



*Soldiers from the 583rd Forward Support Company, 188th Brigade Support Battalion, transfer rocket pods to a heavy expanded-mobility tactical truck on April 13, 2016, during the 18th Field Artillery Brigade's culminating training exercise at Fort Bragg, N.C.*

## Training Lessons Learned by a Field Artillery Forward Support Company

The lessons learned by one unit supporting a field artillery battalion during a culminating training exercise could improve training and operations for other forward support companies.

■ By Capt. Andrea Asendio

I served as the company commander of the 583rd Forward Support Company (FSC), 188th Brigade Support Battalion (BSB), while it supported a high-mobility artillery rocket system (HIMARS) battalion. During that time, the FSC participated in a culminating training exercise (CTE) for the 18th Field Artillery

Brigade at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The training scenario, designed by the brigade, used realistic enemy trends pertaining to its upcoming deployment to assess the HIMARS battalion's operating procedures and the logistics support provided by the FSC.

The CTE allowed the 18th Field Artillery Brigade and its

subordinate battalions to train on mission-critical tasks in order to increase their mission readiness.

The CTE also provided the participants with an opportunity to solve tough, realistic problems that it could face during deployment. The battalion staff, batteries, and FSC were challenged to refine systems and products. Doing so im-

proved communication and mission command throughout the brigade and ultimately resulted in a more effective decision-making process.

During the CTE, the FSC exercised all of the skills it learned through mission-essential task list training performed during section-level sergeant's time training and battalion- and company-level field training exercises. FSC commanders should consider the following lessons learned to prepare for any training event.

**Create a Shared Understanding**

Army Doctrine Reference Publication 4-0, Sustainment, says that understanding is fundamental to mission command. Sustainment

commanders must understand the supported commander's intent and concept of operations. I facilitated this by ensuring the distribution platoon trained with battery support platoons and the maintenance support teams trained with their supported batteries.

Typically, the FSC brings bullets, but in a HIMARS battalion it brings rocket pods. It takes a distribution platoon up to an hour to upload and download pods.

At every opportunity, I ensured the distribution platoon trained with the battery support platoons. This training included linking up, conducting rocket pod transfers, performing security, creating and employing rearm, refuel, and re-

supply sketches, and validating standard operating procedures. The FSC's understanding of the concept of operations led to the HIMARS battalion's success on the battlefield.

In order to facilitate a shared understanding, I assisted the battalion S-4 with the battalion logistics planning. The battalion S-4 and the FSC commander must capture requirements on a designated information system such as the Command Post of the Future or Joint Capabilities Release (JCR) and describe the context for future requirements to the BSB support operations officer and the brigade S-4. This ensures resupply missions and requirements are clearly



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understood and articulated in the synchronization matrix.

### Use a Synchronization Matrix

A logistics synchronization matrix was used for all three phases of the exercise. It was very detailed and depicted who was to get which class of supply at what time and where. The matrix was written after each operation order briefing and showed the unit's mission, end state, and timing of critical events. I developed the matrix with the battalion S-4 using input from the battalion S-3.

Using a logistics synchronization matrix resulted in more efficient operations. The workload was properly distributed, and the delivery of supplies and personnel was synchronized with battlefield operations.

### Know Repair Parts Demand

The FSC should ensure a thorough demand analysis is conducted for class IX (repair parts) bench and shop stock. The maintenance technician and maintenance control officer of the 583rd FSC queried historical data from past field training exercises to determine which parts to keep on hand.

During a 21-day exercise, the brigade support battalion's operational readiness rate was an impressive 97.6 percent. Our maintenance missions included changing out five damaged tires on the mission-critical HIMARS. The maintenance section was proactive and diligent in ensuring it had the parts necessary to keep the HIMARS in the fight.

### Train on Mission Command

When I first took command, my command post had no mission command systems or any other means of tracking logistics, not even a radio. During each field training exercise, I kept adding a communications element to my command post.

By the time our CTE commenced,

the FSC headquarters set up the command post with a JCR, a radio, and logistics tracking systems such as maps, butcher boards, and a logistics synchronization matrix. We also ensured everyone, from the driver to the platoon leader, knew

The 583rd FSC held a weekly training meeting. When a training event had taken place during the previous week, leaders always conducted an AAR following the training meeting. The AAR was driven by what tasks the command-

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how to operate the radio, send messages through JCR, and had basic map-reading skills. The FSC also ordered everything needed for the command post ahead of time to ensure it was on hand before the CTE.

During the CTE, the FSC set up the command post with a JCR tactical operations center kit, a radio, maps, and tracking boards to ensure it reported to its supported battalion S-4 accurately and quickly.

### Secure Your Unit

During the CTE, the FSC ordered ring mount kits and installed its own M240B machine-gun ring mounts. It used its light medium tactical vehicles and humvees for security. These vehicles were maintained to the -10/20 maintenance standard and were available to deploy at a moment's notice.

External security elements are not always available. FSCs need to be able to conduct missions with the equipment that they have.

### Conduct After Action Reviews

Evaluate the training and retrain are the last two steps of the Army's 8-Step Training Model. FSCs should conduct after action reviews (AARs) with the supported battalion following every training event.

er assessed the company on and included by phase what worked and what did not. All company senior leaders were required to provide input, which was kept in a book that was updated after each exercise.

The CTE allowed me to exercise mission command during decisive action training. It was invaluable in showing the FSC's strengths and weakness. The company's success during the event was a direct result of the mission-essential task list training performed during sergeant's time, field training exercises, and other events leading up to the CTE. Having the support platoon as an enabler for these events helped the FSC and its leaders to train as they fight.

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