

# Supporting Light Infantry

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Battalion and brigade task forces from the 25th Infantry Division (Light) deploy to locations throughout the Pacific Ocean areas to participate in joint and combined exercises. These exercises provide superb training in environments that pose both low- and mid-intensity threat scenarios.

While training is certainly the primary objective in all exercises, logistical planning and support for such exercises are also challenging and equally important in terms of contingency training. This is particularly true during deployments to countries where there is no in-country U.S. military support structure, no status-of-forces agreement, and a 7,000-mile air line of communication (ALOC) to Schofield Barracks.

For the past few years, the 25th Infantry Division has participated in Exercise Cobra Gold--an annual exercise held in the Kingdom of Thailand. In July 1987, the division deployed an 850-man battalion task force to Thailand, the largest conventional Army force ever to participate in Cobra Gold. Unlike other training exercises in the Pacific, Cobra Gold requires that the battalion task force plan as well as execute a two-phased program--Phase I is a two-week, combined cross-training period focused on a basecamp; Phase II is a three-week combined field training exercise. This was a superb training opportunity for the staff officers since it presented a variety of challenges in providing support to light infantry forces.

The 25th Division's experience in Cobra Gold 87 is offered here as an

example of the logistical planning and support required for an exercise of this kind. Other units can adapt the techniques to suit their own needs.

In addition to the infantry battalion, the task force included an artillery battery, an engineer platoon, a joint preventive medicine detachment, a 50-man Marine Anglico unit, military police, divisional tactical satellite operators, an air defense artillery section, Reserve Component linguists, nine helicopters, a forward support team, and a laundry unit.

## PLANNING

The planning began six months before the exercise was scheduled to begin. Contact was made with the agencies that were designated to constitute a logistical support network for the task force: the exercise representative of the U.S. country team, an officer assigned to the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) in Thailand; the U.S. Embassy's commissary/exchange manager in Thailand; a senior logistical officer from the Thai Army; a contracting officer from WESTCOM, the division's major U.S. Army command (MACOM); a logistical planner from WESTCOM who was to serve as a support liaison officer at the JUSMAG during the exercise; and a divisional forward area support coordinator (FASCO) for the battalion task force. The battalion executive officer had overall staff coordinating responsibility. (A similar roster of logistical planners would be appropriate for any such deployment.)

By TOE (table of organization and equipment), a light infantry battalion has little inherent maintenance or transportation capability. Moreover, with no in-country support base, all classes of supply would depend upon the initial quantities deployed, local contracting, or a long ALOC using commercial aircraft. Commercial air would pose host country customs challenges, however, and was planned only as a back-up or emergency resupply system. Another restriction, of course, was the amount of airlift allocated to the exercise and how much of it could be used to transport supplies.

The planning process included two formal conferences and one informal visit during the six-month period. The first step in planning for the support of any exercise of this scope is to study the historical data. In this case, the after-action reports produced by Cobra Gold battalion task forces in the past were vital documents for the follow-on planning effort. (They also underscored the need for such detailed historical analysis.)

Either before or during the initial planning conference (IPC), the logistical planners representing the task force had to identify the aircraft and the MILVANs (dismounted containers) that would be available for the deployment. This data, historical documents, command guidance, and the two nations' interoperability objectives roughly determined the task force's composition.

Before the IPC, the infantry battalion's XO and S-4, the major command and division logistical planners, and

the FASCO drafted a logistical memorandum of agreement (MOA). The MOA addressed each class of supply; transportation requirements (including tanker, wrecker, and crane support); ammunition storage and residue disposal; provision for and reimbursement of Class III (including JP4 fuel); Class VI supplies (for the mini-PX at the basecamp); the use of electricity; basecamp improvements in accordance with AR 350-28; Class I supplements; potable and non-potable water supply; customs clearances; combined medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) procedures; use of host nation medical facilities; helicopter maintenance and recovery procedures; emergency leave routing; mail; allocation of imprest funds; and responsibilities for handling important visitors.

