



The BOC at the NTC

by Staff Sergeant Robert M. Castillo

Perhaps the least understood and most underutilized element of the self-propelled battery is its battery operations center (BOC). Trends at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California, show direct sup-

port Field Artillery battalions must emphasize the BOC during their NTC train-ups. The training efforts are to ensure the battery can handle the massive amount of information that must flow through it during fast-paced mechanized

operations. The challenge is only magnified by the fielding of Paladin with its semi-autonomous operations and increase in fire support tempo. This article discusses the mission and general operations of the BOC and provides several checklists to help the BOC accomplish its mission.

BOC Operations. The BOC collects all the information flowing between the platoon operations center (POC), the battery commander and his higher headquarters. It's the commander's tool to gauge the logistical status of his battery and his center for battle tracking the assets of both the battery and his battalion.

Normally under the control of fire direction center (FDC) personnel, the BOC is more than an alternate FDC. The BOC should be able to take control of battery FDC duties, (i.e., firing chart) in the event the main FDC is destroyed; however, its primary function is as the battery's activity center.

A detailed section of the unit's standing operating procedures (SOP) must outline the manning status for the BOC during normal operation. The personnel for the BOC come from the FDC; communications; maintenance; nuclear, bio-

I Personnel

- List of soldiers assigned to the battery by section with battle-roster numbers.
- Authorized number of soldiers in accordance with the table of organization and equipment (TOE).
- List of soldiers who are assigned to other duties or not currently deployed.
- Personal information on all soldiers ranging from clothing sizes to next of kin.

II Logistics

- Status of supplies (Class I-IX) updated at least twice a day.
 - List of next delivery or logistical resupply point (LRP) time and grid location.
 - Ration cycle.
 - Petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) status.
- Maintenance.
 - List of 5988E or preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS).
 - List of all vehicles not fully mission capable.
 - Prescribed load list (PLL) status with job number or order number.
- Communications.
 - List of PMCS for all radios, OE254s antennas and digital equipment.
 - List of all equipment not fully mission capable.

III Battle Tracking

- Operational situation or phase of operation.
 - Map with graphics.
 - Enemy situation and suspected enemy locations, strengths and understanding of who he is and what he looks like.
 - Scheme of fires with assigned targets, purpose and end state.
 - Battalion's and battery's critical Field Artillery tasks.
 - Battery's defensive plan with listening post (LP) and observation post (OP) locations and sectors of fire.
 - Friendly unit locations plotted on a map as well as aid stations or ambulance exchange points, decontamination sites and supply routes.
 - Scheme of movement for the battery.
 - DA Form 1594 Daily Staff Journal with all traffic sent to the BOC via FM radio or digital.
 - Battery precombat checks (PCCs) and precombat inspections (PCIs) with times to be completed.
 - Rehearsal times, which are posted.
 - Battery casualty collections points, which are posted.
 - Battery order, which is posted.
- Maintenance of Radio Nets (per SOP).
 - Battalion command.
 - Battery internal.
 - Administration and logistics operations center (ALOC) if possible.
 - Wire communications to LP/OP, if possible.

Figure 1: Suggested Information for the BOC to Track

- Maintain at least two personnel per shift: radio/telephone operator (RTO) and runner.
- Maintain FA Form 1594 Daily Staff Journal.
- Conduct radio checks with the battalion tactical operations center (TOC) and ALOC once an hour.
- Update all data on the BOC boards twice daily.
- Conduct communications checks with battery listening and observation posts once an hour.
- Check the generator/vehicle power hourly.
- Plot enemy/friendly locations and NBC updates plus post the air threat and precombat checks (PCC) checklist, as relevant.

Figure 2: Radio Watch Guidelines for BOC Personnel

logical, chemical (NBC); supply and the medic. These soldiers provide a good mix of military occupational specialty (MOS) expertise to provide the commander information he needs to wargame his battery's role in any operation.

