

The Field Trains Command Post — Organizing For Success

by Captain Kevin P. Banks

The role of the Field Trains Command Post (FTCP) is to coordinate task force combat service support requirements with the brigade S4 and forward support battalion.¹ Under the control of the HHC commander, it serves a critical function in the success of the unit's combat service support (CSS) plan. Many of today's military publications, such as ARTEP 71-2-MTP, FM 71-123 and FM 71-2, discuss the responsibilities of the FTCP, but amazingly, say little about exactly how these responsibilities are best accomplished. It is, therefore, the mission of the HHC commander and his key personnel (XO, 1SG, S4/S1 NCO) to plan and prepare the FTCP manning and organization to achieve success.

Essential in this planning is developing a command post that is able to simultaneously track the tactical operations of the task force while maintaining an accurate and easy-to-read picture of the companies' and attachments' logistical status. By tracking the tactical situation, the HHC commander and his staff are better able to anticipate the changing logistical situation as demonstrated by the following:

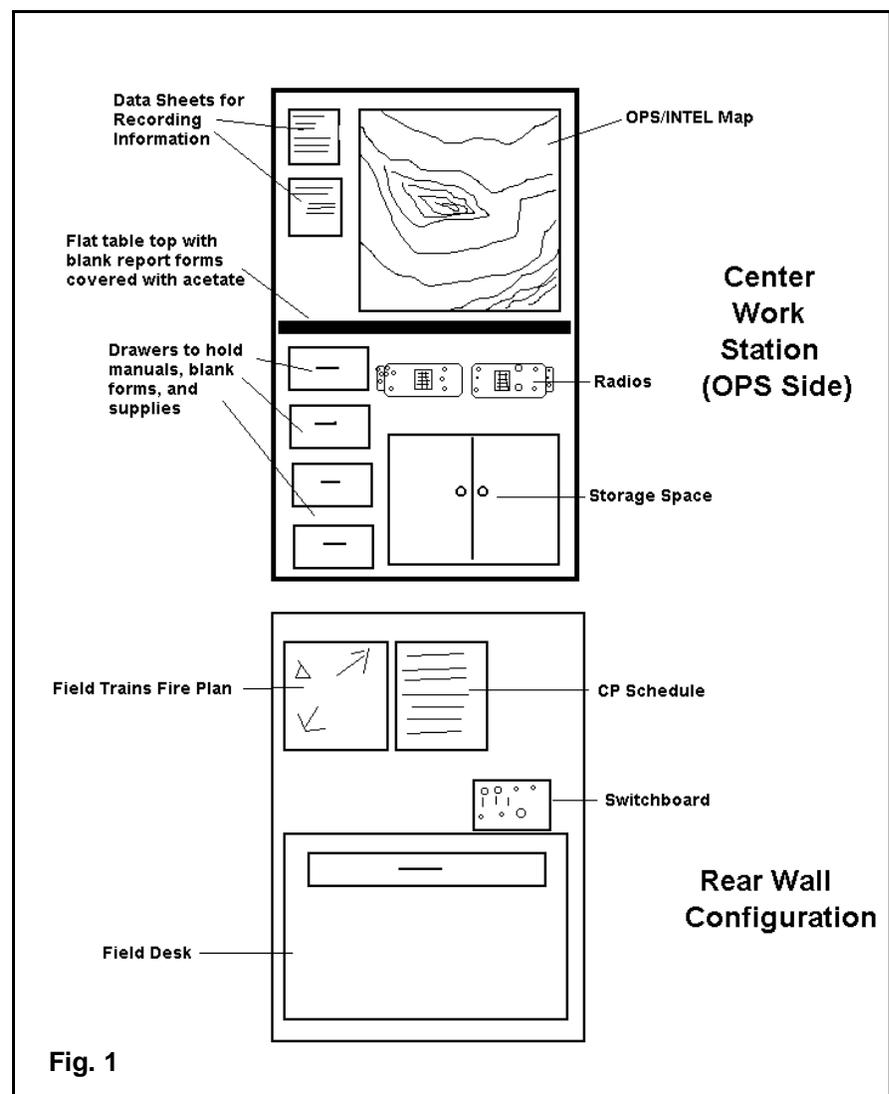
TF CMD NET: "Guidons, this is Saber 6. FRAGO follows...Execution - Team Mech establishes a roadblock along Hwy 144 vicinity North Church in order to prevent the passage of contraband across the zone of separation... Acknowledge, over." (Based upon this transmission, the HHC commander may alert the FSB that they will require additional barrier materials for the new mission.)

TF CMD NET: "Saber 6, this is Ghost 6. SPOT report follows... we are in contact with an AT company that is defending along the forward slope of the hill located at grid ES544323... unit is unknown... time is 1345S... enemy is equipped with AT4s and AT5s, out." (Here, the FTCP may begin requisitioning medical supplies and asking the

brigade S4 to alert Charlie Medical Company of the FSB as to the likelihood of casualties.)

