Vehicles from the 224th Sustainment Brigade stand ready at Military Ocean Terminal Concord, Calif., on Jan. 18, 2017. (Photo by Capt. Dalia Sanchez)

Modern Sustainment Warfare: Operation Patriot Bandoleer

■ By Col. Julian H. Bond

The California Army National Guard has collaborated with the Army Materiel Command, the Army Sustainment Command, the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, and the National Guard Bureau to create an opportunity for National Guard units to participate in sustainment missions involving the transport of munitions throughout the continental United States.

This opportunity is Operation Patriot Bandoleer (OPB), an ongoing training mission that facilitates multicomponent integration in an austere environment. The collaborative effort reinforces the Forces Command (FORSCOM) Total Force Partnership Program, which was developed in 2012 by the secretary of the Army.

The Purpose of OPB

OPB meets the Total Force Partnership Program's objective to unite the active and reserve components in training exercises focused on enhancing the readiness of Army forces. The success of OPB demonstrates the Army's ability to operate in a total force partnership.

OPB has become one of the largest multicomponent logistics events supporting the Army pre-positioned stocks program. It involves the movement of thousands of tons of munitions and war reserve materiel. The event addresses the importance of linking reserve component Soldiers to Army pre-positioned stocks redistribution as a means to support total force development and prepare for future humanitarian and contingency operations.

Planning and Execution

The January 2017 OPB rotation employed units based on the FORSCOM regional partnership task organization. Specifically, it aligned units from the 4th Sustainment Brigade (active component), the 304th Sustainment Brigade

Soldiers from the 1113th Transportation Company check their vehicle's snow chains during an inclement weather convoy operation on Jan. 19, 2017. (Photo by Capt. Howard Knapp)

(Army Reserve), the 17th Sustainment Brigade (Nevada Army National Guard), and the 224th Sustainment Brigade (California National Guard).

The 224th Sustainment Brigade headquarters, known as Task Force 224, assumed mission command of OPB in June 2016 and began planning. In August 2016, five participating states volunteered to support the task force, and the mission commenced on Jan. 17, 2017.

OPB participants successfully delivered a total of 375 class V (ammunition) 20-foot equivalent unit containers from Military Ocean Terminal Concord, California, to McAlester Army Ammunition Plant in McAlester, Oklahoma, and Hawthorne Army Depot in Hawthorne, Nevada. The task force logged more than 645,000 miles and delivered 5,879 tons of class V with the help of more than 700 Soldiers and 160 vehicle systems.

The total force partnership offered a range of nonscripted and real-life dynamic training opportunities in an austere environment. The participants collaborated with new partners to develop lines of communication and practice exchanging information in an unfamiliar environment.

During OPB, Soldiers encountered an array of challenges, including conducting line-haul operations in intense weather conditions, such as black ice, snowstorms, and heavy rain. Since collective training for routine line-haul trucking is conducted in warm and arid climates, approximately 68 percent of the Soldiers across all formations had never before operated tactical vehicles in the snow or used snow chains.

Cold weather conditions can greatly affect line-haul operations, as reflected in an ammunition truck accident in Europe in January 2017. During a line-haul movement in Poland, a truck carrying tank ammunition and Soldiers skidded off a slippery road because the driver was going too fast for the road conditions. The cause of the accident was a lack of realistic training opportunities, and a remedy is dynamic, real, and aggressive but safe training.

Expeditionary Mindset

In today's operational environment, it is imperative that logistics leaders be able to perform expeditionary logistics. Task Force 224 reinforced the Army's expeditionary mindset by establishing and operating its command post from a Standardized Integrated Command Post System tent.

A portion of OPB participants used assigned weapons, followed difficult routes (such as roads with closures and civilian traffic), and overcame difficult weather condi-

tions. Soldiers logged long hours and distances on their equipment, and they also drove through densely populated areas and encountered heavy traffic and narrow roads, which added elements of risk.

Mission Command

OPB provided leaders at the brigade, battalion, company, and platoon levels with an opportunity to reinforce the importance of mission command in real-world scenarios. Leaders had multiple opportunities to lead by example in a constantly changing and unscripted operational environment.

Commanders at all echelons had to make quick decisions to accommodate convoy support centers, force protection, route changes, local law enforcement requirements (such as road closures and snow chain requirements), stevedore adjustments, and safety modifications (such as adjusted rest plans, recovery operations, and fuel stops).

Inhibiting leaders' ability to execute rapid decision-making hinders their ability to be adaptive and resilient. The seven company commanders who participated in OPB reported that the experience forced them to think critically, improvise, and innovate in a realistic learning environment.

Communication

Task Force 224 used SHOUT nano satellite communication devices to augment their primary tactical communication assets. Training was provided across formations and to Soldiers at the lowest levels. The SHOUT nano proved to be an invaluable tool that provided streamlined communication and tracking capabilities across the total force regardless of the status of the units' primary communications equipment.

The task force also used Joint Capabilities Release Logistics (JCR–Log) for redundant tracking and communication with convoys. With its logistics enhancements, JCR–Log enables logisticians to support unified land operations safely and on time.

The SHOUT nano map and JCR–Log map were projected in the tactical operations center at all times throughout the mission. Very small aperture terminals also facilitated communication lines at Military Ocean Terminal Concord and Hawthorne Army Depot.

The task force had a Command Post Node team from the 240th Signal Company that provided Nonsecure Internet Protocol Router Network access, voice over internet protocol, laptop workstations, and an information technology help desk in the tactical operations center.

Recovery Operations

Moving convoys effectively and efficiently along designated supply routes is essential to the successful transport of commodities. Recovery and wrecker operations are critical to that process. The rapid but safe recovery of equipment is similarly critical and even more so in inclement weather conditions, such as black ice and snowstorms.

The Task Force 224 convoys were integrated with several wrecker recovery assets, including an expanded-mobility tactical truck wrecker and several M1088 tractor trucks, to facilitate recovery operations. Battle drills were rehearsed prior to the convoy. The task force conducted more than 45 recovery missions in inclement weather and followed real-world mission timelines.

Maintenance

During OPB, maintenance played a vital role in ensuring equipment readiness and expedient recovery. Although maintenance teams had to conduct operations in heavy rain and cold weather, the task force maintained a 96 percent operational readiness rate and successfully tracked more than 450 pieces of equipment, completed 246 work orders (two-thirds of which were for not mission capable faults), and conducted 34 quality control pre-convoy maintenance checks.

Unit maintenance support teams also had the opportunity to practice military occupational specialty tasks on the move when faced with equipment failure. The mission afforded Soldiers a comprehensive experience.

The goal of FORSCOM's Total Force Partnership Program is to integrate the Army's active and reserve components for training exercises and planning and to improve interoperability. OPB is an ideal collective training opportunity to achieve those goals.

OPB should be used as a capstone training event for units in program year 4 (ready) of the Sustainable Readiness Model. Planners should consider including a third week, similar to combat training center rotations, in order to integrate Objective T (such as live-fire events).

The primary training events for brigade combat team sustainment-enabling units are rotations to combat training centers. However, significant training opportunities are lacking for non-brigade combat team sustainment units, primarily line-haul truck companies and combat sustainment support battalions.

OPB is a collective training event that can mitigate the lack of program year 4 training opportunities. It incorporates the total force of active, Army Reserve, and National Guard service members in a multiechelon, multicomponent, efficient, dynamic, and decisive training program.

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