Additional topics for the MOA included the host nation's preparation of range and cross-training facilities; the provision and upgrading of the vehicle motor pool and wash rack; the provision of host nation linguists; the preparation of bilingual signs; helicopter ramp space and air traffic control coordination; host nation barber support; the hosting and funding of social events; the use of host nation athletic and recreational facilities in the basecamp; host nation basecamp security; the provision of cold storage facilities and refrigerator vans; and refuse removal.

Many of these issues had to be coordinated with several agents before an effective MOA could be developed. For example, during Cobra Gold 87, 20 Thai trucks were provided by the Royal Thai Army (RTA) to support the task force. Clearly, the RTA representative who signed the MOA was involved, as were the FASCO, the task force XO and S-4, the JUSMAG representative (as liaison between the RTA and the task force), and the WESTCOM signer who coordinated with U.S. Pacific Command to provide Title 10 funds for reimbursing the Thai costs.

After coordinating the MOA at the initial planning conference, task force representatives focused on our own support efforts. These included

morale support measures, finance team support for currency exchange and check cashing, coordination with U.S. customs representatives to clarify our redeployment procedures, purchase of expendable supplies, coordination for multi-denominational religious support, public affairs coverage, and task force augmentation by U.S. linguists.

Once the final task force composition—rolling stock, personnel, helicopters—had been determined, the task force logistical planners began to look at aircraft use; use of MILVANS; requirements for in-country local purchase and the consequent imprest funds needed by the task force (in accordance with AR 350-28); and the shipment of ammunition. (Ammunition had to be confirmed six months before the exercise start date, since the Military Sealift Command and the Military Airlift Command channels require a great deal of lead time to prepare for ammunition shipments.)

The conservation of airlift to move our soldiers and rolling stock was crucial. We made every effort, therefore, to use MILVAN space and to procure locally the items that would cost more to ship than to purchase (Class IV, for example). Arms racks, office supplies, Quartermaster equipment, paper products, field furniture, batteries, Class VIII, water and fuel drums, and concertina wire were

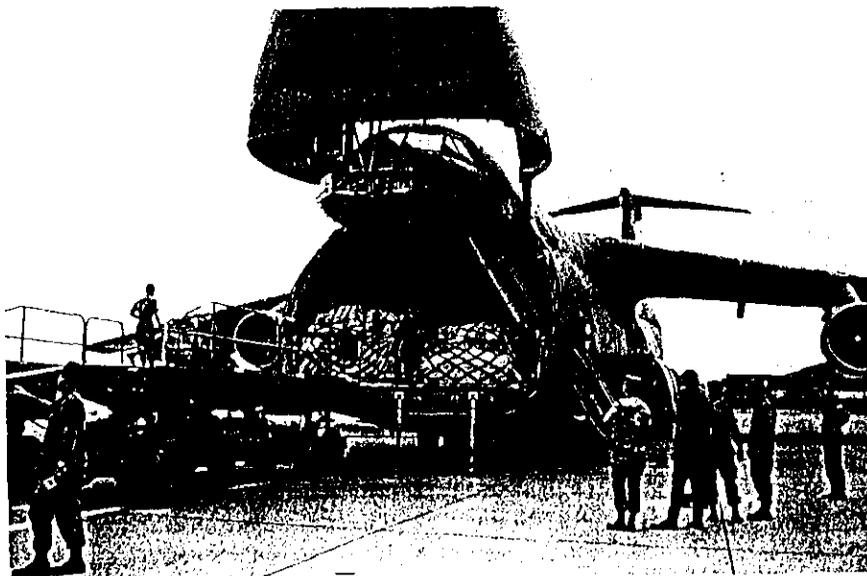
shipped in MILVANS.

During the intermediate planning visit 90 days before the exercise, a preventive medicine survey of the exercise area was conducted to evaluate the medical threat to deploying soldiers. (Ideally, this should be a combined effort including the host nation's medical representatives.)

For Cobra Gold 87, the preventive medicine effort included a division representative, as well as preventive medicine officers from Tripler Army Medical Center, the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and the U.S. Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences in Bangkok. As a result of the preventive medicine survey, immunizations for task force soldiers, Class III requirements for the deployment, and available medical facilities in the exercise area were identified.

Once the logistical planning at the operational level had been completed (following the final planning conference), logistical preparation and execution at the tactical level had to be carried out. For the most part, this amounted to the management and allocation of the resources and services that had been coordinated during the planning process. (In other exercises, it may also include creative efforts to arrange support that has not been anticipated.)

