Recently, the 17th Field Artillery Brigade completed our Warfighter Exercise supporting America’s First Corps in Korea. During this warfighter, the 17th FA served as the corps force field artillery headquarters (FFA HQ). In this role, the brigade was responsible for corps shaping Fires and provided mission command to another FAB HQs serving as the corps counterfire headquarters as well as two division artillery headquarters each augmented with an Multiple Launch Rocket System or high mobility artillery rocket system battalion in a general support reinforcing (GSR) role to assist with their respective division shaping or counterfire operations.

This article will showcase three field artillery brigade lessons learned from our preparations and experiences at our Warfighter:

1. Early coordination with the corps and each division staff to highlight the unique requirements of supporting corps artillery and radar assets during decisive action;
2. The additional FFA HQ staff coordination required when operating within division battlespace and when given the role of corps FFA headquarters; and
3. The value and necessity of conducting a routine FFA HQs synchronization meeting with all field artillery headquarters within the corps task organization.

Seventeenth FA Brigade (FAB) is one of the Army’s four active-duty field artillery brigade headquarters. The 17th FAB commander dual-hats as the corps fire support coordinator and when the corps fights decisive action, the 17th FAB normally receives
the additional role of FFA HQs. This additional role requires the 17th FAB commander and staff to widen their aperture and look beyond their own organic formation. In some cases, the corps may choose to assign another field artillery brigade headquarters the role of counterfire headquarters, and each division task organized under the corps normally is task organized with their organic DIVARTY headquarters. Each of these subordinate artillery headquarters provide information to the Force Field Artillery headquarters to assist the FFA HQs commander/corps fire support coordinator (FSCOORD) to “see” the Fires warfighting function in a holistic sense across the entire corps formation, advise the corps commander, and quickly facilitate corps commander guidance across the entire “Fires” chain. The dual-hatted nature of the FAB commander is critical and ensures the entire Fires community remains nested with the corps commander’s intent. Prior to the operation, the FAB commander participates in the corps military decision-making process (MDMP) as the corps FSCOORD and ensures “Fires” are able to shape the battlefield appropriately for the division fights and then leads their own FFA-level MDMP process with the FAB staff. During operations, the FAB commander leverages their corps deputy FSCOORD to facilitate the corps Targeting Working Group and Decision Board and also leverages their brigade DCO and brigade S3 to coordinate with each of the divisions to ensure all artillery assets and sensors (counterfire radar) are positioned appropriately to execute the mission and meet the corps commander’s intent, while always operating between their corps fire support role, coordinating with all the other O6-level commanders for shared understanding, and commanding their own FAB.

**Lesson Learned #1**

When a field artillery brigade headquarters is assigned the role of FFA HQs, the FFA HQs staff must coordinate early with the corps staff and each task organized division staff to identify support requirements for any corps artillery or radar assets that will need to operate within the division area of operations. Liaison officers’ exchange is critical to ensure a dedicated officer/NCO is able to exchange information and provide mutual support/information flow between the FFA HQs, the Corps Counterfire HQs, and each of the division artillery HQs. We identified early on, the each corps artillery unit will require support with three concerns:

1. Approved land for position areas for artillery (PAAs) and radar position areas (RPAs);
2. Security when operating in the division’s area of operations, escort in/out and during operations; and
3. Sustainment support when operating in the division’s area of operations to include all classes of supply and medical support.

For the initial concern, the importance of synchronizing the allocation of PAAs and RPAs within division battle space, optimal terrain may be limited, and with limited options for feasible firing positions or radar positions, without pre-coordination, the divisions may choose those same firing positions or radar positions for their own organic DIVARTY assets. Also, during operations, a corps asset may fire repeatedly from a firing position within division battlespace and then conduct a survivability move and, without proper coordination, the division may choose to move a mission command, logistics base, or one of their own organic DIVARTY assets. Since corps assets could start in one division’s battlespace and then move to another division’s battlespace, it is necessary to include the details for a successful handoff between assigned security elements, the escort requirements when traversing through divisional battlespace, and identifying where the authority lies to decrease or increase security requirements as the enemy threat changes. During our warfighter, we directed the attention and security in the corps order (this is key advantage to having the FAB commander dual-hat as the corps FSCOORD). We also
required each division to discuss the security they provided during the corps Fires rehearsal and tracked the security element for each firing unit at the FAB daily commander’s update brief (it was a Commander Critical Information Requirement if a corps field artillery or radar asset was uncovered with security for any reason).

The third concern is in regards to sustainment support to the corps artillery and radar assets operating in division battlespace. These corps artillery assets require local sustainment support. The FAB has minimal organic sustainment support. Although each active duty field artillery brigade is assigned a brigade support battalion (BSB) by MTOE, the FAB BSB is only a HQs element and does not contain the subordinate units associated with a typical BSB. They do not have any of the subordinate companies (no SSA, no transportation company, no maintenance company, and no Role II medical capability). Due to the dispersed method in which corps artillery assets will operate during decisive action, the divisions Brigade Combat Team (BCT) assets (or similar) will be required to provide all sustainment support.

