

Chapter 6
BSA Movement

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PRINCIPLES

The brigade commander moves support battalion units to provide responsive support to the brigade and to provide security for support battalion units. Units make forward moves during an offensive operation and rearward moves during a retrograde. They move to maintain appropriate distances from the FLOT and from supported units. Support battalion elements that stay in place for long periods of time do so at great risk. Movement is a key component of support battalion security.

BSA units prepare to move every 24 hours, if required. The support battalion commander does the actual determination when to move. He does so in close coordination with the brigade commander. The support battalion commander does not move just for the sake of moving. The brigade commander understands that support operations are disrupted by moves. Only security considerations and maintenance of proximity to support units justifies this disruption. The commander avoids short moves (about 5 kilometers or less) just to stay

close to supported units, but does make short moves for security reasons. He weighs the benefit of shorter support distances against the cost of disrupted support operations.

The support battalion S2/S3 develops the movement annex to the OPLAN/OPORD in accordance with the brigade OPLAN/OPORD, FM 101-5 and the tactical SOP. The XO approves the annex. The support battalion commander ensures that a BSA move is coordinated with all supported elements, subordinate elements, and the brigade headquarters. All supported elements are aware of when support operations cease at an old BSA. They are also aware of where the new site is located and when operations begin there. Supported units recognize that support operations are degraded while elements move. To minimize support disruption, however, support battalion elements move in echelons. Operations at the new site begin before the old site is completely closed out.

PLANS

All BSA elements have sufficient organic assets to move their personnel and equipment in one lift. However, downloaded supplies at supply points and disabled equipment at maintenance sites may cause mobility problems. Personnel evacuate disabled equipment or repair it before the move. In the offense, an alternative is to leave it (after proper coordination is effected) for advancing maintenance elements to repair. The support battalion elements keep supplies uploaded as much as possible. For all transportation requirements beyond the support battalion's capability, the transportation officer requests additional support from the supporting MCT.

When the BSA moves, the support battalion S2/S3 selects the type of motor march used in coordination with the brigade rear CP. A close column is one in which elements are formed as compactly as possible. Usually, there are 67 vehicles per kilometer. This reduces time and allows better control with fewer guides, escorts, and markers. However, a close column is easier to detect, causes traffic congestion, and makes quick dispersion difficult. To overcome these disadvantages, the BSA move may use an open column with more widely spaced elements. There are usually up to 20 vehicles per kilometer. However, this technique makes control more difficult.

The third type of march is infiltration. With this type, the commander dispatches vehicles individually, in small groups, or at irregular intervals for maximum security. Usually 10 or less vehicles are dispatched per hour. This type takes more time and is harder to control. However, it is also the best way to move when the enemy has air superiority.

The support battalion S2/S3 coordinates with the brigade rear CP. They determine just where the BSA elements fall in with the brigade rear CP elements. Each major subordinate element commander in the BSA acts as a march column commander. Each march commander in turn organizes his march column according to certain guidelines which state –

- Each march column is a mixture of various elements in the support battalion.
- Slower, heavier vehicles are assigned positions in front.
- Recovery vehicles are placed in the rear.
- Gun vehicles are normally placed near the front and near the rear.
- All air approaches are covered.

Each march commander is responsible for providing strip maps to all drivers and briefing all convoy personnel on the –

- Convoy chain of command.
- Convoy route.
- Rate of march.
- Vehicle intervals.
- Accident and breakdown procedures.
- Immediate action security procedures.
- Blackout condition procedures

- Halt procedures.
- Location of HSS.
- Location and identification of destination.
- Ambush reaction procedures
- Time schedules.
- Arm and hand signals.
- Radio frequencies and call signs for control personnel, security force commander, fire support elements, reserve security elements, and medical evacuation support.

For convoy control, the support battalion S2/S3 establishes a convoy command net. This net includes the convoy commander, security force commander, and march commanders. It also includes serial commanders, recovery vehicles, and the trail party commander.

A complete BSA movement SOP makes planning quicker. Appendix L of FM 55-30 includes a sample SOP. Items in the SOP include –

- Duties of the convoy commander and control personnel.
- Convoy organization.
- Weapons and ammunition to be carried.
- Hardening of vehicles and protective equipment for personnel.
- Preparation of vehicles.
- Counterambush techniques.
- OPSEC measures.
- Procedures for halts.
- Maintenance and recovery procedures.
- Actions at release points.

CONDUCT

A move is usually initiated by a FRAGO issued by the brigade headquarters. The support battalion S2/S3 issues a warning order to all BSA units. Each unit reports its vehicle, supply, and maintenance work load status to the support battalion S2/S3 and brigade rear CP. They use the information to finalize the convoy organization, compute additional transportation requirements, and perform required march computations (Appendix F, FM 55-30). They ensure load plans are changed to accommodate current operational status.

