Korean Counterfire
Rotational Field Artillery Battalion Operations in Korea
By Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matthew Pfannerstill and Sgt. 1st Class Gary Weathersbee, Jr.

Abstract
This is an effort to describe the transformative process of adapting from a maneuver-centric Field Artillery battalion to meeting the demands of the static, high volume nature of the Korean Theater of Operations (KTO). There are many significant differences in how we operate and train for decisive action compared to the role of rotational Field Artillery in the KTO. The train-up for the Korean Regionally Aligned Forces (RAF) mission was dynamic and intense but did not entirely prepare us for the nuances of the peninsula. It is vital to assess the train-up for a KTO rotation and ensure lessons learned from previous units are implemented before a rotational unit’s arrival.

We will begin this discussion by describing a centralized counterfire cell’s decisive action national training center rotation and pre-deployment train-up. We will then go on to catalog an organizational transformation process to successfully train and implement Korean Fires through Army Battle Command Systems, Permanent LAN, and FM digital over distance. We will conclude with several lessons learned throughout the deployment.

Introduction
“The Army trains to win in a complex world (United States Army, FM 7-0, 2014, p. 11).” The unit training cycle leading up to a nine-month rotational deployment to Korea included a combination of Artillery Table (AT) progressions and a decisive action rotation to the National Training Center. The unit laid groundwork for the rotation to ensure proficiency on our standardized mission essential tasks (MET). Additionally, 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery conducted numerous multi-echelon training events to ensure we could employ Fires in support of the brigade combat team (BCT). The Army Field Artillery standards prepare units to fight our nation’s wars; however, the essential question remains. Does the current training model offer the preparation needed to fight in Korea? See Figure 1.

Korea can be an enigma to the traditional Army warfighter. What makes Korea so unique? The profound directive that maneuver supports Fires in the KTO. In Korea, maneuver assumes two missions: non-combatant evacuation operations and defense of the Field Artillery. This concept can be problematic for movement and maneuver professionals to reconcile. It can also be a difficult notion for Fires operators as well.

The Army has encountered non-standard mission sets for the better part of two decades, and our ability to adapt has been dictated by our unique operating environments across the globe. Whether through battalion-centric counter-insurgency rotations to Joint Readiness Training Center or the contemporary large-scale combat operations of the NTC, the Army has adjusted pre-deployment training to meet the threat.

Considering the unique en-
vironment of Korea, how did we adapt our pre-deployment training? Looking back at the unit training plan, additional Korea-specific training was warranted to provide the necessary readiness.

**Pre-deployment training**

The battalion training cycle leading up to the KTO deployment was vigorous. Within a year, the unit conducted two NTC rotations, two Artillery Table XVIIIIs, and multiple other ATs to ensure an exceptional level of combat readiness. The operational tempo leading up to the deployment consisted of particularly high-intensity training, which produced a level of readiness that increased the proficiency of the overall unit.

Throughout the execution of the artillery training progressions, the battalion leadership modified the Field Artillery employment method to ensure success at each gate. As a product of decisive action training models, the unit exercised centralized control; this resulted in most of the Fires functions being consolidated and directed at a BCT level rather than the battalion. This lead to the brigade’s “S-2, S-3, counterfire, target processing, and fire support elements” contributing and supervising the employment of weapons locating radars (United States Army, FM 7-0, 2014, p. 60). While this approach was successful at NTC, it proved problematic while operating in the KTO.

There are two collective modes of thought when employing counterfire elements into brigade combat team operations. One approach has the counterfire cell located in the brigade tactical operations centers (TOC), the other method places the cell in the battalion TOC; both come with inherent strengths and weaknesses. When positioned in the brigade TOC, the centralized model allows for expeditious clearance of air and ground.

Additionally, being located in the brigade TOC provides greater access to a robust communications suite. The disadvantages of this method includes being disconnected from the battalion’s maintenance team and assumes risk by placing all mission command fire support elements in the same place. See Figure 2.

The placement of the counterfire cell at the battalion level allows for faster technical processing of fire missions and a greater awareness regarding battalion operations. This enhanced awareness permits the timely deployment of maintenance assets and ensures the distribution of all classes of supply to the radars. However, this movement fundamentally increases clearance times for fire missions, as the counterfire cell is no longer collocated with the land and air owners. Additionally, when separated from brigade, there is a greater risk of failing to establish upper Tactical Internet (TI) communications, which could have a detrimental effect on the counterfire mission.

The placement of the counterfire cell is driven by mission variables dictated by the operating environment. Tasks trained at NTC were very different from the mission we would receive in the KTO.

