
An NTC Lesson

The Light Infantry Battalion 2IC

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Articles on lessons learned from training at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin are plentiful, but not much has been said about the key role of a battalion second in command (2IC) at the NTC, particularly from a light infantry viewpoint. Normally, the role of a battalion 2IC is limited to making sure his unit deploys safely and on time to the exercise area. Once there, however, the actual orchestration of military operations is handled by the commander and the primary staff, and the battalion 2IC reverts to his garrison role as a "brush fire stomper."

During an NTC rotation last year involving a brigade task force from the 7th Infantry Division (Light), it soon became apparent that each battalion 2IC was to play a much more significant role. From that experience, several lessons were learned, particularly regarding a 2IC's responsibilities in supervising and coordinating the battalion staff; planning administration and logistics; supervising the battalion tactical operations center (TOC); and coordinating casualty evacuation.

The key to the successful completion of any mission is a battalion staff's thorough analysis of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time) and its ability to furnish the battalion commander with the information he needs to make timely decisions and formulate his commander's intent. The 2IC must therefore take an active role in the staff planning process and the development of the operations order.

Upon receipt of a warning order, the battalion 2IC can energize the battalion staff to do two things — begin looking

ahead at the next mission so that initial planning can take place and determining what key information is needed from higher headquarters, adjacent headquarters, and the battalion's own units and staff sections. Frequently, staff sections wait until a brigade fragmentary order (FRAGO) is published before they begin any initial planning. Unfortunately, the order is often late arriving at the battalion's TOC, and valuable planning time is lost.

ASSUMPTIONS

Even if the battalion commander and the S-3 are not present at this point, the staff can develop some planning assumptions based on its initial mission analysis, along with possible courses of action. These steps will greatly assist the planning when the brigade FRAGO is received and also will provide the battalion commander and the S-3 an initial concept that can be refined once the formal command and staff process begins. Furthermore, this involvement by the 2IC will help reduce staff planning time and increase the time the battalion commander, his staff, and the company commanders have for preparing the battlefield.

Secondly, the battalion 2IC needs to work closely with the battalion S-3 during the initial command and staff process when a mission is analyzed and when specified or implied tasks are defined. For example, the 2IC can assign tasks and develop planning guidance for the S-1 and the S-4, who are often not present during mission analysis. (Un-

fortunately, most battalion S-1s and S-4s never really get involved in the planning process until courses of action are being analyzed, and even then their input can be flawed by a lack of necessary information.)

Clearly, the command and staff process is constrained during field operations, but here again the 2IC can help. He can make sure key questions are asked and mission information is exchanged, and that everyone — not just the battalion commander and the S-3 — understands the battalion's mission and the concept of the operation. Too often, the 2IC relinquishes this responsibility for staff coordination to the battalion S-3, who at this point is probably already overwhelmed with operational matters.

At times, too, the 2IC will have to use the radio or travel to the combat trains to inform staff officers of changes in mission guidance or to promulgate staff guidance to make sure the operations order is completely developed.

As for administrative and logistical planning, no field training exercise or command post exercise can duplicate as well as the NTC the effect of these factors on the battlefield.

A light infantry task force particularly needs to consider how it will resupply all its elements with all classes of supply over extended distances. The administrative workload increases dramatically with the attachment of more units, usually without any increase in the number of administrative personnel. In short, a great deal of stress is placed on all the administrative and logistical systems. Once again, the 2IC can play a

pivotal role in providing combat service support (CSS) planning guidance and in supervising CSS operations on the basis of the battalion commander's concept. Even when the 2IC, the S-1, and the S-4 try to anticipate problem areas, unforecasted requirements and the lack of an adequate logistics command and control system can prove troublesome.

Several of the major lessons learned in this area, although they directly apply to light infantry forces, are also worthy of consideration by heavy forces. One of these lessons concerns the location of the battalion's supply operators. Field Circular 7-13 suggests they be located as shown in Table 1. The task force's experience at the NTC indicates, however, that the disposition shown in Table 2 is better for several reasons:

- The headquarters company commander can provide continuous coordination with brigade support area (BSA) to support the battalion forward.

- The support platoon leader is better used to provide coordination between the combat trains and the field trains. In addition, by having the HHC commander coordinating with the BSA, the support platoon leader is free to supervise his platoon in getting supplies from the field trains to the combat trains.

