

# TRAINING NOTES



## Moving the Main CP In a Heavy Task Force

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Most of the heavy task forces that train at the National Training Center (NTC) do not seem to know when or how to move their main command posts (CPs) around the battlefield. Some typical comments on unit after action reviews are that the main CP was not positioned properly; that it moved during critical phases of the battle; that it hampered TF command, control, and synchronization; or that it lost communications with forward elements of the task force and was forced to move forward.

The problem is that these units do not habitually conduct training for their CP personnel on movement, security, and positioning. Their CP training normally focuses solely on setting up the CP and preparing plans and orders. Few units have SOPs for their command posts, and those that do usually don't follow them.

Based upon my experience at the NTC, I would like to offer some observations and techniques that may help units with their main CPs in general and with moving them in particular.

A typical heavy TF main CP is organized around the M577 armored command post vehicle. There are usually three or four M577s in the CP

— those for the S-2, the S-3, the fire support element, and the engineer — along with various numbers of wheeled vehicles, usually three to five HMMWVs and a 2½-ton cargo truck.

Attached or supporting elements — such as the ground surveillance radar section, the smoke platoon, the air defense artillery platoon, and others — sometimes stay around the TOC when they are not supporting the task force. These can add up to 15 more wheeled and tracked vehicles in the immediate CP area.

### VEHICLES

To reduce the main CP signature, the number of vehicles should be kept to a minimum. The combat support elements should be dispersed around the CP, about 500 to 1,000 meters from it, to provide security, or they should be laagered at the combat trains. Exceptions to this rule are the Stinger section NCO's vehicle and one or two others whose radios are used to eavesdrop on external communication nets.

The main CP's leadership chain should be clearly identified. While the senior leaders of the TF spend a lot of time at the main CP, they are normally

not responsible for its day to day operation. That job falls to the S-3 Air and the operations NCO. Some task forces also place the headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) executive officer (XO) at the main CP. His function is to run the outside operation — security, logistics, maintenance, and the physical movement of the CP.

There are many ways to configure a main CP. Generally there are three levels of set-up — green, amber, and red.

The green (planning) configuration is the full set-up with all extensions erected, along with any peripheral tentage (Figure 1) and with camouflage nets raised for concealment. This configuration provides a large work space and promotes staff planning and integration for the development of plans and orders. When orders briefings are conducted at the main CP, this configuration facilitates them, and it also promotes light discipline.

The disadvantages are that it presents a large signature and cannot displace quickly. For this reason, the main CP should not remain in the green configuration any longer than necessary to prepare, publish, and issue a plan or order.

The amber (preparation phase)

configuration uses only one track extension. Usually the S-3's M577 extension is erected, and all the other M577s are backed into it (Figure 2). Using only one extension still provides a common work area but creates a smaller signature. (Without such an area, the separate staff sections tend to operate solely in their own vehicles, and there is little staff interaction.) This configuration provides for a more mobile CP while also promoting light discipline during night operations, but it is not suitable for issuing orders.

The red (battle TOC) configuration, which a TF CP assumes before executing a mission, has all extensions stored and the M577s parked in a Y or an X formation (Figure 3). The ramps are down, and a common situation map is positioned outside where it is accessible to all staff members. All nonessential vehicles are positioned away from the CP in a laager at least one terrain feature away or at the combat trains. This configuration greatly reduces the CP's signature and allows increased mobility. Its disadvantages are that it provides little working area, is difficult to use during inclement weather or at night, and does not promote light discipline. A well-trained CP crew can get the ramps up and have the vehicles moving within one minute, if necessary.

A site for a main CP should be selected on the basis of the type of mission, the friendly and enemy situations, communications requirements, adjacent or lateral unit coordination, and the terrain and weather. The site must promote reliable FM communications with the TF's main body and the higher headquarters CP. Since the scouts and the security/counter-reconnaissance force normally operate outside the main CP's FM radio range, retransmission is usually necessary to establish communication with the scouts and the forward OPs.

The chosen site must be accessible to both wheeled and tracked vehicles and must provide enough parking space for the vehicles. Although there should be more than one route into and out of the site, too many such routes increase security requirements. The site must

also provide enough cover and concealment without being too difficult to locate; orders are often delayed at the NTC because commanders cannot find a CP that is too well hidden.

During offensive operations, the main CP should be situated well forward, no more than two terrain

cated with the stationary unit's CP to reduce confusion and misunderstanding. Many units tend to use a liaison officer, the S-3, or half of the main CP instead of collocating CPs. Experience indicates, though, that if main CPs are not collocated during passage of lines operations, the passage of lines is poorly coordinated and not well executed.

During defensive operations, the main CP should be farther to the rear where it will be less vulnerable. During planning, when the CP is in the green configuration, it should be near the TF's rear boundary but not in a position where it will burden the subordinate commanders. To reduce the possibility of detection, the CP should not move into its battle TOC position until the very last moment.

