

# Redeploying From Haiti

by Captain G. Todd Spencer

The 710th Main Support Battalion met the challenge of preparing and moving its equipment to the port for shipment home.

**W**hen the initial stage of Operation Uphold Democracy began winding down in Haiti and the bulk of the large U.S. military contingent began heading home, logisticians faced a new challenge: redeploying their units' equipment from an oversea theater. The 710th Main Support Battalion (MSB)—part of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) at Fort Drum, New York—had to move over 400 pieces of rolling stock, 135 MILVAN's, and 11 other systems requiring movement assistance from the battalion's main base to the seaport of Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince.

To accomplish this redeployment, the battalion had to surmount several challenges. They included—

- Finding appropriate vehicles for moving MILVAN's from the battalion's main base to the seaport.
- Obtaining enough rough-terrain cargo handlers to support the operation.
- Navigating Army vehicles, many pulling trailers loaded with materiel, through the civilian traffic normally found on the roads of Port-au-Prince.
- Coordinating with a Government contractor for transportation support.
- Finding ways to move key personnel after the battalion's organic vehicles had been sterilized for shipment.

The concept of operations for the redeployment had two phases: preparation and movement. The preparation phase began immediately after the battalion received its first warning order to get ready for redeployment. The timeline for this phase had to be flexible, since hard dates were not set until approximately 1 week after the warning order was received. The movement phase of the operation originally was planned for completion in 10 days, starting when the first MILVAN was loaded on a trailer for transport from the main base to the port and ending when the last MILVAN or vehicle was staged at the port.

The equipment to be moved came from six subordinate units of the 710th MSB, including the ord-

nance company; quartermaster company; transportation company; aviation intermediate maintenance company; test, measurement, and diagnostic equipment (TMDE) detachment; and an attached field artillery battery.

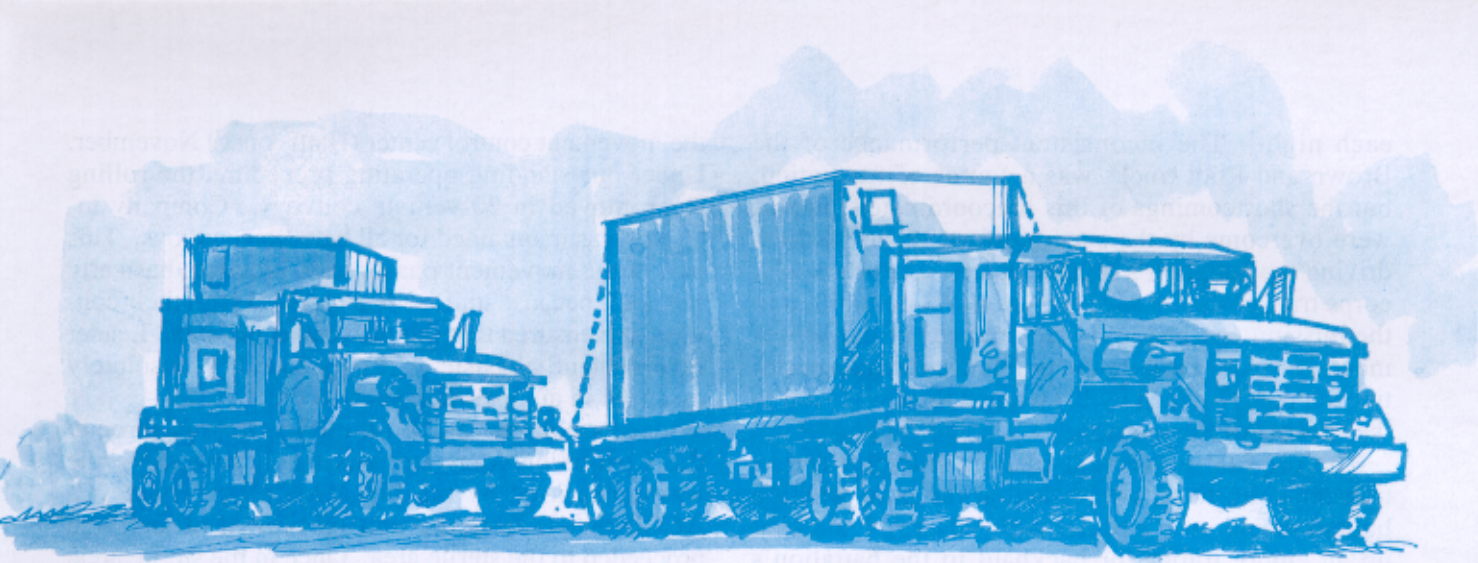
## Preparation

A successful preparation phase was absolutely critical to the success of the movement phase and the overall operation. Preparation involved the hardest work by the most soldiers; it also required critical coordination between the battalion and higher headquarters, between battalion and customer units, and among the battalion's internal staffs and sections.

