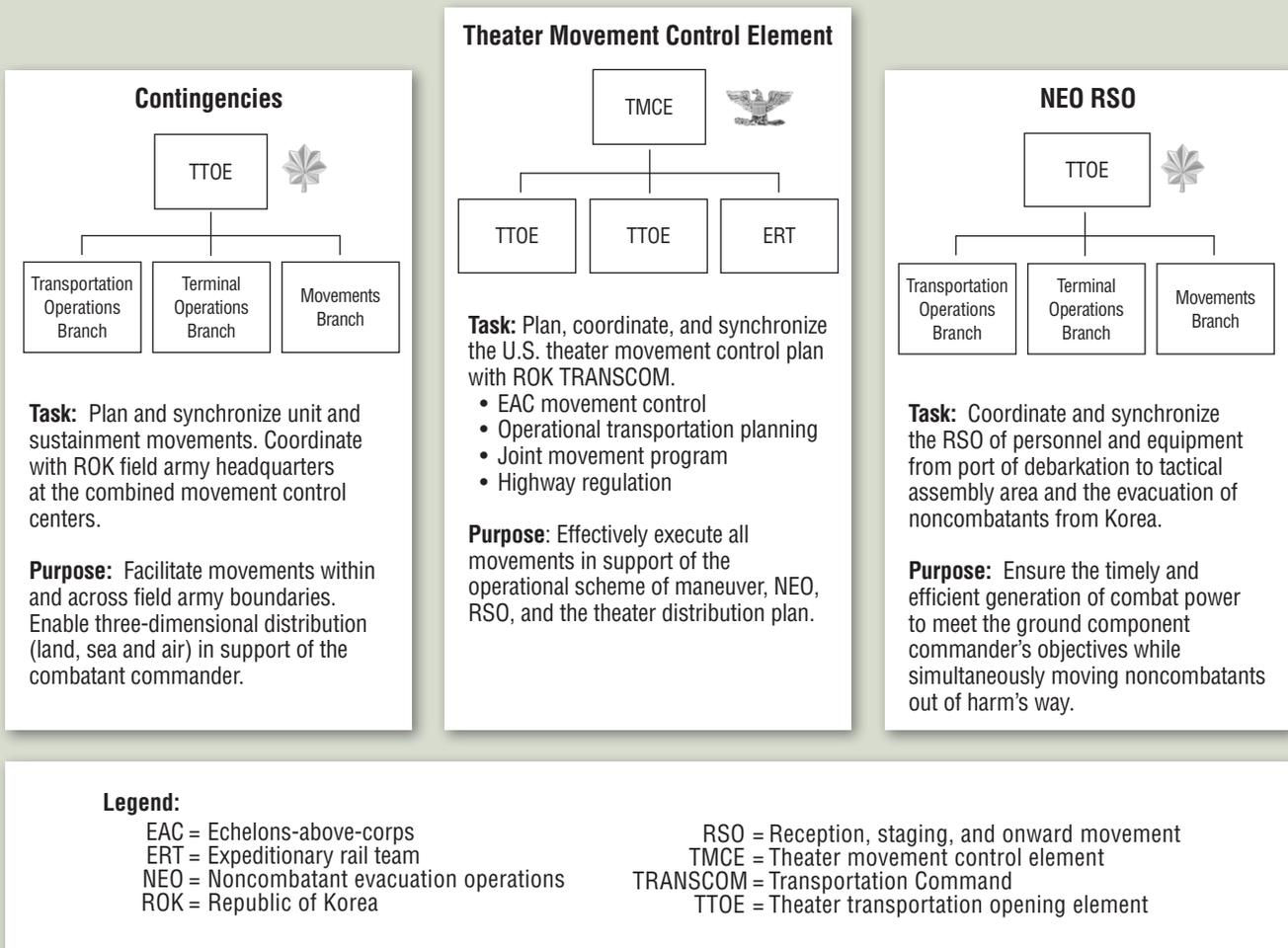


Figure 1. The TMCE plugs directly into the host-nation movement control architecture. In the case of the Korean theater, it would plug into the ROK TRANSCOM to represent U.S. interests in the development of theater movement programs.

to a theater and assess the rail network and its capabilities and advise the commander on using rail to augment the movement program.

The ERT is used for military movements or to develop commercial rail capability in the host nation. In combat zones or for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, the ERT adds another dimension to sustaining the force. For this reason, it is an essential aspect of the theater movement control structure.

### The TMCE

Together, the TTOE(s), ERT, and the MCBs form the theater move-

ment control element (TMCE). The TMCE is led by a colonel and reports directly to the TSC or ESC commander. This colonel performs a dual role as the TMCE commander and the support operations officer. This dual role allows the TMCE to plug directly into the host-nation movement control architecture at the highest decision-making level.

