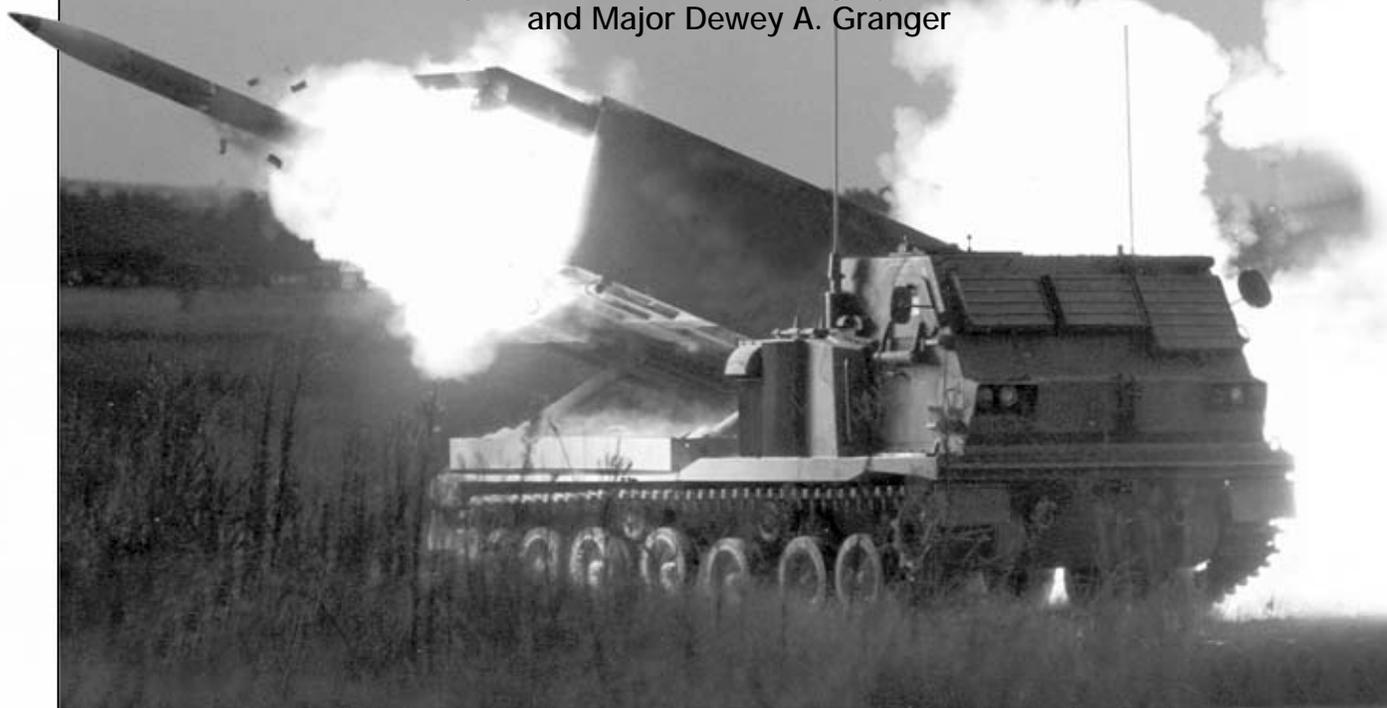


The Role of the Reinforcing Battalion

By Lieutenant Colonel Gregory C. Kraak
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The brigade commander's guidance was clear: deploy your multiple-launch rocket system (MLRS) battalion in a reinforcing (R) role in support of a direct support (DS) battalion. All artillerymen are familiar with the seven inherent responsibilities of standard tactical missions, as shown in Figure 1.

The fire support doctrine that covers the four standard tactical missions has been consistent and relatively unchanged for many years. It has served the Field Artillery well and provides a simple azimuth of who does what for any tactical mission. However, there is no manual that spells out the many additional implied tasks that must be accomplished between the supporting (R) and supported (DS) units.

This article explores the role of the reinforcing battalion and provides insights into some key reinforcing tasks and tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) to help ensure success on the battlefield.

The reinforcing battalion brings many resources for the fire support coordina-

tor (FSCOORD) to employ, including a fully manned sister battalion staff. The synchronization of these two staffs is paramount in reducing redundancy and streamlining the military decision-making process (MDMP) in what is always a severely time-constrained environment. Accordingly, three key decisions dictate the actions of these two staffs.

Single or Joint FA Support Plan (FASP). The first decision should be whether or not to develop a single joint plan or separate FASPs. Producing a single FASP by conducting a joint MDMP is the most efficient and preferred method. A joint MDMP dictates that each battalion staff principal remains "joined at the hip" with his counterpart, thus creating a fully coordinated and integrated product that takes advantage of each unit's particular strengths while masking each element's weaknesses.

