



*Soldiers with the 787th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, from Dothan, Ala., receive dinner from a mobile kitchen trailer at Forward Operating Base Santé Fe at the National Training Center, at Fort Irwin, Calif., on Aug. 15, 2015. (Photo by Spc. Michael Germundson)*

## The Keys to Success for a Forward Support Company at the NTC

■ By Maj. Jared W. Nichols and Capt. Hunter B. Cantrell

**W**ithout sustainment, an Army can win one battle, but it cannot win a war. That is why rotations at the National Training Center (NTC) are just as important for sustainment units as they are for maneuver units.

During NTC Rotation 16-08, G Forward Support Company (FSC), 101st Brigade Support Battalion

(BSB), maintained an expeditionary mindset, placed the right personnel across the battlefield, and balanced sustainment assets across echelons. This article explores how G FSC maneuvered to support the 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, during the NTC rotation.

According to Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 4-90, Brigade Support Battalion, when planning for sustainment, the maneuver battalion command team, the BSB command team, and the FSC commander must collaborate to determine the best method of employment commensurate with the brigade concept of support.

There is no single “right” way to execute sustainment because there are many variations of sustainment execution based on the experience and leadership within the BSB, the FSC, and the supported units. According to ATP 4-90, those considerations are the following:

- The FSC’s location in relation to the supported battalion.
- The decision to separate elements of the FSC by platoon or by other sub-elements into multiple locations.
- The benefits of locating FSC elements in the brigade support area.
- The benefits of co-locating battalion staff sections and medical elements with the FSC.
- The security of the FSC locations.
- The establishment and location of the maintenance collection point (MCP).

**Staying Mobile**

The configuration of the various mission command nodes across the battalion was central to the FSC’s ability to remain mobile. Leaders determined that all assets needed to be as expeditionary as possible because

mission command nodes tend to stay in one place for too long.

After experimenting with various configurations before deploying to the NTC, the FSC relied on expandable vans and camouflage nets for rapid setup and movement. The FSC was able to break down and be ready to move within two to three hours after initial notification. The company remained mobile by not setting up any permanent or semi-permanent structures like sleeping or maintenance tents. The company relied heavily on camouflage nets for concealment, security, and shaded work and rest areas.

The FSC also used a forward logistics element (FLE) that enabled it to split operations while on the move. The FLE is a doctrinal concept at the BSB level, but the employment of a FLE at the company level allowed the FSC to move assets forward. The FLE was a distribution platoon of class III (petroleum, oils, and lubricants) and class V (ammunition) that moved forward to the next combat trains command post (CTCP) location.

Moving the FLE forward ensured continual support to the line

companies, allowed the CTCP and MCP to consolidate and reorganize, and enabled the FSC to move to its next location. If the maneuver battalion continued to move forward, the CTCP could have moved past the FLE and established its operations. The intent was to keep the FSC flexible by having assets that were ready and available at all times so that no break in sustainment to the battalion would occur.

**Mission Command**

In order to execute mission command, the company needed to properly disperse its sustainment assets across the battlefield. The most common dispersion of an FSC’s personnel is 60 percent at the CTCP and 40 percent at the field trains command post (FTCP).

Battalion and FSC leaders decided that the 60-40 split would not work. Instead, leaders decided to place 90 percent of the personnel at the CTCP and MCP and 10 percent at the FTCP. This gave the FSC more assets forward to support the battalion’s varied missions, reduced vulnerability by shrinking the logistics footprint within the brigade support area, and enabled some assets to be moved past other FSC assets on the battlefield as the battalion continued to move.

Mission command of the FTCP was given to the FSC executive officer (XO) and the headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) XO so that the FTCP could operate 24 hours a day and provide continual logistics support forward to the battalion. Contributing to the FTCP’s ability to operate nonstop was the additional duty tasking of the maintenance control sergeant, the battalion S-4 non-commissioned officer-in-charge, two Global Combat Support System-Army clerks, an S-1 clerk, and two additional Soldiers.

All of the personnel assigned to the FTCP mission were selected for their ability to operate independently with little guidance. The loss of the personnel was felt in their respective



*Crew members and mechanics from G Forward Support Company, 101st Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, reinstall an engine during National Training Center Rotation 16-08 in August 2016. (Photo by Capt. Jonathan Camire)*

sections, but the right people had to be selected for the critical mission.

The FTCP's 24-hour liaison presence with the support operations cell allowed the FSC and the battalion to stay current on all brigade scheme of support updates. The FSC and HHC XO's immediately communicated any changes from the battalion to the BSB and vice versa. The FTCP was able to plan and prepare for all logistics packages heading toward the forward line of troops (FLOT).

The FTCP relieved the FSC leaders of a great burden by allowing the commander and first sergeant to focus sustainment efforts from the CTCP to the FLOT. The strategy enabled the company to focus two or three steps ahead of operations at the FTCP and CTCP.

### Set Up and Organization

The set up and organization of the CTCP and MCP played a critical role in the success of the battalion. The CTCP consisted of the FSC distribution and headquarters platoons and an HHC element made up of the S-4 and S-1 cells. The FSC headquarters platoon and HHC element combined forces to create a combined command post that used both entities' mission command systems. This set up enabled the CTCP to monitor more FM and digital radio networks.

The battalion S-4 remained in charge of the mission command node while the FSC commander maintained overall command of the CTCP. This arrangement allowed the FSC commander and first sergeant to move to help their troops at points of friction on the battlefield instead of being tied down to a one location. The S-4 maintained control over managing the mission command systems and communicating with the battalion.

The CTCP was placed one to two kilometers from the battalion tactical operations center and no more than 10 kilometers from the battalion FLOT. The MCP was placed with its own perimeter defense within one

kilometer of the CTCP.

The maintenance platoon leader was in charge of MCP operation and the perimeter defense plan. The internal maintenance operations of the unit maintenance collection point (UMCP) were managed by the maintenance control officer. This arrangement allowed the maintenance chief warrant officer to focus on the maintenance of vehicles and equipment.

The maintenance chief warrant officer and the prescribed load list section resided in the UMCP. The

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UMCP maintained mission command of the MCP.

Separating the CTCP and MCP footprints allowed the FSC to reduce its overall footprint while maintaining mutual support. When the CTCP moved, the MCP still had a defensible perimeter and was able to independently sustain itself.

### Supply Placement

The CTCP kept more than one day of supply on hand. This gave the battalion greater freedom of movement and maneuver and provided contingency supplies in case there was a break in the chain of support. By having all fuelers, water assets, and ammunition assets forward, the FSC was able to pre-position the FLE closer to the FLOT to provide the companies with emergency resupply.

Throughout the NTC rotation, the FSC never dropped below 2,000 gallons of water, one day's supply of ice (180 bags), three day's supply of food (heat-and-serve rations and meals ready-to-eat for approximately 600 Soldiers), 6,000 gallons of fuel, and

the battalion's basic load of ammunition. During the final battle period of the NTC rotation, the G FSC was the only FSC able to conduct a re-supply of classes I (subsistence), III, and V to its supported companies because its assets had already been pushed forward.

A successful FSC is a vital part of successful battalion combat operations. An FSC will succeed if it maintains an expeditionary mindset and arrays the right personnel and

sustainment assets across the battlefield. The FSC has to be forward with the fight and provide flexible options for its maneuver battalion.

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