

THE FIGHTING XO AND C4S2

MAJOR STEPHEN C. LIVINGSTON

The restructuring of mechanized infantry and armor battalions under Division 86, along with the introduction of lethal, highly mobile fighting systems, leaves the role of the battalion executive officer (XO) in question. The term "fighting XO," so much in vogue today, seems to mean many things to many people.

One thing is clear, however: Because of the mobility of fighting systems such as Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles, a battalion commander needs his XO's help more than ever to effectively command his unit and control his assets. As second in command, the XO must be more than just the unit's battlefield logistics coordinator; he must be totally familiar with the tactical situation and directly involved in it.

At the same time, though, this mobile and fluid battlefield makes his job as logistical coordinator more challenging, because the logistical "battle" must be synchronized with the tactical battle. Without this synchronization, the Abrams and the Bradley can quickly outrun their logistical lifeline.

This article is an attempt to describe some methods one battalion (the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, 3d Infantry Division) has used in Europe to effect the intent of Division 86 doctrine and the concept of the fighting XO. In certain instances, as will be apparent, these methods are not in perfect harmony with the letter of that doctrine, nor are they in harmony with currently developed modified tables of organization and equipment (MTOE), especially in the area of communications. Nevertheless, they do work and work well.

First, what is the fighting XO's role in a battalion? He monitors the tactical battle by "eavesdropping" on the battalion command net. On the brigade's command net, he responds for the commander when the commander is unable to answer, for whatever reason. While the commander influences the central battle in his sector, the XO monitors and can influence the portion of the battle that is not in the commander's immediate focus. The XO



closely follows the battle on either flank and keeps the commander informed as needed. The XO renders any reports that may be required by the brigade, relieving the commander of that responsibility; he anticipates the needs of the commander on the basis of the tactical situation; and he requests additional combat power as it is needed.

Finally, the XO orchestrates the unit's logistical battle to ensure that it supports the tactical battle. He prompts and coaches the battalion S-4 — the logistical coordinator and executor — to see that the needs of the battalion are met. Thus, he assures that the logistical battle is synchronized with the tactical battle.

To accomplish all of this the XO must have at his disposal sufficient means by which he can influence command, control, and communications (C³) at the combat service support level (CS²). Combined, these become command, control, communications, and combat service support, or C⁴S². For the XO, these are not separate terms and systems but one unified system.

A fighting XO, therefore, is a stage manager in the literal sense of the word. He strikes a balance between the combat and logistic needs of the battle, thereby allowing his commander to focus his attention on the central battle. As the "actors" are needed, the XO sends them on stage without undue prompting from the commander. He is also fully ready to assume command on a moment's notice.

What means does the fighting XO have at his disposal for C³? The command and control of the direct tactical battle is accomplished primarily through the tactical command post (TAC CP), which some more commonly, but erroneously, refer to as the jump TOC. The TAC CP is manned by the battalion commander, the air liaison officer (ALO), the battalion assistant operations sergeant, an S-2 representative, the NBC NCO, the commander's assistant operations sergeant, and a forward observer (FO). It usually consists of three or four vehicles, the commander's track, the S-3's track, the ALO's track, and, on occasion, the commander's light wheeled vehicle.

SPLIT AND MOVE

The TAC CP can split up and move to different locations to accomplish specific missions and then rendezvous at another location. The ALO, for example, can move to a vantage point to control close air support, and the commander can move about the battlefield to influence a battle while the S-3 track remains on a good communications site to relay information. Depending on the situation, the S-3 or the antiarmor company commander can complement this crew to assist the commander. The commander's light wheeled vehicle follows the TAC to provide backup communications and to transport the battalion commander, if required.

The TAC CP is usually located well forward and moves frequently to allow the commander to influence

the battle at its central focus. Its location, of course, is entirely dependent on the battalion commander's needs and desires. The TAC CP is not capable of 24-hour continuous operation, though, because of manpower constraints. It is active at the decisive point and time during the battle. At other times the battalion S-3 or the XO controls the battle from the TOC.

Some modifications to the battalion's communications and power generation means are needed for the TAC CP to operate. The S-3's track should have three radios to operate effectively. These radios are entered into the battalion command net, the brigade command net, and the brigade operations and intelligence (O&I) net. The commander's track must be entered into the battalion and brigade command nets and the fire net (for the FO), and must also be able to monitor the brigade O&I net. The FO and the commander's operator monitor and respond to these nets. The ALO monitors the battalion command net and his own Air Force nets (UHF/VHF) through his own systems mounted in his M113. The ALO track also needs an externally bracketed 1.5- or 3-kilowatt generator on its rear deck to provide auxiliary power to the TAC. (It is not advisable to use an M577 because of its mobility problems and bulk.)