However, the mission might dictate a different approach to the orders process. For instance in a deliberate attack, the focus of the DS battalion is usually

suppress, obscure, secure and reduce (SOSR), meaning it is primarily planning prep fires and smoke. Meanwhile, the R battalion likely will be focused on counterfire against the enemy regimental artillery group (RAG) and (or) division artillery group (DAG) as well as on deep shaping fires to help the maneuver commander set the conditions for success in the close fight.

In this scenario, given such divergent tasks in terms of space, time and capability, it may make the most sense for the DS and R battalions to initially conduct a joint MDMP but complete their staff work independently and issue separate FASPs. A technique for accomplishing this is to have the R battalion S3 and the DS liaison officer (DS LNO) attend the DS battalion orders process instead of the entire R battalion staff. In this way, the R staff is able to continue parallel planning by using warning orders (WARNOs) and updates through the DS LNO.

More to the point, the R staff wargames its specific essential FA tasks (EFATS)

with more efficiency and with much more detail than might be allowed in the DS battalion tactical operations center (TOC). In this way, the R battalion can issue a more detailed FASP to its subordinate battery commanders and the radar section. The DS battalion can do the same with more focus on the close fight and special munition tasks.

The key point is that regardless of the mission or approach, the two staffs must be synchronized and integrated so the FSCoord can employ all his firepower assets to support the scheme of maneuver. As long as the two battalions coordinate their actions, it becomes largely irrelevant as to how they actually meet the seven inherent responsibilities. The seven responsibilities are still valid as a guide for laying the foundation for accomplishing EFATs and establishing tactical relationships between the artillery units.

In the end, the joint MDMP process, through whatever means, sorts this out. Both staffs must work the details out early and include them in all training events.

Control of the DS Radar Section. The second key decision is to determine

who will control the DS battalion's lone Q-36 Firefinder radar section. Typically, the R battalion will be the counterfire headquarters and, as such, is best suited to control the Q-36. Attaching the radar section to the R unit seems to work best with all levels of support flowing through the R battalion.

To support the overall scheme of maneuver, the brigade fire support officer (FSO) plans the initial zones, radar positions and critical friendly zones (CFZs) while the brigade S2 should plan the call-for-fire zones (CFFZs). In the initial scheme of fires, the brigade FSO must clearly articulate the PLOT functions of PLOT-CR (purpose, location, observer, trigger-communications and rehearsal) for the radar, while the R battalion is responsible for communications and rehearsals. The initial plan must clearly articulate how the zones will support the scheme of maneuver and, therefore, are an integral part of the scheme of fires.

However, once the battle begins, the brigade FSO does not have full access to all the resources necessary to refine zones as effectively as the R battalion

targeting officer, who is based in the R battalion TOC, or the radar section leader. Additionally, he is focused on executing targets and fires specifically related to the EFATs in support of the close fight as is his targeting officer.

With this in mind, managing and refining radar zones—critical tasks for executing the mission—are best handled by the R battalion targeting officer, not the brigade FSO. The battalion targeting officer has the real-time information to refine the CFFZs while the task force FSO refines the CFZs (except for those around the R battalion targeting officer's FA assets).

Once the initial brigade plan is disseminated and understood, specialized execution of this EFAT is underway by the R staff. This technique allows zone refinement to go directly to the R S3, the individual charged with ensuring the CFFZs meet the criteria listed in the EFAT.

Obviously, this approach does not eliminate the FSCoord's and brigade FSO's ability to dictate CFFZs to turn on or off. However, the majority of their efforts are focused on other, more close support related EFATs.

| An FA Unit with a Mission of: | Direct Support (DS) | Reinforcing (R) | General Support Reinforcing (GSR) | General Support (GS) |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Answers calls-for-fire in priority from— | 1. Supported Unit 2. Own Observers ¹ 3. Force FA HQ | 1. Reinforced FA 2. Own Observers ¹ 3. Force FA HQ | 1. Force FA HQ 2. Reinforced Unit ¹ 3. Own Observers ¹ | 1. Force FA HQ 2. Own Observers ¹ |
| Has as its zone of fire— | Zone of Action of Supported Unit | Zone of Fire of Reinforced FA Unit | Zone of Action of Supported Unit, to Include Zone of Fire of Reinforced FA Unit | Zone of Action of Supported Unit |
| Furnishes FS personnel for ² — | Temporary Replacements for Casualty Losses, as Required | No Requirement | No Requirement | No Requirement |
| Furnishes liaison to— | No Requirement | Reinforced FA Unit HQ | Reinforced FA Unit HQ | No Requirement |
| Establishes communications with— | Company FS Officers and Supported Maneuver Unit HQ | Reinforced FA Unit HQ | Reinforced FA Unit HQ | No Requirement |
| Is positioned by— | DS FA Unit Commander or as Ordered by Force FA HQ | Reinforced FA Force FA Unit or as Ordered by Force FA HQ | Force FA HQ or Reinforced FA Unit, if Approved by Force FA HQ | Force FA HQ |
| Has its fires planned by— | Own Fire Plan | Reinforced FA Unit HQ | Force FA HQ | Force FA HQ |

