

# The HHC Commander

CAPTAIN WALTER J. SUTTERLIN

Commanding the headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) of an infantry battalion is a job that most infantry officers seem to try to avoid, feeling perhaps that it is not a *real* command. But it is one of the most demanding jobs they can have in today's Army.

An infantry HHC commander, like any other company commander, is charged with the overall development of his soldiers. But unlike the others, he is also responsible for providing various types of support to the battalion — command, staff, communications, administration, and logistics (mess, supply, medical, maintenance, and transportation).

Another difference is that he must provide all of this support with only his immediate headquarters personnel to handle the administrative work and the other necessary company functions. He does not directly supervise the majority of his soldiers — they spend most of their time working in their individual sections and platoons. In fact, the chain of command in a headquarters company is such that the commander does not even rate most of his soldiers. His enlisted soldiers are usually rated by the officers and non-commissioned officers in their staff sections or respective platoons, and his officers are rated by members of the battalion staff.

Somehow, he must pull together all of his diverse elements so that they can accomplish the company's most important mission — providing day-to-

day support to all the battalion's operating units. And even though he does not have rating power over his enlisted soldiers, he does have three ways of exerting control over them:

- He decides who will be promoted in the first four ranks, who will be recommended for promotion in the next four, and who will be allowed to reenlist. (His decisions, of course, are usually based on the recommendations of the various platoons and sections in which these soldiers work.)

- He uses the powers given him by the UCMJ (Uniform Code of Military Justice) to instill proper discipline in his unit.

- He writes the training schedule.

But in using these powers he must strike a tenuous balance between being a concerned counsellor and a stern disciplinarian. He must also work closely with the battalion staff to see that the resources are available to meet not only the battalion's support requirements but also the company's daily training requirements. (It is a little like being an ambassador to the United Nations: success depends to a large extent on mutual agreement and cooperation.)

The HHC commander must recognize the difficulty of trying to implement a formal training program in his unit. Seldom will he be able to concentrate all of his resources to accomplish a single training objective. (He must also keep in mind that battalion support comes first, maintenance second, and training, unfortunately, last.)

Therefore, he must realistically

tailor his training program so that his soldiers will have at least a fair chance of succeeding on their SQTs. It will help him immeasurably if his battalion commander will set clear priorities and reduce the "ash and trash" details that often fall on the headquarters company. Even then, because of daily support requirements, most of the company's training classes will probably have to be scheduled two or three times each to train all of the company's soldiers.

A low density MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) training program is absolutely essential. The HHC commander must concern himself with about 20 different MOSs and SQTs. Accordingly, he must manage his training program by using short range training plans that are compatible with his continuous support requirements. Giving his soldiers the best possible opportunity to prepare themselves for their SQTs will benefit not only them but also the battalion. (The battalion's learning center can help in this effort.)

To do his job properly, considering the competing missions that his company is given, the HHC commander must use every means at his disposal to keep himself informed on all of the battalion's missions and the corresponding support requirements. In carrying out these missions, he must not forget his NCO chain of command; he should rely on the experience and knowledge of these men to help him do his job better. And although ARTEP missions are accomplished by the individual sec-

tions or platoons, the HHC commander is responsible for leading the battalion's quartering party during these exercises, for selecting the exact location of the battalion's command post, and for supporting it after it has been established.

One of the most difficult tasks any HHC commander has to do is to find a way to instill in his soldiers a desire to provide the best possible professional support to the battalion. Because they often operate separately, he cannot supervise their actions closely. Unfortunately, his soldiers get little recognition or thanks for the support they pro-

vide; too often it seems that no one notices what they do until something goes wrong. He must let his soldiers know that their actions have a profound effect on the overall morale of the battalion and on its success or failure. His reward, if there is one, comes from watching his soldiers perform, develop, learn, and mature while providing the best possible support to the battalion.

The job of a HHC commander is demanding, both professionally and personally, and carries with it the requirements for a professional understanding of how all of the in-

dividual assets of the battalion fit together to produce a proficient unit. This understanding gives an officer a broad educational base upon which to build the rest of his career.



**CAPTAIN WALTER J. SUTTERLIN** is assigned to the G-1 division of the Berlin Brigade, where he previously served as commander of the HHC, 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry. A 1976 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, he has also served as a rifle company commander and a TOW platoon leader.

# The Headquarters Commandant

CAPTAIN KIM STENSON

One of the toughest problems confronting the commander of a mechanized infantry battalion headquarters company is the question of exactly what his responsibilities are when his battalion moves to the field and he becomes the headquarters commandant.

Once the battalion is committed tactically, the headquarters company's assets are split into three distinct sub-units: the battalion's tactical operations center (TOC), the combat trains, and the field trains. The combat trains are usually supervised by the battalion S-4, while the field trains operate under the control of the battalion motor officer and the support platoon leader. The headquarters commander is responsible for the TOC — he must select a site

for it and provide for its movement, its security, and its logistical support and maintenance.

But Army doctrine on the subject of what all this means is sadly lacking, and what doctrine there is is misleading and seldom followed. What, then, really happens when the HHC commander moves out the gate on a combat exercise and becomes the headquarters commandant? And what does he have to work with?

His personnel assets include a first sergeant, a supply sergeant, a supply clerk/armorer, a driver, and a two-man maintenance team. This group is sometimes augmented by an executive officer, an NBC NCO, and a full-time armorer. (This augmentation depends upon the particular infantry battalion and the company's

strength.) With these people, the HHC commandant must ensure that the TOC has the logistical and administrative support it needs to operate.

Transportation for the group consists of an M561 and an M35 with trailer. The first sergeant and the supply sergeant double up with the M35 and the HHC commandant uses the M561. Neither the commandant nor the first sergeant is authorized any communications equipment.

The actual components of a battalion TOC are, at least, the following:

- The battalion command group (one M113 and one M151).
- The S-2 (one M577).
- The S-3 (one M577, one M113, and one M151).