



Stewards of Kings: Preparing Distribution Platoon for the National Training Center

By CPT John M. LeClair

A junior lieutenant dismounts their Palletized Load System (PLS) in the dead of night. Stumbling over rocks and sand just off the shoulder of Bitter Springs Main Supply Route (MSR), they make their way back to their assistant convoy commander's vehicle.

“Did we miss a turnabout a kilometer back?” they ask their transportation section sergeant, acting as the assistant convoy commander.

“I think so, but I can't say for sure,” the section sergeant responds.

“This wouldn't have happened if we weren't also jacked up on ammo, which set us back a few hours.”

Distribution platoon leaders in the Field Artillery battalion (FA BN) regularly face stressful situations like this at the National Training Center (NTC). To ensure these issues don't continue, distribution platoons must prepare by conducting practical, tactical mounted land navigation, mastering ammunition management and implementing realistic training on logistics release points (LRPs) and rearm, refuel, resupply points (R3Ps).

“Sustainment is a central, potentially decisive aspect of ensuring the [Fire Support] system functions effectively; additionally, it is an essential component of the endurance tenet of multidomain operations and as such leaders should strive to integrate it into all [Fire Support] plans and operations. It is not a separate function or afterthought” (Field Manual 3-09). Leading up to a rotation at NTC, there is no shortage of opportunity for a distribution platoon to conduct the training required to propel it to success. As a unique forward support company (FSC) within the brigade combat team (BCT), the FA BN FSC is involved in numerous training exercises unseen throughout the rest of the BCT, including but not limited to artillery tables VI, XII, XV and XVIII. During these training exercises, it is paramount that the distribution platoon hone their tactical expertise. Given the controlled environment at home station, FSCs can utilize required real world sustainment missions to train on their essential tasks. Second Lieutenant Alex Caudill, a distribution platoon leader in Foxtrot Forward Support Company, 3rd Battalion, 16th Field Artillery Regiment, who has completed a rotation at NTC, states, “Battalion training exercises allowed everyone to put their knowledge to the test in a controlled training environment. Training exercises allowed Soldiers to see what our equipment can and can't do to ensure the success of the battalion's mission.”

F FSC, 1-5 FA, 1ABCT, 1ID conducts a convoy brief in the Intermediate Staging Base (ISB) Warrior Motor Pool on 7 February 2025 prior to movement to “The Box” during Rotation 25-04 at the National Training Center.



loads other than ammunition will be considered under the unit's holding capacity. These CCLs are not loaded on a PLS because those systems are not directly dedicated to hauling only that ammunition.

F FSC and C BTRY, 2-82 FA, 3ABCT, 1CD conduct a tactical Rearm, Refuel, Resupply Point (R3P) in preparation for a live fire exercise on 8 April 2025 during Rotation 25-06 at the National Training Center.

TACTICAL LRPs AND R3Ps

The final skill that a distribution platoon must execute proficiently is the tactical execution of LRPs and R3Ps. "A progressive approach enables a logical succession, builds skills and knowledge from basic to advance tasks and sets conditions for individual and collective training" (Field Manual 4-0). By utilizing this crawl, walk, run method as well as wrapping mounted land navigation and ammunition management into the LRP or R3P operation, the distribution platoon exercises their



trained skills to stay aware of the location of the supply point, using the terrain as concealment while executing a security plan. These resupply activities are time sensitive, and the distribution platoon must practice effective and efficient resupply of bulk fuel and ammunition to complete the operation within two hours, as to not to compromise the LRP or R3P location. Integrating LRP and R3P operations into the unit tactical standard operating procedure (TACSOP) will ensure all involved parties are on the same page, from the link up to which sustainment asset is to provide for which battery to the flow of traffic through the R3P site. Executing these tactical LRPs or R3Ps as much as possible during all battalion training exercises should be the goal and expectation of the FSC commander and the FA BN commander.

Many sustainment organizations face problems when training at NTC. Regardless of the cause—be it a lack of resources, training time or a true understanding of the issues at hand, there are a few focus areas that should prepare the distribution platoon for the true test that NTC is. In training, tactical mounted land navigation, ammunition management and tactical LRP and R3P execution are necessary priorities. Master these three tasks, and you enable the King of Battle to win.

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References

1. Headquarters, Department of the Army. (August 2024). FM 3-09, *Fire Support and Field Artillery Operations*. Washington, D.C.: Army Techniques Publication.
2. Headquarters, Department of the Army. (August 2024). FM 4-0, *SUSTAINMENT OPERATIONS*. Washington, D.C.: Army Techniques Publication.