



*Spc. Michael Steen, part of the 4th Engineer Battalion's forward support company (FSC), demonstrates the capabilities of his welding trailer. The FSC provides shop maintenance support, such as welding and small-arms and generator repair, for all the companies in the battalion.*

## Forward Support Company Operations in Separate Units

Forward support company structures and operations vary depending on the supported unit.

■ By Capt. Thomas A. Knothe

The integration of forward support companies (FSCs) into maneuver battalions has resulted in a much greater combat role for logisticians. FSCs have enabled Soldiers in logistics military occupational specialties (MOSs) to work directly for maneuver, fire, and effects (MFE) battalions.

In a traditional armored brigade

combat team (BCT), four FSCs are assigned to the brigade support battalion (BSB) as D, E, F, and G companies. Each FSC is attached to and supports an MFE battalion within the BCT.

Falling into formation with and supporting the reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition squadron is the D company. E and

F companies normally have identical modified tables of organization and equipment and support the combined arms battalions. G company supports the field artillery battalion.

The mission of these FSCs is to provide full-spectrum logistics support to their assigned maneuver battalions in order to sustain unified land combat operations. FSCs pro-

vide transportation, supply, maintenance, and food service support to enable their supported units to execute combat missions; thus, by definition, all FSCs are multifunctional.

### **Separate Brigade and Battalion FSCs**

FSCs assigned to separate engineer battalions outside of BCTs are still responsible for supporting their battalions, but these FSCs are different in one major way. FSCs subordinate to separate battalions and brigades are not organic to a BSB like their BCT counterparts are. These FSCs are assigned directly to and fall under the mission command of the engineer battalions they support.

Not having a BSB over an engineer FSC results in increased responsibilities for the FSC command team. The FSC executive officer (XO) serves as the support operations officer (SPO) for the supported battalion and coordinates support requirements with the other company XOs. The FSC commander is the senior logistics officer in the battalion, and the FSC first sergeant must be proficient not only in his MOS but also in all of the different logistics MOSs inside the FSC.

### **Maintenance Operations**

The task organization for an engineer FSC and an FSC within a BCT are very similar. Each is primarily made up of Soldiers from the same support MOSs, and the missions for the companies are fundamentally the same. The one major difference in their capabilities is the fact that an engineer FSC contains no maintenance support teams (MSTs).

An MST is normally a squad-sized element, led by a sergeant first class, that provides maintenance support for one supported company. A BCT FSC usually has four MSTs, one for each supported line company.

In an engineer battalion, an MST organic to the line company completes vehicle and track maintenance, while in a BCT, the MST is organic to the FSC and attached to the MFE company.

The engineer FSC often is assigned fewer Soldiers than the BCT FSC because it has fewer maintenance requirements. The engineer FSC supervises all maintenance control for the battalion and provides shop maintenance support, such as welding, small-arms, and generator repair, for all the companies in the battalion. However, it maintains only FSC and HHC equipment.

### **Support Operations**

Support operations inside and outside the BCT are coordinated for and executed much differently, although the operations are basically identical. Inside a BCT, the brigade SPO coordinates and tasks support companies with specific missions. A separate engineer battalion has no SPO to coordinate support operations. The requests for support come directly from line company Soldiers to the FSC.

The FSC commander, acting as a SPO, is ultimately responsible for everything that the company does or fails to do, which includes providing all sustainment the supported engineer battalion requires. Typically, an FSC (whether it belongs to a BCT or an engineer battalion) provides field feeding, vehicle and shop maintenance, fuel and water support, and distribution operations.

The main difference between the units is the manner in which the FSCs receive the support taskings. Inside a BCT, a request for support originates from a leader within a supported company to a member of the SPO section. The SPO section then validates the request and prioritizes it based on need and the availability of assets. After the SPO shop validates the request, the S-3 shop decides which support unit will receive the tasking and then publishes it in the daily fragmentary order.

In an engineer battalion, the requests for support are less formal. Most support requests come directly from the XOs and platoon leaders within the line company to the FSC XO. The FSC XO then reviews the requirements for any conflicts and ei-

ther supports the request or proposes a different timeline. If the requester is not happy with the FSC XO's proposal, then the battalion XO resolves the issue by establishing which operation has the highest priority.

The engineer battalion will occasionally publish a tasking within the fragmentary order requesting support from the FSC, but those are mostly for high-visibility support requirements involving multiple sections.

The FSC XO not only must run day-to-day operations for the FSC but also must serve as the point of contact for all support requests from the line companies. Most FSCs prefer that the requests for support go through either the XO or the commander so that the company headquarters section maintains visibility of the FSC platoons' assignments. Visibility within the FSC headquarters provides the commander with troops-to-task oversight, which prevents overburdening sections and ultimately mission failure.

Engineer battalion FSCs and BCT FSCs may have different capabilities, personnel numbers, support relationships, and higher headquarters, but their functions are essentially the same. Whether the FSC falls under a BCT, an engineer battalion, or something totally different, the FSC exists to provide full-spectrum logistics support to its supported unit.

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Capt. Thomas A. Knothe is a phase I instructor at the Combined Logistics Captains Career Course at the Army Logistics University at Fort Lee, Va. He previously served as the commander of the Forward Support Company, 4th Engineer Battalion, 555th Engineer Brigade, at Fort Carson, Colo. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Auburn University and is a graduate of the Ordnance Officer Basic Course and the Combined Logistics Captains Career Course.