The brigade headquarters normally prescribes the route. The support battalion S2/S3 uses a map reconnaissance in such cases to confirm checkpoints. He also identifies problem areas and begins planning positioning of elements in the new BSA. If the route is not prescribed, the support battalion S2/S3 activates a reconnaissance team. He briefs the team on the displacement plan. He provides it with a strip map. He also designates the MOPP level for the reconnaissance party to wear. The party monitors all radiological and chemical detection devices. It

performs duties to –

- Verify map information.
- Note capabilities of bridges.
- List significant terrain features and possible ambush sites.
- Compute travel times and distances.
- Perform the route and ground reconnaissance of new site.

When they receive the warning order, BSA units begin to break down tentage, heaters, and sleeping areas. They load equipment according to the individual unit loading plans. They also begin taking up wire and policing the area. The medical company increases evacuation to reduce the patients in the holding area requiring movement. Maintenance companies also increase evacuation if possible. Customers top off Class I, III, V, and IX levels before supply points close out. All units begin uploading supplies and equipment as much as possible.

The support battalion commander forms a quartering party to facilitate the move. Whenever possible, the core of the quartering party is designated in the SOP and simply adjusted to account for the units that are in the BSA at the time. The party is a group of unit representatives sent to the new BSA to secure, reconnoiter, and organize the area before the arrival of the main body. It includes representatives from each unit and sub element in the BSA.

The quartering party leader is a part of the S2/S3 planning team. The S2/S3 provides him with an overlay that shows the planned locations and orientations of all the BSA units. It also shows major obstacles and passage points into and out of the BSA. The leader distributes this information to quartering party members.

The leader also issues a warning order to all party members that tells them when and where the quartering party briefing will be and what their roles will be. The briefing should cover the following:

- The quartering party mission.
- The start point and time to arrive there.
- Traffic control point locations and responsibilities. This includes identification of the soldier responsible for placing each point.
- The release point and when guides from each unit should be there to meet their units.
- Security halt procedures.

- Code words for key actions such as completion of security sweep or NBC survey.
- Responsibilities for alternate leaders in case the officer in charge cannot perform the mission.
- Alternate procedures to be used if communications fail.

Whenever possible, the quartering party conducts a walk-through rehearsal of the steps it takes during the move and occupation of the new BSA.

The quartering party has enough assets to –

- Conduct a security sweep of the new site to ensure the area is free of enemy forces.
- Establish communications with parent and higher headquarters and notify the CP of the results of the sweep.
- Establish a jump CP.
- Select locations for unit vehicles, work sites, and tentage.
- Select individual and crew-served weapon fighting positions.
- Establish land-line communications among the BCOC, unit CPs, dismount points, LPs and OPs, and other critical sites.
- Position personnel to guide arriving units of the main body from the RF to preselected locations.
- Position chemical alarms.
- Ensure personnel follow dispersion and other countersurveillance measures.

Representatives of units in the BSA reconnoiter their unit sites and begin preparations for occupancy. They notify the jump CP of problems with the new positions. The jump CP reports to the support battalion S2/S3 when it is prepared to begin operations. It also relays any information the commander needs to change movement plans.

The main body begins the move in accordance with the OPORD or FRAGO issued by the support battalion CP. The support battalion CP plans the serials to move by echelon. Planners never include an entire support battalion company in a single serial. Otherwise loss of a serial eliminates all of the capability in a functional area. In addition, if the whole company is moving at the same time, continuity of support is not achieved. However, planners do not fragment individual elements too much due to austerity of communication assets. The first serial or serials include elements of critical support points.

These consist of—

- Class III, V, and IX elements.
- Maintenance elements to set up a new MCP.
- Medical treatment assets to provide EMT and ATM at the new site.

Typically, field trains are likely to move next. The remaining elements of the support battalion cease operations not already stopped. They upload the rest of their materiel and disconnect and pick up the rest of their wire. They break down their camouflage and move out with permission of the CP. The support battalion CP and the brigade rear CP transfer control to the jump CP. Then they break down their equipment and move out.

The trail party closes out any remaining operation. The party ensures the old site is clear of evidence of intelligence value to the enemy. Then it moves to the new site. This party includes maintenance elements to deal with disabled vehicles from the rest of the convoy. It also picks up guides and markers along the route.

When the main body closes, ideally during the hours of darkness, the quartermaster party representatives meet their units and guide them to their positions. The accomplishment of tasks then follows the priorities established by the commander in the movement and occupation order. Establishment of hasty defense normally has priority over the logistics mission. The suggested sequence of tasks for the main body is to —

- Position crew-served weapons.
- Prepare primary fighting positions.

- Clear fields of fire and prepare range cards.
- Emplace wire, mines, and other obstacles, and cover them by fire.
- Select and prepare alternate and supplementary positions.
- Finalize base defense plan depicting base layout, sectors, fields of fire of crew-served weapons, obstacles, and fire support plans.
- Implement reconnaissance and surveillance plan.
- Emplace sensors and early-warning devices.
- Prepare protective positions adjacent to work areas.
- Prepare and rehearse reaction force.
- Submit base defense, obstacle, and proposed fire support plan to BCOC.
- Coordinate with adjacent bases.
- Plan deceptive measures in coordination with the BCOC.
- Erect work areas.
- Camouflage vehicles and installations.
- Make the new support points fully operational.

