

Integrating “Doctrinal” Support Into Peacekeeping Operations:

Supporting a Heavy Task Force in Kosovo

by First Lieutenant Brian Novoselich and First Lieutenant Chad Foster

Peacekeeping operations were nothing new to the soldiers and leaders of Task Force 1-77 Armor. Many members of the battalion were veterans of Operation Joint Guard, operating in both Camp Colt and Camp McGovern, Bosnia, from March to October of 1997. To many, receiving the WARNOs and eventual deployment orders for Operation Joint Guardian II, in Kosovo, meant, “Just another Bosnia.” Although many aspects of the mission remained similar, logistically the mission was considerably different. Unlike the base camp concept the task force was used to in Bosnia, the logistical arena in Kosovo would take on a much different form. The logisticians of Task Force 1-77 AR found themselves supporting their armor heavy task force much like they would during the tactical operations of a Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC) rotation.

As soon as the leadership of Task Force Tiger hit the ground in Kosovo, they quickly realized that the tactical situation was much different than that of Bosnia. Unlike Bosnia, where ethnic groups were separated into rather coherent enclaves, the Serbian and Albanian Kosovars still lived together in small villages and towns. Ethnic tensions ran high. Within the first week, houses could be seen burning almost nightly. The entire situation was likened by many to the “Wild West,” with no sheriffs and lawlessness running rampant. KFOR would take on a multifaceted role as lawmakers, peacekeepers, and civil court judges during the initial months of the deployment.

To accomplish our peacekeeping mission, our battalion task organized into an armor heavy task force, which consisted of two tank companies, a mechanized infantry company, and an airborne company. This mix of units created many unit-specific support requirements which



the task force would eventually have to meet.

The level of violence and the frequency of violent events in the area made it necessary to keep assigned companies outside the Camp Bondsteel base camp. In the midst of the population, they provided a constant presence, which the leadership felt necessary to restore normalcy to the lives of the Kosovars. The terrain supported this plan: there were four large towns, each requiring a constant presence, in the area of operations. These towns each contained large buildings, typically factories, which were used to house the units. Similar to war-fighting operations, the companies each established company assembly areas in their assigned towns. From these areas, they began executing peacekeeping operations.

The array of forces in the area of operations forced the logisticians to change their preconceptions of how to support the force. With no maneuver units living on the base camp, they had to establish a new concept of support.

Task Force Falcon’s concept of support for the battalion-size task forces originated from the fact that Camp Bondsteel

served as the logistical hub for most classes of supply for all U.S. KFOR forces. Camp Able Sentry, Macedonia, served as the rear logistics node. Co-located on Camp Bondsteel were: the forward support battalion (FSB), elements of the main support battalion (MSB), a property book detachment, the combat area surgical hospital (CASH), a signal company, the Task Force Falcon Tactical Operations Center (TOC), and contracted Brown and Root packages. With the FSB at Camp Bondsteel and the furthest subordinate unit within 17 kilometers, it followed logically that the task force field trains, combat trains, Unit Maintenance Collection Point (UMCP), main aid station, and the TOC be co-located at the base camp. It now fell upon the task force and the companies to determine the best course of action for adequate support of all task force missions and the line companies scattered throughout the task force area of responsibility (AOR).

Revamping Support Operations

The task force commander set the resupply standard with his order to ensure that every soldier received two hot meals each day. This made it necessary for the task force logisticians to execute two LOGPACS daily. The initial task force support plan, upon entry into Kosovo, called for line company first sergeants to execute LOGPACS from Camp Bondsteel twice each day. This initial plan put an undue strain on the vehicles, first sergeants, and supply sergeants of the task force.

During the first few weeks of mission support in early July 1999, the task force quickly realized that due to the tactical and operational situation facing each line company, a closer look at overall support operations was in order.



Maintenance personnel work on the unit's tanks at the task force's Life Support Area, Camp Bondsteel.

Task Force Falcon required all convoys, logistical or operational, to travel with a minimum of two vehicles at all times. Tank and mechanized infantry companies possess only two HMMWVs and one 5-ton truck by MTOE, thus extremely limiting the ability to cover great distances (up to 17 km). With platoons scattered throughout their area of operations, line companies soon felt the huge burden and wear on both vehicles and personnel executing the LOGPACS.

Due to the high frequency of violent incidents in such a large AOR during the weeks following initial entry, the first sergeants played a key role in maintaining senior leadership at company command posts and in the AOR where needed. Normally the company logistical executors, the first sergeants found that they could either run LOGPACS and deal with the intricacies of heavy company logistics or help provide that senior leadership in the AOR, but not both.

Like the first sergeants, the company supply sergeants also found it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to run two LOGPACS a day lasting up to four hours each. Along with the requisition and pick-up of all Class II, maintaining accountability of all property book items, making daily logistical coordination, and keeping vehicles mission capable, the LOGPACS quickly hindered company-level supply operations.

After the initial growing pains, the task force turned to the consolidated task force LOGPAC technique for resupply. With the company supply sergeants living in the field trains and maintaining constant liaison with all higher and internal support assets, the task force adopted a "doctrinal" approach to supporting the battalion. Hoping to take the pressure away from the line companies, the support platoon assumed responsibility for executing two LOGPACS each day to either company assembly areas or the Logistical Rally Point (LRP). The LOGPAC nor-

mally consisted of the support platoon leader's HMMWV for command and control, line company supply trucks, HEMTT fuelers and cargoes when needed, and a trail 5-ton truck outfitted with a radio and .50 caliber machine gun. This LOGPAC resembled normal "doctrinal" operations very much like those rehearsed at the CMTC. Using the administrative and logistical net at the combat and field trains locations, the task force logisticians remained accessible for any line company support and supply requests in addition to the two LOGPACS each day.

