



# Providing Higher Headquarters Sustainment Mission Command at Combat Training Centers

■ By Col. Kimberly J. Daub, Maj. Hugh H. Coleman III, Maj. Benjamin Polanco Jr., and Maj. Michael A. Allard



*Sgt. Tony Clinton and Spc. Natalie Smith, from the 129th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade, hook a hose onto a load handling system compatible water tank rack on Sept. 3, 2015, at the intermediate staging base in Alexandria, Louisiana. The water purification team was supporting the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, during its training at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk. (Photo by Master Sgt. Mary Rose Mittlesteadt)*

## FEATURES

The 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade headquarters was the first unit of its kind to exercise mission command of sustainment units at the Joint Readiness Training Center. This type of training provides new opportunities for sustainment brigades, but more could be done to improve the concept.

In October 2015, the 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade deployed to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana, to support the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), during JRTC Rotation 16-01. This exercise marked a paradigm shift for sustainment support at combat training centers (CTCs). The rotation integrated training for a sustainment brigade mission command element into the scenario where it provided oversight and integrated echelons-above-brigade (EAB) sustainment.

A sustainment brigade has the opportunity to support its division-aligned units and train with additional resources provided during a CTC rotation. These assets are not always available at home station.

During previous JRTC rotations, the JRTC Operations Group provided mission command, orders, and interaction between the maneuver units for the combat sustainment support battalion (CSSB) providing EAB sustainment. But during JRTC Rotation 16-01, the 101st Sustainment Brigade's tactical command node (TAC) provided mission command to the 129th CSSB, facilitated more realistic training, and oversaw the joint reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (JRSOI) and sustainment support operations to the 2nd BCT. This proved the 101st Sustainment Brigade's ability to improve the readiness of a sustainment brigade TAC through CTC training.

### ISB Mission Command

The JRTC provides an excellent training venue for EAB sustainment units to establish longer lines of communication than they would typically train with in garrison. It includes an intermediate staging base (ISB) that is located about 55 miles away in Alexandria that provides real-time constraints. The distance stresses accurate logistics forecasting and planning for both the supported units

and EAB logisticians supporting the rotational unit.

While operating at the ISB, the sustainment brigade support operations served as a critical link between the 2nd BCT and 129th CSSB by developing reporting procedures and requiring the rotational unit to follow doctrinal requests for support in an effort to synchronize operations. Without this layer of mission command, provided by the sustainment brigade TAC working in conjunction with the 2nd BCT support operations, the BCT would have to directly coordinate with the supporting CSSB without higher headquarters' oversight and prioritization.

### Reducing Contracted Support

During previous rotations, a BCT could request sustainment support directly from the JRTC Operations Group who would, in turn, task the rotational CSSB to fill the request. If the CSSB could not deliver the commodities, then the operations group would task its acting CSSB, the mission support services contractor on Fort Polk. The contractor provides



combat training systems, mission support services such as fuel transportation, and defense electronics to rotational units.

During this rotation, the 101st Sustainment Brigade TAC provided sustainment support for the rotational unit by taking the contractor's EAB sustainment duties. This allowed the BCT and CSSB to greatly reduce their reliance on the mission support services contractor. It also allowed the sustainment brigade and its CSSB to establish class I (subsistence) and class IIIB (bulk petroleum, oils, and lubricants) accounts and use internal transportation assets and materials handling equipment from the CSSB.

Having a sustainment brigade TAC included in the rotation to allocate and prioritize sustainment also allowed the BCT to experience sustainment operations and support request procedures that better represented combat operations. The sustainment brigade support operations and its commodity managers interacted with strategic partners to open and close accounts, which allowed

the CSSB to focus on supporting the rotational unit.

### JRSOI Operations

The ISB was instrumental in providing an opportunity for the sustainment brigade TAC and its CSSB to train on the sustainment brigade's mission essential task to conduct JRSOI. While the primary training audience is the rotational BCT during decisive action operations, JRTC places additional burdens on the BCT by requiring that it use the ISB.

