



Humvees stand ready for issue at the National Training Center's pre-positioned fleet draw yard at Fort Irwin, California. (Photo by Capt. Andrew J. Cochran)

Maximizing the NTC Pre-Positioned Fleet for a Successful Rotation

An armored brigade combat team used the grid draw process to balance its deployment of home-station equipment with its use of the NTC's pre-positioned fleet.

■ By Capt. Heath A. Bergmann

The challenge presented to brigade leaders deploying to the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, is how to maximize the use of the pre-positioned fleet while ensuring that each subordinate unit has all of the equipment it needs to conduct its

mission. There are many viewpoints on how to deploy a brigade to NTC, and every brigade's experience differs.

Forces Command (FORSCOM) requires units to use as much of the pre-positioned fleet as possible. The reason for this is simple—money. Maintaining a fleet of commonly

used items at Fort Irwin is much cheaper than paying to ship the same types of equipment for each rotation.

This article shares how the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), 1st Infantry Division, was able to successfully balance the de-

ployment of home-station property and remain compliant with FORSCOM's requirement to use the NTC pre-positioned fleet.

Using the Grid Draw

There are no magic tricks for successfully drawing equipment from the pre-positioned fleet. Successful use of the pre-positioned fleet is a result of communication, coordination, and the use of a predeployment checklist to ensure compliance within a defined time line. The 2nd ABCT's success can be directly attributed to its establishment of an internal tracking system that managed changes to the pre-positioned fleet allocation process, known as the grid draw.

Coordinating transportation assets early in the planning process saved the brigade time and money. Developing a system to mitigate and manage hundreds of changes to the grid draw was also critical to controlling chaos and keeping a common understanding of the plan.

The Pre-Positioned Fleet

It is important to understand what the pre-positioned fleet is, how and why it's used, and the consequences for not complying with FORSCOM requirements for its use. The pre-positioned fleet is a store of rolling stock items, trailers, generators, forklifts, mine plows, and other ancillary equipment. The purpose of this equipment is to reduce the transportation costs associated with deploying a brigade to NTC. The pre-positioned fleet does not include items such as Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, Strykers, or Paladins. It does include a great deal of support equipment that is used by both light and heavy formations.

If a piece of equipment exists in the pre-positioned fleet and a unit needs that equipment at the NTC, it must draw the equipment in lieu of bringing it from home station. There are exceptions to this rule, but only FORSCOM can approve them. During reception, staging, onward

movement, and integration, units are audited for equipment compliance. Units found not compliant can be fined and lose training dollars.

Overcoming Challenges

Understanding what the brigade's task organization would look like for its NTC rotation was the first step to remaining compliant with FORSCOM regulations for use of the pre-positioned fleet. The amount of external units attached to the 2nd ABCT during the rotation and its complicated task organization made this difficult to visualize. The 2nd ABCT was responsible for the equivalent of 11 battalions. This large and complex task organization made it difficult to determine each unit's mission essential equipment requirements.

The key to overcoming this complexity was clear and productive lines of communication between the brigade S-4 and the battalions' executive officers and S-4s and between



3rd Cavalry Regiment Stryker vehicles halt during a convoy movement at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, on Feb. 12, 2016. The National Training Center has a pre-positioned fleet of equipment that is issued as part of the combat training center rotation. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Alex Manne)

the battalion executive officers and S-4s and their organic and enabling companies. The greatest communication challenges were experienced while working with supporting units from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve. These units fell under unfamiliar headquarters and were unaware of their reporting process. As the brigade S-4, I often called reserve component units during the planning process to gain clarity on their equipment needs.

Over time, supporting units came to understand their role within their respective organizations and communication improved drastically. The battalion S-4s began to take ownership of their attached units and effectively communicate their equipment needs to the brigade S-4.

Constant changes to the NTC's pre-positioned fleet presented yet another challenge. One change to the grid draw invariably affected multiple formations across the brigade. For example, once the grid draw was complete, adding a unit to the rotation caused ripples that affected at least one other formation because newly added units rarely had all of the equipment that they needed for the rotation. As a solution, the brigade had to source the equipment from another unit. This caused a ripple throughout the brigade as assets were redistributed and transportation was coordinated to accommodate the changes.

Completing the grid draw as soon as possible allowed for the sourcing of transportation assets to move the rolling stock and containers shipped from Army posts and Army National Guard and Reserve Training Centers. Coordination of rail movements from Fort Riley, Kansas; Fort Sill, Oklahoma; and Fort Lewis, Washington had to be completed 60 days before movement. The key to being able to project and lock in these assets was completing a solid grid draw as early as possible.

Planning Through the PDSS

The 2nd ABCT executive offi-

cer decided that the brigade would use the predeployment site survey (PDSS) to begin the grid draw. The PDSS was conducted during a four-day period in November 2014, nearly four months prior to the start of the NTC rotation.

The planning team, which included the brigade and battalion executive officers, the battalion S-4s and me (the brigade S-4), made the ini-

It is important to understand what the pre-positioned fleet is, how and why it's used, and the consequences for not complying with FORSCOM requirements for its use.

tial list containing the equipment that each unit would draw from the pre-positioned fleet and the equipment it would ship from home station. The list was made in accordance with the pre-positioned fleet utilization report, which is used by FORSCOM to audit units in the reception phase.

By taking advantage of the PDSS, the ABCT was prepared for the NTC grid set conference, a teleconference between the NTC rotation coordinator, the brigade S-4, and representatives from each battalion and company, including the Army National Guard and Reserve units. The grid set conference took place about two weeks after the PDSS and was the first time that each unit was required to submit their unit grid worksheets.

Over the next two months, hundreds of changes were made to the grid draw due to the addition of enabling units, equipment serviceability, personnel changes, and input from commanders. A small change from one unit inevitably affected multiple units in order to keep the brigade compliant with FORSCOM regulations. Communication among units mitigated the impact of these changes.

Maintaining Document Control

Tracking all of the changes between the grid set conference and the final grid draw submission was the most difficult part of the process. Version control and consistent internal auditing were the keys to successfully managing this process. The 2nd ABCT only allowed the brigade S-4 and assistant S-4 to make changes to the official version

of the grid draw submission.

It was highly stressed that change authority was limited to no more than two people, with these individuals communicating each change with each other as soon as possible. The document was also consistently audited to ensure accuracy and compliance with FORSCOM requirements.

In recommending a course of action for any brigade to successfully maximize the pre-positioned fleet at NTC, I suggest tackling the issue as early as possible. Maximizing communication with supporting units early can mitigate last-minute changes to drawing pre-positioned equipment.

Capt. Heath A. Bergmann is commander of Dakota Troop, 299th Brigade Support Battalion, a forward support troop for the 5th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, at Fort Riley, Kansas. He holds a bachelor's degree in general studies and a master's degree in safety, security, and emergency management from Eastern Kentucky University.