

Refining the CSSB at JRTC

Combat sustainment support battalions can benefit greatly from a rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center, where units have the opportunity to exercise skills that are normally applied only during deployments.

By Major James J. Zacchino, Jr.



Soldiers from the 514th Support Maintenance Company engage villagers during a JRTC situational training lane in August 2011. (Photo courtesy of the 514th Support Maintenance Company)



Combat sustainment support battalions (CSSBs) are continuing to exercise and refine their sustainment functions in nonlinear environments. The CSSB's abilities are tested daily across the full spectrum of operations. Because of this, CSSBs require challenging training designed to stress capabilities and develop flexibility and adaptability. This training must also provoke the creativity and thought for formations to grow in proficiency, control complexities, and sustain forces across multiple operating environments.

The Army's combat training centers (CTCs) offer dynamic opportunities for echelon-above-brigade (EAB) units to exercise and shape the capabilities needed to fight, survive, and win. CTCs must offer training opportunities that are not available at home station and that are essential for future logistics success and design employment.

JRTC Rotation 11-09

The 548th CSSB, 10th Sustainment Brigade, at Fort Drum, New York, served as a rotational unit supporting the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, from Fort Richardson, Alaska, during the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) 11-09 rotation in August 2011. According to the JRTC operations group, the 548th CSSB was the first CSSB to train at the Fort Polk, Louisiana, CTC in nearly 7 years.

The JRTC 11-09 rotation proved to be a successful EAB rotation proof of concept. The 548th CSSB served as the task force headquarters in a counterinsurgency scenario, exercising mission command for five companies. The Headquarters and Headquarters Company, the 514th Support Maintenance Company, the 543d Quartermaster Supply Company, and the 590th Field Services Company, were all subordinate to the 10th Sustainment Brigade at home station. The 25th Transportation Company (palletized load system) from the 524th CSSB, 45th Sustainment Brigade, at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, was attached to the 548th CSSB during JRTC training.

The 548th CSSB's training not only exercised company and platoon teams certifying for deployment to Operation Enduring Freedom; it also served to substitute for some of the contract support normally required for BCT rotations at JRTC. The 548th CSSB company teams also participated in recovery, convoy security, and base defense situational training lanes provided through JRTC's premier exercise resources. The CTC experience proved invaluable to the 548th CSSB's Task Force Sword during JRTC Rotation 11-09. Battalion, company, platoon, and squad teams exercised critical functions and mission sets only possible at a CTC.

Recommendations for CSSB Rotations

A CSSB brings multifunctional capability to a JRTC rotation. To optimally support a JRTC rotation, the unit's

modular composition must be designed to support maneuver forces in varying scenarios. The CSSB must have palletized load systems to deliver supplies, field-level maintenance assets to reinforce capabilities, ammunition supply point operations, bulk petroleum resupply, and multiclass supply support.

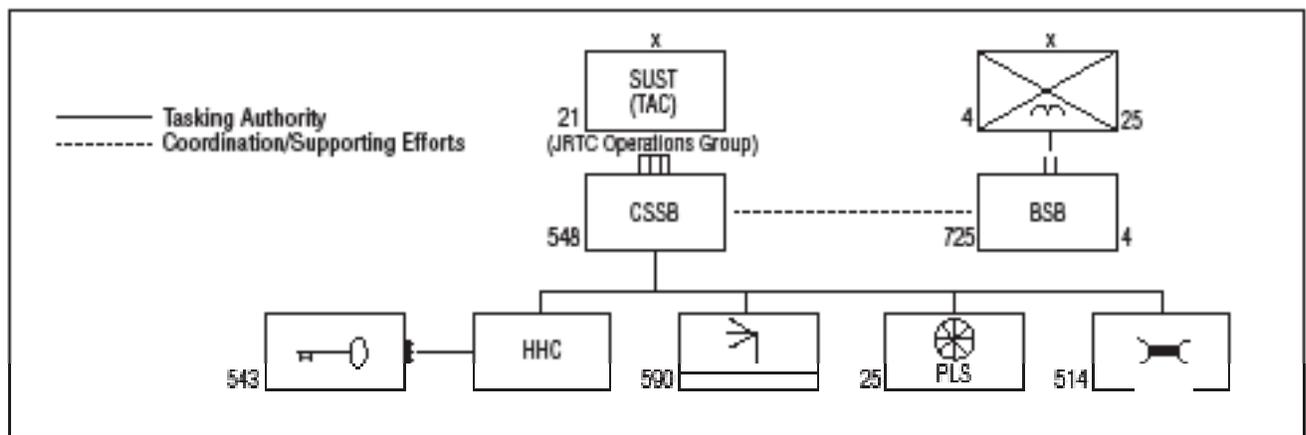
Further capabilities provided by these elements include convoy security for EAB elements traversing areas of operations, area recovery support, and partnerships with foreign military and civil authorities. Additional EAB capabilities may include shower, laundry, clothing repair, mortuary affairs, and aerial delivery.