- Many times, since the S-4 is gone from the combat trains, having the S-1 and the command sergeant major located there further facilitates administrative and logistical operations. Additionally, the location of the battalion S-1, S-4, and CSM near the TOC permits their timely involvement in planning the mission and developing the operations order.

- Administrative and logistics planning is further improved by reducing the number of locations to which the 2IC must go for coordination.

- This configuration provides for the establishment of an administrative/logistics center (ALC) as well as for an alternate TOC location by using the combat trains not only for their location from a command and control perspective but also for their personnel composition.

Several other lessons in this area can also apply to heavy forces. First, supply

FIELD TRAINS	COMBAT TRAINS	TOC/CP
S-1 PAC S-4 Cell	S-4 Spt Plt Ldr Doctor PA Chaplain	Bn Cdr Bn XO CSM HHC Cdr S-1/S-4 Cell (as needed)

Table 1

routes, both primary and alternate, should always be designated. These routes facilitate the selection of logistic release points and casualty collection points. And all CSS assets need to be controlled by the battalion S-4 so they can be used by the entire task force.

The high volume of all classes of supply needed by a unit to fight in a mid-

FIELD TRAINS	COMBAT TRAINS	TOC/CP
HHC Cdr S-4 Cell (S-4 NCOIC) PAC	S-1 S-4 CSM Doctor PA Chaplain	Bn Cdr HHC XO Bn XO

Table 2

high-intensity environment can severely strain the transportation assets of a light infantry task force. From the mission analysis, the battalion 2IC needs to anticipate transportation and resupply needs so that the FAST (forward area support team) can respond upon request. The battalion needs to file requests at least 24 to 48 hours in advance.

The logistical package (LOGPAC) system, with its standard Class I, III, V, and water resupply per company, works well, but the other classes of supply must also be considered. Additionally, the direct exchange of MILES equipment can become a problem. The battalion S-3 section should dedicate an NCO full time to the issue, turn-in, and direct exchange of MILES equipment and attach him to the battalion S-4 section. MILES can be treated as Class VII and become part of the LOGPAC system.

Depending upon the weather conditions, water can become the key resupply item. The 7th Division task force, using 175-gallon water pillows, 55-gallon blivets, and water cans, provided 1.5 gallons of water per man per day. During an infiltration attack, however,

resupplying the battalion and company scout teams became difficult because of the distances between teams and because they were behind enemy lines. This is a clear case in which logistical considerations need to be part of the mission analysis and the development of the reconnaissance and surveillance plan. Aerial resupply is a possibility, of course, if METT-T permits and aircraft are available.

The key to the success of a battalion resupply mission and the battalion 2IC's ability to develop logistics planning guidance is the involvement of each company 2IC in determining the requirements for his unit in making sure the logistical status report (LOGSTAT) is accurate and submitted on time. *(Timely and accurate reporting continues to be a major planning factor.)*

Class IV supply needs to be in pre-palletized loads in the BSA. The loading of these supplies is labor intensive; configuring Class IV in pre-palletized loads to be pushed forward upon arrival in the area of operation would save a significant amount of time in preparing the battlefield.

A pre-positioned Class V supply package and, if possible, the pre-positioning of other packages of supplies in unit sectors during defensive situations also improves resupply operations during the battle when resupply vehicles may not be able to go forward.

