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# Heavy Brigade HHC Operations

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An armor and infantry brigade headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) plays a critical role on the battlefield in keeping the brigade mobile and sustaining and supporting its command and control posts. Yet the heavy brigade HHC is one of the most neglected organizations when it comes to doctrine, tactics, and techniques. Commanders find little material to guide them and must rely on the advice and opinion of others.

Most brigade HHCs do not have mission essential task lists (METLs) that they can use in preparing for war, and this is something they should correct. Having deployed on numerous field exercises and National Training Center (NTC) rotations with one of these companies, I would like to offer a sample METL, along with some techniques that have worked well for our organization.

I believe the following tasks encompass all the missions for a HHC commander and provide a vision for the unit:

- Deploy by rail, sea, and air.
- Move tactically.
- Secure a command post.
- Sustain personnel and equipment.

## Deployment

The HHC must be able to deploy quickly and efficiently, and each operation provides more insight on how to prepare for movement the next time.

The company's executive officer (XO) should serve as the unit's movement officer. Working closely with the brigade S-4 and post agencies, he should become an expert on all aspects of movement. The result of his efforts

should be a "movement book" that continues to be refined. All special emphasis areas associated with movement must be assigned within the company, and neither the staff nor the company personnel should be overloaded. The maintenance section should become expert in rail-loading operations and hazardous cargo. (See also, "Rail-loading a Heavy Brigade," by CPT Michael V. Truett, *INFANTRY*, November-December 1986, pages 16-20; and "Rail Movement Spreadsheet," by CPT Charles B. Pelto, *INFANTRY*, July-August 1986, pages 17-21.)

Solid maintenance training and management are vital for deployment. A realistic and attainable goal for a unit that is heavy on supervisors and light on workers is a disciplined maintenance program consisting of a command preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) time and good services.

Particular attention should be paid to the organization's transportation assets. The MTOE (modified table of organization and equipment) allows only four M35 trucks (two maintenance, one supply, one mess) and two M105A2 trailers. The unit can afford only one "built-up" five-ton truck—the prescribed load list (PLL)/tool truck and trailer—which will house the ULL (unit-level logistics) computer and all the tool sets. This configuration gives the unit the flexibility to haul a variety of equipment, depending on the factors of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time).

Personnel readiness, a primary mission of the company first sergeant, requires constant work. Periodic old-

fashioned dog-tag and record checks will help keep this aspect of deployment manageable. Finally, a good family support plan is a proven deployment advantage. Family support for the HHC brigade requires special attention and usually falls under the wing of a rear detachment battalion.

## Tactical Movement

To survive, the brigade's main command post (CP) must be able to displace and set up efficiently, and this is a more complex task than it initially appears to be. The main CP consists of far more elements than are organic to the HHC. Engineer, air defense artillery, fire support, signal, and U.S. Air Force elements all tie in once the tactical operations center (TOC) is in the field.

At this point, any actions that have not been coordinated earlier will be more difficult for everyone. The HHC must have written standing operating procedures (SOPs) for such basic drills as moving the TOC. The HHC commander can coordinate with the operations sergeant major and the slice elements to review the SOPs and conduct simple sandtable exercises before the unit deploys. This will pay big dividends in efficient TOC operations and will set the tone for teamwork.

Through these informal rehearsals and wargaming sessions, the austere HHC gains in available assets. For example, the engineer S-3 section that accompanies the brigade TOC has an M35 truck that can provide critical hauling capability for the TOC's organic equipment. The section also has M8

chemical agent alarms and additional weapons that can augment the company's security plan.

The keys to successfully moving the main CP are reconnaissance and an effective quartering party. Before the main CP moves, the HHC commander coordinates closely with the brigade XO (a never-ending process). The company commander gets information on the area of operations from the staff and selects some possible TOC locations on the basis of a map reconnaissance. He and the signal officer then conduct a personal reconnaissance to confirm good locations for the main CP. The checklists in Field Manuals 71-1, *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Company Team*; 71-2, *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force*; and 71-3, *Armored and Mechanized Brigade*, provide solid criteria for selecting positions, but an eye for the right ones comes only through experience.

