

Preparing a Company for Property Book Split and Deployment

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In the summer and fall of 2019, Battle Company, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, conducted an intense training cycle over the course of five months that included individual and collective training events and culminated with a decisive action rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, LA. The transition from the culmination of our training events to deployment preparation was onerous. As the company commander and company executive officer (XO), we had a unique opportunity to observe and lead the company through this intense training cycle and deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel (OFS). We will tackle in detail the conditions that must be set to conduct a successful property book split, best practices and systems that will assist with property management, and advice for property pack-out procedures.

During our initial planning stages, we spent some time going over the mission requirements, which drove the equipment needs, and figuring out the key tasks for property book split and pack-out. There are elements to this planning process that involve many echelons above the company and battalion level and require assistance from the brigade, so understanding the company fight is paramount to successful implementation. The main things that are within the company’s control are the identification of the rear detachment hand-receipt holder, identification of what property will deploy, an inventory of all of the property, and the proper documentation to accompany both forward and rear property as well as the hand-receipt holders.

A critical element to setting conditions for a successful property book split is the selection of a rear detachment leader who will be entrusted with the proper care and custody of government property. You must pick someone you trust; otherwise, things in the rear will become a forward problem. When you pick someone and leave him/her behind as the rear detachment leader, it should hurt the organization that is going forward. The rear detachment NCOIC will integrate with the commander and XO as they go through their inventories to become a subject matter expert of the rear equipment and understand the responsibility. The rear detachment leader should receive training on basics of Global Combat Support System – Army (GCSS-Army) and property management in order to enforce the Command Supply Discipline Program (CSDP).

The next requirement for the company is to identify what equipment will actually deploy. The Army publishes a modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) that generally lists what a unit is supposed to be equipped with to be an effective fighting force. However, we understood that it would not be necessary to bring all items on our MTOE/property book with us. We analyzed our mission set in theater and balanced that against the theater-provided equipment (TPE) and equipment table of distribution and allowance (ETDA) that was supplemental to our organizational property. We ensured that the analysis of our organizational property and the planning process included not only the commander and the XO but also the platoon leaders and platoon sergeants to ensure we had what we thought we needed for the mission. In hindsight — like most units that prepare for deployment — we over-packed and brought a lot of equipment that we probably could have left in the rear. We quickly recognized that the radios we had brought were not necessary due to the large number of radios on the TPE/ETDA books. We recommend conducting a detailed mission analysis with the forward unit and tying their feedback into the planning process to understand what you do or do not need to bring forward.

After analyzing our operational requirements, we developed a concept of operations for our property book split. This essentially mimicked the level of detail equivalent to a change-of-command inventory schedule with the requisite time for updating paperwork such as bills of materials (BOMs) and inputs into GCSS-Army.

Before the inventories began, we set the conditions to ensure a physical separation between forward and rear property in order to maintain proper accountability. To that end, we made a separate room in one of our cages, and the rear detachment NCOIC solely owned the keys. With that space, he could inventory the items, label and secure the basic issue items (BII)/end items as necessary in a tough box (or in the arms room/commo room, etc.), and safeguard them from forward property. Simultaneously, our platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, and squad leaders attended the inventories for forward equipment and created DD Form 1750s with tough boxes to secure the equipment. As the rear detachment NCOIC inventoried all of the rear items he would keep, he made notes, and at the end of each day, he stayed an extra 1-2 hours to annotate everything correctly on consolidated BOMs by like items. He identified what those items were correctly on paper and ensured that his own rear detachment sub-hand-receipt holders knew exactly what they were going to receive and subsequently sign for. In addition, we formed a property team consisting of our unit supply specialists (92Ys), armorer, commo NCO, and other members of the headquarters to ensure attention to detail was applied to every piece of equipment and associated document. This was very important to ensuring success as it set conditions for the rear detachment. No one went home until the rear detachment NCOIC and the aforementioned property team rectified all inventoried items and completed BOMs.

Another important part of splitting the property and packing out is to identify the BII that although belongs to forward end items we would leave in the rear. We recognized certain items' BII were not necessary for their functionality (for example, the PVS-14's BII — green bags, ammo cans, eyecups, etc.). We created a BOM for what items would stay in the rear and signed the BOM from the commander to the rear detachment NCOIC. The NCOIC then locked up the extra BII, organized it in neatly labeled bags/containers, and placed the items in a tough box with a DD Form 1750 on top. We secured the tough boxes with a lock so the rear detachment could protect and keep track of the BII for end items going forward.

Once in theater, the unit must conduct a detailed reconciliation of its equipment. Though the process sounds very straightforward, we made some mistakes. As the operational environment changed, we ran into issues and had to adapt the way we continued our CSDP and accountability of equipment. When we arrived in theater, we ran into a multitude of problems that included delays in flights, COVID-19 restrictions, newly imposed quarantine timelines, and a change of mission — all of which had a profound impact on the movement and accountability of equipment. Not unlike most deployment experiences, everything we had expected and planned for changed within hours.