The first step was loading and preparing the MILVAN's. This required us to shut down the missions of the battalion's subordinate units, and that of course affected the battalion's primary mission of customer support. Coordination of mission shutdown was handled by the battalion's support operations officer. Once a company or section was given the order to shut down its mission, it could begin packing its organic equipment and authorized stockage list (ASL) items.

As the battalion S4, I was responsible for central control of the operation and was assisted by the movement control noncommissioned officer (NCO) from the support operations section. The unit movement officers from each company were subordinate to this ad hoc "movement headquarters." Timely and clear communications, as well as individual initiative, proved essential to achieving a smooth operational flow amidst a sea of changing truths, times, and resources.

Arrangements were made with U.S. Customs Service personnel in Haiti to inspect the battalion's MILVAN's soon after they were loaded. Eight separate inspections were conducted at the battalion's three sites in and around Port-au-Prince in the 2 weeks leading up to the movement phase. The battal-



ion's ordnance, quartermaster, and medical companies and the field artillery battery were located at Muleskinner Base on the north side of Port-au-Prince International Airport; the aviation intermediate maintenance company and TMDE detachment at Falcon Base on the southeast side of the airport; and the transportation company at Bowen Military Airfield. (The medical company was not redeploying at this time; it would stay in Haiti until January to provide regional medical support.)

This inspection procedure eliminated the need to inspect the MILVAN's at the fixed customs site at the port support activity (PSA), located at Bowen Airfield, and thus prevented creation of a bottleneck at the PSA. Once the MILVAN's were inspected and sealed, they were ready for transport. The only remaining task before staging the MILVAN's at the port was to wash their exteriors at the PSA.

While individual sections of the 710th MSB shut down their missions and packed MILVAN's (in some cases simultaneously), the unit movement officers prepared their deployment equipment lists and transportation coordinator-automated command and control information system (TC-ACCIS) labels for their companies' equipment. Two labels had to be prepared and printed for every MILVAN and piece of rolling stock to be redeployed. These labels were prepared in advance to avert bottlenecks at the PSA and ensure a smooth flow of the massive volume of battalion equipment passing through the PSA.

Assembling the trailer fleet needed to move the 135 MILVAN's in an efficient manner proved to be a difficult task. We determined that a minimum of 30 trailers would be needed to maximize the use of the bobtail trucks that would assist in the MILVAN move. We planned to have a MILVAN always loaded on a trailer and ready for hauling through the PSA for cleaning and to the port for final downloading. We hoped to avoid having a bobtail without a trailer for any amount of time, and for the most part

we were successful.

Because there was no centralized control of trailers in the theater, assembling the required fleet at our primary unit location (where the supply support activities and the lion's share of MILVAN's were located) called for supreme initiative and ingenuity by the movements NCO. Finally, he was able to acquire about 34 trailers in time for the proposed starting time of the MILVAN move. Once the trailer fleet was assembled, we could begin uploading the packed and sealed MILVAN's.

The 548th Corps Support Battalion and a U.S. contractor, Brown and Root Services, Inc., provided rough-terrain container handler (RTCH) support for this operation. RTCH's were in short supply, and we often had to engage in intensive, personal management to ensure they weren't diverted to other missions by other units. RTCH's are arguably the most important piece of logistics equipment in a tactical theater; and their shortage in Haiti, as in the early months of our deployment in Somalia, seems to reflect a systemic Army problem. Our experience in Haiti led the 710th MSB to seek approval for adding an RTCH to the battalion's modification table of organization and equipment.