In site selection, concerns for communications and security must be weighed against each other: A location that is excellent for security may not allow good communications, while a position silhouetted on a hilltop for good communications will not last long. Depending on time available, the operations sergeant major or operations NCO and a representative from the signal team should be brought in to accompany the reconnaissance group and provide their expertise. The HHC commander should know the dimensions of the CP and pace it out on the proposed location, because some locations may prove to be a tight fit between large rocks or trees. In a desert environment, where many wadis look the same, the location must be marked with a small stake or other inconspicuous marker so it can be found again.

The HHC commander returns to the TOC to brief the brigade XO. Once the location is chosen, the brigade XO must establish a time line for the move. The quartering party cannot leave the main CP too early, because the loss of its personnel will hurt overall TOC operations, but a late departure will only defeat its mission. In our brigade, we found that the quartering party needed to move

early enough to allow the main CP to move at EENT (end of evening nautical twilight) or shortly before. This allowed enough light to select positions and have the main CP displace while there was too much ambient light to use AN/PVS-7 night vision goggles but not enough for the enemy to see with binoculars.

Either the HHC commander or the XO should lead the quartering party. The logistics support area (LSA), consisting of maintenance, supply and mess trucks, should move in the quartering party. The trucks can provide security for the quartering party, reduce the size of the main body, and quickly set up to prepare for the main CP; for example, the mess team can serve hot beverages after the main CP arrives and goes into operation. The quartering party should also include the M577 "base track" for the TOC setup. This vehicle breaks down, receives the quartering party briefing, then moves with the commander. It can proof the route to the new TOC location in case of any particularly steep entrances. This vehicle immediately erects the 254 antenna for the main CP; begins nuclear, biological, chemical (NBC) monitoring; and sets up its standard integrated CP system (SICPS), providing the base for setting up the main CP. Finally, we always moved the signal team with the quartering party. When the main body arrived, the junction box was ready for mobile subscriber equipment (MSE) communication. A well-briefed quartering party was then ready to accept the main body.

The first sergeant and the HHC XO can move the main body. One technique is to take the XO along on the initial reconnaissance so he will know the exact route to the new location. Since the TOC is made up of many different units, moving it requires real discipline and cooperation. The key to getting the main body moving is early notification and practice. One successful technique is to move all the vehicles in a hasty column formation (herringbone), issue the movement briefing, and then move. This ensures that everyone gets in the column, and it orients the unit on the proper route. The first sergeant leads, followed by tracked vehicles and then

wheeled vehicles. The operations sergeant major usually stays with the trail vehicle. The maintenance M578 recovery vehicle travels with the main body to provide support.

When the main body arrives at the new site, the quartering party moves it into place, and work begins according to SOP. Key to an effective SOP is a priority of work scheme such as the following example:

- Position vehicles.
- Establish security (quartering party).
- Establish communications.
- Employ NBC equipment (quartering party should have an M8 chemical agent sensor in operation).
- Camouflage.
- Establish sectors for defense.
- Conduct PMCS.
- Dig in generators on the basis of METT-T.
- Resupply.
- Rehearse reaction force.
- Initiate sleep plan.

At this point, the HHC commander conducts another map reconnaissance and prepares to repeat the entire process.

### Security

The main CP is highly susceptible to infiltration and attack by enemy forces and a lucrative target for artillery and air attack. The HHC has few assets with which to defend itself. In most situations, military police support is not available because of key MP missions elsewhere on the battlefield. Passive measures that use the resources at hand are the main CP's best defense.

The CP should be set up in a position that offers natural protection. No security force, whatever its size, can protect a completely bare TOC. The commander and the first sergeant take on the mission of security, and the enforcement of discipline is important. Good old-fashioned noise and light discipline goes a long way toward the main CP's survival. The CP should be scanned with AN/PVS-7 goggles to find and eliminate any sources of light.