If properly aligned with company and platoon teams, a CSSB can easily provide support and services normally offered through contract support at a CTC. To maximize the training opportunity, CSSB elements must provide sustainment to the BCT in a tactical mode as opposed to providing administrative support to a contract.

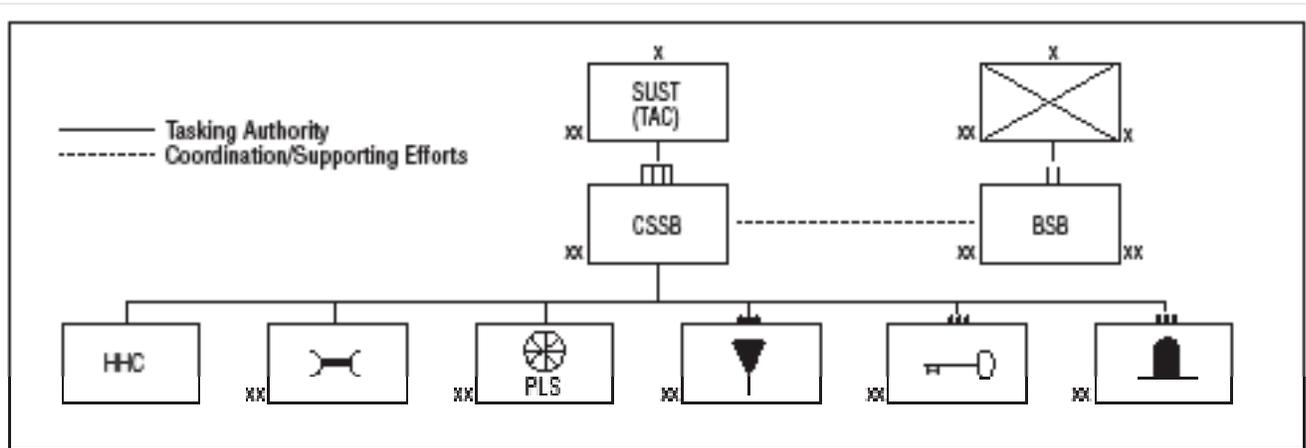
CSSBs are available throughout the active Army,

Army National Guard, and Army Reserve formations, so they provide an opportunity to exercise the integration of multiple modular units into a task force, which is a requirement particular to EAB logistics formations. An appropriately task-organized CSSB will require a higher headquarters package responsible for providing mission requirements, teaching, mentoring, and assessing. A sustainment brigade tactical command post (TAC) can fulfill this need and certify company and platoon teams for their assigned missions.

The skill sets and depth of function for the TAC to exercise mission command does not require an entire sustainment brigade headquarters. Rather, a TAC should be composed of multitasked special teams to synchronize support requirements, teach and mentor key positions, analyze sustainment operations, and produce operation orders. The TAC will synchronize efforts with the rotational BCT, the JRTC operations group, and contract support personnel.



Above, this chart depicts the task organization of Task Force Sword during JRTC Rotation 11–09. In this organization, the quartermaster supply platoon falls under the headquarters and headquarters company. The organization also includes a laundry and bath company, transportation company (palletized load system [PLS]), and maintenance company. Below is the proposed task organization of a sustainment brigade tactical command post with a subordinate CSSB task force. The units on the lowest tier of the chart (from left to right) are a headquarters and headquarters company (PLS), petroleum platoon, quartermaster supply platoon, and an ammunition platoon.





514th Support Maintenance Company Soldiers practice recovery operations at the Joint Readiness Training Center in August 2011. (Photo courtesy of the 514th Support Maintenance Company)

The JRTC rotation should also serve as a training event exercising sustainment brigade support functions. An ideal arrangement is to have a sustainment brigade exercising mission command over the CSSB's supporting maneuver and advisory forces during the rotation. The challenge will be to align multicomponent EAB logistics units with deployment and availability timelines. As this concept evolves, it is imperative to start scheduling EAB units on the CTC patch chart. (A patch chart is a tentative schedule of when units will attend training.)

CSSBs can benefit greatly from participating in CTC rotations. EAB units can gain needed and valuable experience from providing tactical support during rotations. BCTs and joint forces will also benefit from being the supported units on the battlefield. Keys to moving forward are designing the CSSB composition for the CTC rotations. Stressing EAB capabilities through CTC opportunities will expose requirement gaps typically not found at home station. EAB units will have the opportunity to exercise and improve competencies

that are currently only tested during deployments.

Considering the reduction in combat deployments, the lessening reliance on contract support, and the need to refine EAB units for the full spectrum of operations, CTC rotations are the best opportunity for providing premier training for unit and team certification. As our logistics leaders and Soldiers, become more flexible, adaptive, and creative in problemsolving, CTC opportunities must be maximized. JRTC rotations provide the training required for certifying EAB units' proficiency. Additionally, rotations will continue to shape modular Army logistics units for success.

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