By staying abreast of the tactical developments, the field trains CP is better able to provide the responsive support units need. At the same time, the FTCP crew will be receiving reports from the

combat trains command post that detail the companies' specific logistical needs, from personnel and major end items (tanks, Bradleys, trucks) to repair parts and food. This is the focus of their existence. Task force SOPs, with established formats, reporting times, and brevity codes, will assist in this process,² but unless a workable system is in



<u>LOGREP</u>	<u>PERS-SUM</u>
Line 3 (Class III Items)	Line 1 (Unit)
- Green 90%	Line 2 (DTG)
- Amber 75%	A. OFF B. WO C. ENL D. TOTAL
- Red 60%	Line 3 (Auth - Organic)
- Black <60%	Line 4 (Asgnd - Organic)
Line 5 (Class V Items)	Line 5 (Attached)
- Green 90%	Line 6 (Detached)
- Amber 75%	Line 7 (KIA)
- Red 60%	Line 8 (WIA)
- Black <60%	Line 9 (MIA)
Line 7 (Class VII Items)	Line 10 (Noncombat Loss)
a. # M1A1s FMC	Line 11 (Total Loss)
b. # M3A2s FMC	Line 12 (Total Gains)
c. # M106s FMC	Line 13 (Current Strength)

Table 1

the personnel manning the FTCP to have a clear delineation of tasks and not interfere with each others' duties. Cover the table tops with blank report formats and then top them with acetate so that information received over the radio can be recorded quickly and in a readily accessible location. The area below the table top is the radios' location, along with any necessary COM-SEC equipment. The TF A/L and FSB CMD nets will be tuned in on the logistics side of the station and TF CMD on the ops side. (Note: The FSB CMD is a redundant source of communication when the FTCP is located in the BSA since it can communicate with the FSB via wire or messenger. In this case, the additional radio may be used as part of the base cluster defense system or alternate use.) The remaining storage space and drawers are useable for manuals, battle tracking supplies, and other miscellaneous items.

place and well rehearsed during peacetime, the FTCP will undoubtedly fail to accomplish the numerous, critical tasks placed upon it.

The two parts of any successful command post are the right equipment and the right people to do the job. With some smart planning and early preparation, both can be available in time to conduct the mission proficiently.

Equipment

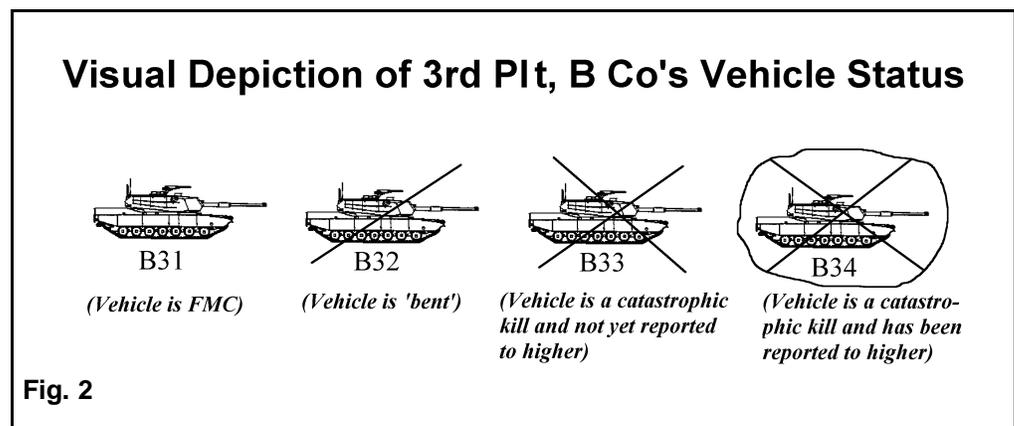
The first thing needed to establish the FTCP is the actual command post. Although the vehicle available for use will vary from HHC to HHC, an M934/820 5-ton expando van or M577 Armored Command Post with TOC Extension, in conjunction with a generator, work best. Both vehicles provide the space and versatility needed for tracking the tactical and logistical situation simultaneously while monitoring three nets (TF CMD, TF A/L and FSB CMD), and the generator provides the auxiliary power source necessary to power radios and lights when the vehicle's engine is off. The expando van offers a much larger operating space and is already configured for an air conditioner, which will assist greatly in preventing radios from overheating when the weather is extremely hot. The decreased mobility of a

wheeled vehicle will not adversely impact FTCP operations because it will be near the mess section, support platoon, and other wheeled elements and thus be on trafficable terrain anyway.

Once a vehicle is chosen, it must be configured for use as a multifaceted command post. The following setup utilizes an expando van, but is easily adaptable to the M577.

