Enabling the Brigade Combat Team: Headquarters and Specialty Company Commanders Maximize Scarce Resources

by CPT Alfred J. Flores, CPT Dallas Hopkins, CPT Jeffrey Nielsen, CPT Jordan R. Scanlan and CPT Jennifer St. Remy

The commanders of headquarters and headquarters company (HHC), headquarters and headquarters troop (HHT), headquarters and headquarters battery (HHB) and the military-intelligence company (MICo) of a brigade combat team (BCT) are uniquely situated to influence their unit's combined-arms fight during large-scale combat operations (LSCO).

While serving in these roles, the authors of this article served together during National Training Center (NTC) Rotation 21-09, and they collected tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) to share with other BCTs. By training together prior to deployment, task-organizing their elements effectively, positioning themselves to facilitate cross-boundary communication and coordinating directly via the Joint Battle Command-Platform (JBC-P), these commanders maximized scarce resources for their entire BCT.

BCT fight

The BCT fight is complicated and requires close coordination and synchronization across multiple warfighting functions to execute well.[1] Fortunately a BCT is organized into seven subordinate battalions that each have key leaders available to identify and solve friction points.

As peers (and key leaders) in their respective battalions, the HHC, HHT and HHB commanders should train together prior to deployment and coordinate directly during operations to assist the battalion and BCT staffs in synchronizing critical assets to meet the brigade commander's intent. When battalions plan in isolation, they frequently default to assigning their "headquarters and headquarters" (HH) commander to their own forward-support company (FSC) to try and "get parts for the battalion."

This course of action indicates a lack of synchronization between the battalions and their peer units in the BCT rear area and is a sub-optimal course of action for the entire brigade. Instead, the HHC commanders can synchronize the close fight; the HHT, HHB and MICo commanders can synchronize the deep fight; and the HHT, HHC/brigade engineer battalion (BEB), HHC/BCT and HHC/brigade-support battalion (BSB) commanders can synchronize the rear area.

To operate as a team, specialty commanders and battalion/BCT staffs need to understand "the BCT fight." A common LSCO operational framework is to split the BCT areas of operation (AO) into a close fight (where the maneuver battalions make direct-fire contact); the deep fight (where reconnaissance and fires assets shape the future close fight); and the rear area (where command and sustainment nodes operate).[2] This framework enables the BCT to engage the enemy across all domains using multiple forms of contact.

Figures 1a and 1b are example sketches of the reconnaissance, fires, counter-fire, attack aviation, electronic warfare, command and sustainment assets arrayed in a BCT fight.

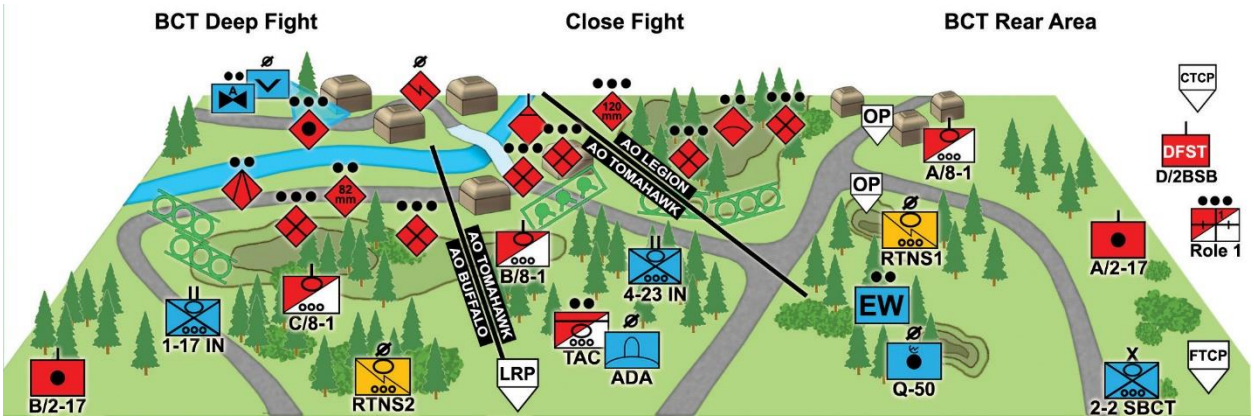

Figure 1a. The BCT fight.

