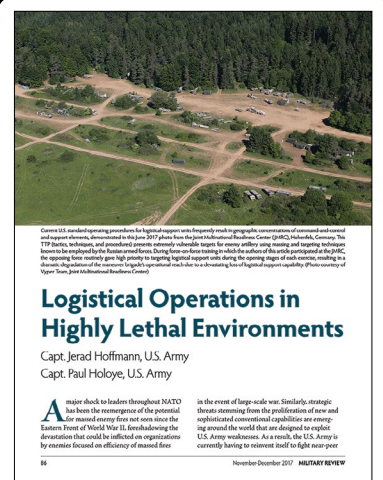


LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Response to Capt. Jerad Hoffmann and Capt. Paul Holoye's "Logistical Operations in Highly Lethal Environments"

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To view this article, please visit <http://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/November-December-2017/Logistical-Operations-in-Highly-Lethal-Environments/>.

I concur with most of the conclusions drawn by Captains Jerad Hoffmann and Paul Holoye in their article “Logistical Operations in Highly Lethal Environments” concerning the need to stress survivability for sustainment units. However, I take issue with their discussion of the placement of the brigade support area (BSA) and the battalion field trains. Essentially, my question is this: Why are BLUEFOR [friendly force] units establishing their BSAs at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) within effective range of OPFOR [opposing force] artillery?

Captains Hoffmann and Holoye lamented about the current practice of collocating the field trains within the BSA as it “makes such concentrations of units immediately subject to [OPFOR] fires before they can react,” established earlier in the article as “within five to fifteen minutes” of detection by enemy UAVs. I assume from the article that field trains elements at the JMRC are dying like flies to OPFOR artillery. These gentlemen have definitely done their homework when it comes to the current Russian artillery threat capabilities; however, they missed a key employment consideration.

While Russian doctrine places maneuver in support of artillery, Russian artillery will most likely deploy roughly 25–33 percent of their maximum artillery range from their forward line of troops (FLOT). Speaking from repeated experience as a support (now called distribution) platoon leader, maneuver S-4, and field trains commander from back in the 1990s (deploying against a similar OPFOR threat), we typically positioned the BSA twenty to thirty kilometers behind the FLOT—essentially mitigating the threat from OPFOR artillery.

If units at the JMRC are deploying the BSA (and their field trains) any closer than thirty-four to thirty-eight kilometers behind the BLUEFOR FLOT, considering the modernized Russian artillery threat, then they are wrong. Deploying the BSA and field trains

thirty-four to thirty-eight kilometers behind the BLUEFOR FLOT should obviate much of the OPFOR artillery threat.

Splitting the field trains out—and possibly placing them closer to their supported maneuver battalions—may actually decrease their survivability. Sending the field trains outside the BSA footprint in the 1990s was the exception, not the rule. Now, more than ever, sustainment formations struggle with an increased amount of Level I and II threats [individual to small tactical unit threats] in the brigade and division support areas. This stresses the need of keeping the field trains within the BSA footprint for mutual security.

Even at a distance of thirty-four to thirty-eight kilometers, the brigade support battalion and the forward support companies remain responsive to the needs of the maneuver commanders. While some may consider this an extreme distance, the field trains may operate a five- to six-hour logistics package (LOGPAC) mission (about two hours from the BSA to the logistics release point [LRP], two hours on site, and about two hours back). In the 1990s, once a company first sergeant linked up with his LOGPAC at the LRP, it never took more than two hours for his company to receive their supplies and bring the company’s LOGPAC back to the LRP for the return trip. The company first sergeants and executive officers resupplied their companies through a well-honed battle drill designed to limit their exposure time during this very vulnerable operation. Imagine the tactical equivalent of a NASCAR pit stop with a mobile pit crew brought out to the track during a very narrow, replanned time window.

This article illustrates that we not only need to dust off our survivability tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for sustainment units, we also need to brush up a new generation on the full range of forgotten tactical sustainment TTPs.

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