**Lesson learned #2**

A field artillery brigade staff assigned the role of FFA HQs needs to truly understand the scope of their FFA HQs mission. The staff should already have strong relationships with the corps headquarters staff and with the staff of their organic battalions. They will now need to develop a relationship with each of the division staffs supporting the corps and any field artillery brigade staffs and DIVARTY staffs that will report to the FFA HQs. Due to the positioning of the corps FA artillery and radar assets within division battlespace, the FFA HQs staff have a greatly expanded role to effectively coordinate, monitor, and hand-off the security and sustainment requirements with each movement between division battlespace. As the battle progresses, the FFA HQs S3 will need to ensure previously planned PAA/RPAs are still valid and work to identify new alternatives if those plotted locations become untenable. The FFA HQs S2 must coordinate with the corps and the respective division G2 to ensure the corps artillery asset receives local intelligence updates from the battlespace owner for each of the PAA/RPA locations. The FFA HQs S2 would not have the most relevant information for each corps artillery asset operating within the division Battlespace as multiple corps artillery/radar assets would essentially be operating in multiple brigade combat team areas of operation and the respective brigade S2 in that area of operation would have the best information on the local enemy threat. The FFA HQ S1, S4, and surgeon will need to monitor sustainment support as corps artillery or radar asset moves and must reestablish a connection their support for all classes of supply, the nearest Role II facility, or replacements. The FFA S6 must continually monitor the primary, alternative, contingency and emergency (PACE) communication plan for each of the corps artillery and radar assets to ensure they do not lose connectivity and must work with corps and each division G6 to potentially employ retains assets (another corps asset that will require land, security, and sustainment). The FFA HQ protection chief looks at all enemy threats to artillery and radar inclusive of corps and DIVARTY (air, ground, counterfire, electronic warfare, cyber, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats), looks for trends, and distributes methods to mitigate those threats across the entire FFA HQ Fires community. It is critical that the FAB staff officers are aware of their expanded role when assigned the FFA HQs mission. This expanded role requires that they establish connectivity and relationships with multiple different headquarters, develop reporting methods to keep the FFA HQ commander informed and able to advise the corps commander for the reallocation or re-prioritization of corps resources, and to ensure proper hand-offs occur for security and sustainment as corps artillery and radar units maneuver on the battlefield. Finally, the FFA HQs is likely also responsible for sourcing and monitoring fire support requirements in the rear area. This requires the FFA HQ staff to establish a non-traditional fires headquarters linkage to the corps rear area headquarters. Sourcing that rear area with artillery assets from one of the BCT organic field artillery battalions or with a GS cannon unit, develop a mission command structure as well as a sensor plan, and then provide oversight of the process as part of the FFA Mission.

**Lesson Learned #3**

The importance of a routine FFA HQ synchronization meeting. During our Warfighter, we held a daily meeting with each field artillery brigade, each DIVARTY and the current ops corps Fires DFSCOORD. This meeting proved critical to providing the FFA HQs commander/ corps DFSCOORD requisite information to advise the corps commander and ensure the entire Fires enterprise maintained shared understanding to meet the corps commander’s intent for the Fires Warfighter Function. The FFA HQ synch meeting is not a replacement for any of the corps Targeting Working Groups or Boards and it is recommended that “targeting” topics are reserved only for those targeting forums. The FFA HQ synchronization meeting (see attached 7-minute drill) is a great tool for commanders (each FAB CDR and each DIVARTY commander or their representatives participated as available) to gain shared understanding on the current fight and resolve difficulties quickly. As the FFA HQs, 17th FAB exercises the forum to gain insight on any challenges requiring the short duration re-allocation of corps assets (reassigning a unit from a GS status to a GSR status as a means to assist a DIVARTY
while they were the main effort) or reassigning radar coverage to account for unexpected gaps due to either unscheduled maintenance or battle loss. For our fight, the FFA HQs had to manage all Q37 and Q53 radars in the corps area of operations through the Counterfire Headquarters (inclusive of the FAB, DIVARTY, and BCTs) since, if not centralized, the divisions would gravitate to providing coverage to only their own area of operations and the corps radar coverage plan would dissolve into a coverage area fraught with wide open gaps or extreme redundancy.

During our daily FFA synchronization meetings, we also discussed the cross-leveling of critical munitions, corps artillery assets providing temporary artillery fires short of the fire support coordination line, and the prioritization of artillery and radar replacement Class VII (due to battle loss/damage) to ensure proper radar coverage and firepower during critical time periods.

The 17th FAB served as the America’s First Corps Force Field Artillery Headquarters during our Warfighter in Korea in November, 2017, and then again in Japan in December, 2017, for Yama Sakura 78. Each time, 17th FAB operated with different field artillery brigade and different DIVARTY headquarters and the previous lessons learned were critical to the effective employment of our FFA HQs. From our experiences, early communication and coordination is crucial or the initial days of the exercises will create angst and confusion across the Fires community. We recommend that the FFA HQs include their expanded FFA HQ role in the unit mission and commander’s intent during MDMP, ensure division requirements for division, field artillery brigade and DIVARTY headquarters are outlined thoroughly in the corps OPORD, ensure that each of these topics are discussed at the Corps Combined Arms Rehearsal and the Fires Rehearsal, and the FFA HQ develop and disseminate clear reporting requirements for the FFA HQs and an agreed upon agenda/format for the habitual Force Field Artillery Headquarters synchronization meeting.

Overall, the 17th FA Brigade learned much about an artillery headquarters expanded role as a corps Force Field Artillery Headquarters. We offer our staff for further discussion or for requests for additional information. We hope these lessons learned will be of benefit to the entire field artillery community.

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