Supporting a light infantry task force in the field during such an exer-



Unloading supplies at Korat, Thailand, Cobra Gold 87.

cise requires precise logistical wargaming, taking into consideration the effects of METT-T (mission, enemy, troops, terrain, and time) on both the likely and the conceivable support challenges. A number of techniques within MTOB constraints and the doctrinal limits of FM 7-72 will succeed. The ones pointed out here are only one such set of techniques.

It is critical for a light infantry task force, for example, to be augmented with truck support from the host nation. In most such exercises, even those that have been allocated a generous amount of airlift, only about half of a battalion's organic vehicles will be able to deploy. Accordingly, a truck master from the FAST should be part of the task force to coordinate the use of organic and supporting transportation assets. And the trucks provided by the host nation should be tactical vehicles, if possible, to support field training events.

In Thailand, the extreme heat and the threat of torrential rains made water resupply and pre-planned slingload operations vital. A potable water point in the exercise area and a dedicated water purification team within the support platoon were the keys to an ample, uninterrupted supply of water. Commercially bottled water was not an economical or prudent option.

Water and fuel drums must be deployed along with enough slings and cargo nets to lift water, fuel, rucksacks, rations, ammunition, or vehicles. Poor secondary road systems, restrictive terrain, severe weather, and extreme heat can make slingload operations a tactical necessity, however, and they must be included in the planning.

A successful technique used during Cobra Gold 87 placed the battalion's headquarters company XO and battalion motor officer at the combat trains in charge of slingload and MEDEVAC

**FIELD TRAINS**  
 Support Platoon Leader  
**FAST OIC/NCOIC**  
**S-4 NCOIC**  
 Ammo NCO  
 COMSEC Custodian  
 Wireman  
 Reenlistment NCO  
 PAC Supervisor  
 TACCS Operator  
 Legal Clerk  
 Mail Clerk

Mess Section -----  
 (depending on the tactical situation)

**COMBAT TRAINS**  
 Bn XO  
 Bn S-4  
 Bn S-1  
**HHC XO/BMO**  
 Bn Surgeon  
 Bn PA  
 Med Plt Ldr  
 Med PSG  
 Chaplain  
 Bn Maint Sect  
 Wire Team  
 Spt PSG  
 HHC Armorer  
 Co Supply SGTs  
 Mess Sect

**MAIN CP**  
 Bn XO  
 HHC Cdr  
**HHC 1SG**

operations, the trains area and its security, and forward vehicle maintenance. The field trains were run by the FASCO with slingload and CDS operations managed by a rigger-qualified noncommissioned officer.

The support platoon leader pushed all classes of supply 40 miles from the field trains to the combat trains, as well as 5 miles from the water point to the combat trains. The S-4 and the S-1 ran the administrative-logistical operations center in the combat trains, which also served as the alternate tactical operations center. Company supply sergeants with unit HMMWVs (high-mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicles) and trailers handled resupply from the combat trains to the unit logistics release point. (A typical breakdown of key logistical personnel in a battalion task force augmented by a forward area support team is shown in the accompanying chart.)

Medical evacuation must be planned from the point of incident to the home station medical facility, including facilities for stabilizing patients enroute. During Cobra Gold 87, evacuation was by HMMWV to the aid station at the combat trains, then by helicopter from the combat trains to the Thai hospital in Korat (in the vicinity of the field trains). Theater medical evaluation procedures included

using stabilizing facilities in Bangkok (which exceeded the capabilities at Korat), U.S. Air Force C-9A aircraft evacuation to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines and then, if necessary, to Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu. Although the task force experienced neither death nor serious injury, every leg of this system was used during the exercise.

Supporting light infantry is a difficult task anywhere. This is especially true in the austere environment of a developing host nation when the strategic lift limits the number of organic vehicles participating in an exercise. Performing this task successfully requires thorough, detailed planning and coordination followed by flexible, creative execution.

In spite of the many support challenges of such an operation, an orderly approach to the task that emphasizes historical lessons learned, and that coordinates the diverse logistical players, will result in excellent support for a deployed task force.

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