

Multi-function air defense units for maneuver force

By Capt. Douglas Brown

The Army's air defense forces are the most deployed, or rotated, forces in the U.S. military. Air defense currently cover missions in, and provides protection to, the Middle East, Europe, parts of Asia and the U.S. The Army and Northrop Grumman are developing the Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System (IBCS). With this new capability, the ADA must develop a means to provide air and missile defense to maneuver forces.

Theoretically, the IBCS system will link all shooters and sensors in any theater. This will enable the shooter to conduct an engagement from the data provided by the sensor on the Integrated Fire Control Network (IFCN). The centralized method of control from the engagement operations center would involve commanders in the engagement process. It will allow us to create "mission tailored" air defense packages to counter local threats. Finally, it will provide a way to move away from only defending assets on the Defended Asset List and give maneuver units access to the protection of our systems while conducting operations.



This system is currently in testing and the Army plans to begin integrating it in the near future, radically changing the way air defense forces operate. This requires us to relook current doctrine, adapt it in order to match the new capabilities that IBCS offers and become a force that can also provide protection to maneuver forces.

Military intelligence multi-function teams

The military intelligence community faced a similar issue during Operation Iraqi Freedom regarding how to turn an inherently immobile force into one that could be flexible enough to operate directly with maneuver forces. Like air defense, military intelligence organized their units by system, or discipline, and they all remained in each of their locations to provide situational awareness to the warfighter.

The warfighter wanted an intelligence element that could provide them with immediate and actionable intelligence on an objective in order to facilitate further missions and maintain momentum. The intelligence community answered this request by creating multi-function teams (MFTs). An MFT is made up of approximately seven personnel from human intelligence, counter intelligence, signals intelligence and other intelligence disciplines and one lieutenant. These teams have the ability to lead maneuver forces onto an objective, collect all types of intelligence from the objective and provide that intelligence to the warfighter. This empowered them to maintain momentum and continue to carry the fight to the enemy before the enemy had a chance to regroup. Additionally, prior to deployment, the MFTs participated in multiple exercises with their assigned maneuver units thus allowing them to create relationships of trust and integrate into their forces successfully. In garrison, MFTs remained organic to the battlefield surveillance brigades (BFSBs) allowing them to train on their respective systems and disciplines in order to ensure they remained proficient. Finally, the BFSBs still maintained the ability to carry out normal functions by leaving other parts of the unit unchanged in their mission and force structure.

The multi-function team concept in air defense

I believe a similar concept is viable when looking at the force structure changes necessary to make IBCS flexible enough to provide air defense capabilities to maneuver units. Air defense, however, would have to do this on a larger scale than teams of seven personnel. I recommend the creation of IBCS brigades with the specific task, or mission, of providing air defense capabilities to maneuver units while maintaining the number of legacy Patriot units required to fulfill our obligations in the Middle East. An IBCS brigade would contain two IBCS battalions to support a division-sized maneuver unit, and each battalion would be able to provide capabilities to a brigade combat team-sized element.

We should also move the air defense and airspace management cells to the IBCS/ADA brigades so they can train with air defense forces and then attach them to maneuver units for training and deployments to act in their actual roles of advisors and not as battle captains. Each IBCS battalion would have four IBCS batteries, a THAAD battery, a maintenance company and a headquarters battery. Each IBCS battery would have a Patriot launcher section with four launchers and a ground-moving target or forklift for reload, an Avenger section with four Avengers, a radar section with two Sentinel radars and one Patriot radar, a C-RAM platoon, a mission-command platoon with an engagement operations center and a head-

quarters/maintenance platoon. Later, the Indirect Fire Protection Capability (IFPC) platoons could replace, or augment, the C-RAM platoons after IFPC comes to the force.

The battalion's THAAD battery could provide the BCT's footprint defense and early warning against the larger, and longer flying upper-tier threats, while each IBCS battery could provide their assigned maneuver battalions with defense against all smaller and lower flying lower-tier threats. This also facilitates layered radar coverage and the creation of a robust IFCN throughout the brigade's area of operations. While Patriot and C-RAM protect each battalions' forward operating base or attack position, the Avengers could move with the maneuver forces on patrols, convoys and other missions to provide a level of defense while on the move. With IFCN in place all weapon systems, to include the Avengers on the move, and their operators would share the same air picture and have the ability to detect, track and engage the enemy threats against the maneuver force. Thereby, each battery could support the movement and missions of a battalion and be flexible enough to move with them without sacrificing the protection of other assets. Each battery would also have all of the assets required to reload and maintain their systems and operate with a considerable amount of self-sufficiency. They would rely on minimal support from the IBCS battalion's maintenance company for system specific supplies and receive all other support, to include security, from their respective maneuver units. In this construct, one IBCS brigade could effectively support the missions of up to eight maneuver battalions.

This type of force structuring would allow each of the IBCS units to train on air defense tasks while in garrison, build unit cohesion and trust within each of the batteries and allow each battery to conduct training with the units with which they will be deploying. The ability to train with the unit they will be supporting will allow the IBCS battery commander to build a relationship of trust with the maneuver battalion's commander and give them the knowledge and understanding of air defense that will lead to effective use of the forces when deployed. After training and certifying as batteries, their final certification prior to deployment would become the combat training center rotations that they would conduct with the maneuver unit they will support in combat.

After operating in relatively the same manner since the advent of air defense, we are now facing multiple threats that do not operate the same and a maneuver force that lacks proper air defense coverage. Should IBCS work as promised, air defense forces will be able to break out of our current molding and create a force that is better prepared to meet the current challenges and remain flexible enough to defend against future threats. In order to do these things, we must structure the force in a way that allows for unit training and cohesion and supports the maneuver force. However, I believe that we must keep some units in their current force structure to remain flexible and able to maintain our presence in the Middle East and South Korea.

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