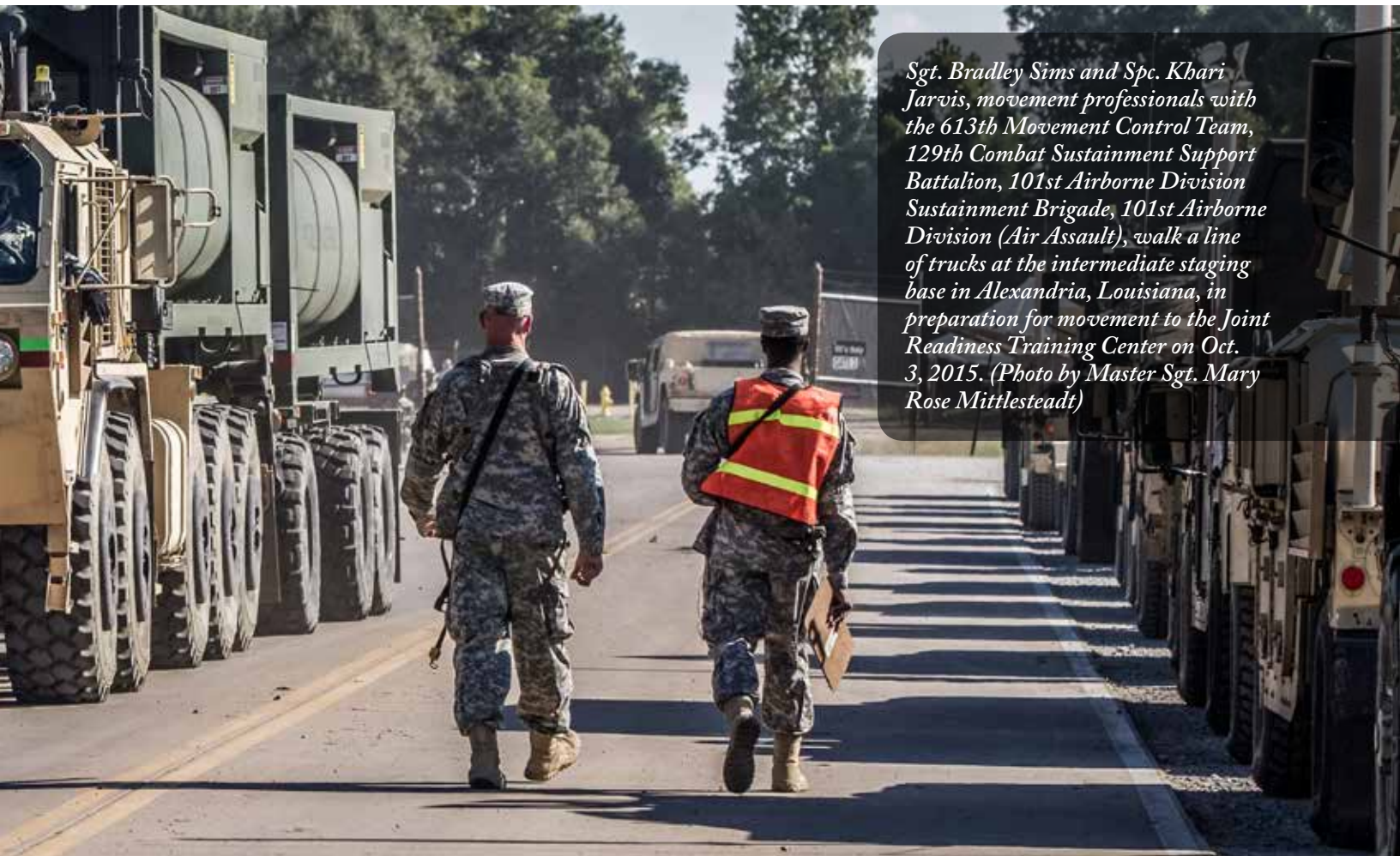
At the beginning of the rotation, the BCT must shift its focus from preparing to execute force-on-force decisive action to the reception of forces and equipment. Requiring the BCT to sign for the ISB, establish life support, sign for and issue unit basic loads, begin contracts, and conduct terrain management greatly detracts from its primary responsibility of preparing for joint forcible entry and follow-on missions.

A sustainment brigade TAC and its CSSB can alleviate the burden on the rotational unit at the ISB

while simultaneously training on one of the unit's core competencies of JRSOI. For future rotations with a sustainment brigade TAC and CSSB, the JRTC Operations Group should shift all planning and execution of the ISB from the BCT to a sustainment brigade and its subordinate EAB sustainment units. Related tasks include land allocation, JRSOI, mayor cell duties, unit basic load issuing, contract oversight, and life support operations. Shifting these tasks to the sustainment brigade would provide unique training that most sustainment brigades do not have the resources to conduct on a large scale at home station.

During planning and scenario design, the sustainment brigade and CSSB with the task of JRSOI should be seen as separate rotational units from the BCT. This would allow the BCT to conduct their own, separate planning processes to enable the accomplishment of its own training objectives independent of JRSOI.

Additionally, EAB sustainment units should arrive at the ISB ahead



*Sgt. Bradley Sims and Spc. Khari Jarvis, movement professionals with the 613th Movement Control Team, 129th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), walk a line of trucks at the intermediate staging base in Alexandria, Louisiana, in preparation for movement to the Joint Readiness Training Center on Oct. 3, 2015. (Photo by Master Sgt. Mary Rose Mittlesteadt)*



*Sgt. 1st Class Christian Thompson, with the 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), reviews transportation documents with Spc. Khari Jarvis, with the 613th Movement Control Team, 129th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 101st Airborne Division Sustainment Brigade, at the intermediate staging base in Alexandria, Louisiana, in preparation for movement to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, on Oct. 3, 2015. (Photo by Master Sgt. Mary Rose Mittlesteadt)*

of the rotational BCT. This is a more realistic scenario and sequence of events that would facilitate the JR-SOI process. The setup now has EAB sustainment units and the BCT arriving at JRTC at the same time, which stresses the BCT as it tries to receive railcars of equipment and personnel, install Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System

gear, and prepare for its decisive action rotation. Having units arrive at same time does not allow the sustainment brigade and CSSB to properly execute JR-SOI and build forces in order to receive BCT personnel and equipment. The cost and additional time required to deploy EAB sustainment units to JRTC ahead of the BCT would add to the

realism of a sustainment brigade TAC and CSSB operations.