Dispersion is also important. Here, the layout of the position must be bal-

anced. A TOC with vehicles dispersed over two kilometers cannot be defended, while one with the vehicles bunched together can be taken out by artillery. Some of the remedies are common sense: Vehicles must be parked away from the TOC, and natural wadis, vegetation, and folds in the terrain must be used to help conceal them.

There are many techniques for securing the TOC. We tried several and found a successful system that relied on early warning and a reaction force. In this system, two observation posts are set up, one manned with personnel from the LSA and one with personnel from the TOC. When there are multiple avenues of approach, one OP should be manned and a roving patrol sent out. This combination works. Although more personnel are needed when the threat is high, the cost must always be weighed, with a balance between manpower and sleep.

The OPs must be tied in with PRC-127s, HYG-57 secure wire line adapters, or TA-1035 digital nonsecure voice terminals. These communications go to the TOC and the HHC CP, which is usually just an M998 HMMWV (high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle). A well-briefed and disciplined OP or a two-man patrol can get early warning and alert the CP. At this point the commander, the XO, or the first sergeant takes care of nonessential personnel in the TOC and the LSA and acts. If the threat is low, a five-man team might handle the situation. Faced with an all-out attack, however, the TOC comes alive and mans the defensive perimeter, in positions the HHC commander has pointed out during the occupation of the site. Since the main CP is not designed to conduct a strong defense, the goal is to achieve security through passive measures and the early detection of the enemy.

Although its MTOE seems slim, the HHC has the equipment needed to conduct the security mission. The M578 provides an excellent hasty OP to cover the main approaches; it has armored protection, heavy armament, and FM radio communication. In large areas such as the NTC, the commander's or

the first sergeant's M998 can be used for mounted patrols.

Finally, a good sleep plan must be developed in which either the commander, the XO, or the first sergeant is alert at all times.

### Sustainment

The brigade HHC must sustain the command post's men and equipment, and these operations can be conducted over long periods of time under harsh conditions.



Although the HHC commander is responsible for the TOC's overall support, the XO carries out that support, handling all of the unit's coordination. Since the company has some unique support relationships, coordination with the forward support battalion (FSB) is especially important. The HHC XO must also keep the brigade S-4 informed of all requirements and changes in status. The XO should coordinate face-to-face whenever possible, but he can also use the communication assets available at the main CP, such as MSE and lightweight digital FAX.

By doctrine, the company mess team stays at the CP, and this arrangement worked best for us. The mess team became very responsive to the needs of the TOC, and we could schedule Class I resupply around the times we expected to move again. In combat situations, the team prepared T-rations without erecting the mobile kitchen trailer. This

saved time and enabled the team to move more quickly. It also enabled the mess teams to increase or decrease headcounts for meals, which was especially critical as personnel from the slice elements drifted in and out of the main CP. We prepared a logistical package (LOGPAC) for the tactical CP and the command group, moving it forward by M998. On a few occasions, we were able to use available aircraft to resupply the tactical CP. The rear CP received all its support from the FSB.

Class III support is difficult for a brigade HHC, because the MTOE does not allow it any fuel-holding vehicles. Instead, by doctrine, nearby battalions are to provide area support, but we found that this didn't work. The battalions couldn't spare the fuelers, and our fuel needs were often too unpredictable in any case—vehicles that needed to be resupplied would return to the TOC at all hours. Both in war and at the NTC, the HHC needed a tank and pump unit of diesel fuel. For motor gasoline (MOGAS), we coordinated closely with the direct support artillery battalion and agreed to provide their TOC with diesel fuel in exchange for periodic resupplies of MOGAS.

All maintenance personnel must be at the main CP to provide quick repairs. The HHC maintenance requirement greatly increases once a unit is in the field. With the influx of track and wheeled vehicles from the slice elements, the size of the TOC can double. (Somebody has to fix the Air Force's M998s.) An old-fashioned PMCS program and efficient mechanics go a long way toward keeping the fleet running and sustained.

The HHC MTOE does not include an assigned medic; nevertheless, we found that a medic was necessary at the main CP. The medic provides critical First Aid, along with trained combat lifesavers, who are absolutely necessary in an organization such as the brigade HHC. If the company takes heavy casualties, it must activate an area support mission from the nearest battalion or FSB.