¹Includes all target acquisition means not deployed with supported unit (radar, aerial observers, survey parties and so on).
²An FSE for each maneuver brigade, battalion, or cavalry squadron and one FIST with each maneuver company or ground cavalry troop are trained and deployed by the FA unit authorized these assets. USMC artillery battalions, upon deployment, provide FO teams to each company-sized maneuver unit. After deployment, FISTs and FSEs remain with their supported maneuver units throughout the conflict.

Legend:
 FIST = Fire Support Team FO = Forward Observer FS = Fire Support FSE = Fire Support Element HQ = Headquarters

Four Standard Field Artillery Tactical Missions with Seven Inherent Responsibilities. The Figure is based on one taken from *FM 6-20 Doctrine for Fire Support*.



6-32 FA FASP Briefing. The mission dictates whether or not the FASP is developed jointly by the DS and R battalions or as separate plans.

Therefore, zone management is often a secondary effort for the FSO. To help meet the challenge, the R targeting officer should be responsible for battle tracking the close fight and refining radar zones based on the tactical situation.

This technique can be effective, but several additional challenges may arise as a result. Task force FSOs, who ultimately are responsible for ensuring the allocated zones meet the commander's intent, do not work for the R battalion. Consequently, radar zone refinement might not be as important as target refinement and easily could be overlooked. As with target refinement, timeliness and trigger execution for zones are critical radar issues.

The Role of the R Battalion Commander. The third, critical decision is to determine the exact role of the R battalion commander. The FA community has no doctrine or formal TTP on this subject, and therefore, there is no one answer as to where he should be located or what tasks he should undertake to help the FSCOORD. Despite the doctrinal void, experience points to the brigade TOC as the best location for the R commander.

The R commander in the brigade TOC can help in many areas. One is the brigade deep fight. As the FSCOORD focuses his attention on the close fight, the R battalion commander can work shaping fires in greater detail. In conjunction with the brigade targeting cell, the R commander can help develop not only the radar plan, but also the deep fires requested by the brigade reconnaissance troop (BRT) and combat ob-

servance lasing teams (COLTs) down to the PLOT-CR level.

He also can work closely with the brigade FSO and the brigade targeting officer to develop the plan and supervise its execution. In addition, the R commander can ensure that Army airspace command and control (A²C²) is synchronized with all aspects of the fight, particularly the counterfire fight.

The FSCOORD faces similar challenges as he strives to juggle multiple tasks while trying to be everywhere at all times. Prioritization of effort is essential; it is imperative the FSCOORD and R battalion commander meet early and often to synchronize their efforts and compare notes.

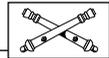
They should adopt a "tag team" approach whereby they cover each other's blind spots. For instance, if the brigade reconnaissance and surveillance (R&S) rehearsal conflicts with the FA battalion mission analysis briefing, it may make sense for the FSCOORD to attend the R&S rehearsal and ensure his COLTs and fire support teams (FISTs) are postured to support the scheme of maneuver, while the R battalion commander receives the joint mission analysis briefing from the two staffs. If the two commanders are in synch with each other, they will be equally prepared to issue guidance and allow the staffs to continue to work without unnecessary delays.

This approach requires somewhat of a "leap of faith" by the FSCOORD as, essentially, he must delegate authority to the R battalion commander to give guidance to the DS battalion staff and battery commanders. The key is the

relationship between the two commanders. If they are trusting and cordial, the two staffs are set up for success.

The R battalion faces many other challenges as it cultivates its relationship and develops its niche with its sister DS battalion as well as the brigade task force. These tasks include, but certainly are not limited to, communication, such as the use of retransmission, digital nets, multiple subscriber radio terminal (MSRT) integration; terrain management and deconfliction; and establishing quick-fire channels to the BRT, COLTs, Strikers and other sensors as dictated by the mission.

The absence of proven TTPs for the R battalion does not eliminate its mission to provide fires in support of the DS battalion and maneuver commander. A set of ways to meet reinforcing challenges cannot be spelled out neatly in one magazine article. The unit's missions as well as its capabilities largely determine the solutions. However, considering the three key decisions should provide a framework as a starting point.



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