



Brigade Route Tracking at JRTC

By Major Ted D. Yates

The safe, reliable, and secure operation of a surface transportation system within a brigade combat team's (BCT's) area of operations (AO) depends on collaboration and coordination across organizational boundaries. Units within or transiting across the BCT's AO need information to plan safe and predictable movement in terms of travel time while considering a host of variables that influence a route's condition.

Route tracking is a tool to help commanders and staffs plan movement times, route selection, adjustment of force protection measures, and prioritization of route reconnaissance and clearance efforts. The procedures for route tracking outlined in this article are not currently addressed in doctrine and portray a method of managing route information based on rotational unit practices at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and unit products from Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Effective route tracking is a result of a nested process between units transiting the BCT's operational environment and the battalion and BCT staffs. The analytical capability of the staff at the BCT level can provide a regularly updated, single-source product to subordinate units and units traveling through the BCT's AO. Examples of unit and staff input are listed in Table 1. The "landowning" battalion task forces

provide routine (time-driven) and event-driven reports to the BCT on the route status criteria concerning route capability, threat incidents, civil activities, and friendly activity within the battalion task force's AO to develop an accurate common operational picture of the brigade route status.

Route-tracking collection systems must provide timely, reliable, accurate, and relevant information, and they must be disseminated properly to be effective. Credibility is an extremely important consideration in properly implementing a route-tracking system. Regardless of how well a unit designs a tool, units will eventually distrust the system if it is not updated to reflect current conditions. Each time the information displayed is disproved, the credibility of the system decreases. Figure 1, page 22, shows a method of information flow of incidents and subsequent actions, and Table 2, page 22, shows a method of route-status distribution.

If possible, classify routes with the color-coded standard (Green, Amber, and Red) from checkpoint to checkpoint based on associated route status criteria. Additional reasons for route status (ongoing friendly operations, weather effects, construction, congestion, and threat incidents) can be displayed on the graphics with pertinent data such as rerouting criteria and related date-time groups.

Table 1. Unit and Staff Input Into Route Tracking

Element	Input
Units	Ongoing/future operations – patrols, cordon and searches, neighborhood engagement/development, traffic control points (TCPs), route capability, threat incidents, congestion due to random events (threat incidents, accidents, or breakdowns), impacts of recurring congestion due to daily/weekly cycle of events (work/market/religious) or religious/national observances, frequency of congestion (time periods, volume of traffic, and speeds of traffic along routes).
Brigade S-2	Threat incidents, predictive analysis/event template, and intelligence preparation of the battlefield.
Brigade S-3	Authority for raising and lowering route status and associated force protection measures, rerouting authority, monitoring units transiting through the BCT's AO, monitoring BCT asset movements, route clearance efforts, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) operations.
Brigade Engineer	Overall staff proponent for route status tracking (a way); weather and terrain impacts; route capabilities; and monitoring planned construction, work zones, and closures.
Brigade S-4	Monitoring ongoing/future combat logistic patrol movements and requirements, monitoring contracted movements and coordinates, and monitoring echelon-above-brigade logistic movements within the BCT's AO.
Brigade Civil Affairs	Population traffic patterns and congested areas – market areas/times, anticipated demonstrations/rallies, displaced civilian patterns, pilgrimages, holidays or observances, school congestion times, nongovernmental organization movements.

