

TIPS FOR A BATTALION S4

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Arriving at a mechanized infantry battalion as a captain with only light infantry experience as a lieutenant, and being assigned as the S4 can be a light fighter's worst nightmare. However, with a little preparation and prior planning a new captain can still provide valuable support to the rifle companies and the battalion overall.

First and foremost, you as the incoming officer need to get a handle on daily operations. Typically, infantry officers have basic knowledge of the supply realm so it is imperative that you and your NCOIC have an informal closed-door session at the start. In this meeting, ground rules and boundaries need to be established. Daily supply transactions and "50 meter" targets should be handled more by the NCO; his experience in supply operations gives him the ability to work faster and put out the small fires that occur daily faster than you could. Long-term planning for deployments, rail operations, and budget planning should be done by you and briefed to the NCOIC. The NCOIC will be able to provide input on previous experiences, and the closer each event comes to execution, he will take over direct management to allow you to continue to the next set of long term issues.

As the combat arms officer, you must always be thinking of training your shop for war simultaneously to all of the typical garrison missions that occur. It is your duty — not just the HHC commander's — to ensure your Soldiers are trained for war. You can relieve a lot of the HHC commander's concerns by assisting him in training your shop whenever possible, and supporting HHC training events and ranges. You and the NCOIC can use each event as a training opportunity for your Soldiers. During HHC ranges each Soldier needs to go and fire his weapon. During sergeant's time training, you can set up the combat trains command post (CTCP) and conduct tactical operations center (TOC) drills to train Soldiers to not only talk on the radio and set up the CTCP, but you can have your Soldiers rehearse battle tracking and logistical situation reports. A technique that proved successful was to spend the entire sergeant's time training on setting up and jumping the CTCP to various locations in the local training area and motor pool. This gave the Soldiers the time and experience to develop a battle drill of what need to be packed first, who would monitor the fight during breakdown or set up, and where equipment could be stored in each vehicle. In addition, you can coordinate with the HHC commander to do this jointly and rehearse the CTCP and field trains command post (FTCP) set up and communications in the motor pool to verify SOPs or create SOPs to ensure both command posts are aligned and clearly working together.

Battalion gunnery is also a great opportunity to physically work the logistical channels and get the first sergeants into the training. During gunnery the S4 and HHC commander, with battalion's approval, can mandate all chow support, personnel entering or

leaving the field, and any supply needs move through logistics packages (LOGPACs). A home station gunnery can develop or reinforce the battalion logistical SOPs without having to put the entire battalion into the field. The motor pool can be designated as the FTCP/ UMCP (unit maintenance collection point), the command posts (CPs) for the FTCP and CTCP can simply be the S4 shop and HHC orderly room during Bradley tables V-VIII. This works the logistical muscles of the battalion as a rehearsal and ensures support platoon, S4, and the HHC commander get into a good working relationship prior to the first full blown battalion FTX. During Bradley table XI and XII the battalion TOC, FTCP, UMCP, aid station, and CTCP can deploy to the field to conduct a full rehearsal of all CPs prior to the battalion CTC or FTX ensuring all element understand requirements and reaffirm or develop SOPs.

Finally, as the CTCP, doctrinally you are the alternate battalion TOC, and you must always be prepared to assume this role. By MTOE (modern table of organization and equipment), the CTCP does not have the same amount of radios needed to monitor all the channels the TOC is required to. However, by adding additional OE-254s to your packing list you can quickly turn the fire support officer's (FSO's) and battalion executive officer's (XO's) HMMWVs into part of your radios for the TOC. The BN XO's vehicle radio already on CMD NET can be hooked up to an OE-254 to boost its reception, and the same can be done with the FIRES NET in either the FSO HMMWV or simply use the second radio from the BN XO's vehicle. By monitoring the CMD NET in the BN XO's vehicle, the CMD NET inside the CTCP can then be used to monitor BN O&I NET. This allows the CTCP to continue to monitor A&L within the M577, and provides a slight separation of the TOC personnel and CTCP personnel to avoid confusion and total chaos that will occur when both the CTCP and TOC are combined.

Entering into a new battalion as the battalion S4 can be seen as an overwhelming leap; however, like anything else having a goal of what you want your shop to be able to accomplish is the key. Although these are only a few tips to assist a new S4, the key to success is knowing the supply system, property accountability, and combat logistical resupply techniques. Following some of these simple tips can help new officers assume the role of battalion S4 focused to train the Soldiers in their section to better support the battalion.

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