### **Movement**

The trailer fleet was uploaded in time for the movement phase to begin as planned. On the night of 17 November 1994, the first wave of MILVAN's was hauled by Brown and Root bobtail trucks. Coordination of the Brown and Root assets was critical to the success of the operation. The Brown and Root trucks were used at night, when traffic in the city was light. The 12 bobtails organic to the battalion were used primarily during the day, except when a driver was available for nighttime operations.

The move of MILVAN's and heavy trailers continued for the next 3 days and nights, with between 7 and 17 Brown and Root trucks hauling 1 to 3 serials

each night. The inconsistent performance of the Brown and Root trucks was a source of frustration, but the shortcomings of this precoordinated support were overcome by the superb efforts of the soldiers driving the battalion's organic assets. Unfortunately, corps transportation support was never committed to the mission and had to be factored out of our movement matrices. Despite the problems, the transportation support provided by Brown and Root was vital to the success of the mission.

The original movement plan called for a trailer transfer point to be established at the port, where a bobtail would drop a trailer with MILVAN and pick up an empty trailer for backhaul to the battalion's base; there, the empty trailer would be dropped in favor of a loaded one. Early into the operation, however, a couple of drivers recommended that the trailer transfer at the port be abolished because the port operations people were downloading trailers faster than a bobtail could drop one and hook up to another; this recommendation was adopted and the transfer point was eliminated. The efficiency of the port operations was a great help in completing our mission on time.

The overall cycle of a bobtail truck followed this pattern. A bobtail would pick up a trailer loaded with a MILVAN at the battalion's main base. By using an RTCH, we ensured that a trailer was always uploaded to minimize bobtail queuing. The bobtail then would travel approximately 5 miles to the PSA at Bowen Airfield over roads shared by local civilian traffic. (For strategic reasons, a secured, military-only supply route was never established in Haiti. However, the fact that we operated in a relatively nonhostile environment simplified the security demands on our movement operations.) At the PSA, the bobtail was allowed to proceed directly to the washrack, where the dirty MILVAN and trailer were dropped and a clean MILVAN and trailer picked up.

Another bobtail, operating as a "yard dog," then hauled the dirty MILVAN's through the washrack and staged them in the clean area for pickup. Once hooked to a clean MILVAN, and after receiving a TC-ACCIS label from the owning unit's movement officer, the bobtail proceeded approximately 3 miles to the port, where the MILVAN was downloaded and staged for loading on a ship or barge.

The bobtail then traveled approximately 5 miles back to the main base with the empty trailer, dropped that trailer, picked up a loaded one, and started the cycle all over again. This operation worked with surprising efficiency and, despite numerous snags, was completed nearly 4 days ahead of schedule.

The movement of rolling stock took place in the midst of the battalion's MILVAN move. The battalion's rolling stock was called forward to the PSA by

the movement control center (Haiti) on 19 November. Under our standing operating procedure, the rolling stock moved in 20-vehicle convoys. Company integrity was maintained for all battalion convoys. This part of the movement phase, once initiated, basically ran itself because unit leaders traveled with their convoys and ensured that things went as planned. Leader involvement, as basic as it may sound, is absolutely essential in an operation such as this.

Once a convoy reached the PSA, it went through the various customs stations (including the same washracks used by the MILVAN's), received TC-ACCIS labels from the unit movement officer, and proceeded to the sterile area. Once in the sterile area, the vehicles and trailers waited in ship sets until called forward to the port. At the port, after a final rinse, the equipment came under the control of the port operations unit for loading aboard the ship.

Most of the battalion's rolling stock was through the PSA and in the sterile area by sundown on 21 November. The last of the rolling stock to go through the PSA, at the completion of the MILVAN move, were the battalion's organic stake-and-platform trucks.

After our organic vehicles were sterilized, key personnel were transported on vehicles from the battalion's medical company. Without these vehicles, the MSB's overall effort would have been somewhat slowed by the inability of key personnel to be in the right place at the right time.

The successful completion of the 710th MSB's redeployment depended on several factors, including centralized control of the operation; coordination with U.S. Customs personnel in Haiti; coordination with the movement control center; intense involvement by individual unit movement officers; and, as always, soldier commitment.

Overall, the redeployment of the 710th MSB from Haiti was a smooth, efficient, and successful operation. Employment of basic leadership principles by key personnel and intensive coordination by officers and NCO's directly responsible for movements produced this success.

**ALOG**

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