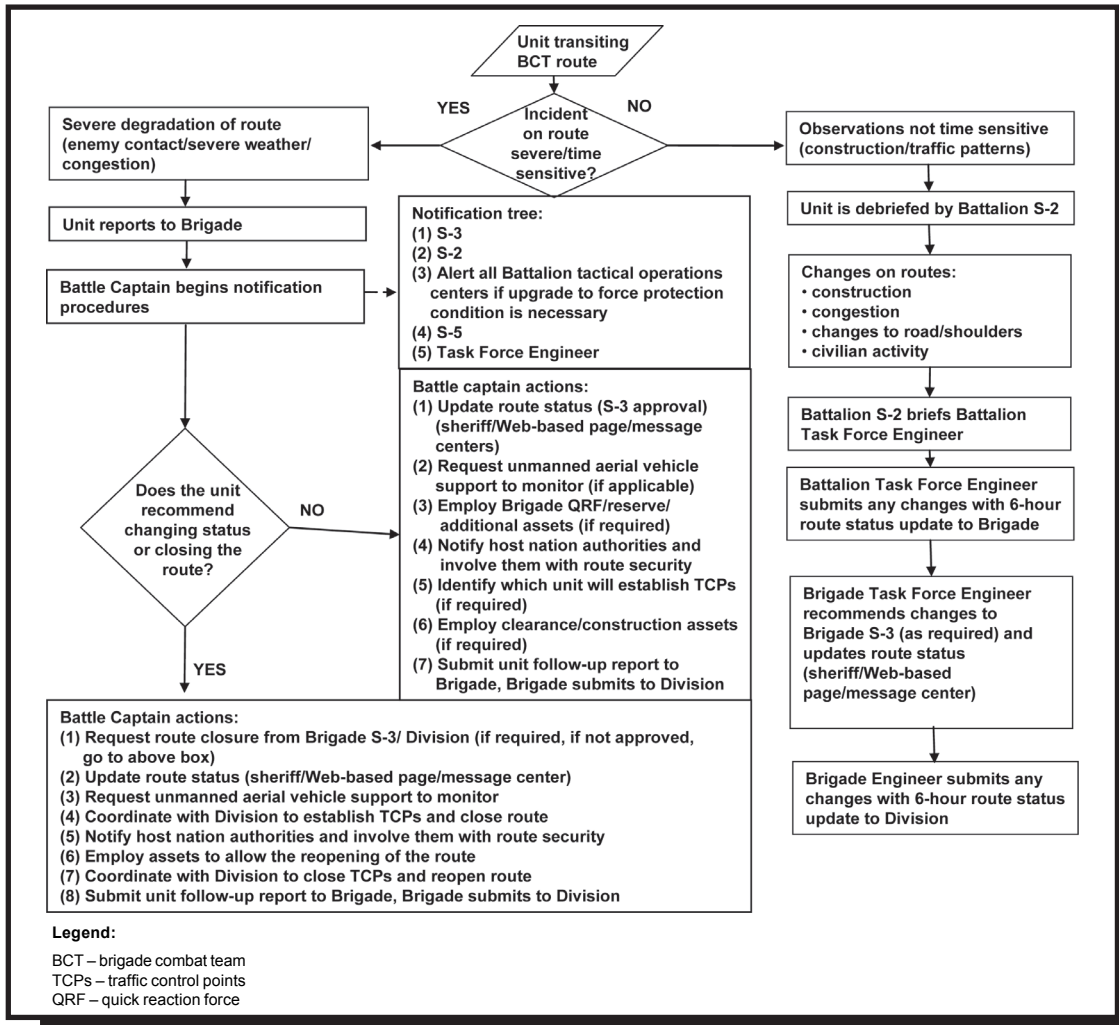


Figure 1. Sample Route-Tracking Information Flow Chart

Table 2. Methods of Route Status Distribution

Prior to Movement	During Movement
Blue Force Tracker/ Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2)	Blue Force Tracker/FBCB2
Convoy brief by staff	
Maneuver Control System-Light (MCS-L)	
Frequency modulation (FM) (sheriff network [NET])	FM (sheriff NET)
Telephone answering-machine message	Telephone answering-machine message
Message board at compound exit gate	
Web-based page	


In Figure 2, page 23, the route status criteria is limited to four areas (weather/congestion/trafficability, threat, obstacles, and protection measures) and addresses restrictions, constraints, and limitations of the routes and the units transiting them. It also prescribes how a unit can raise a route

status through proactive measures; for example, conducting clearance operations or confirming a clear route.

This article reflects the practices of units training at JRTC and should not necessarily be construed as Army policy or doctrine. The intent is to provide commanders and staffs with

Figure 2 is an example of a single-source product which graphically portrays the BCT's AO route status common operational picture. The information allows the unit to—

- Determine main supply routes (MSRs) and alternate supply routes (ASRs), with check points, using the map with an overlay.
- Identify (ID) boundaries for landowners and check-in point for cross boundary movement.
- ID telephone numbers, command frequency, and administrative and logistics frequencies with command post call signs for landowners.
- ID recent threat incidents (within 30 days) with possible analysis—for example, indicators of increased threat and possible route alternatives (timing, dispersion, alternate routes). Often this will use callouts with images for better resolution.
- ID locations of compounds/forward operating bases (FOBs), police stations, host nation or coalition military compounds, and other significant friendly organizations with security capabilities.
- ID locations of coalition medical facilities/aid stations (generally on compounds/FOBs).
- ID aerial medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) capabilities (frequency, call sign, and general response time).
- ID friendly quick-reaction force (QRF) and maintenance recovery capabilities (generally, type of unit, base camp, and size).
- ID guard or sheriff frequency.
- ID if there is a route security element—for example, a military police unit or artillery unit—in addition to a landowner (should be identified with frequency and call sign).

a tool to examine an existing route-tracking system or initiate a new system. There are numerous methods, techniques, and criteria that can be employed to evaluate and disseminate route status. If you have “best practices” concerning route tracking or any other aspects of assured mobility that would prove valuable for units preparing for deployment, please contact the JRTC Brigade Command and Control Engineer Team at <ted.yates@polk.army.mil>. 

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