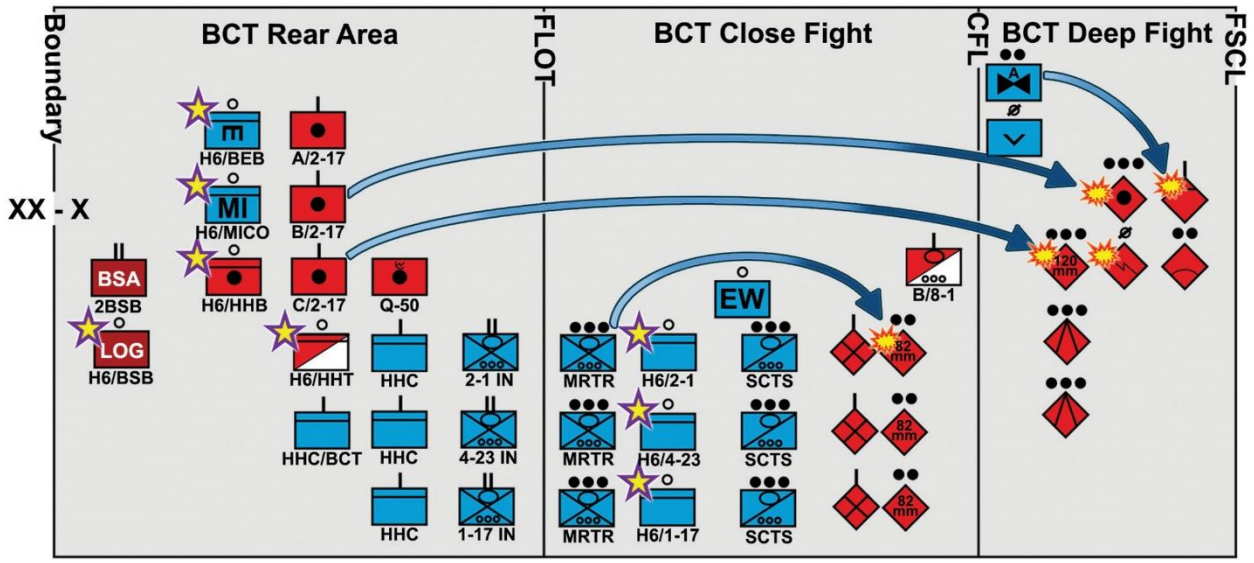

Figure 1b. Task-organization.

The blue lines in Figure 1b highlight the effects of friendly units in an AO relative to their enemy targets. The yellow stars highlight recommended HH commander locations relative to the forward line of own troops (FLOT) and coordinated fire line (CFL) to maximize their ability to influence each AO. Arraying the HHB/HHC/HHT commanders with the entire BCT AO in mind enables them to act with greater independence and efficiency, and it synchronizes all six warfighting functions for the brigade commander.

Deep fight: Sensor-shooter loop

The BCT deep fight includes everything from the CFL to the division fire-support-coordination line (FSCL). The key prosecutors of this fight include the cavalry-squadron commander, fires-support battalion commander and brigade executive officer to synchronize the staff. The deep fight is inherently complex because it requires the careful synchronization of assets across the intelligence, maneuver, fires, protection and command-and-control (C2) warfighting functions to decide, detect and deliver effects on the enemy. While the BCT and battalion staffs are responsible for most of this synchronization during the operations process, the HHT, HHB and MICo commanders can set conditions for unit success through training at home station and direct coordination in the field.

A key initial step among the HHT, HHB and MICo commanders to improve the BCT fight is to conduct capabilities briefs to and from each of their units. In a combined-audience setting among themselves, the staff primaries – the MICo platoon leaders, the counter-fire radar-section leader and the reconnaissance-troop commanders – should each brief their equipment, task-organization, capabilities and key planning considerations when detached from

their parent units. These conversations will enable the leaders and subject-matter-experts present to establish shared TTPs and conduct better planning in the field.

If able, the HHT, HHB and MICo commanders can recommend and resource a fire-support coordination command-post (CP) exercise through their respective battalion leaders to validate their military decision-making process (MDMP), troop-leading procedures (TLPs) and current operations together. This training event pays dividends both for individual company/troop/battery mission-essential task proficiency and overall BCT staff readiness, according to Training Circular (TC) 6-0.2.3, ***Training the Mission Command Warfighting Function for Battalions, Brigades and Brigade Combat Teams***.[3]

In the field, the HHT, HHB and MICo commanders can continue to facilitate the BCT deep fight by coordinating directly to fill in any coordinating instructions not completed by their respective staffs. These three leaders can establish shared JBC-P, very-high-frequency and frequency-modulation networks to ensure mutually supporting effects are synchronized/nested with the battalion and BCT commander's intent.

