

tion with the commander.

The statement about the commander's hip pocket was intended to point out the fact that a commander must fully and continuously keep his FSO abreast of the situation and his own intent in executing the mission. For his part, the FSO must totally understand the concept of the operation and how the commander envisions integrating fire support—especially during the execution phase.

It is surprising, therefore, that some of the same commanders who insist on having their FIST chiefs right in their "hip pocket" during a battle ignore them during the planning process for that battle. Some commanders may even fail to take their fire support coordinators to hear the battle order. But just as the battalion order is where the planning process begins for a company commander, it should also be where the company FSO conducts his face-to-face coordination with the battalion FSO, who is, essentially, his second boss. Just as the battalion commander gives guidance to his com-

pany commander on his plan, so the battalion FSO briefs the company FSO concerning the battalion's fire support plan. This coordination must take place in order for the battalion FSO to execute the fire support tasks directed by the battalion commander.

The final misconception is that the burden of responsibility for developing the relationship between a company commander and his FSO rests with the FSO. That responsibility belongs to both. In fact, the company commander has the final responsibility. After all, as the leader and trainer of lieutenants, he is just as responsible for teaching the FSO to apply what he has learned in school as for teaching his other young lieutenants to apply their knowledge to the battlefield.

This is not to say that the commander should try to teach his FSO artillery tactics and techniques, but he should teach maneuver tactics and how he, the commander, fights battles. In turn, the FSO should be able to discuss with the com-

mander how fire support systems can be integrated into the planned maneuver. Through this dialogue, the maneuver company commander and the FSO will succeed on the battlefield because they will have achieved the understanding that makes an effective combat team possible.

In today's peacetime Army, because of the limitations on training realism and the obvious safety considerations, it is sometimes difficult for maneuver company commanders to see how well fire support complements their schemes of maneuver. But any commander who fully understands the FIST concept, and who employs his FIST as it was meant to be employed, will be able to integrate fire support effectively into his maneuver operations.

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COHORT Housing Program

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A light infantry battalion preparing to receive its COHORT soldiers fresh from one-station unit training (OSUT) faces several challenges. One of these is helping the married soldiers find housing, plan budgets, and integrate their families into the Army community. The ultimate goal is to accomplish this mission as effectively, easily, and quickly as possible.

During March 1986, the 3d Battalion, 14th Infantry, 10th Mountain Division at Fort Benning faced just such a challenge. Through creative thinking, foresight, and hard work, the battalion met this chal-

lenge by developing a comprehensive housing assistance and sponsorship program. This program could also be of great value to other units preparing to receive COHORT soldiers in the future.

First, an informative and detailed housing packet was produced that provided the relevant financial and rental information as a guide for incoming married soldiers who might be searching for off-post housing. In addition, married soldiers were matched with dedicated sponsors in a program designed to help them consider feasible housing alternatives, find neces-

sary points of contact on and off post, and make responsible decisions.

In planning the housing packet, which would go to each soldier while he was still in OSUT, members of the battalion contacted all local apartment complexes, real estate companies, and trailer parks, and checked classified advertisements in local newspapers. Most of the managers and real estate agents were glad to help. Once the information had been collected from these sources, a simple off-post rental and sale packet was constructed. A three-column table was made up listing

the agent/owner/complex (including addresses and telephone numbers); the type of housing being rented or sold (apartment, house, or trailer); and the average monthly rental fee. (Specialists-4 John Franklin and Todd Bryer did the legwork for the housing plan and carried it out.)

The next step was to consider what was actually realistic, financially, for the new soldiers. More important, the soldiers had to be informed, in the simplest terms, what they could or could not afford to do. The battalion did this in two ways.

First, the battalion commander wrote a cover letter to accompany the housing packet, telling the soldiers, "You need to start thinking about where your family is going to live after you graduate and, if you live off-post, how you are going to get to and from work. Look closely at how much money it is going to cost to move your family here. Unfortunately, it is very expensive to live off post. . . you *must* have a place for them to live *before* you make arrangements for them to come here."

AUTHORITY FIGURE

(It is mandatory that a soldier receive such advice from authority figures, not only for his family's and his own well-being but also for the unit's well-being and future combat readiness and effectiveness. The soldier may decide to wait until a later date, or a promotion, before he considers moving his family to his duty station.)

In addition to these comments from the commander, a sample monthly budget was included in each package, including initial expenses such as security, telephone, and utility deposits and downpayment figures on high-expense items. The budget included all normal monthly household expenses at realistic rates for the local area. These figures were subtracted from the pay and allowance figures for married privates first and second class to give them hard figures, on paper, to study and consider before committing themselves to a plan of action.

Although such a budget may seem unimportant or inconsequential to older and more experienced personnel, its impor-

tance to an 18-year-old private, newly married and moving his family for the first time, should not be underestimated. Again, the primary consideration is the welfare of the soldier, his family, and the unit from the first day of his arrival in the unit.

As additional features of the housing packet, a map of the post and surrounding off-post areas was included as well as a list of telephone, utility, and cable television companies with pertinent information, addresses, and telephone numbers. The battalion color coded a map of the local area according to the expense of renting in general areas, crime rates (obtained from local police departments), and distances to place of duty. This en-



abled a soldier to use his housing reference list, compare the information on the list with his highlighted map, and begin searching for housing in an organized manner, with the assistance of his sponsor.

The sponsorship program was the second portion of the battalion's program, and it proved invaluable. Once again, early planning was crucial. Sponsors for the graduating OSUT COHORT soldiers were picked early so they could be prepared for their mission. Selection was based on maturity, dedication to the unit and the Army, marital status, and ability as well as willingness to enter the program. Wherever possible, they were volunteers who were leaders in the soldier's direct chain of command. This also proved to be an important step in the vertical bonding of a COHORT soldier to

his new leaders while fostering commitment to the unit.

The entire chain of command was instructed to allow these sponsors the time they needed to accomplish their mission. After preparing for their job and attending the housing briefing, many of the sponsors needed a great deal of time when the soldiers first arrived. They sometimes had to provide transportation for their soldiers to search for housing and had to be familiar with the area as well as with the entire packet the soldiers had received earlier. They also needed a briefing or a short class on one-on-one counseling, if they were not already experienced in that area.

A sponsor's job was to help his soldier find housing, show him he was cared about while providing a role model, and assist the soldier, in any way possible, in dealing with the problems inherent in moving his family.

If a sponsorship program such as this one is adequately thought out and planned well in advance, a unit will recognize higher morale, decrease the time needed to be combat ready, and meet its duty to care for and provide assistance to the new married soldiers. For the best results, the two aspects of the program, the housing packet and the sponsorship program, must be combined into a unified effort.

In the 3d Battalion, 14th Infantry, the housing program succeeded in helping soldiers make the difficult transition from being geographic bachelors in training to being permanent party members. The unit was able to begin its training mission without unnecessary delay and with maximum benefit to the new soldier and his family, the gaining unit, and the Army family values tradition. It can be a valuable tool to others facing the same challenge in the future.

Copies of the battalion's original housing plan can be obtained from Commander, 3d Battalion, 14th Infantry, ATTN: S-1, Fort Benning, GA 31905-5965.

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