

# **BCT 2020 LOGISTICS:**

## ***WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD***

**CPT BRIDGET I. DAY**

Gone are the days of a robust, fully mission capable forward support company (FSC) that can provide extensive support to a maneuver battalion. The Brigade Combat Team (BCT) 2020 initiative modified the Army's overall strength and structure to meet future requirements and missions, but unfortunately, the modifications included significant reductions to the FSC.

Under the BCT 2020 organizational structure, assets such as an additional maneuver battalion and a brigade engineer battalion were added to the brigade to increase its autonomy and meet future requirements. These changes affected both maneuver units and logistics capabilities within BCTs.

### **Changes to FSCs**

The BCT 2020 sustainment structure is intended to provide globally responsive sustainment that is relevant, affordable, and synchronized. But the structural changes affected FSCs by decreasing or completely removing a number of its capabilities, such as troop transportation, distribution, maintenance, and welding.

The brigade support battalion (BSB) also experienced an overall reduction in its capability set, while the sustainment brigade and echelons-above-brigade (EAB) units saw an increase in their capabilities. Many of the FSC's capabilities were passed back to the BSB and the sustainment brigade. The new support structure is designed so that the FSC depends on reachback support to meet the supported unit's requirements.

In an FSC, which is the heart of tactical logistics and where the rubber meets the road, the BCT 2020 sustainment structure has missed its mark. For the past 10 years, logisticians at the tactical level have taken great pride in being self-sufficient and had the necessary capabilities at their disposal. BCT 2020 has changed this paradigm and forces FSCs to rely heavily on BSBs and EAB units to support their missions. However, as Peter Drucker famously said, "culture eats strategy for breakfast." The "we can do it all" culture at the FSC tactical level and the precedent of allowing the FSC to be self-sufficient at the BSB and sustainment brigade levels have made the implementation of BCT 2020 nearly impossible.

The BCT 2020 modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) should be changed to be based on the tactical application and existing culture of FSCs. The BCT 2020 concept of support, which increases the number of personnel at EAB and reduces it in the FSC, hinders the maneuver unit. BCT 2020 is neither effective nor efficient.

### **Juliet Company**

The 1st BCT, 82nd Airborne Division was one of the first brigades to transition to this new structure. The brigade's Juliet Company, 2nd Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), is an FSC that was restructured under the BCT 2020 model.

Juliet Company supported two Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) rotations, multiple joint forcible-entry exercises, and platoon, company, and battalion live-fire exercises. It also supported an outload support battalion for the global response force and a U.S. European Command exercise.

The recent training exercises that Juliet Company supported demonstrate that the rationale behind the concept of support of BCT 2020 can be disputed and is arguably more detrimental than successful. Ideally, the FSC MTOE should be adjusted to meet transportation, fuel, water, security, maintenance, and communication requirements in both garrison and tactical environments.

### **Distribution Platoon Problems**

The MTOE changes that were implemented because of BCT 2020 caused personnel problems in the FSC. The number of personnel in an FSC's distribution platoon was cut to one-third of its original strength. In the BCT

2020 MTOE, the Class III (petroleum, oils, and lubricants), general supply, Class V (ammunition), and truck squads no longer exist. What is left is essentially two squads consisting of a total of 14 personnel of various military occupational specialties (MOS).

The 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, training missions required a great deal of sustainment support. For instance, to train for the requirements that it was tasked to execute, the battalion used a brigade's worth of ammunition in just eight months. In all, Juliet Company supported more than 100 ammunition draws and turn-ins with only one ammunition specialist (MOS 89B), over 200 transportation missions with only eight motor transport operators (MOS 88M), and more than 50 fuel and water missions with only four petroleum supply specialists (MOS 92F) and no water purification specialists.

Although the support missions were met successfully, the lack of personnel did not enable proper rest cycles or the ability to multitask and support multiple missions at once. The increased safety of not having as many transportation assets on the road was one of the purported benefits of the BCT 2020 structure. However, the FSC conducted the same number of transportation missions as before but with far fewer personnel and while experiencing rest cycles that were inadequate for 24-hour operations. These conditions increased risk.