A successful TTP is for these three commanders to conduct one touchpoint per day to confirm the location and task-organization of their detached units; compare intelligence and fires matrices for synchronization; and prepare shared recommendations to provide up the chain of command. This peer-to-peer coordination has the potential to exponentially increase the BCT's ability to answer priority intelligence requirements, identify high-payoff targets (HPTs) and maximize effects on the enemy that directly support other combined operations.

The BCT's ability to shape the deep fight directly impacts its success in the close fight by desynchronizing and reducing the enemy's combat power prior to direct-fire contact.

Figure 2. HHT snipers train to call-for-fire in the close-deep fight at Yakima Training Center in May 2021. *(U.S. Army photo by CPT Jeffrey Nielsen)*

Figure 3. CPT Jeffrey Nielsen (left), the 8-1 Cavalry HHT commander, conducts TLPs with 2LT James Donnelly, medical-platoon leader, at NTC during September 2021. *(U.S. Army photo)*

Close fight: HHC kill teams

The BCT close fight generally stretches from the FLOT to the CFL. The key prosecutors of this fight include the maneuver battalion commanders, the brigade/battalion operations officers, and maneuver-company commanders.

A common technique is for maneuver battalions to assign their HHC commanders to the combat trains command post (CTCP) as an alternate CP, but we observe two shortfalls with this technique:

- The CTCP generally lacks the redundant tactical-internet systems (Command Post Computing Environment and Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System) to function as an alternate CP; and
- The CTCP has enough leader presence provided by the FSC that another commander is redundant. An alternate technique is to assign the HHC commander with his/her organic scouts and mortars to create an "HHC kill team" (HKTs).

HKTs have multiple benefits for the battalion and BCT. Maneuver-battalion HHC commanders are usually second-time commanders with the requisite training and experience to operate on shorter timelines and with less guidance. This naturally makes them good as higher control for their organic scouts, as scout platoons will often step off early in the battalion's operations process. HHC commanders can position themselves to give refined guidance to the scouts in stride while communicating directly with the mortar platoon and tactical-operations center (TOC) to detect targets and deliver effects.

The increased communication and controlled maneuver enables the HKTs to destroy HPTs beyond the maneuver company's AOs but prior to the CFL using observation posts (OPs), small unmanned aerials systems, signals-intelligence collection teams and mortars. Suitable targets for HKTs include enemy OPs, dismounted squads,

antitank crews, motorized-vehicle sections, individual fighting vehicles and individual unprotected main battle tanks. This capability creates a battalion-level “deep-close” fight that shapes enemy formations prior to direct-fire contact without adding work to the battalion staff.

This technique incurs a small amount of risk to the maneuver battalions’ ability to manage its command and sustainment nodes in the rear area. This risk is best mitigated by following our recommendation on rear-area cross-unit coordination.

Support area: Maximizing scarce resources

The BCT rear area includes everything between the FLOT and the next higher headquarters’ support activity or boundary. The key prosecutors of this fight include the engineer-battalion commander, support-battalion commander and unit command sergeants major. The key tasks associated with facilitating rear-area activities are terrain management, local security, logistics and route clearance.

BCT staffs often prioritize their Step 7 of MDMP, orders production, by completing as much of the close and deep fight plan as possible while delegating rear-area tasks to the BEB. However, the BEB does not organically possess the excess combat power to conduct these tasks alone and is unlikely to receive supplementary maneuver units during LSCO. Fortunately, the HHT, HHB, HHC BEB and HHC BSB commanders are available to share scarce resources to accomplish these tasks.

These commanders have inherent duties and responsibilities that align them well to coordinate across adjacent units. The HHT commander manages long lines of communication to reach the recon troops through other unit AOs. The HHB commander manages radar sections across the full BCT AO. The HHC BEB commander coordinates as many as 12 subordinate elements when assigned responsibility for attached enablers and the BCT TOC. The HHC BSB commander secures the brigade-support area (BSA) in direct coordination with unit FSCs. Their individual unit capabilities can combine the rear area into an effective battlespace that is synchronized and secured without pulling combat power away from the close fight or deep fight.

