Successful Field Artillery Battalion

Intelligence Support to Brigade Targeting

By Capt. (P) Tim Wilson and Sgt. 1st Class Kurt Legnon

There are multiple ways an S-2 can be successful in supporting the targeting efforts of the field artillery battalion. During exercise Combined Resolve X (CBR X) at the Hohenfels Training Area, the field artillery S-2 was extremely successful in focusing on the deep fight and destroying enemy artillery assets in a timely and effective manner. Daily, the FA S-2 worked closely with the target acquisition platoon leader (TAPL) to analyze enemy artillery assets and actions. They continually assessed when and where the enemy would fire from next. In doing so, the FA battalion, in close and constant work with the brigade at the daily targeting working group (TWG), were ultimately able to influence the enemy commander’s decision cycle.

The S-2, along with the TAPL, collected and analyzed all point of origin (POO) and point of impact (POI) data from enemy fires collected by the counter-fire (CF) cell and plotted all the data on a map overlay. The map overlay also displayed the type of round shot from each location, as well as the date time group of each shot. In order to differentiate the date-fired of each round, the S-2 plotted the POO/POIs, including the direction of travel, using different colors. Utilizing this overlay, the S-2 enhanced mission command by creating a shared understanding of the operational environment. Every day of the exercise, the battalion S-2 took the map and overlays to the brigade TWG and briefed the brigade staff on his assessment of the location of the enemy’s position artillery areas (PAAs). This allowed the entire staff to visualize the next 24 hours of the targeting cycle and better assess what assets to target.

Secondly, by assessing the location of possible enemy PAAs, the S-2, with advice from the TAPL, identified and nominated new call for fire zones (CFFZs). This provides the second most responsive priority for the call for fire generated by radar. In doing this, the FA battalion has the ability to conduct counter-fire faster when a radar acquisition is within that CFFZ. The S-2 was also able to template potential enemy artillery targets with these PAAs, therefore generating terrain denial missions and predictive analysis. These target nominations, used at the brigade TWG, led to destruction/neuralization of enemy equipment. Along with the CFFZs, the S-2 section developed a Time Analysis Wheel that displayed the times the enemy was firing artillery and the types of round shot at any particular time. The Time Analysis Wheel is a more concise tracker of when the enemy fires artillery. By utilizing the wheel, the S-2 was able to identify the primary times that the enemy conducted Fires, as well as the potential resupply times for enemy artillery. The S-2 section passed this information to brigade and to the subordinate units which led to the batteries being in position ready to fire at the assessed times in order to provide timely and accurate counter-fire.

Another technique the S-2 used to support targeting was to assess what echelon the enemy would be moving into the area of operations in each phase of the operation. Through detailed staff analysis, the S-2 could assess what pieces of equipment would be in each echelon, and therefore provide adequate threat assessments to the battalion. Additionally, the S-2 shared these assessments with the fire direction officer (FDO) and the battalion S4. The FDO and S4 were then able to work together in requesting the best type of ammunition to destroy enemy equipment.

The aforementioned techniques applied by the S-2, albeit extensive and effective, were ultimately not the fundamental characteristic to the overall success achieved throughout the rotation. The fundamental characteristic is the application of all analytical techniques in conjunction with one another, and the timely dissemination of intelligence and information. S-2 assessments, within the Intelligence Summary, on why the information was important, drove the determining factor for the decision makers. Finally, the constant and effective communication between the S-2 section and the brigade targeting cell, battalion FDC/FDO, and the subordinate units solidified the success during the rotation. All of these successful techniques led to the destruction of 19 2S19s and 5 BM 21s, ultimately giving the training unit the upper hand in the artillery fight.

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