



*Maj. Gen. Bryan Owens (center right), commander of U.S. Army Alaska, receives an operations order back-brief in the brigade tactical operations center near Fort Greely, Alaska, July 20, 2016. (Photo by Marion Basilioli)*

## Simplifying Complex Briefings

A two-minute drill informs the command team of pertinent information to improve the common operational picture.

■ By Maj. Allen D. Tapley and Master Sgt. Edwin Clouse

At some point in their careers, logisticians step into a position just before a major training exercise or a training center rotation where they have to support the commander and subordinate commanders in understanding situations, making decisions, and implementing courses of action.

Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, Mission Command, defines the

science of control as the systems and procedures used to improve the commander's understanding and support accomplishing missions. As leaders, we sometimes struggle to come up with the systems needed to synchronize staff efforts and build a shared understanding that will act as a forcing function to update running estimates on a regular basis. The subordinate companies are the ones

that suffer when staff officers get this wrong.

Company commanders and first sergeants know how frustrating it can be to have five different staff sections requesting the same information during the same day. So what systems can be put into place to ensure that the staff sections talk to each other and update running estimates? Besides conducting com-

mander's update briefs, battle update briefs, and shift change briefs, the two-minute drill is another technique coached and observed at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

## How to Conduct the Drill

The two-minute drill is basically a mini commander's update brief that allows the staff sections to quickly inform the commander, executive officer, command sergeant major, or a distinguished visitor of any pertinent information as of a specific date and time. Each staff group provides their own piece of information that paints a common operational picture (COP) in a relatively short amount of time.

The contents of the two-minute drill vary depending on what the battalion commander wants to know, but typically, it will consist of the following.

**Intelligence.** The S-2 provides enemy significant activities and their effects on the battalion and on logistics. He also provides the current weather and weather activities that could affect operations.

**Operations.** The S-3 outlines the current activities of friendly forces, route statuses, and the current mission status for current and upcoming convoys.

**Personnel.** The S-1 reports the number of personnel on ground at every location of responsibility. He also provides the status of any wounded-in-action or killed-in-action packets.

**Supply.** The S-4 provides a status update of combat power, estimated shipping dates or completion dates for supplies and the current logistics status for the battalion.

**Communications.** The S-6 provides the status of communications and the battalion's primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency communication plan to higher commands, subordinate units, convoys, and any deployed forward logistics elements.

**Support operations.** The support operations officer briefs the logistics

COP and any changes to brigade combat power.

The order of the briefing is important because operations are based on intelligence. After current operations are briefed, personnel and equipment should be next. Communications will tie everything

confidence that the staff is competent and understands their roles and responsibilities.

As Field Manual 6-0, Mission Command, states, "Staffs support the commander in understanding situations, making and implement-

The two-minute drill is basically a mini commander's update brief that allows the staff sections to quickly inform the commander, executive officer, command sergeant major, or a distinguished visitor of any pertinent information as of a specific date and time.

together. The support operations officer will brief the current logistics posture for the brigade and any resupply updates. At the JRTC, we have found that this order works best; however, it can be modified to best suit the organization.

## The Benefits

Why is a two-minute drill so important to developing a good COP? First, it is a forcing function that makes staff sections update their running estimates because most of the information used in the drill comes from these estimates. This does not mean that you have to update your running estimates every hour. You will update them as conditions change.

Second, staff sections will tend to put their information near the analog map board with as of dates so that it will be easier to brief if a commander calls for a two-minute drill. Third, the drill is a forcing function to update the analog map board, creating the analog COP that will match the digital COP. Fourth, it promotes communication among the staff sections that results in information sharing.

Lastly, the two-minute drill breeds confidence in staff sections by creating a COP for everyone in the unit. This improves the commander's

ing decisions, controlling operations, and assessing progress by providing timely and relevant information and analysis."

A well-run staff will update their running estimates. The challenge has always been ensuring that the staff sections update their running estimates. Staff officers must understand that their main purpose is to give the commander the right information at the right time to make sound decisions.

Maj. Allen D. Tapley is the sustainment planner for the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and was previously the operations officer observer-coach trainer. He holds a history degree from the Citadel. He is a graduate of the Infantry Officer Basic Course, Combined Logistics Captains Career Course, the Command and General Staff College, and Combined Arms and Services Staff School.

Master Sgt. Edwin Clouse is an S-3 and support operations observer-coach trainer at the JRTC. He is a graduate of the Warrior Leader, Advanced Leader, Senior Leader, First Sergeants and jumpmaster courses. He is also a recipient of the Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharp.