



Soldiers from the 701st Brigade Support Battalion conduct lateral transfers to on-post units at Fort Riley, Kansas. (Photo by Lt. Col. Bradley Nelson)

Inactivation: An Opportunity for a Major Logistics Training Event

Inactivating the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, provided unique training opportunities for logisticians and allowed the unit to become a force multiplier for deploying units.

■ By Lt. Col. Joseph M. Colacicco

In June 2014, the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division (ID) (4/1 IBCT), received formal notice that it was to begin inactivation as part of force restructuring. The order directed an inactivation date of June 15, 2015.

However, because the unit was assigned as an Army contingency force and as the regionally aligned force to

Africa, it was required to maintain readiness through February 2015. To accommodate these responsibilities, Forces Command allowed 4/1 IBCT a 90-day extension. By June 15, the 4/1 IBCT was required to draw down to a provisional unit that would remain to close out all personnel and equipment actions by September 15.

The Plan

The 4/1 IBCT's plan for inactivation included the same lines of effort that all inactivating units follow: training and operations, equipment divestiture, personnel divestiture, and facilities transfer.

The 4/1 IBCT was required to draw down to 10 percent of its 3,400 Soldiers (340) and 30 percent of its

52,000 pieces of equipment (15,600) by June 15, 2015.

By reviewing the after-action reviews of several units, brigade leaders determined that equipment divestiture was the keystone of the inactivation process. Equipment divestiture required personnel, which drove facilities requirements.

Previously when units inactivated, battalions and companies worked to divest their equipment and left junior officers as provisional commanders to close out the brigade's personnel and equipment actions. This structure allowed units to maintain leadership continuity throughout the process, and each unit remained responsible for divesting its own equipment.

The 4/1 IBCT would instead maintain the structure of an existing unit in order to smooth the transition to the provisional phase. The IBCT would close all but one company and one battalion unit identification code (UIC) by June 15, 2015. Equipment would be maintained by a cohesive unit under its regular headquarters. The reduction in overhead would allow 4/1 IBCT to meet the mandated 90-percent reduction on time.

The primary purpose of the strategy used by 4/1 IBCT was to gain effective use of personnel in order to maintain multiple units and centralized control of the logistics involved with the inactivation. The 4/1 IBCT commander designated equipment divestiture as the decisive operation for inactivation and named the 701st Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) as the main effort for the brigade.

Task Organization Changes

Funneling the equipment through the BSB required changes to both the brigade and BSB task organizations. So on Jan. 4, 2015, the attachment of the forward support companies to their supported battalions ended, and they reintegrated into the 701st BSB and assumed a direct-support relationship.

This provided the BSB commander with the flexibility to draw down his unit and consolidate his low-den-

sity military occupational specialty Soldiers, such as mechanics and automated logistical specialists, while still supporting the brigade.

Additionally, the commander attached the supply support activity (SSA) to the field maintenance com-

At every level in the brigade, Soldiers and leaders relearned the basics of property accountability, transfer procedures, the need for inventories, maintenance operations, SSA operations, and transportation planning.

pany designated to control all equipment divestiture operations. These efforts facilitated unity of command and established necessary relationships well before the brigade's transition to a provisional status.

Establishing the BSB support operations fusion cell was the most critical event in preparing for turn-ins. The fusion cell served as the BSB commander's entity to provide oversight of equipment divestiture.

Under the control of the BSB support operations officer (SPO), the cell consisted of SPO entities and representatives from the brigade property book office and transportation section, a brigade S-6 technical expert, and a liaison officer from each battalion.

The fusion cell controlled the workflow, planned and organized transfers, tracked transfer status, monitored and coordinated with on-post agencies, and provided visibility for the brigade and BSB commanders. This cell essentially served as the materiel management center for the brigade during the inactivation process.

Early Actions

Because of the 4/1 IBCT's requirement to maintain readiness through February 2015, its battalions began taking actions early to prepare for inactivation. Beginning in July 2014, Soldiers worked to ensure all of their excess equipment

and non-mission-essential modified table of organization and equipment items were entered into the Lead Materiel Integrator Decision Support Tool (LMI DST). (LMI DST is the Army's database for vetting lateral transfers and issuing direc-

tives.) These early actions allowed the brigade to divest more than 10,000 items before January 2015 and reduced the brigade's equipment by nearly 20 percent.