The first thing to emplace is a two-sided tracking station running lengthwise in the center of the van. Tool tables from a local DRMO or fabricated entirely from lumber by the unit R&U NCO are the most cost effective. Directly in the center, extending to the ceiling, will be a piece of plywood that will be the basis of the map boards. On one side will be a map with the OPS and ENEMY SIT TEMP graphics; the other side will have an identical map with the CSS graphics. This will allow

In addition to the center workstation (where the majority of the CP's activity will occur) the back wall of the expando van offers valuable space. In one corner is a field desk with switchboard (SB-22). WD-1 commo wire and TA-312 field telephones allow command and control of the subordinate elements (mess section, support platoon, DS maintenance...), OPS, and crew-served weapon positions. The rear wall is useful for posting the field trains fire plan and daily CP schedule, to include critical LOGPAC actions, report times, and shift changes. The remaining area in the Expando Van houses the S1's TACCS computer or other necessary automation equipment. A generic example of how this may look is shown in Fig. 1.



	<u>DAY (0600-2100)</u>	<u>NIGHT (1900-0800)</u>
CP OIC:	CDR	XO
CP NCOIC:	1SG	OPS NCO
OPS/INTEL NCO:	TRAINING NCO	TRAINING CLERK
CSS NCO:	S4 NCO	S1 NCO
RUNNER:	CO'S DRIVER	XO'S DRIVER

Table 2

The actual forms the FTCP will use for tracking each team's logistical status are a final, major factor to consider. The forms for OPS tracking can usually be copied from those used by the TF TOC or TAC. This will save effort and ensure uniformity. It is likely that similar logistical reports for tracking equipment and manning status already exist, probably at the brigade combat team level. A careful review of these reports must be made in conjunction with the other key CSS players (S4, Bn XO, S1, and BMO) in order to ensure that they are current, practical, and standard. Examples of two logistics reports you may use are shown at Table 1.

In addition to the detailed reports that are necessary when relaying information between the FTCP and task force/company combat trains, it is critical that the HHC commander has a system in place that will immediately tell him the status of the task force's major end items and personnel and what actions have been taken to obtain replacement equipment/soldiers. One technique used with success is to have visual depictions of each company's vehicles by nomenclature and bumper number. A simple marking system indicating whether the vehicle is FMC or NMC, a catastrophic kill, or just 'bent' and if a replacement requisition has been forwarded to brigade is easily trained to the FTCP personnel. This method is depicted in Fig. 2 and can be used just as readily for tracking the status of individual soldiers once the FTCP staff acquires unit crew rosters with battle roster numbers. With a bit of interaction in garrison, identical charts can be created for habitual supporting attachments such as engineers.

Manning

Equally as important as planning out how you will equip the FTCP is how you will man it. CSS is an around-the-clock task. The HHC commander must

compose a competent command post crew which can sustain the operation from 0001 to 2400 hours, seven days a week. This is not a simple task, given the limited number of available personnel. Like the TF TOC and TAC, a day and night shift rotation allows the field trains command post to provide quality support at any given time. The minimum personnel that should comprise each shift are:

CP OIC: Has overall responsibility for FTCP, ensures crew is tracking all TF logistical and tactical activities and forwarding applicable information higher, oversees the formation of LOG-PACs, is responsible for security of field trains, and assists the S4 in planning future CSS operations.

CP NCOIC: Assists OIC management of FTCP crew, oversees the field trains security plan, and guides HHC LOGPAC to TOC, TAC, CTCP and UMCP.

OPS/INTEL NCO: Is responsible for tracking all tactical reports/activities in the TF over O/I and CMD nets and alerting CSS NCO to any activities that may impact significantly on the supply system.

CSS NCO: Is responsible for tracking all logistical reports/activities from company and TF combat trains and forwarding appropriate reports higher while disseminating any information sent down from the FSB or BDE Rear.

RUNNER: Assists in monitoring the switchboard for all wire communications, serves as messenger to FSB CP and other elements in the BSA, and conducts vehicle/generator maintenance.

A typical manning plan is at Table 2. Notice that there is time to allow personnel to brief their counterparts on any significant activities that have occurred and actions ongoing. This period of double manning allows the crew to catch up on any maintenance or other activities that have not been accom-

plished on schedule. Each soldier should maintain a log or note system to facilitate the information exchange.

Conclusion

It was said long ago that "without supplies, neither a general nor a soldier is good for anything."³ The maxim is still as true today. If the field trains command post is not prepared to fulfill its role in the execution of the task force logistical plan, then the unit will quickly find itself without equipment or personnel. Getting the field trains command post organized for its mission is the first step in achieving success. By using time in garrison to create a CP equipped to efficiently perform the myriad of tasks expected of it, the HHC commander will achieve the standard required during deployments.

Notes

¹Headquarters, Department of the Army, Mission Training Plan for the Tank and Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force, HQDA, Washington, D.C., 1988.

²Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Cavalry Operations*, HQDA, Washington, D.C., 1991.

³Clearcus of Sparta, from *Cavalry Operations*, HQDA, Washington, D.C., 1991.

Captain Kevin P. Banks is a 1991 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy. After completing the Armor Officer Basic Course, he was assigned as a cavalry platoon leader in 1-1 Cavalry, 1AD. After 12 months, he was assigned as the squadron asst. S4 for 11 months and then served as the HHT XO. His military schooling includes AOBC, AOAC, Airborne, Air Assault, SPLC, and SCCC. He is currently serving as the executive officer for the Deputy Commanding General of Fort Knox.