

The Urban Field Trains

Taking the Field Trains Out of the Field

by Captain J. M. Pierre

The modern heavy task force is supplied by the battalion field trains, which serves as its lifeline, not only for food and ammunition, but for all classes of supplies. The trains supplies routine logistical packages (LOGPACs), or can also react on shorter notice to provide what are known as "emergency pushes."

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry (Mechanized) experimented with establishing an urban field trains configuration in an abandoned warehouse, learning several lessons in the security and the functionality of such a setup.

The unit was fortunate to find a structure perfectly placed in the heart of the Ko-

rean farm country. The size of the building allowed all the trains personnel to stay under one roof, thereby increasing the effectiveness of overall command and control. The building was within 10 kilometers of our parent unit, and was accessible to a major highway (Hwy. 43). The two-story building, which included a large garage, was situated adjacent a highway intersection. The area of operation was bounded by a river to the east and Highway 43 to the west, and the local rice paddies afforded us an unobstructed view for up to two kilometers in all directions.

The main building housed the field trains command post (FTCP), the dining

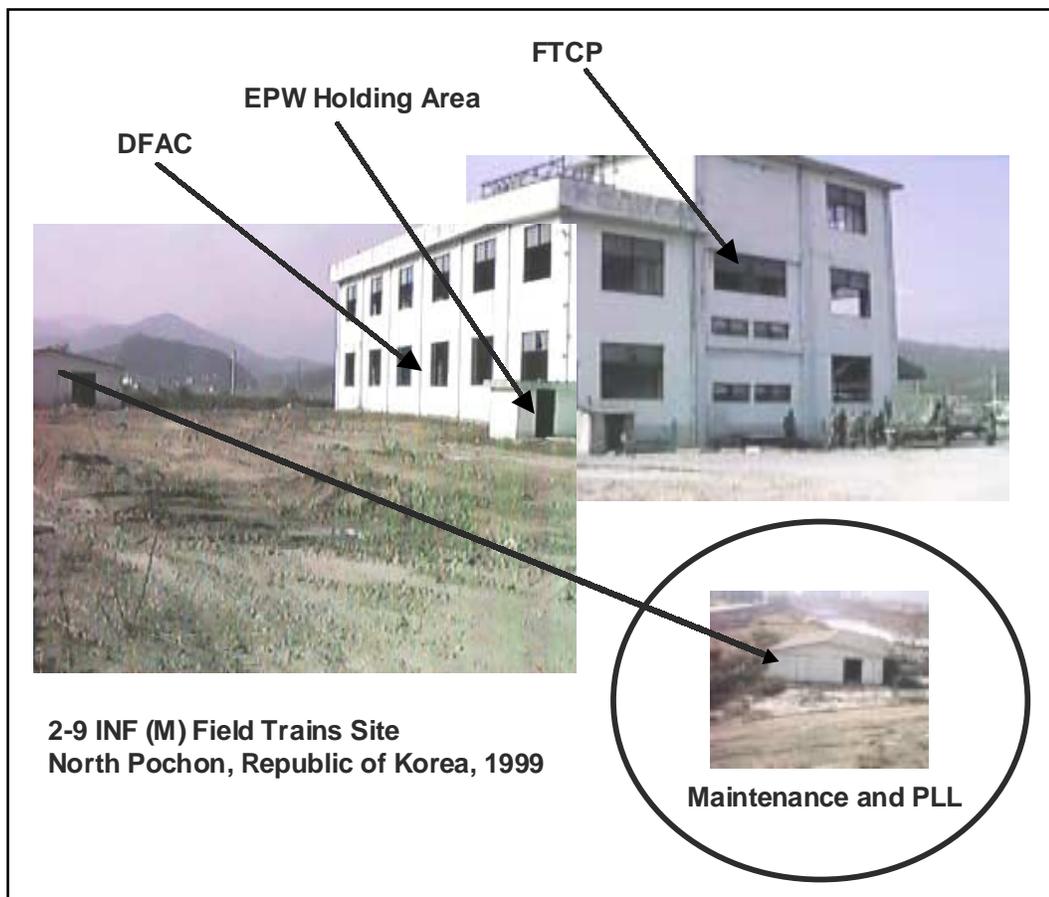
facility, kitchen personnel area, troop replacement area, and a detention area for enemy prisoners of war. A second smaller building served as our maintenance area. The area around the building was suitable for mounting possible sling load operations.

Security

ARTEP 7-94-MTP, the mission training plan for the infantry battalion HHC and CS/CSS platoons, covers the sequence of quartering and final establishment of the field trains:

- Key leaders conduct a leader's reconnaissance of the site.
- The quartering party secures the location prior to the arrival of the main body.
- Communication is established with the task force.
- The main body arrives and moves into assigned sectors.
- Leaders survey the terrain to finalize the defense plan.
- Leaders designate locations of observation posts.
- Leaders plan for indirect fire.
- Fighting positions and sectors of fires are designated.
- Fields of fire are cleared.
- Security and OP teams move to their assigned positions.

On our perimeter, we employed triple-strand concertina wire, booby traps, and early warning devices. These protective obstacles



and countermeasures were overwatched by dug-in M2 and SAW fighting positions, as well as a continually roving guard.

The concrete walls of the warehouse enhanced our defense by providing 360-degree cover. Reinforced with sandbags and wood, the windows served as formidable fighting positions from which we were able to fend off attackers while sustaining nominal "losses." The trains personnel slept close enough to their positions that the average response time to reach 100 percent security during alerts was two minutes.

From the rooftop, one roving guard could observe the entire perimeter in a matter of minutes. At night, this guard had PVS-7 night vision goggles and a spotlight. From his location, he could quickly identify enemy dismounts, our greatest threat in the Korean theater. He was able to easily alert the trains and our quick reaction force.

Functionality

In our building setup, we could support our battalion with less stress in our daily operations. This was most evident in our food service. Dining facility personnel dismounted their equipment from the mobile field kitchen and were able to



Kitchen in the urban field trains. Increased space and concrete floors improved operations for dining facility staff.

prepare food free from the confining enclosure of the field kitchens. The concrete floor was also more sanitary, and could be frequently mopped with hot water and bleach, reducing the risk of microbes forming in standing water.

Rations arriving from the Forward Support Battalion were driven into the building through the garage entrance and off-loaded with our forklift, so the food was secure from theft by local inhabitants (a real-world problem) and more accessible to the cooks.

Our mechanics, from their garage, could provide maintenance and services around the clock in a heated and lighted work bay.

The FTCP had a view of the facility from the many windows on the second floor. The gate was always under its observation and direct fire.

The main disadvantage of concentrating the field trains in a single area is vulnerability to enemy observation and artillery attack. While dispersing the trains reduces the potential for total loss, a consolidated facility can easily be rendered ineffective by a single attack.

Conclusion

The field trains must be able to supply the force around the clock in all types of weather and terrain while protecting against a dismounted threat. When available, a building serves as an ideal place to establish the field trains. This type of location reduces the manpower necessary to secure the facility, can improve hygiene during food preparation, and can improve the command and control of the facility.



Nighttime in the urban field trains North Pochon, Republic of Korea.

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