In January 2015, large-scale unit turn-ins to the BSB began. The battalions remained responsible for completing the transfer of all equipment that had valid LMI DST transfer directives. The remaining equipment was transferred to the BSB. This left a workload of just over 31,000 property book items for the 701st BSB's SSA.

Equipment Intake and Prep

On Jan. 9, 2015, mass equipment turn-ins to the BSB began based on unit priorities set by the brigade commander. Each company had a turn-in day with appointments scheduled Tuesdays through Thursdays. The BSB used Mondays and Fridays for internal SSA operations and overflow from prior appointments.

Additionally, flex days were built in to the schedule to accommodate potential shifts caused by mission or training requirements. The battalions' liaison officers met each day in the fusion cell to provide turn-in estimates, work special cases, and adjust the schedule.

The turn-in requirements were simple: clean each piece of equipment in accordance with Army guidance.



Units turn in rolling stock to the 701st Brigade Support Battalion at Fort Riley, Kansas, as part of the equipment divestiture process leading up inactivation. (Photo by 1st Lt. Kaitlyn Anderson)

Since all of the mechanics reverted to the BSB in January 2015, technical inspections were not required.

Once received in the SSA, the equipment was inspected and required parts were ordered. Each piece was categorized as “ready for transfer” or “held for maintenance” and put into storage. With the consolidated workforce in the BSB, the SSA received up to 1,400 pieces in a day, adding more than 30,000 pieces of equipment to the SSA hand receipt by March 30.

Equipment Divestiture

During the turn-in phase, the SPO fusion cell, the property book office, and the 1st ID G-4 ensured all equipment was loaded in LMI DST and monitored the vetting and receipt of disposition instructions. Equipment took only three paths out of the SSA: lateral transfer, turn-in to De-

fense Logistics Agency Disposition Services (DLA DS), or depot turn-in.

Lateral transfers. Lateral transfers were the most difficult to execute. They required the equipment to be at the highest standard of the three divestment paths. They also required coordination of schedules between different units and meticulous inventories to ensure gaining units properly signed for and posted the equipment to their property books. The BSB handled on-post lateral transfers like any other lateral transfer within the 1st ID.

Off-post lateral transfers required management by a “slingshot” (a property-away team). Each team consisted of a slingshot officer-in-charge (OIC), a supply specialist, and other specialty personnel, if required. The slingshot OIC ensured all paperwork was prepared correctly prior to shipment, packaged the

shipment, and coordinated with the gaining units. If the shipment contained sensitive items or was valued at more than \$10,000, the OIC escorted the equipment and conducted a face-to-face transfer with the gaining unit.

The S-3 developed a concept of operations for each off-post transfer, and the BSB tracked each as diligently as it would any tactical operation. This positive control facilitated the posting of the signed lateral transfer documents by the property book officers and minimized loss of visibility.

DLA DS turn-in. Equipment vetted for turn-in to DLA DS was the easiest to execute, but it had the highest volume of the three divestiture pathways. The turn-in process involved assigning a dedicated team to execute three turn-in appointments each week from February through the first week of September.

These turn-ins included not only property book items but also class II (clothing and individual equipment), class VII (major end items), and unserviceable class IX (repair parts) that had accumulated in 4/1 IBCT over the course of multiple deployments. Locking in three appointments per week for six months enabled a constant flow rather than a large surge.

Depot turn-in. The final and most interesting path for equipment was depot turn-in. The 701st BSB conducted throughput shipments straight to the depots instead of flooding the Fort Riley Logistics Readiness Center with equipment or relying on a DLA Demand Data Exchange Customer Collaboration team for help near the end of the process.

Depot turn-ins were handled in the same way that off-post lateral transfers were. Shipping equipment directly from the 701st BSB and sending an escort to accompany it had the same result as escorting off-post lateral transfers. The depots allowed the slingshot OIC to schedule a turn-in appointment and provided the appropriate personnel for the items list provided by the OIC. Army depots and

chemical materiel activities were very responsive and processed equipment within hours of its arrival.

