



Setting up the BSB and the FSC for Success

■ By Lt. Col. Brent Coryell and Capt. Christopher Devenport

A good relationship between the brigade support battalion (BSB) and the forward support company (FSC) starts in garrison, and it is difficult. The BSB is assigned subordinate FSCs by its modified table of organization and equipment, but most FSCs in the Army are under the operation control of and are almost entirely integrated into their supported battalions.

There is a tendency for the FSCs to become “distanced” from the BSB, which limits the BSB commander’s influence and undermines his authority as the senior logistician in the brigade combat team (BCT). This is mainly because those within the BCT do not understand the difference between command and support relationships. The BSB commander is the BCT’s senior logistician and is responsible for sustainment planning, coordination, integration, and synchronization for the brigade, regardless of FSC command relationships.

Establishing Terms of Reference

In garrison, the task organization and command relationship of the FSCs require analysis of BCT operations and the consensus of all commanders. With this in mind, the BSB commander should establish a memorandum of agreement that delineates roles and responsibilities and ensure that the agreement is supported by the BCT and the maneuver commanders.

This “terms of reference” document must clearly delineate who is responsible for what while in garrison and in the field. With only a few exceptions, FSCs receive the same support from their supported battalion as the supported battalion’s organic companies.

Talent Management

The BSB commander should have the authority (delegated from the BCT commander) for logistics officer management, while the BSB command sergeant major (CSM) should have the delegated authority for logistics noncommissioned officer (NCO) management.

Talent management and honest, accurate assessments of all subordinate leaders are critical to mission success and support flexibility. Many BSB commanders put their best Logistics Captain’s Career Course graduates in the FSCs. The BSB CSMs do the same with senior NCOs; they accept risk with the internal BSB leader talent because they have more control to mentor less talented leaders.

Talent should be dispersed proportionately between the BSB and the FSCs. The BSB commander should make an effort to professionally develop logistics lieutenants and grow the next generation of logisticians. BSB commanders should rotate logistics lieutenants between supply, maintenance, and transportation jobs with the lieutenant’s final year ending as a company executive officer or in a staff position. A second lieutenant should do a branch-specific job first, if possible, but position openings do not always align with new arrivals.

can help offset this imbalance. The transportation platoon of the BSB’s distribution company can support multiple FSCs and CTCPs through synchronized and rehearsed LRP operations to help balance the use of distribution assets. LRPs are an excellent way to extend operational reach, but they are not often used during NTC rotations.

Swapping modular systems, such as a palletized load system flatracks, load handling system compatible water tank racks, and modular fuel system tanks is also useful. These systems are designed to decrease the time of sustainment assets on station, thus increasing efficiency and extending operational reach. At the NTC, many units do not exchange these systems because they are afraid of losing property accountability or damaging equipment.

The FSCs that position all of their distribution capabilities with the FTCP in the BSA do not have the assets forward in the CTCP to con-

Continued on page 43.



Forward support company paratroopers, from the 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, conduct recovery operations for a vehicle disabled by a simulated improvised explosive device during a logistics convoy at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, on Aug. 11, 2015. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Hull)

duct LRP operations with the BSB’s transportation platoon. Conversely, if all FSC distribution assets are at the CTCP, it forces the FSC distribution platoon to return to the BSA to get supplies in order to push from the CTCP. An effective solution is meeting in the middle at an LRP. At the LRP, the maneuver company first sergeants and supply sergeants link up with the FSC distribution platoon or the BSB transportation platoon to conduct LOGPAC operations.

Maintenance Challenges

NTC OC/Ts have observed that commanders have low confidence in the technical abilities of FSCs’ forward mechanics. In many cases, FSC mechanics are not fixing forward because they lack the troubleshooting skills to identify faults. The underlying issue is that specialty technicians who reside in the BSB shops do not provide forward support team me-

chanics with the low-density MOS training needed to repair radios, small arms, night-vision devices, and ground support equipment.

The BSB often pulls the forward mechanics in low-density MOSs back to its field maintenance company (FMC) so that they can work under the supervision of the commodity warrant officer technician. In other cases, items are not repaired because the untrained forward FSC mechanics have been given other jobs such as unit armorers or orderly room clerks.