The first step in fighting a successful rear area is terrain management. The BCT rear area experiences friction when nine retransmission sites, seven CTCPs, seven battalion TOCs, four Role I’s (unit-level medical care), three position areas for artillery and one brigade TOC compete for scarce suitable terrain. In the absence of planning, these assets tend to cluster together forming massive, unsecured assembly areas that concentrates the enemy’s HPT list into one enticing target.

Figure 4. Medics conduct a mass-casualty training event while operating a Role 1 shared to support two battalion AOs at the Yakima Training Center in August 2021. *(U.S. Army photo by CPT Jeffrey Nielsen)*

A simple yet effective TTP to synchronize each of these nodes is for the HHT, HHB, HHC BEB and HHC BSB commanders to directly compare/share their individual common operating pictures (COPs) twice daily to identify where critical sustainment and C2 nodes are going to run into each other. While these commanders should not adjudicate which unit gets priority for terrain, they can provide unified recommendations that inform their battalion and BCT staff to manage terrain according to planning factors distinct to each unit's requirements and capabilities. This minor amount of synchronization will prevent critical BCT assets from jumping locations just to be bumped off by another unit and waste crucial time finding a new location.

These commanders can play a similar role in maximizing scarce resources by maintaining a rear-area COP reported via JBC-P to each other and their higher headquarters. As each unit prepares for, executes and assesses its routine movements across the BCT's ground lines of communication, it can confirm security and manage traffic. This task is very easy for rear-area commanders to accomplish. The alternative – delaying a convoy or altering its route – can cause fratricide or trigger convoys to stack on each other along narrow routes.

A successful TTP is for the HHT commander and headquarters section, operating out of the cavalry CTCP, to conduct a section-sized route reconnaissance-and-security patrol during their routine logistics packages. If the BCT has an attached military-police platoon, the BEB's HHC commander can coordinate for it to provide route security, route management and local-population engagement. Combined, these procedures can increase the efficiency of the BCT's rear area, enabling the nodes established there to better support the close and deep fights, and buy back precious combat power that would otherwise be expended securing units that have the ability to secure themselves.

Conclusion

The BCTs of today and tomorrow are tasked with synchronizing multiple assets across all six warfighting functions to achieve maneuver and effects in multiple domains. The headquarters and specialty-company commanders within a BCT are critical assets, with the potential to positively influence the BCT's ability to fight in the deep, close and rear areas during home-station training and in the field. Therefore, these key leaders should be trained to work together parallel to the chain of command and deliberately arrayed across the BCT fight as HKTs, deep-fight coordinators and rear-area responsible officers.

In the face of greater complexity and competing priorities, these changes will increase the BCT's lethality without adding more requirements to the battalion and BCT staffs.

CPT Alfred Flores is the Raptor 14/09 military-intelligence (MI) observer/coach/trainer at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC), Hohenfels, Germany. Previous assignments include MICo commander, Company D, 14th BEB, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT), Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), Tacoma, WA; infantry rifle-company commander, Company A, 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd SBCT, JBLM; and targeting officer/team chief, Brigade Intelligence Cell Mobile Command Group, HHC, 2nd SBCT, JBLM. CPT Flores' military schools include infantry one-station unit training, Airborne School, Emergency Medical Technician Basic Course, Ranger School, MI Basic Officer Leadership Course, Joint Human Intelligence Interrogation Management Course, Biometrics Operations Specialist Course, Company Intelligence-Support-Team Course, Rifle Marksmanship Instructor Course, Foreign Disclosure Officer Course, MI Captain's Career Course and North Atlantic Treaty Organization Military Engineering Multinational Advisory Course. He has a bachelor's of science degree in multimedia arts and animation from The Art Institute of California – Los Angeles. CPT Flores' awards and badges include the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM), Ranger Tab, Combat Infantry Badge and Expert Infantry Badge (EIB).

CPT Dallas Hopkins is a team leader, Troop A, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Security Force Assistance Brigade, Fort Hood, TX. His previous assignments include commander, HHC, 14th BEB, JBLM; commander, Company A, 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment, JBLM; assistant operations officer, 1-17 Infantry, JBLM; and executive officer, Army Military Working Dog School, Joint Base Lackland, TX. CPT Hopkins' military schools include Airborne School, Military Police Basic Officer Leadership Course, Infantry Basic Officer Leader's Course (IBOLC), Maneuver Captain's Career Course (MCCC), Cavalry Leader's Course and Ranger School. He has a bachelor's of science degree in kinesiology allied health from the University of North Texas. CPT Hopkins' awards include the MSM.