Although the TOC in this arrangement does not move as frequently as the TAC CP, it is able to move quickly, and it *can* move frequently without disruption to command and control, because it is lighter than the traditional TOC.

The TOC should be no larger than eight vehicles, the key ones being three M577s — the S-3's, the S-2's, and the FSO's. The other vehicles in the TOC are the thin-skinned vehicles that are ancillary to its mission — the battalion XO's, the S-3's, the HHC XO's, and the communications platoon's light wheeled vehicles.

The battalion XO controls the TOC, or, in his absence, the S-3. The principal personnel in the S-3 section are the S-3 Air, the chemical officer, and the operations sergeant, augmented by another NCO, preferably in the rank of staff sergeant, to assist the operations sergeant. The air liaison officer is not assigned to a shift and should not normally be in the TOC. (Shifts will not be discussed here because they tend to be somewhat dependent on the personalities of the individuals involved. It is up to the battalion XO, the S-2, the S-3, and the intelligence and operations sergeants to ensure that the members of all shifts, both the S-2's, and the S-3's, are well trained and competent.) The entire S-2 section mans the TOC unless it is necessary to send a representative with the TAC CP. When the TAC CP requires someone from the S-2 section, that person should be the battlefield information control center officer or the senior intelligence analyst.

The FSO's location is dependent upon the desires of the battalion commander, but consideration should be given to leaving him at the TOC where he can manage and plan supporting fires more effectively. He cannot fully plan and manage the supporting fires from the TAC CP. The FO with the TAC CP can call for the fires the

battalion commander needs. Wherever the FSO is, the battalion XO or S-3 should see that he is kept abreast of the tactical situation at all times and is included in planning and anticipating the needs of the direct battle.

The primary role of the people in the TOC is to monitor the direct battle over the battalion command net and to assist the commander when needed. We found the TOC configuration shown in Figure 1 the most efficient, and it generally permits the employment of the TOC in constricted terrain.

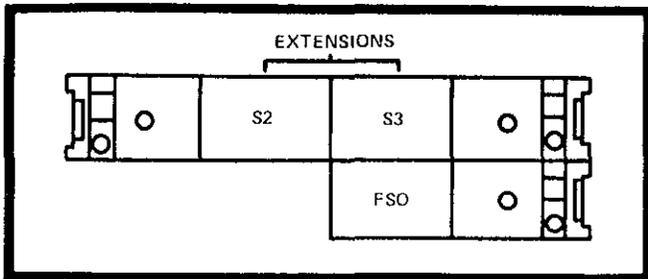


FIGURE 1. CONFIGURATION OF TOC VEHICLES (S2 AND S3 POSITIONS ARE INTERCHANGEABLE)

The use of camouflage nets and concertina wire must be weighed against the tactical situation and the terrain; they are cumbersome and time-consuming to deploy and remove. Nets should probably be used in generally static defensive operations in sparsely vegetated or deciduous areas, especially if the enemy's intelligence collection efforts are principally made up of overhead and ground based systems focused on battalion or company C³ systems. Neither nets nor wire should be used during offensive and counteroffensive operations or operations in densely vegetated or coniferous areas, or when enemy intelligence collection systems are principally derived from signal intelligence. Without this encumbrance, the TOC can establish itself more quickly at a new site. Thus, security is sacrificed for speed.

The internal configuration of the TOC is shown in Figure 2. The ramps of the M577s are kept in the raised position because this allows the radio operators (instead of senior NCOs and officers) to operate the radios; it provides more rapid protection from artillery; and it provides more usable space in the extension. The battalion and brigade command nets are remoted from the S-3's M577 to the area indicated in Figure 2, and the brigade O&I net is remoted to the S-2 area. (This requires one additional AN/GRA-39, which is taken from the command group.)

Radio-telephone operators are trained to respond to routine reports and requests for information, but they automatically defer to the senior officer present — who is able to monitor the nets (via the remote hook-up) — for calls from the battalion commander, or for calls that request permission to perform any type of activity. The remote is used as an intercom between the M577 and the extension. The radio-telephone operators are supervised and assisted by the shift NCOIC who also records all radio traffic in the log.