In the case of the Korean theater, the TMCE would plug into the ROK TRANSCOM to represent U.S. interests during the development of theater movement priorities and programs. As part of the support operations staff, the TMCE executes

U.S. movement control through the mobility section of the TSC or ESC to ensure seamless and synchronized movement control efforts.

The TMCE is a total force integration approach to bridging the movement control capability gap. The current Army force structure has six TTOEs and five ERTs, all of which are in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve. These highly capable units can rapidly deploy and make an instant impact. They specialize in engaging with the host nation in the early stages of theater opening, allowing them to establish relationships and procedures early to facili-

tate U.S. movement requirements as the theater develops.

The TTOEs and ERTs are also easy to deploy because of their small numbers and very small equipment footprint. In order to maximize the capability to rapidly deploy in the early stages of a pending conflict, each geographic combatant command (GCC) should have a TMCE with TTOE and ERT elements aligned with the Reserve component mission support command in the Army service component command.

For example, in the U.S. Pacific Command area of responsibility, the TMCE units would be aligned to U.S. Army Pacific's 9th Mission Support Command. This alignment would facilitate a habitual relationship with the ESC or TSC and allow each TMCE element to become expert in its specific combatant command area of responsibility. This total force integration approach provides a high degree of readiness at the substantially lower cost of Reserve component units.

### **Ulchi Freedom Guardian**

The TMCE was recently exercised as a proof of concept in Korea during Ulchi Freedom Guardian 2014 (UFG14). During the exercise, two TTOEs and an ERT were deployed and positioned at critical movement control nodes, such as the ROK TRANSCOM, ports, and the multiple headquarters where movement requirements were generated.

The elements successfully established relationships with their ROK counterparts and provided expert input to the movement planning process, representing U.S. movement requirements in support of the combined forces commander's scheme of maneuver.

The presence of the TMCE in ROK TRANSCOM furthered the 19th ESC's efforts to strengthen the alliance by establishing partnerships in support of the two nations' mutual requirements. This proof of concept should become the model for other GCC's to emulate in bridging the theater movement control gap.

### **The Way Ahead**

The TMCE's ability to reduce risk for the theater commander makes it worthy of continued development. This must occur across three lines of effort.

First, the TMCE concept must be established as doctrine through the Combined Arms Support Command's Capabilities Development and Integration Directorate. Completing a doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities analysis will allow this concept to be embedded in doctrine and will ensure it is trained and resourced to accomplish its mission when required.

Second, we must continue to refine and experiment with this new concept in exercises and simulations. The proof of concept was conducted during UFG14, but this was just the tip of the iceberg for uncovering the full capability of the TMCE. Continuing to use the TMCE in exercises and contingencies will uncover other potential applications for the TMCE to improve movement control in a theater of operations.

Finally, this concept must be written into the existing GCC operations plans. By doing this, the GCC will establish it as a valid requirement for resourcing in the time-phased force deployment data list. Validating the concept places the requirement on the Army for the continued resourcing of that capability or another capability that can accomplish the same mission.

These three lines of effort will eventually lead the Army to consider using the TMCE as a permanent rotational unit as part of the regionally aligned forces initiative. A regionally aligned forces TMCE would establish a full-time presence and relationship with host-nation movement control structures and headquarters.

The rotational forces would also participate in exercises in the assigned region, fostering a common understanding of capabilities and working practices. This would enable the TMCE to immediately begin working movement requirements

during the early stages of a crisis.

Complex operations, such as non-combatant evacuation and reception, staging, and onward movement of forces flowing into the theater, are critically vulnerable to movement. An organization embedded in the movement control structure and advocating for U.S. movement priorities early in the process provides the commander increased flexibility by preventing movement bottlenecks that would delay the plan's execution.

The TMCE concept was already proven to be a value-added capability during UFG14. Feedback from U.S. and ROK leaders clearly indicated that this concept was worthy of being included in our doctrine. The concept is a low-cost opportunity, using force structure that already exists and applying it in the manner for which it was designed.

Consolidating the TTOEs and ERTs into a TMCE that deploys early provides the theater commander with a movement control solution at the operational level and bridges the gap to synchronize movement control from the tactical to the strategic levels.

---

Maj. Gen. Edward F. Dorman III is the commander of the 8th Theater Sustainment Command at Fort Shafter, Hawaii. He holds a master's degree in strategic studies from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

Brig. Gen. Stephen E. Farnen is the commander of the 19th Expeditionary Sustainment Command at Camp Henry, South Korea. He holds a master's degree in strategic studies from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

Col. Sean M. Herron is the support operations officer of the 19th Expeditionary Sustainment Command. He holds a master's degree in strategic studies from the Army War College and a master's degree in military arts and sciences from the Army Command and General Staff College.