

Distributing Repair Parts During Decisive Action Training

■ By Chief Warrant Officer 3 Marsha Johnson

The Army is transitioning from counterinsurgency to decisive action training at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, Calif. During the transition, observer-coach/trainers (OC/Ts) have observed many new challenges for the sustainment community; most notable is its inability to maintain combat power.

Flow management of class IX (repair parts) is critical to sustaining combat power. Supply support activity (SSA) operations within the brigade support area are challenged by the mission to rapidly receive and prioritize class IX to be pushed forward. The greatest challenges faced are expediting parts needed for combat systems and resourcing forward transportation for class IX.

What's Different?

During counterinsurgency training operations, delivery and pickup of class IX around the training area are manageable and have little or no effect on combat power. Support is easier to provide during this type of rotation because unit locations are predictable. Maneuver units usually set up on forward operating bases or command outposts for the duration of the training exercise, making it easier to distribute repair parts.

Alternatively, during decisive action operations, the maneuver units' task organizations are always changing and the SSA is greatly challenged to provide support to the right location on time. Delivering to a unit on the move makes it more difficult to get the right items to the right place at the right time.

Recommendations

To mitigate these challenges, the SSA accountable officer should dedicate an SSA Soldier to scrub the 026 (deadlined equipment) report daily. As class IX items are processed into the SSA receiving section, the Soldier should separate the 02 priority parts and arrange expedited air or ground delivery to the maneuver units. (The 02 priority parts are items required for immediate use in the replacement or repair of mission essential training materiel.) During past decisive action rotations at the NTC, this method has proved to be most effective in maintaining the units' combat power.

Aerial delivery assets are more efficient than ground assets because they allow for more timely delivery of repair parts. Using ground assets for parts delivery depends on the brigade support battalions' distribution company tactical convoy operation schedule.

Typically, if a convoy is not scheduled to leave for another six hours or has already left for the day, the items will have to wait for the next day's delivery. Class IX is usually low on the brigade combat team's (BCT's) priority of supply. Trucks are filled first with high-priority supplies such as food, fuel, and ammunition, and oftentimes little space is left for repair parts.

Another course of action would be to develop battalion field trains within the BCT. To counter the problem of the distribution company convoy unavailability, the BCT should place one or two vehicles in the field trains to help the distribution company expedite parts more

efficiently. This would allow the support operations officer to develop a dedicated convoy element combining all field trains assets.

Incorporating field trains within the brigade support area and having each battalion supply one to two vehicle platforms for support would be a great way to have 02 priority repair parts expedited throughout the training area with the sole purpose of improving combat readiness across the BCT.

Expediting class IX to support combat power has been a challenge for decisive action rotations since the Army began the transition from counterinsurgency training. The described courses of action are not intended to override published Army doctrine. They are intended to provide a way of getting class IX repair parts moved seamlessly across the training area and to share the observed notable challenges for the sustainment community at the NTC. Army units can incorporate the above outlined methods during home station training exercises to familiarize Soldiers with decisive action support concepts.

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