The HHC supply sergeant stays at the main CP, where he maintains a stock of

self-service supply center (SSSC) items and conducts a daily LOGPAC to the brigade support area (BSA). The move to the BSA must be organized and efficient. It is best to have the mess team and maintenance personnel consolidate their moves to reduce the time on the road and the danger of attack during periods of limited visibility.

Leaders must not forget the soldier as part of this sustainment operation. The HHC soldier must be proficient in a number of survival skills that are part of constant wartime readiness. Given the variety of military occupational special-

ties, the company's individual training program must include critical First Aid, NBC, and weapon proficiency skills. As with the HHCs at other levels, the commander must approach the challenge of training these diverse soldiers with imagination and detailed preparation.

The brigade TOC is a critical asset to the brigade commander; it implements his orders and keeps him informed. To function, it must deploy, move, survive, and sustain; and these are the missions of the brigade headquarters and headquarters company. Although this company has few resources, if it develops a

mission essential task list, solid SOPs, and disciplined leaders, it can accomplish its mission and free the brigade commander and his staff to focus on conducting the fight.

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### FIFTY YEARS AGO IN WORLD WAR II MARCH-APRIL 1944

*As the winter of 1944 drew to a close, the ring was tightening around the Axis Powers. Japanese forces in the Pacific, their sea lanes blocked by American and British naval operations, were feeling the pressure of relentless offensives on the land, on the sea, and in the air. In Russia, a mounting Soviet offensive was isolating and destroying Wehrmacht units, which were also unable to effectively resupply or sustain armies that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea. In Italy, U.S. troops were solidly ashore, preparing to break out of Anzio and mount a drive on Rome. The cost of victory was high, however; Marine losses at Tarawa, U.S. Army casualties at the Rapido, and the stubborn German defense at Cassino only strengthened Americans resolve to fight and win. Ultimately, the defeat of the Axis was measured in the acts of individual heroism that are the fabric of our military heritage.*

*These and other highlights of World War II are drawn from Bud Hannings' excellent book, A Portrait of the Stars and Stripes, Volume II, available for \$50.00 from Seniram Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 432, Glenside, PA 19038.*

- 1-3 March** *The U.S. 3d Infantry Division repulses a heavy German attack against its positions on the Anzio beachhead, then counterattacks to regain ground lost earlier.*
- 4 March** *An eight-man squad of Troop G, 5th Cavalry, is attacked by a 200-man Japanese that killed six of the eight Americans. Sergeant Troy A. McGill singlehandedly holds off the enemy until his weapon ceases to function; he continues to fight with the butt of his rifle until he is overrun. The next morning, his body and those of 105 Japanese are found in and around his position. Sergeant McGill is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.*
- 15 March** *Allied planes pound the town of Cassino with 1,200 tons of explosives, but the German defenders quickly reoccupy the rubble and continue to offer heavy resistance. American, New Zealand, and Indian infantry continue to pour into the town in a driving rainstorm.*
- 28 March** *The U.S. 34th Infantry Division lands at Anzio to replace the 3d Infantry Division deployed near Cisterna. On the same day, Russian forces of the Third Ukrainian Front recapture Nikolaeu.*
- 2 April** *The 2d Battalion, Merrill's Marauders—enroute to capture the airfield at Myitkyina, Burma, are holding their positions in spite of heavy Japanese attacks.*
- 10 April** *U.S. Task Force Reckless prepares to embark for the invasion of Hollandia, New Guinea. In Italy, the Germans cancel a planned assault against the Anzio beachhead. Soviet forces of the Third Ukrainian Front capture the Black Sea port of Odessa.*
- 23 April** *During a heavy fight near Padiglione, Italy, in which most of the noncommissioned officers are casualties, PFC John Squires of the 30th Infantry, 3d Infantry Division, takes charge, repulsing three German counterattacks. Advancing with his machinegun, PFC Squires captures 21 Germans and 13 machineguns. He is later awarded the Medal of Honor.*