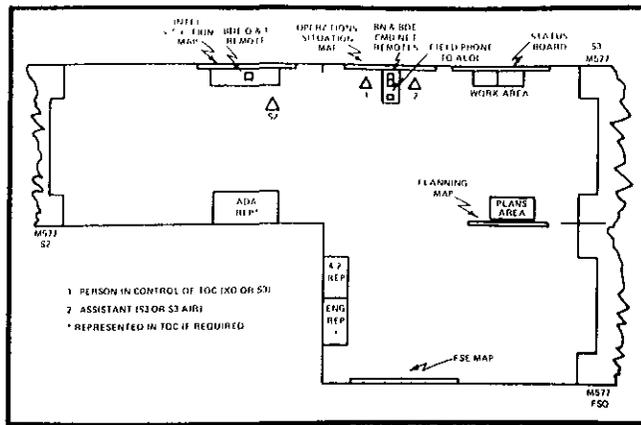


FIGURE 2. INTERNAL TOC CONFIGURATION

The configuration shown in Figure 2 allows for a good flow of information between the S-3 and the S-2. (Information flow is often lacking in TOCs, with the S-2 usually not fully aware of the current tactical situation.) It also allows the FSO to monitor both the friendly and the enemy situation closely.

AUGMENTED

Here again, the communications permitted by the MTOE must be augmented. The S-2's and the S-3's M577s must be equipped identically so that either vehicle can perform the other's mission as well as its own. This is most crucial during movements by echelon. The TOC should be the net control station (NCS) at all times and should never pass the burden of control to the TAC CP. Either of these two M577s can displace first. The crews — "jump teams" — must be crossloaded between the two vehicles during movements by echelon, and everything works best when these "jump teams" have been pre-determined and can remain the same all the time.

With the establishment of these "inviolable" rules ("jump teams," identical communications equipment, and the understanding that control of the NCS is not to be passed to the TAC), displacing the TOC becomes a quick and efficient operation. (On an average, this battalion can totally displace the TOC and be fully operational at the new site in 45 minutes. When the "inviolable" rules are not observed, however, for whatever reason, our displacement time increases dramatically.)

It is necessary to point out here that no extraneous equipment or personnel should be at the TOC. The TOC should be kept light and highly mobile, so it can displace with only a few minutes' notice. Yukon stoves are used instead of space heaters (they take less time to cool and less storage space), the RTT is at the combat trains (to reduce the electronic signature), and, as a result, the signal operation platoon is also at the combat trains. Either a single infantry squad or the better part of a platoon, depending on the situation, should be provided to the TOC for security. Depending on the size of the security element, a portion of it can also help provide security



for the combat trains, which should be no more than 1,000 to 1,500 meters from the TOC.

The HHC XO or first sergeant is responsible for coordinating the defense of the TOC, and he and the battalion signal officer make up both the site reconnaissance and the quartering party teams. Although doctrine calls for the HHC commander to fulfill this function, because of the field trains' size composition (150 people and approximately 40 vehicles), his presence at the field trains is generally more important, especially during the TOC's initial establishment or re-establishment. He commands the field trains (which is also where most of his company is located) and coordinates its defense. He should also visit the TOC periodically to check on the company XO or first sergeant and to provide any guidance they may need on the defense and the external organization of that location.

When feasible, the antiarmor company commander can provide an alternate TOC and should visit the main TOC frequently to keep abreast of the tactical situation. He should also monitor both the battalion and brigade command nets. When the TOC has been called three times (on FM nets) and has not answered, he should respond. He should also follow up to determine the reason why the TOC did not respond. (This same procedure is also applied to communications between the TOC and the TAC CP.)

LOGISTICS

The fighting XO, in his role as logistical coordinator, commands and controls the logistical "battle" through the battalion S-4. He communicates with the S-4 principally over a land line established between the combat trains and the TOC, but he can also use the battalion command net for that purpose. The land line between the

TOC and the combat trains is installed as soon as both sites have been established. The two should therefore never be more than 1,000 to 1,500 meters apart. (Another reason they should be relatively close is that the combat trains are central to the logistical operations just as the TOC is central to the combat operations).

The S-4 establishes, for command and control purposes, a site similar to the TOC; it is known as the administrative and logistics operations center (ALOC). It is the nerve center not only of the combat trains area but of the entire logistical operation for the battalion.

The ALOC consists of the S-1 and S-4's M577 and the RTT's M577. It is manned by the S-4, the S-1, the battalion maintenance sergeant (BMS), the S-1 and S-4 NCOICs, the RTOs, and the necessary operators for the RTT. The ALOC maintains a tactical and logistical situation map and enough charts to monitor the administrative and logistical "battle." (The RTT is located with the ALOC instead of with the TOC to reduce the TOC's electronic signature, and also to transmit the lengthy reports that come from the S-1 and the S-4.)