### Challenges

JRTC had not trained a sustainment brigade headquarters element since the inception of modularity. A sustainment brigade headquarters and its TAC are not included in the current CTC rotation scenarios, but JRTC rotational planners helped to integrate the 101st Sustainment Brigade TAC into JRTC Rotation 16-01.

In the future, JRTC planners should significantly revise the base decisive action operations order to include EAB sustainment and sustainment brigade mission command elements. Adding these changes to the scenario and orders, which drive planning and training at home station, will better integrate a sustainment brigade mission command node into future rotations.

A sustainment brigade headquarters is designed to provide mission command for multiple CSSBs, functional logistics battalions, and functional logistics companies, platoons, and detachments. In this role, the sustainment brigade is capable of providing support from the operational to the tactical level. Having only one CSSB as a direct subordinate to a sustainment brigade in a JRTC scenario does not accurately represent a sustainment brigade's headquarters in a decisive action environment.

During JRTC Rotation 16-01, the JRTC planners added notional CSSBs to the scenario in order to facilitate the 101st Sustainment Brigade's training objectives. The sustainment brigade's staff had to fill gaps and make assumptions in order to create an overarching concept of support for the subordinate CSSB and two simulated CSSBs. These gaps in higher orders and planning could be mitigated by creating a mock operations order for an expeditionary sustainment command or theater sustainment command that includes multiple subordinate battalions for the sustainment brigade

so that it can start planning early.

The 101st Sustainment Brigade TAC informed the JRTC Operations Group of all additions and changes to the concept of support so that it could provide oversight of the changes while observing and mentoring the BCT. This helped to synchronize and allowed staff to conduct in-depth analysis of the sustainment planning and efforts of its higher, lower, and supported counterparts.

During the 2nd BCT's leader training program, the 129th CSSB and the 101st Sustainment Brigade could only send limited personnel because of limited workspace and life support. Allowing the sustainment brigade headquarters and the rotational CSSB to send planners during the leader training program would benefit the BCT by allowing the sustainment brigade to plan ISB establishment, open accounts for commodities, and forecast EAB sustainment requirements.

### **Creating Robust Training**

During JRTC Rotation 16-01, the 101st Sustainment Brigade TAC provided mission command of sustainment forces and synchronization for a simulated combined joint task force. While the sustainment brigade was able to exercise critical mission command systems and increase the core competencies of the brigade staff, it did not fully use its mission command element because there was a lack of sustainment commodity requirement data for planning with additional simulated CSSBs and customer units. The data is needed to drive accurate and timely planning, forecasting, and training for the sustainment brigade TAC.

CTCs would benefit from expanding simulation capabilities that blend live and simulated training in order to stress the mission command and planning efforts of a sustainment brigade TAC. Leveraging integrated simulations such as the Joint Deployment Logistics Model or the Warfighter's Simulation

would significantly improve training for larger logistics units.

The simplest way to improve simulations at Fort Polk would be to integrate the Combined Arms Support Command's Command Post Exercise-Functional databases into the mission training complex. This integration would provide constructive wraparound and generate requirements data that would better stimulate the sustainment brigade's support operations section.

Adding this information would increase the number of personnel required to fill response and white cells during a rotation, but the opportunity to provide realistic training for EAB sustainment units is one that should be considered. Blended training environments would enable synchronized operations and stress the mission command capabilities of the sustainment brigade staff and commander at levels above what is currently offered at CTCs.

In order to be successful, a sustainment brigade must train its staff and leaders to execute its mission essential task of mission command. Because of their available resources, CTCs can provide an excellent training venue for this mission essential task. The ISB in Alexandria is a great example; it stresses a sustainment brigade TAC's mission command capability and replicates the fog of war by extending the time and distance supplies must travel, increasing friction between logisticians and maneuver forces, and requiring proper forecasting of supplies and services in order to be successful.

CTCs must consider taking the next step by tailoring scenarios, simulations, and manning to meet the training objectives for EAB sustainment units and their higher headquarters. The Army should include a sustainment brigade headquarters in scenarios and planning. To facilitate this, CTC planners should establish training opportunities that incorporate a role for the sustainment brigade headquarters that allows it to

oversee EAB sustainment operations in both live and simulated environments. Doing so will provide warfighters with the realistic constraints and expectations of sustainment operations.

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