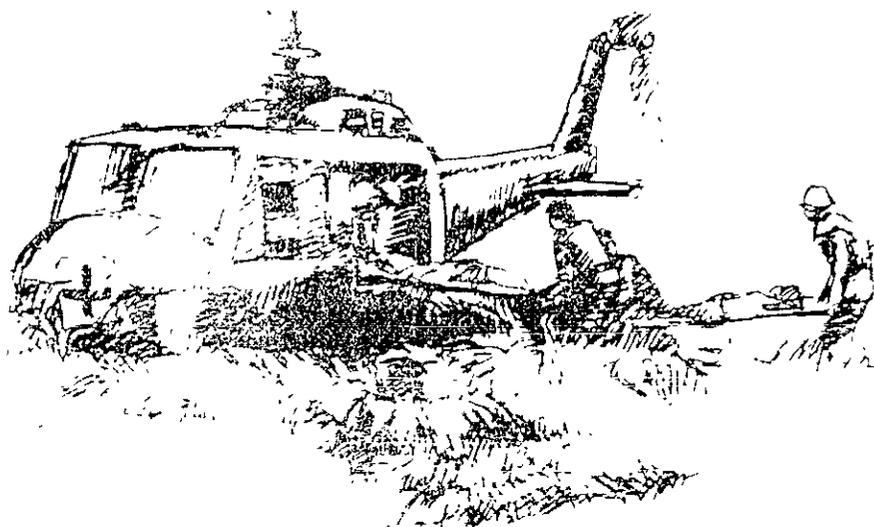
SECURITY

When it comes to protecting the combat trains, the best way is to avoid their detection through the selection of a good location and the use of camouflage. But units should also consider augmenting the combat trains with a minimum security force and providing the trains personnel with antiarmor weapon systems.

The hardware for the combat support computer system is durable and combat capable, but the software program as it pertains to the Personnel Daily Summary needs to be revised in the areas of tracking casualties, processing SIDPERS wartime transactions, and producing an accurate battalion rollout.

At the same time, commanders and leaders at all levels need to write awards and letters of sympathy. Many units never practice doing these in their field training exercises, and the battalion 2IC should see to it that several awards and letters are prepared by each unit.

Even though the 2IC may not be able to solve every logistical problem, particularly those associated with computer software, he still must ensure that a detailed administrative and logistical plan is developed that will anticipate shortcomings. His ability to ensure the smooth functioning of the ALC will prove invaluable throughout the training.



CASUALTIES

Coordinating for casualty evacuation is another key area of concern at the NTC. Few units practice casualty evacuation or educate their leaders and soldiers properly in the administration associated with casualty processing (DA Forms 1155/1156). The battalion 2IC must become actively involved in the process and, in conjunction with the staff — specifically the battalion S-1 and the medical platoon leader — must develop a medical evacuation plan that is based on METT-T. Once the plan has been approved, the S-1 should coordinate its execution from the combat trains through the ALC while the medical platoon leader supervises the execution of the plan in the forward areas.

A casualty collection plan should be developed for units and soldiers inserted deep behind enemy lines. Aerial evacuation is possible if the tactical situation permits. Alternative methods need to be developed even to the extent of reducing foxhole strength, if necessary, to provide litter-carrying teams.

Casualty collection points should be designated along primary and alternate supply routes and near identifiable terrain features so that they will be easy to locate. Drivers need to reconnoiter supply routes from the combat trains to the objective area (if the tactical situation permits) or to each unit defensive position so they will know how to find the casualty collection points. Units also

need to provide guides at these designated points.

Contingency plans for aerial evacuation always need to be developed and coordinated. If ambulances are not available, the S-4 should also coordinate for additional ground transportation.

Finally, once the unit returns home from the NTC, the battalion 2IC should make sure this subject is not neglected in the battalion's training program. Units should practice medical evacuation, casualty collection, and the accurate completion of the forms in all field training exercises and ARTEPs.

TOC

The operation of the TOC is another area in which the 2IC can help solve some problems. The inability of a TOC to perform planning, reporting, and command and control functions adequately was mentioned in an INFANTRY article last year, along with the location of the TOC and a lack of security. (See "NTC: Lessons Learned," by Captain Gregory M. Heritage, INFANTRY, January-February 1986, page 39.)

If the 2IC gets involved in establishing set procedures for TOC operations, he can help solve such problems. He can do this by seeing that information management systems are developed and that all TOC personnel understand their

respective duties. So much information is generated at the NTC that battalion staffs soon find themselves unable to function if they do not have a firm concept of the TOC SOPs and of the reports and information required by higher headquarters.

The 2IC needs to be present in the TOC during key military operations, because in the absence of the battalion commander he is the key decision maker. He also needs to supervise the use of both passive and active measures for protecting the TOC from detection. In brief, he is directly responsible for supervising all TOC operations.

The battalion 2IC cannot solve all the problems his unit encounters at the NTC, but in these areas at least he can play a pivotal role. He can act as the catalyst through which things happen. By carefully orchestrating and synchronizing the battalion's assets and by ensuring the timely and accurate exchange of information in and out of the battalion TOC, the 2IC provides the key to a successful NTC rotation as well as success on the battlefield. His competence and performance do make a difference.

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