



Sgt. Jon Findley (right) explains to Pfc. Arturo Gonzalez how to brief the enemy situation using the Command Post of the Future during the 311th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) Command Post Exercise-Functional at Camp Parks, Calif., on Sept. 19, 2015. (Photo by Maj. Gregg Moore)

Increasing Proficiency With the Command Post Exercise—Functional

■ By Capt. Steven J. Sickles

A command post exercise-functional (CPX-F) is a total force sustainment, home-station, support operations-centric, functionally focused training exercise. It is designed to provide echelon-above-brigade sustainment organizations, commanders, and staffs with a venue to increase their units' proficiency and prepare them for an external evaluation (EXEVAL), such as a warfighter exercise (WFX).

These echelon-above-brigade sustainment organizations include expeditionary sustainment commands (ESCs), sustainment brigades, expeditionary transportation brigades, and combat sustainment support battalions (CSSBs). Theater sustainment commands also benefit by providing personnel to serve as a higher command when an ESC is conducting a CPX-F.

The CPX-F Training Strategy

CPX-F training support packages

(TSPs) are constructed as progressive training events in a unit's training strategy. The strategy addresses the unit's mission-essential task list (METL) core competencies and prepares the unit for its EXEVAL by stressing its ability to synchronize materiel management, sustain distribution, and execute sustainment warfighting function requirements at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

The Department of the Army headquarters, the Forces Command, and the Training and Doctrine Command participated in an Armywide effort in May 2011 called the Army Training Summit II. The purpose of the event was to refine and codify a total Army comprehensive multiechelon training strategy for functional and multifunctional units.

The Army Training Summit II identified a need for a technical and functional CPX as a ramp-up event before the unit's EXEVAL. The function-

al and multifunctional brigades and commands should conduct a CPX-F specifically focused on exercising their functional systems and processes prior to a mission command-focused WFX, the primary culminating training event.

A CPX-F's Purpose

A CPX-F provides the sustainment commander with an opportunity to assess the staff's ability to accomplish METL collective tasks with associated strategic enablers.

A CPX-F sets conditions for a sustainment unit to meet published priorities or focus areas that are part of current Army Force Generation templates, event menu matrices, and future Sustainable Readiness Model templates. A CPX-F is an essential progressive training event for achieving staff proficiencies and properly prepares units for EXEVAL and subsequent deployments.

CASCOM's CPX-F Improvements

To keep TSPs relevant, the Combined Arms Support Command (CASCOM) recognized that it must update TSPs each year based on doctrinal and Army force structure changes. These revisions in turn update the synchronized TSP databases such as the Joint Deployment Logistics Model (JDLM) database, the Joint Master Scenario Event List database, and the transportation/distribution database.

In 2014, CASCOM developed and published Phase III (Dominate) CPX-F TSPs for sustainment brigades and ESCs. In July 2015, two new TSPs were published: one for sustainment brigade reception, staging, and onward movement and one for a CSSB decisive action training environment phase III.

CASCOM recently published an expeditionary transportation brigade theater opening TSP in conjunction with the 3rd and 7th Transportation Brigades (Expeditionary). On the horizon, CASCOM is developing new movement control TSPs and is considering an ESC theater opening CPX-FTSP for development in 2018.

JDLM Fills the BCS3 Gap

Since the Army stopped using the Battle Command Sustainment Support System (BCS3) last year, many have wondered how to recapture the ability to track and report commodities. JDLM is the sustainment simulation capability that can meet exercise requirements in constructive environments. It is a scalable and tailororable simulation model that mimics sustainment information systems.

JDLM provided sustainment information to BCS3, and BCS3 then replicated the sustainment information systems in a visual logistics status report format for units to use. The information is still available within JDLM and is accessible to the users of a CPX-F or WFX through JDLM's ability to export information in Microsoft Excel for all commodities and personnel.

How a CPX-F Affects Readiness

As part of the crawl/walk phase,

a CPX-F allows for staff training through a five-day simulation event focusing on sustainment warfighting function requirements for the support operations staff. Because there is no opposing force presence, it allows leaders to concentrate on sustainment-centric core METL collective tasks, including the following:

- Leveraging logistics information systems.
- Conducting the military decision-making process.
- Producing concepts of support.
- Producing a logistics status report.
- Producing a logistics synchronization matrix.
- Producing a logistics common operational picture.
- Coordinating logistics support.
- Coordinating distribution.
- Performing essential personnel services.

After a CPX-F, the unit is prepared to plan, execute, and leverage boards, bureaus, centers, cells, and working group events related to sustainment operations in a controlled, simulated, constructive environment. A CPX-F allows unit leaders to know that many of their battle rhythm event processes are already trained, refined, and streamlined so they can direct their focus on planning to support a corps or division prior to a WFX or combat training center rotation.

Best Practices for a CPX-F

Collected observations, insights, and lessons learned from several exercises revealed a few suggestions for executing a successful CPX-F.

Begin planning early. The G-3 or S-3 can pull TSP products as early as desired and begin the military decisionmaking process. Use the CPX-F access link located in the Sustainment Unit One Stop (SUOS) to download the recommended life cycle planning guide.

Train the master scenario event list (MSEL) manager to use the Joint Training Information Management System and to manage MSEL injects.

Commanders, pending assessments, can use the MSEL injects to increase or decrease the stress level on the staff as long as the MSEL manager knows how to manage the inject flow.

Leverage the training audience's training readiness authority. Identifying and providing a solid group of support personnel for the higher, adjacent, lower, supported, and supporting units is crucial to the success of the exercise. However, the exercise support manning document requirements are much smaller and, therefore, more forgiving than documents for the larger WFXs and other simulation exercises, such as Talisman Saber.

Know that this is your exercise. Take ownership of the exercise from start to finish, and do not be driven by outside influences.

All TSPs are available online in the CASCOM SUOS portal at http://www.cascom.army.mil/g_staff/g3/SUOS/index.htm. The SUOS is a well-organized sustainment repository of useful resources. Key leaders responsible for sustainment operations are encouraged to review the portal.

Should your organization elect to conduct a CPX-F within the context of CASCOM's advise and assist concept, the CASCOM Collective Training Development Division's CPX-F Branch personnel are here to assist throughout the process. Such assistance includes contributing to conference planning, participating in technical working groups, and providing input toward exercise execution. The branch's contact information can be obtained through the SUOS portal.

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