The commander assigns a section chief or NCO-in-charge (NCOIC) to the BOC. Too often, battery commanders at the NTC don't understand that, like the gun line, the BOC must have a section chief and personnel assigned. The BOC section chief is responsible for all BOC activities and training and updating the commander daily on the battery's status.

The soldiers' and section chief's skills are important to ensure the BOC can accomplish its mission.

(1) *Fire Direction.* The BOC assumes control of the battery fires, if necessary. The FDC supplies the BOC the required materials and field manuals.

(2) *Communications.* The BOC tracks battery communications as well as communications maintenance and trains the radio/telephone operators (RTOs) for the BOC.

(3) *NBC.* The BOC maintains the battery mission-oriented protective posture (MOPP) status, chemical downwind messages (CDMs) and ensures the correct emplacement of all chemical warning devices.

(4) *Supply.* The BOC maintains the logistical status of the battery and the status of all future logistical resupply points (LRPs).

(5) *Maintenance.* The BOC tracks the daily status of the battery vehicles and trains personnel in conducting preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS).

The commander and section chief determine the information needed in each of the categories the BOC is responsible for. The BOC's tracking requirements can be broken into three information areas: personnel, logistics and battle tracking. Listed in Figure 1 are suggestions for the BOC to track in the three areas. The information in the first area, personnel, ensures the battery's accountability of its soldiers and makes the information readily available to the commander in the event of any emergency.

The information in the logistics category must be available to the commander at any time, but the BOC provides him a daily logistical summary so he has time to react to any situation. This is particularly critical during the mission-analysis phase of an operation; if the BOC updates the information in a timely manner, the commander should have enough time to address problems that could interfere with the battery's completing its mission.

The BOC must track the battle, the third information area, at all times with the information provided to the commander based on the phase of the operation. Battle tracking is the BOC's most critical task.

When not on the move, the BOC tracks the information listed in Figure 1, a challenge in continuous operations. Figure 2 suggests some guidelines for BOC radio watch personnel to keep the battery's status listings current.

The BOC can distribute all the information to the commander in two ways. The first is to create a BOC book. The alternative is to make slides that can be laminated and posted on the wall of the BOC vehicle. The BOC should be prepared to distribute the information both ways to accommodate any situation.

BOC Training. As seen at the NTC, training the BOC crew is, perhaps, where the battery leadership fails the most. For the commander to establish a crew drill for BOC personnel, he first must determine the BOC's priority of work, beginning with site occupation. Figure 3 outlines a BOC's priority of work. The time line for accomplishing the work can vary from situation to situation, but all must understand the commander's priority of tasks. In addition to the priority of work, the commander establishes a training plan with clearly defined guidelines and end states.

NTC trends show that a well-trained BOC gives the commander the information that's critical for planning battery operations or transitioning into a different phase of an operation. The BOC can make the difference between the battery's success or failure.



Staff Sergeant (Promotable) Robert M. Castillo is an Assistant Fire Support Analyst and has also served as a Battery Fire Direction Trainer in A Company, Operations Group at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. In other assignments, he was a Battery Fire Direction Chief with the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) at Fort Drum, New York; and a Fire Direction Chief/Platoon Sergeant in 5th Battalion, 29th Field Artillery and Fire Control NCO in 3d Battalion, 29th Field Artillery, both in the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Carson, Colorado. He has been a Fire Direction NCO for five of his eight years in the Army. Staff Sergeant Castillo holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from Saint Edward's University in Texas.

1. Establish voice with higher and lower elements.
2. Establish firing capabilities for handoff to the fire direction center (FDC).
3. Establish 100 percent accountability of all personnel and sensitive items.
4. Send the howitzer locations, ready-to-fire status and tube strength to battalion.
5. Establish a defensive plan for the battery.
6. Prepare for all incoming and outgoing reports to be sent to higher headquarters.
7. Update the graphics on the map.

Figure 3: BOC Priority of Work