CPT Jeffrey Nielsen is the brigade operations trainer, Mustang Team, 7th Army Training Command, JMRC. Previous assignments include commander, HHT, 8th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, JBLM; commander, Company C, 4th

Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, JBLM; battle major, 7th Infantry Division, JBLM; and battalion logistics officer, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, Fort Bragg, NC. CPT Nielsen's military schools include U.S. Military Academy (USMA), IBOLC, Airborne School, Ranger School and MCCC. He has a bachelor's of science degree in mathematics and environmental engineering from USMA. CPT Nielsen's awards include the MSM.

CPT Jordan Scanlan commands HHC 1-17 Infantry, 2-2 SBCT, 7th Infantry Division, JBLM. His previous assignments include rifle-company commander, Company B, 4-23 Infantry, 2-2 SBCT, 7th Infantry Division; brigade/battalion assistant S-3, 4-23 Infantry, 2-2 SBCT, 7th Infantry Division; aide de camp to the commander, Research, Development and Engineering Command, Natick Laboratory, Natick Soldier Systems Center, MA (now reflagged as Combat Capabilities Development Command under Army Futures Command); and rifle-platoon leader; Company C, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 1st BCT, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, KY. CPT Scanlan's military schools include IBOLC, MCCC, Ranger School, Airborne School, Sabalauski Air-Assault School, Maneuver Leader Maintenance Course and Combat Lifesaver Course. He has a bachelor's of arts degree in political science from Pacific Lutheran University. CPT Scanlan's awards and badges include the MSM with 1st oak-leaf cluster, Ranger Tab and EIB.

CPT Jennifer St. Remy commands Headquarters and Service Company, 7th Infantry Division, JBLM. Her previous assignments include commander, Company A, 2nd BSB, 2-2 SBCT, JBLM; support operations/transportation officer, 2nd BSB, 2-2 SBCT; support-operations planner, 2nd BSB, 2-2 SBCT; battalion S-4, 52nd BEB, Fort Carson, CO; and executive officer, Company B, 704th BSB, 4th Infantry BCT, Fort Carson. CPT St. Remy's military schools include Ordnance Basic Officer Leader's Course, Unit Movement Officer Course, Support Operations Course (PH I) and the Logistics Captain's Career Course. She has a bachelor's or arts degree in law and society from Pennsylvania State University, a master's of science degree in acquisition in supply-chain management from the University of Maryland Global Campus and a master's of business administration degree in business management from the University of Maryland Global Campus. CPT St. Remy's awards include the MSM.

Notes

[1] "Deep Maneuver," Part 5, ***Large-Scale Combat Operations Volume I***, Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Lessons learned.
[2] Field Manual 3-96, ***Brigade Combat Team***, 2021.
[3] TC 6-0.2, ***Training the Mission Command Warfighting Function for Battalions, Brigades and Brigade Combat Teams***, July 2019, Figures 1-5 and 2-2.

Acronym Quick-Scan

ADA – air-defense artillery
AO – area of operations
BCT – brigade combat team
BEB – brigade engineer battalion
BSA – brigade-support area
BSB – brigade-support battalion
C2 – command and control
CFL – coordinated fire line
COP – common operating picture
CP – command post
CTCP – combat-trains command post
EIB – Expert Infantry Badge
EW – electronic warfare
FLOT – forward line of own troops
FSC – forward-support company
FSCL – fire-support coordination line
FTCP – field-trains command post
HH – headquarters and headquarters
HHB – headquarters and headquarters battery
HHC – headquarters and headquarters company
HHT – headquarters and headquarters troop
HKT – HHC kill team
HPT – high-payoff target
IBOLC – Infantry Basic Officer Leader's Course

JBC-P – Joint Battle Command-Platform
JBLM – Joint Base Lewis-McChord
JMRC – Joint Multinational Readiness Center
LOG – logistics
LRP – logistics release point
LSCO – large-scale combat operations
MCCC – Maneuver Captain's Career Course
MDMP – military decision-making process
MI – military intelligence
MICo – military-intelligence company
MRTR – mortar
MSM – Meritorious Service Medal
NTC – National Training Center
OP – observation post
SBCT – Stryker brigade combat team
TC – training circular
TLP – troop-leading procedure
TOC – tactical-operations center
TTP – tactics, techniques and procedures
USMA – U.S. Military Academy