The ALOC is also the NCS for the battalion administrative/logistical net.

All requests for logistic support are sent through the ALOC, which then directs the necessary agency to fill them. In addition, all vehicle traffic to and from the FLOT (forward line of own troops) and the field trains moves through the combat trains so that the logistical flow can be more effectively controlled. This must be the ALOC's single "inviolable" rule, and it must be made a part of the logistical plan.

The combat trains also have at least one medical M577 aid station, a portion of the maintenance and service section of the battalion maintenance platoon in an M113, and at least one M88 recovery vehicle — all armored vehicles. As few thin-skinned vehicles as possible are in-

cluded in the combat trains, but at least one TPU and one 5-ton truck loaded with a standard mix of Class V supplies are there all the time, ready to be "pushed" forward by the S-4 as the tactical situation dictates. When these vehicles move forward to resupply a unit, replacements for them are called forward from the field trains. This greatly reduces response time.

To maintain an efficient logistic system that pushes products and services forward in response to the tactical situation, the ALOC has to be able to monitor the battalion command net, and it also has to be able to monitor the maintenance net. This increases to three the number of radios in the S-1 and S-4's M577. (One is authorized by MTOE.)

The field trains are the largest of the battalion's logistical operations. They can be either independently located or co-located with the brigade support area (BSA). The field trains consist of the battalion support platoon (less the elements that are located with the combat trains), the mess section, the maintenance platoon (less company maintenance contact teams and the necessary personnel from the maintenance and service section to provide maintenance at the combat trains), and the remaining support personnel. These elements are large enough to provide for their own defense, but it is their very size and diversity that requires the presence of the HHC commander to coordinate not only the trains' defense but also their movement when required. (Doctrine states that the support platoon leader should coordinate the field trains, but the support platoon leader is also the S-4's representative in the field trains and serves as liaison with the BSA as well. The burden of coordinating the movement and defense of the field trains requires someone's full-time attention. It is for this reason and others stated earlier that this mission is best accomplished by the HHC commander.)

MAINTENANCE

With the centralization of maintenance at battalion level, it is necessary to establish a maintenance net that is independent of the administrative/logistical net. This prevents overcrowding that net, and it makes the administrative, logistical, and maintenance efforts more responsive. Maintenance contact teams are in direct support or under the operational control of the rifle companies and monitor the company command nets. But they are also entered into the maintenance net and can request parts, recovery, and assistance through the ALOC.

The ALOC, manned by the BMS, can forward these requests to the field trains quickly, or it can direct elements in the combat trains to respond.

The establishment of a maintenance net requires only two additional radios, one for the battalion maintenance officer (BMO) and one for the battalion maintenance technician (BMT). The BMO is not fixed to one location; he moves to the critical place at the critical time. The BMT stays in the field trains area to supervise the maintenance effort there and to maintain contact with the direct support maintenance unit.

One key to the maintenance effort for the battalion is a published and enforced schedule of evacuation criteria. A recommended schedule is as follows:

- **Company maintenance contact teams.** In the defense, evacuate a piece of equipment to the combat trains if it can't be repaired in two hours; in the offense, evacuate it if it can't be repaired in one hour.

- **Combat trains.** In the defense, evacuate equipment to the field trains if it can't be repaired in six hours; in the offense, evacuate it if it can't be repaired in two hours.

If a piece of equipment must be evacuated to the field trains from a company maintenance contact team, it is first evacuated to the combat trains, and the combat trains then evacuate it to the field trains. This returns recovery capability quickly to the company.

The fighting XO in a battalion has many difficult tasks to perform. In performing them he cannot allow himself to become divorced from either the combat or the logistical operations. He must develop the logistic "battle" to support the direct battle in a timely and responsive manner.

To help him in this effort are the S-4 and members of the battalion's special staff. The XO must anticipate the needs of his unit, both tactically and logistically, and he must see that reports are sent to higher headquarters to keep them informed of the current tactical and logistical situations. He assists his commander, anticipating his needs and relieving him of some of the more mundane and less critical tasks. The XO is, in fact, the battalion's deputy commander, and as a true "fighting XO," he must be prepared to assume command at any time, instantly and confidently.

Major Stephen C. Livingston recently completed an assignment as executive officer of the 1st battalion, 30th Infantry, 3d Infantry Division. Previously, he served in several staff positions in the 1st Cavalry Division and the 25th Infantry Division and also served on the staff of a division support command. A 1970 ROTC graduate of Wichita State University, he is now assigned to the ROTC Detachment at Southeast Louisiana University.