To tackle this problem set, we operationalized layouts as well as checked BOMs against the layout of the items. Attention to detail was extremely important as NCOs and Soldiers identified BII/obscure items that were hard to understand from a picture in a technical manual (TM). We combined our armorer's knowledge and our supply clerk's expertise on the obscure items — we used pictures and phone calls to confirm the BII/equipment status. We annotated the BOMs to reflect the physical locations of the items.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices/Techniques

1. Place arms room items (weapons, optics, lasers, etc.) on platoon hand receipts/storage location (SLOC) in accordance with the master authorization list (MAL). Having the items on an officer's hand receipt adds a layer of protection for the commander and allows the XO and first sergeant to identify the ownership of MAL items. An accurate MAL makes it easy to identify which serial numbers are forward, rear, or in a sensitive item (SI) container. The majority of SIs are hand carried by the individual users, and the remaining items go in the SI container. The armorer and supply specialist should be responsible for packing the majority of the SI container, but a competent squad leader needs to run the pack-out and a PL needs to handle the 1750s. An accurate MAL will also feed proper maintenance procedures because platoon sergeants know which serial numbers are their responsibility. Squad leaders need to sign for all of their squad's weapons, lasers, optics, etc., and then hand receipt it to the team leaders. Then the team leaders sub-hand receipt the equipment to the end user (with heavy squad leader supervision). NCO ownership of property management will greatly assist in understanding what components of end item (COEI) and BII they are responsible for and ensure they are maintained properly.

2. Identify the mission requirement versus MTOE: It is important to understand that although there is an MTOE not all of those items will go on a deployment. Most deployed units will sign for TPE/ETDA books — we recommend getting a copy of this hand receipt so you can verify what you will be inheriting. We highly recommend all units make a standing list (updated monthly) annotating which items will go forward and which items will stay in the

rear in preparation for deployment. Subsequently, we recommend preparing DA 1750s and hazardous material (HAZMAT) declarations for each container. Finally, we highly recommend setting aside a day to conduct a rehearsal of the actual load-out — without this rehearsal, waiting until the last day to try to fit everything into a container will quickly expose the lack of space/proper methods of transporting equipment.

3. Recommend Commander's Property Book contains:

- a. The consolidated BOM for each item.
- b. Consolidated BOM for each SLOC with a specific national stock number (NSN) (i.e., show which items were signed to each hand receipt holder).
- c. TM with BII, COEI, and additional authorization list (AAL).
- d. Cover sheet with picture(s) of the item; picture(s) should show the full layout of BII labeled. This is super important for items with unfamiliar names/obscure description or which have pictures in the TM that are hard to recognize.

4. Other notes:

- a. Each rear detachment commander/hand-receipt holder needs to have a location and a way to segregate and lock up the equipment that they sign for.
- b. Understand human geography as well as the importance of attention to detail in supply teams, a systems-oriented company XO, and the need for putting discipline back into the CSDP from the commander level.
- c. Cross-coordination with battalion unit movement officer (UMO) teams and brigade mobility teams is important; understanding hard deadlines is key to backwards planning. (Try to adhere to one-third/two-thirds rule; it takes a lot of time and patience to inventory and pack everything correctly)
- d. Have a leader professional development session on how to properly annotate BOMs — this is a huge issue with Soldiers and NCOs who don't understand the outlining/scratching/writing a zero vs. quantity, etc.
- e. BOMs — When we talk sub-hand receipts, use BOMS and TMs to sub-hand receipt down the equipment. Some BOMs are incomplete and confusing; use a 2062 and submit a ticket to fix the BOM if you run into an issue.

Conclusion

Splitting the property book into forward and rear halves is an important step in setting conditions for a successful deployment. The key elements to streamline this transition period with effective G-Army practices are effective planning with NCO involvement, correctly identifying the necessary equipment needed for deployment, careful management of the inventory and accounting processes, proper pack out procedures, and a detailed reconciliation once in theater.

PRO TIP: It's important that you keep a list of technical manuals (TMs) you use on a memorandum for record (MFR) so that new identified shortages that come from this layout are annotated as "TM Update" shortages and not shortages caused by liability on someone's loss/damage. When in doubt, write an MFR that describes exactly what happened with the items. Damage statements from JRTC were common.

PRO TIP: During inventories, we used BOMs and technical manuals (TMs) together. BOMs will sometimes have extra items that do not apply to certain pieces of equipment (useable on-code). TMs will also have items that BOMs will not list (TM Updates/BOM not up to date). For example, the TM for the PRC-152 shows three different end items because they share very similar components. It's important that you use the correct useable on-code to identify the BII that matches with the end item.

PRO TIP: Company MAL is a sacred document. No one should have access to edit or change this besides the trusted few (XO and armorer). If you change something on the MAL, this is a major commander's critical information requirements (CCIR)-level information — otherwise you risk not understanding where your serialized items are located.

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