The support battalion CP/brigade rear CP —

- Takes control from the jump CP.
- Ensures base commanders report to the BCOC on readiness and provide the BCOC with a base sketch.
- Finalizes communications among units.

The brigade rear CP reports to the brigade main CP that the move is complete. The S2/S3 begins planning for the next move.

CONVOY TECHNIQUES

The support battalion commander ensures all support battalion elements practice good convoy techniques. All should practice good march discipline. This includes following traffic regulations, responding to all signals, keeping proper distances, and practicing good security measures. Drivers also know what to do in case of mechanical failure. Drivers move the disabled vehicle off the road and notify the march element commander. They perform unit maintenance operations within their capability. Maintenance beyond the driver's capability is performed by mechanics in the trail party. Refer to FM 55-30.

Support battalion elements frequently move at night. So knowledge of night convoy techniques is required. The support battalion commander decides whether to move or not to move under blackout conditions. Blackout moves reduce the probability of enemy observation but make the convoy more vulnerable to ambush and sniper fire. They also contribute to driver fatigue. In any case, night moves require greater coordination and additional radios. More information is in Chapter 5 of FM 55-30. In addition, if the convoy crosses a contaminated area, it follows the procedures prescribed in FM 3-3.

CONVOY DEFENSE

A key consideration in movement is security. The support battalion's limited self-defense assets make convoy defense a challenge. The brigade rear CP coordinates closely with the supporting MP unit. The MP unit provides convoy security whenever possible. However, support battalion elements take proper measures throughout the move, including during halts. The brigade rear CP also coordinates fire support in advance with the fire support officer to get a priority of support for the convoy. The brigade rear CP informs the fire support officer of start and release points, time schedules, checkpoints, and convoy size. The fire support officer sets call signs, frequencies, and other required signal information. Convoy commanders use information from reconnaissance to plan fires. They coordinate and rehearse actual calls for fire and adjustments to fires. Refer to FM 55-30.

Movement on an open road makes a convoy very susceptible to air attack. The support battalion lacks significant firepower. Therefore, passive defensive techniques are critical. Personnel do not use closed columns during daylight. They may use tarps and bows to disguise the shape of lucrative targets such as fuel tankers. Personnel cover portions of vehicles that reflect light. Drivers scan the surrounding areas for objects to use for cover and concealment if ordered to disperse. In addition, soldiers should scan for aircraft. (Search and scan procedures are in FM 44-3.) Personnel use radios minimally.

If attacking aircraft are spotted, the convoy commander may choose to halt the convoy, continue to

move, or disperse. A halt makes the convoy harder to spot, but if spotted, it becomes easier to hit. If the move continues, vehicles are easier to spot but harder to hit. Also, fewer soldiers are available to provide small arms fire. Proper dispersion makes it harder for pilots to make multiple hits. However, it is easier for the pilots to spot targets as vehicles move to dispersion positions. It is more difficult to continue the move after the attack.

Though the support battalion has limited firepower, small arms defense can be effective against low-flying aircraft. The key is to put up as much volume of fire as possible; all available weapons are concentrated on the aircraft.

Passive defense against artillery or indirect fire is similar to that discussed above. Active defense consists of coordinating air or artillery fires and directing fires against the enemy forward observer if located.

Commanders have a plan to avoid ambushes whenever possible. They minimize the effects by protecting vehicles and personnel. If the convoy is ambushed, vehicles in the kill zone drive out if possible. Personnel abandon disabled vehicles in the kill zone or move them if they are blocking the road. Vehicles not in the kill zone do not attempt to pass through it. Personnel dismount and take up defensive positions. Commanders call for artillery or air fire on enemy positions. They may also request reaction forces to counter the attack. Details on all aspects of convoy security are in FM 55-30.

EMERGENCY MOVES

The support battalion conducts routine moves as described above. In addition, it should have an SOP coordinated with the brigade rear CP for conducting emergency moves. Personnel use these procedures when the BSA is directly confronted with a Level III threat.

Each BSA element identifies personnel, vehicles, and equipment to immediately move out to a predesignated rally point. These elements are capable of providing limited support in critical support areas. These critical areas are Class III, V, and IX, maintenance; and medical treatment. A small CP element assumes immediate command of these critical elements at the rally point.

The move is initiated by a transmission over all available nets as well as a prearranged visual signal or sound. At the signal, all elements come up on the command

net. Elements not designated for immediate movement load up essential items (such as weapons, maps, and communications assets). They leave tentage, camouflage nets, and supplies on the ground. Elements destroy supplies and equipment, except medical items. The provision of the Geneva Convention protects medical supplies and equipment from being intentionally destroyed.

In order for such moves to prevent destruction of the brigade's support base, the SOP thoroughly spells out responsibilities and actions to be taken. The support battalion coordinates the SOP with all BSA elements. Training is also required to make the plan work. In addition the BCOC designates and makes known to all BSA elements alternate rally points every time the BSA moves.