**Transformation**

Shortly after redeploying to Fort Stewart from the National Training Center the 1-41st FA Battalion began conceptually restructuring operations to meet the complex operating environment Korea. The reorganization subsequently produced the follow-on effects on multiple facets of the battalion’s standard operating procedures. For example, the battalion TOC/Tactical Command Posts (TAC) configuration changed to accommodate the influx of personnel, the battalion level communications architecture changed to permanent local area network (LAN) due to the proximity of the battalion fire direction center (FDC) and the counterfire cell, and the power demand increased due to

---

*Figure 2. CF cell placement into the brigade combat team operations. (Courtesy illustration)*

http://sill-www.army.mil/firesbulletin • 39
the greater number of dismounted radios.

Functionally, this altered our battalion TAC standard operating procedure (SOP) in multiple dimensions. The 1-41st FA had revised its SOP throughout multiple training events and rotations and now had the added challenge to change it again immediately before deployment, which was not ideal.

The changes were not well received by the senior NCOs throughout the formation and they inquired about the necessity of the seemingly last-minute changes. Nevertheless, the battalion leadership recognized that the organization needed to adjust to meet the needs of the operating environment. The Korean Peninsula places a strain on multiple aspects of rotational battalions operations including the successful operation of digital communications over increased distance and heavy terrain, substantial reliance on upper TI, and the potential for an incredible volume of enemy artillery fire. The manner in which the rotational battalion adapts to change and conducts their pre-deployment training will ultimately determine its success or failure. This begets the question: Can a battalion concurrently train for decisive action and Korea? See Figure 3.

The KTO has many Field Artillery nuances that are unique to the peninsula. From the significant integration of Joint Automated Deep Operations Coordination System (JADOCS) into fire mission processing, to the freedom related to Field Artillery delivery mechanisms; units must learn how to exploit both opportunities in order to find success in Korea.

JADOCS increases the ability of a counterfire cell to manage an enormous amount of acquisitions while simultaneously broadcasting that data to multiple echelons for intelligence and action. JADOCS essentially takes an over-saturated two system job and breaks into four cellular components. This cellular break out of sensor-to-shooter mission processing provides a distinct advantage in information flow. In essence, the digital elephant is consumed one bite at a time by increasing the number of hands that can service the targets. Another significant characteristic of JADOCS is that all of the components of the Department of the Defense employ the system, which facilitates real-time cross organizational coordination between all component commands on the peninsula. Finally, JADOCS serves as the digital communication bridge between Re-
public of Korea forces and United States Army; this bridge grants us the capability to leverage all available coalition resources to deter any threats that may arise. See Figure 4.

The 1-41st FA Battalion incorporated the effects management tool (EMT) and Advance Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATDS) to analyze and employ Fires. However, in Korea, JADOCS is mandatory and the battalion absorbed the shock of implementing a new instrument into the counterfire process. We operated with four JADOCS in total: one for the analysis of acquisitions (H1), the second for the initiation of fire missions (H2), the third to distribute the common operating picture to brigade (FA), and the fourth for the battalion S-2 to conduct real-time counterfire analysis (S2). This process proved incredibly efficient and increased the counterfire mission capacity of the battalion.

**Conclusion**

In retrospect, integrating JADOCS was a step 1-41st FA should have incorporated before the NTC rotation. However, JADOCS support stateside is not a priority and the battalion did not have a field service representative (FSR) in garrison to support such a transition. Training for a deployment to the KTO requires an increased level of train-up criteria that is codified at a level higher than that of a brigade and a program of instruction implemented before deployment to guarantee that units are capable of transitioning seamlessly into various unique operational requirements.

Rotational Field Artillery units should consider modifying pre-deployment training to capture the distinct nuances of the peninsula. Decisive action training relies heavily on Field Artillery movement and Fires in support of maneuver; however, that model does not holistically prepare you for the static, high-volume nature of Korea. Battalions must stress systems to the magnitude of 4,500 acquisitions and 750 fire missions over a 72 hour period, which will likely illustrate the rapid shift of operational priorities. Carrying out a focused, deliberate train-up will safeguard the 2nd Infantry Division’s “Fight Tonight” mission and reduce the culture shock of counterfire in the KTO.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matthew Pfannerstill served as a battalion targeting officer for the 6th Battalion, 37th Field Artillery Regiment, 210th Field Artillery Brigade. Additionally, he served as part of a regionally aligned forces deployment with 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery Regiment.

Sgt. 1st Class Gary Weathersbee, Jr. has served as a target acquisition platoon sergeant for 333rd Field Artillery Target Acquisition Battery, 210th Fires Brigade and as a senior Field Artillery targeting NCO for 1st Battalion, 41st Field Artillery.