The CP should not be positioned astride a major enemy avenue of approach. During operations at the NTC, the opposing force (OPFOR) often detects the main CP by radio-electronic means or through its reconnaissance elements' visual sightings. The OPFOR does not normally attack that CP, though, until the TF crosses the LD. Then it attacks the CP with artillery or with ambushes by its reconnaissance elements. The OPFOR's sole purpose in waiting is to disrupt the TF's command and control facilities when initial direct fire contact is made, which is one of the most critical points in the battle.

The actual movement of a TF's command and control facilities requires detailed planning and coordination. In many cases at the NTC, though, a unit has no plans for moving its main CP during the battle other than adding a few proposed CP locations to its maneuver graphics.

To help a commander maintain command and control, the CP should remain stationary during the critical phases of an operation — moving from assembly areas and attack positions, crossing the line of departure, passage of lines, initial direct fire contact, breaching obstacles, assault on the objective, repositioning of reserve forces, and commitment of the trailing unit.

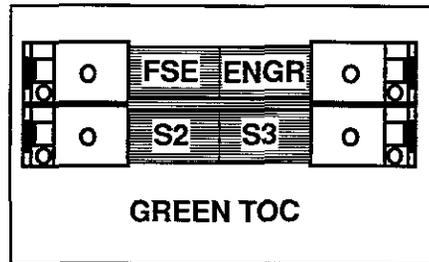


Figure 1

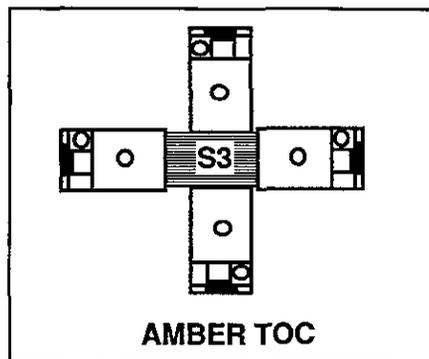


Figure 2

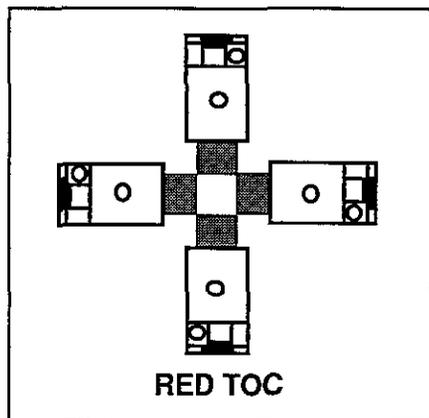


Figure 3

features behind the forward edge of the battle area or the line of departure (LD). CP sites should be planned along the TF axis or route. They should be planned through the depth of the zone of action from the LD to the final objective.

During passage of lines operations, the main CP must be physically collo-

Once the critical phases of the operation have been identified, possible CP sites are selected by map reconnaissance — a joint effort by the S-3 Air, the signal officer, and the HHC XO. If possible, a physical reconnaissance of the proposed sites should also be conducted. The movement time between sites needs to be calculated both for best cases (during the day with clear visibility) and for worst cases (at night in MOPP-4).

The S-3 Air, the CP officer in charge, must have a thorough understanding of the scheme of maneuver and the commander's intent before developing the CP's displacement plan. After determining the critical phases of an operation (the times he does *not* want the CP moving) and estimating the movement time between the proposed sites, he determines the trigger or decision points when the CP must move to support the next critical phase of the battle. A lack of communication or the whim of the second in command (2IC) cannot be allowed to trigger a CP move. The positioning of the main CP should be included in the TF's execution matrix in the operations order, in the decision support template or matrix, or in a separately published execution matrix.

While Field Manual 71-2 and ARTEP 71-2-MTP indicate that the main CP should move by echelons, there are several other movement techniques that include moving by short bounds and by long bounds.

In the move by echelon technique, the main CP is organized into forward and rear sections. The battle staff members are split equally between the two sections. The rear section remains in place and continues to perform the main CP duties while the forward section moves to the next site and sets up. As soon as the forward section is ready, the main CP duties are transferred to it. The rear section then breaks down and moves to link up with the forward section.

In a fluid situation, the two sections may by-pass each other, continually leap-frogging to the next CP site. The 2IC remains with the rear section until the forward section is ready to accept

control of the battle and then moves to the forward section.

In the technique of moving by short bounds, the entire CP moves as one unit to the next site, while the battle staff continues to monitor the battle. While main CP duties cannot be performed as well during the move, the actual distances are short — three or four kilometers — and the movement time should never exceed 15 minutes.



When moving in long bounds, the main CP transfers its functions to another command and control facility, such as the combat trains CP. Once the trains CP accepts control of the battle, the main CP moves to its next position. The distances between sites when using this technique can be up to eight kilometers. Because the main CP is not actively tracking the battle during the move, though, the time used is not critical.