The 2nd Battalion and Juliet Company made several modifications to support the significant logistics requirements. The battalion's leaders understood that forward support personnel should be the last to be tasked with non-MOS-specific duties, such as traffic control point guards, so they instead gave these duties to Infantrymen.

A second modification that the battalion made was assigning Infantry Soldiers to augment the distribution platoon. The FSC had as many as seven 11Bs at a time augmenting the platoon. At first this seemed like a great solution to the personnel shortage, but it ended up creating a different set of issues. The biggest issue was that the 11B personnel did not join the Army to be truck drivers. Many of the 11Bs in the FSC formation loved being Infantrymen and did not wish to be in an FSC. These personnel were forced to do a job they did not sign up for, and the FSC leaders had the added challenge of motivating them to fill support positions and watch their peers from the sidelines.

BCT 2020 forces units to modify the structures set by their MTOEs in order to accomplish their missions. FSC distribution platoons will inadvertently change themselves back into a support and transportation platoon if they are not given the adequate support and capabilities on their MTOEs. Tactical-level requirements will not decrease, and may even increase, in the near future; therefore, the capabilities of the direct-support unit should remain constant or even increase to ensure the greatest success.

### **Maintenance Platoon Problems**

The pre-BCT 2020 MTOE had nine more paratroopers, which may not seem like a big difference, but it is NCOs that the new MTOE lacks. Like many other units across the Army, 2-501 PIR struggles with not-mission-capable equipment and having multiple, complex maintenance deadlines. Even an experienced mechanic sometimes takes days to conduct an accurate and thorough inspection, and the maintenance team is often stretched thin with the two tasks of identifying faults and installing parts received.

Without the proper NCO leadership, it is difficult to plan a sensible preventive maintenance schedule and keep up with unscheduled services. The majority of mechanics are simply too inexperienced to conduct some of the complex repairs that the battalion's equipment requires. Repairs often need two or three mechanics and the supervision of an NCO.

The 2nd Battalion, like many units that have transformed to BCT 2020, kept many of its unauthorized vehicles. The units are either in the process of turning in their unauthorized vehicles, which is a long and laborious process, or the unit is holding on to the vehicles to better sustain itself.

Having more vehicles than what is authorized on the MTOE creates a huge gap in maintenance capabilities versus requirements. The BCT 2020 maintenance platoon MTOE will be successful only if units strictly adhere to their authorizations, even if the additional equipment is needed to support the unit's mission.

### **Headquarters Problems**

Before BCT 2020, an FSC's headquarters was authorized an E-6 supply sergeant as well as an E-4 supply clerk. It was also authorized an E-4 chemical biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) specialist. With the BCT 2020 MTOE, the FSC is now authorized an E-5 supply sergeant and an E-4 supply clerk, despite having the largest and most



**A Soldier with Juliet Company, 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment, works on a vehicle prior to convoy training. (Photo courtesy of author)**

complex property book in the battalion.

Additionally, the FSC is not authorized a CBRN specialist or a communications specialist. This forces FSCs to pull personnel from other sections to operate their training rooms, learn communications equipment, and oversee the CBRN equipment.

### **Equipment Problems**

Under the BCT 2020 MTOE, an infantry battalion FSC suffers from several equipment reductions.

**Transportation.** FSC troop transportation assets are drastically decreased, leaving a total of only nine family of medium tactical vehicle (FMTV) trucks. The original 35 FMTVs should be maintained on the MTOE in order to support troop transportation and other distribution missions simultaneously.

**Class I (subsistence).** Neither the pre- nor post-BCT 2020 MTOEs had authorizations for a 2,000-gallon water tank rack (hippo), but both had authorizations for three 400-gallon water trailers (buffalos). The FSC should be authorized two hippos to allow the FSC flexibility in its support of combat trains.