Meeting the End State

The final two months of inactivation was a period of intense management that focused on the divestiture of the last 8,500 items remaining in the IBCT. The 701st BSB conducted daily meetings on the status of shipments and receipt of disposition instructions.

With more than 3,000 items still awaiting disposition in mid-July, the BSB commander directed the SPO to send lists of on-hand equipment to the Army Materiel Command item managers in order to receive direct disposition instructions.

Between this directive and the 1st ID G-4's push to receive disposition for heavy vehicles, the brigade ended up having less than 120 pieces of rolling stock that had not been divested by August 15. These items were transferred to the 1st ID Sustainment Brigade along with an OIC and a team of mechanics who would complete divestiture once disposition instructions were received.

On Sept. 15, 2015, the inactivation mission was successfully completed when the last 23 Soldiers in the 701st BSB were transferred out of the unit and the UIC was closed.

Inactivation Lessons Learned

Sustainers can learn several lessons from this highly successful operation.

Equipment divestiture can be a force multiplier. The decision to consolidate equipment into the BSB allowed for the transfer of Soldiers to units with critical shortages well before the June 15 inactivation date. By moving the equipment out of the units, entire companies were able to inactivate and Soldiers were made available for transfer to 1st ID brigades that required manpower for upcoming deployments.

By mid-May 2015, only nine of the original companies and battalions remained in the brigade. On June 2 only 238 Soldiers remained, under

one company UIC and one battalion UIC, to execute equipment divestiture. If 4/1 IBCT had followed the model that previous units had used, there would have been between six and 20 UICs, each with an OIC, noncommissioned OIC, a supply clerk, an administrative clerk, and other personnel.

Inactivation is primarily a logistics operation. If equipment is the center of gravity, then inactivation is a logistics operation. The key tasks are core logistics competencies both at the unit level (with supply transactions and inventory procedures) and at the BSB SSA level (with receipt, storage, maintenance, distribution, and materiel management).

Planning for the BSB to serve as the provisional unit ensured that the brigade's logisticians were locked in to execute the operation. Any battalion headquarters can handle the oversight of remaining Soldiers and equipment, but only a support battalion has the expertise and background to seize opportunities with depots and item managers to rapidly divest equipment.

Inactivation is a logistics training event. At every level in the brigade, Soldiers and leaders relearned the basics of property accountability, transfer procedures, the need for inventories, maintenance operations, SSA operations, and transportation planning. Moving one piece of equipment out of the brigade touched on all of these tasks, and the 4/1 IBCT had the opportunity to execute 52,000 moves.

The BSB logisticians had the opportunity to truly manage a logistics operation. Employing the SSA and mechanics, coordinating cross-country shipments, escorting equipment to depots, and working with item managers are not daily tasks in a support operations section in garrison, and many BSB Soldiers do not do these tasks while deployed.

The logisticians also learned how to constantly be on the lookout for more efficient ways to execute these tasks. For example, the SPO coordinated with the installation transportation office to allow all shipments to de-

part directly from the SSA instead of the logistics readiness center; this reduced the number of times a load was touched from three to one.

Inactivation requires a proactive approach. Units cannot be afraid to contact item managers and coordinate with depots. This is not advocating for every company in the Army to contact item managers and depots; however, BSB support operations sections should not be afraid to do so.

Prior to modularity, coordination like this was done through the division materiel management centers, and this task was intended to move into the BSB. It works, it is efficient, and it allows a brigade combat team to meet its logistics requirements. Some might say that it is nondoctrinal; the 701st BSB argues that it is just doctrinal throughput.

From its receipt of mission in July 2014 until successful completion in September 2015, the 4/1 IBCT responsibly transferred 3,400 Soldiers and 52,000 pieces of equipment. Critical to meeting the assigned mission was properly identifying the key problem, divesting equipment, reorganizing early, funneling equipment through the BSB, and leaving the right leaders and Soldiers in place to see the inactivation to its conclusion.

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