

CACC System

CAPTAIN STEPHEN ORLOFF

In the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), an infantry unit commander must insure that the aviation resources he is given to support his particular operation are closely integrated with the requirements of his ground tactical plan. In the Division, it is usually an air assault company team that is assigned a tactical mission. This team normally consists of a ground element (an infantry company), a lift element (four to six UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters), a security team (one or two AH-1S Cobra gunships), and a screening element (an air cavalry "pink team"). The team is quite mobile, has a considerable amount of firepower, and can react quickly to changing tactical situations.

To keep the control problems that can accompany this blend of ground and aviation resources to a minimum, the division has established the Combat Aviation Control Center (CACC) system. The senior officer in the center itself, usually referred to simply as the CACC, is an experienced aviator who centralizes air forecasts and acts as a liaison officer between the ground and aviation units.

At the battalion level, a CAP (Combat Aviation Party), which is also headed by an aviator, provides the same kind of assistance to the battalion as the CACC does to the brigade.

Finally, each maneuver element within a battalion has a CAT, or Combat Aviation Team. The CAT

has from one to three pathfinder-qualified soldiers, and their chief function is to provide a direct link with the aviation elements for the ground unit commander. They also supervise and assist in preparing pickup and landing zones, and closely monitor all rigging and slingloading operations.

Because they provide their own combat aviation net (CAN), each member of the CACC team can swiftly adjust the aviation plan as required



by changes in the ground plan of maneuver.

The CACC also plays an important role during the planning stages of an air assault operation, for the various aviators not only broaden the base of understanding with regard to the aviation side of the house, they are immediately available to clarify for the ground commanders what the aviation units can and cannot do. For the ground commander, the S3 Air, who is his movements control officer,

must work closely with the CACC during the planning phases.

Once an operation begins, the CAT with the air assault team, using its own communication net, monitors and controls the air support and the air lift. At the same time, it passes to the company team commander any information pertaining to the aviation plan. This special communication loop frees the company command net from traffic that may not be vitally important to the operation.

The air liaison function performed by the various CACC personnel relieves the S3 Air from having to monitor air traffic once an operation starts, and this allows him to get ready to handle any subsequent movement requirements his commander may place on him.

The modern battlefield will have many challenges for all members of the combined arms team. Incorporating new technology and doctrine with age-old infantry fundamentals is one such challenge. Never before has an infantry commander had such a vast array of resources with which to conduct war. The CACC system can be regarded as a useful tool that a ground commander in an air assault unit can use to accomplish his mission.

CAPTAIN STEPHEN ORLOFF is now attending the Infantry Officer Advanced Course. He is a 1978 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and recently completed an assignment as S3 Air of a battalion in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)