**Class III.** The FSC fuel truck authorization decreased from two to zero; however, the FSC is still authorized four 92F Soldiers. The authorization should be increased to two fuel trucks, which again will allow the FSC flexibility in its support of combat trains.

**Welding.** The FSC lost its welding capability; however, no significant decrease in the FSC's ability to accomplish the mission was noted.

**Vehicle recovery and combat maintenance.** On the new MTOE, the wrecker authorization remained the same, while the recovery vehicle operator authorization changed from six personnel to three. The problem with the wrecker authorization is that the FSC is authorized one heavy expanded-mobility tactical truck (HEMTT) wrecker and two FMTV wreckers. The HEMTT wrecker has a 24,000-pound crane capacity and a 60,000-pound recovery

winch capacity, while an FMTV wrecker has only an 11,000-pound crane capacity and a 30,000-pound recovery winch capacity. This means that the FMTV wreckers do not have the ability to recover a load handling system, a HEMTT, or any vehicle weighing more than 36,678 pounds. The FSC authorization should be changed to three HEMTT wreckers to give the wrecker teams the freedom to support multiple recovery missions and not be limited by the type of vehicle needing recovery. Adding security elements to FSCs would allow the maneuver battalion commander the freedom to employ an antitank company without having to work around the added duty of escorting resupply missions. It also adds one more security element to the battalion to assist with battalion security or casualty evacuation missions.

### **Other Recommendations**

The FSC's lack of necessary personnel and equipment hinders its capabilities in the garrison environment and during unified land operations. During the two JRTC rotations and the multiple joint forcible-entry exercises that Juliet Company supported, it had to use the field trains command post and unit maintenance collection points to support as far forward as possible. Juliet Company did not support the battalion from the brigade support area and was sometimes a two-hour convoy away from it.

Based on these experiences, it would be beneficial and arguably crucial that FSCs have the capability to support their battalions with three days of supply for Classes I, III, and V, as opposed to the one day of supply that BCT 2020 supports. The FSC needs the flexibility to support its battalion using the combat trains model and to deploy multiple combat maintenance teams, employ tactical convoy operations, and use logistics release points while maintaining a command post.

During unified land operations, FSC leaders play a vital tactical role. They need to understand the tactical plan, integrate themselves tactically, and provide the best logistics support. To do so, communication is vital. An FSC should be authorized the same communication equipment as the maneuver companies they support.

The greatest disservice done to FSCs is the lack of security vehicle authorizations. FSCs are authorized the heavy machine guns to arm gun trucks but have never been authorized the trucks. FSCs must conduct countless tactical convoy operations during unified land operations but must do so unsecured or with the assistance of an anti-tank company, which strains the battalion. Adding security elements to FSCs would allow the maneuver battalion commander the freedom to employ an anti-tank company without having to work around the added duty of escorting resupply missions.

This article outlines how BCT 2020 affects a light airborne infantry FSC, but these challenges are not unique to Juliet Company or other infantry FSCs; the BCT 2020 MTOE has had or will have the same effects on heavy and Stryker BCT units. In an Army that is moving toward Force 2025 and Beyond and focusing on unified land operations, we must empower our support units with the capabilities that ensure mission success. Logisticians owe supported units timely and accurate support; units cannot afford to wait for an approval process to get the support that they need to accomplish their missions.

Success in a combat arms battalion relies heavily on trust between maneuver and support. The supported unit must trust that the FSC will be there with their ammunition, water, food, and fuel. They must trust that their FSC will do whatever it takes to be in the right place at the right time with their support. The FSC has its finger on the pulse of the maneuver unit's priorities and mission. Considering the principles of logistics (responsiveness, simplicity, flexibility, economy, attainability, sustain-ability, and survivability), the FSC BCT 2020 MTOE satisfies only the principle of economy. As sustainment moves into a future of expeditionary logistics and unified land operations, the best solution is to place our resources and capabilities as far forward as possible.

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**Editor's Note:** As with all *Infantry* Magazine articles, the views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the position of the Department of Defense or any element of it.