Each of these three movement techniques has its advantages and disadvan-

tages. Moving by short bounds is the easiest to execute, but it requires more frequent moves. Movement by echelon is the most difficult to execute, and it requires a level of training not normally found in units training at the NTC. The least preferred method is moving by long bounds, because it requires extensive cross training and established SOPs. But it is possible that a main CP may have to use all three of them during combat operations.

Whatever technique is used to move the main CP, a unit must have a system for obtaining the critical information it missed during a move. Standard information displays within all of the CPs and well-kept staff journals make it easier to share such information.

When moving by long bounds, the stationary CP must execute an information dump when it passes control of the battle to the moving CP. One way is to have the OICs of both CPs meet on an unused net to conduct an in-depth situation update. Control should never be passed to the moving CP until its personnel completely understand what has taken place during the move.

Regardless of the movement technique, a move requires organization and coordination. Whenever possible, an advance party — led by the HHC XO or the TF signal officer — should precede the movement of the main CP. The advance party has two main responsibilities — to ensure that the site is suitable and to determine the positioning of the various elements within the site.

The movement convoy should be organized with the armored tracked vehicles leading and the wheeled vehicles trailing, and the track commander of the lead vehicle must be the most experienced navigator. Terrain driving should be used whenever possible. Each vehicle should be assigned a sector to observe and the TCs must scan and pay attention to their assigned areas of responsibility. Countless times at the NTC, main CPs have moved down a road, past fully operational enemy vehicles without ever noticing them and have suffered the consequences.

All the members of a particular staff section should not ride in the same vehicle. They and their plans and graphics should be spread across the entire main CP to prevent the possibility of losing the section if one vehicle is lost or destroyed.

All personnel in the main CP must be briefed in detail on the move. If possible, strip maps should be issued, or at least each vehicle must have a map with the location of the next site marked on it.

The main CP must have standard reaction drills for actions on contact and should practice and refine those drills whenever possible. Such actions should

include enemy air, ground, artillery, and NBC attacks.

Most important, when it is the right time for the main CP to move, it should move. Many units at the NTC don't move their main CPs until their communications have failed or until most of the TF is some 20 kilometers to the front because the leaders in the CP hesitated to move for one reason or another.

Again, the rule for moving CPs at the NTC is that "he who hesitates loses communications, loses track of the battle, and contributes nothing to the outcome."

Moving a command post around a

battlefield requires the same level of planning and coordination as moving a maneuver company. Units must train their battle staffs and CP crews in the daily operations of a main CP and must develop standing operating procedures for moving their main CPs. The objective is to have a well-trained main CP that can move, communicate, and control.

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# Moving in the Mountains

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One of the key tasks for combat leaders is timing the movement of their maneuver elements so they will be in the right places at the right times. In normal infantry terrain, calculating approximate movement time is a reasonably straightforward procedure.

Thus, the time estimates required for a cross country movement from an assembly area to an objective rally point, and for the various elements to move from the rally point to their respective positions, do not normally demand an inordinate amount of planning and evaluation. Mountainous terrain, however, imposes its own rules.

One factor that is vital to success in mountain operations is the ability of leaders, from squad through battalion level, to calculate movement time accurately. In the mountains it is not enough to just look at a two-kilometer move and guess at the time needed.

The basics of calculating movement

time in mountainous terrain for an unopposed movement are simple:

- Horizontal movement takes 60 minutes for each four kilometers.
- A gain in altitude takes 60 minutes for each 300 meters.
- A loss of altitude takes 60 minutes for each 500 meters.

From the perspective of a soldier, this is one and one-half minutes per 100 meters in horizontal distance, one minute per five meters of elevation gain, or one minute per eight and one-third meters elevation loss.

A given segment of a route is calculated first for horizontal movement and then for vertical movement. For example, in Figure 1, the 2,000-meter horizontal move (30 minutes) with a 100-meter elevation gain (20 minutes) would require a total of 50 minutes.

Each elevation gain and loss is figured separately as shown in Figure 2:

The horizontal distance of 3,000 meters takes 45 minutes; the vertical distance of 100 meters takes 20 minutes; the vertical loss of 50 meters takes 10 minutes; and the final vertical gain of 75 meters takes 15 minutes. Adding the minutes, the climb would take 90 minutes.

The conditions for this rate of movement include a good trail, a 35-pound load, dry weather and terrain, properly conditioned soldiers, and good visibility. As conditions become more adverse, this calculation becomes less of a science and more of an art that must rely on experience and judgment. At the best, a skilled mountaineer may be able to make an accurate estimate.

In extremely mountainous terrain where a unit is traversing very steep hillsides, it may be necessary to prepare contour profiles to provide more precise ground distance calculations than is possible with simple map distances.