The BSB support operations officer and the maintenance officer, along with the maneuver battalion S-3s and executive officers, could resolve the issue of untrained Soldiers in low-density repair MOSs by publishing a training plan that develops the necessary technical skills to troubleshoot and fix equipment forward. Specialty maintenance technicians

assigned to the FMC should take an active role in training and mentoring Soldiers in low-density maintenance MOSs in order to develop their skills in the FSCs.

Recommendations

BCT sustainment planners must clearly understand requirements derived from effective forecasts and the functions and capabilities of the FSCs in order to develop the battlefield geometry required to maximize the operational reach of the BCT. Optimal FSC asset emplacement in decisive action requires thorough staff analysis, a complete understanding of FSC capabilities, and clearly defined personnel functions to support the tactical operation.

Accurate and continuous logistics running estimates will determine what is needed where and when on the battlefield. With input from

the BSB commander, sustainment planners need to have the flexibility to move and adjust sustainment forces across the CTCP and FTCP, use LRPs as required, and enforce the use of modular system exchanges to best support the BCT.

The BCT S-4 should plan the sustainment missions and the FSC commander should execute them. The BCT sustainment planners need to establish the right balance of distribution assets and methods between the FSC distribution platoon and the BSB distribution company's transportation platoon so that one or the other is not being overused or underused.

Specialty maintenance technicians assigned to the FMC should training and mentor low-density maintenance MOSs in order to develop the skills of Soldiers in the FSCs. This will prevent the pooling of mechanics and the evacuation of not-mission-capable equipment to the FMC.

Positioning the right FSC capabilities at the right echelons will limit immediate resupply operations, fully extend the operational reach of the BCT, and provide proactive versus reactive support.

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Continued from page 41.

The goal should be for all logistics lieutenants to have three job assignments during their tenure with the BCT that include both time in the BSB and the FSC. This will make them well-rounded and ultimately better prepared to be multifunctional logistics captains.

Training Together

The BSB should incorporate the FSCs into all battalion-level field training exercises so that the support relationships remain intact. BSBs should establish the brigade support area with its FSCs at least twice a year and practice the complexity of tactical distribution, sustainment synchronization at each echelon, and the science of control by establishing the field trains command post and combat trains command post and defining the skill sets and equipment (to include communications systems) that should reside at each location.

The BSB commander and CSM should establish and validate the sustainment tactical standard operating procedures to cover all sustainment echelons in the BCT. The BSB should provide resourced training packages for all sustainment Soldiers and oversee their professional development by mentoring and training all junior sustainment leaders. The BSB commander and CSM can host a "Sustainment University" that meets monthly and covers sustainment functions like reporting logistics statuses and preparing logistics estimates.

Another training event that works for logistics lieutenants is a logistics lieutenant "stakes" competition. Have logistics sergeants first class grade the lieutenants so that it is a training event for the NCOs as well. Have the lieutenants participate in 10 to 15 graded events such as setting up an OE254 radio antennae, conducting preventive maintenance checks and services on a humvee, and turning on and distributing fuel from a heavy expanded-mobility tactical truck fuel tanker. This competition will test mental toughness, physical fitness, technical and tactical proficiency but most importantly will build camaraderie among the logistics lieutenants and improve their skills in many areas.

Train As You Fight

While in garrison, do not allow FSCs to pick up fuel from main post. Make the distribution company issue it from the motor pool. This is how petroleum supply specialists in the FSCs develop working relationships with their fellow fuel handlers in the BSB.

The BCT should set up all of the very small aperture terminals and conduct tactical file transfer protocol between logistics information systems daily. It is easy to get tied to the Network Enterprise Center, which is not training as we fight.

Have all of the commodity maintenance technicians in the field maintenance company incorporate all of the low-density MOSs into monthly "fenced" MOS training. Training between the BSB and the FSCs is essential and requires coordinated efforts and agreements among commanders.

Build the BSB and FSC relationship in garrison with a memorandum of agreement between commanders that clearly outlines the terms of reference that define who is responsible for what. Then, most importantly, BSB and FSCs must train together.