This LOGPAC method allowed quick and easy replenishment of all classes of supply. Given the underlying constraint of two hot meals daily, the task force also managed to push Class II, IV, and IX from the base camp with the LOGPACS. Based on necessity and/or emergency requirements, special convoys were also established accordingly.

The task force handled Class III bulk and packaged products uniquely. Due to the lack of a combat trains with emergency fuelers and packaged products available, the support platoon positioned HEMTT fuelers at each company assembly area, under the control of the company. These fuelers were tasked to support any emergency resupply needs for all task force elements. Given the initial high operational tempo of the M1A1s, M2A2s, and the light infantry's attached HMMWVs, the forward-positioned fuelers proved extremely helpful for the entire task force. In addition, the support platoon maintained a stand-by fueler in the field trains with an operational basic load of packaged products.

Caring for Troops and Civilians

Medical coverage for the task force also took on another look. In the initial weeks of the deployment, trauma cases in the local population were frequent. In the first month, there were numerous gunshot

wounds and also a mass casualty situation, a grenade attack that injured 18 people. All injuries threatening life, limb, or eyesight were treated by KFOR because the local medical facilities were largely incapable of handling such injuries effectively. Unlike the typical tactical situation, Task Force Falcon had a CASH deployed to Camp Bondsteel. Having the hospital that far forward enabled faster treatment of urgent patients and also gave us the ability to push additional assets as far forward as possible.

With the maneuver companies deployed throughout the AOR, medical could not be handled from a consolidated aid station on Camp Bondsteel. Instead, each company had assigned medics and a tracked ambulance at their assembly areas, but despite having the tracked ambulance on hand, we found they were often too slow or too large to maneuver effectively in the small villages and crowded roads of Kosovo. Having the FSB's medical company as well as the CASH located on Camp Bondsteel allowed the attachment of five field litter ambulances (FLAs) to the task force. These FLAs were attached to the maneuver companies for evacuation purposes, and greatly reduced the time needed to move patients to the air medevac landing zones.

In addition to having medics and an FLA attached to each company, the task force also pushed a trauma team forward to the largest town, Vitina, which was also the area's ethnic "hot spot." This team, which co-located with the airborne company in their assembly area, consisted of two medics, the physician's assistant, and an ambulance, bringing advanced treatment as far forward as possible. In addition to being located in the largest town in the area, they also were centrally located to all companies. This trauma team began seeing an influx of routine and priority patients from the local population. In many instances the Kosovars did not trust or have access to health care in their towns. Although medical care was always readily available for KFOR soldiers, the majority of patients treated by the trauma team and task force medics in general were from the local population.

The remainder of the medical platoon, with the augmentation of two FLAs,

Reminiscent of a scene at the NTC, a dust devil swirls through the support platoon motor pool at Camp Bondsteel.

maintained health services in the base camp as well. These personnel served all task force personnel remaining on the camp, and their facility also served as a Class VIII resupply hub for the forward medical teams. The close proximity of the CASH allowed immediate and direct resupply to the aid station on a demand basis. In the event of a mass casualty situation in the area of responsibility, a medical quick reaction force was immediately dispatched from the aid station to help assist in casualty treatment and evacuation.

Decentralized Maintenance

Task force maintenance also required dispersing maintenance teams away from the base camp. Each line company took its organic trains to the assembly areas, along with the maintenance team tool trucks. This allowed the teams to fix most deficiencies and shortcomings on sight, and eliminated the need to travel back to the base camp for quality assurance checks.

The UMCP and field trains remained co-located at Camp Bondsteel. This allowed constant access to direct support maintenance assets. All ULLS-G boxes were linked directly to their FSB counterparts via a local area network to allow immediate maintenance reporting and Class IX transactions. Any direct support level deadlines were evacuated to the UMCP for repair. This configuration let us house mechanics and crew in the LSA (Life Support Area) already established on the base camp. Overall, maintenance operations remained fairly similar to the tactical configuration the task force repeatedly rehearsed at CMTC. With minor adjustments, the system worked well in both war-fighting and peacekeeping missions.

The growing pains of supporting a dispersed, tank-heavy task force during the first few weeks in Kosovo led the logisticians to reassess their concept of support

for the task force. The decision to deploy all companies to assembly areas throughout the AOR forced a re-evaluation of the preconceptions many task force logisticians had from their experiences in Bosnia. The task force-level LOGPAC was the solution of choice. Not only did the "push" method of support facilitate all classes of resupply, but it also allowed line companies to focus efforts on the mission at hand. Pushing medical and maintenance support assets as far forward as possible ensured responsive support. Battalion task forces routinely rehearse logistical support at the training centers. Peacekeeping missions should not force battalion logisticians to scrap those operations that they execute routinely. Although the missions may be different, a task force deployed outside a base camp can be supported in a peacekeeping environment much as it would be in a war-fighting environment. By considering all logistical support requirements prior to entry into these areas of conflict, heavy mechanized units will be better prepared to support the unorthodox missions involved with stability operations.

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