

Standardization of Division Remain-Behind Equipment Programs

EWS Contemporary Issue Paper

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To

Major J.M. Weis, CG 10

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Equipment readiness is an essential part of pre-deployment training for an infantry battalion, with in most cases, less than 180 training days in between deployments. However, the state of remain behind equipment maintenance within the Marine Corps infantry division has declined to the point where some battalions are returning from deployments to near zero percent readiness. This forces the battalions to spend time repairing their vehicles, weapons systems, and communications gear, instead of training. The Marine Corps needs to establish standard operating procedures for remain-behind¹ equipment which meet the needs of Battalion level commanders, specifically infantry battalion commanders, as their units deploy en masse and often with a 1:1 dwell ratio.

The solution to the remain behind maintenance problem for the infantry battalions is a standardized, regimental level program with an emphasis on accountability and readiness, which would require and incorporate a civilianized maintenance force, a detachment of 3521 (motor transport maintenance) Marines from the respective direct support CLB, as well as an adjustment to MARADMIN 566/06.

Program Overview

The program I will outline will formally transfer all SAC-3² items from infantry battalions to their regimental HQ Co account before they deploy via Z2M³ supply transaction. The regiment will then be responsible for maintenance on this equipment and conducting internal redistribution, if required, to provide the battalions, upon their return, with a T/E equipment set with as high a readiness rating as possible.

Accountability and Manpower

The key to any successful remain behind equipment program is accountability, and hand-in-hand with accountability goes reliable and knowledgeable personnel in the areas of maintenance, maintenance management, and supply. Every time a unit deploys, whether to OIF/OEF⁴ or UDP/MEU⁵, they leave a remain behind element. However, the composition of this element is not tailored towards maintenance. The task organization of this element is usually comprised of one SNCO, who is tasked with handling casualty responsibilities, and a handful of junior Marines to assist him in these duties. With the emphasis on combat operations, and not on operations in the rear, the battalions will justifiably take every deployable Marine with them on deployment. The 1st Marine Division, in its' Letter of

Instruction (LOI) for remain-behind equipment, published July 27, 2007, establishes a T/O for a battalion level remain-behind element:

- Capt/1stLt Any MOS
- (1) Supply Officer/Supply Chief
- (1) DASF/MAL/Fiscal clerk
- (1) Administrative clerk
- (1) Operations NCO
- (1) Logistics Officer or MMC/0411
- (1) MT Mechanic (Sgt or above)
- (1) MT Dispatcher (Sgt or above)
- (1) Armory (2111 NCO or above)
- (1) Comm (NCO or above)
- (1) Comm technician (LCpl or above)

This is simply unrealistic for an infantry battalion to be able to source from within. The 1st Marine Division LOI goes on to say that, "Manpower for the RBT [remain behind team] can be sourced from/by the Regimental HQ staff as a collateral duty or additional duty."⁶ Specifically, for officers, there will almost never be an "extra" officer to assume the duties as the RBE OIC. On the 0402 side, each battalion at full T/O will have one Capt and three Lieutenants (one of which in the current operating

environment will be used to source a MTT requirement). The Regimental HQ Companies are in no better shape. The best approach to handling the accountability question is to have the Regiment be the responsible entity for all SAC-3 items and establish the program at their level. In a brief prepared by LtCol Beaudoin, former 1st Marine Division Supply Officer, he states that, "Poor management of RBE is the single biggest source of poor asset accountability in the Division."⁷

Establishing a standard procedure where the regiment, which will remain in CONUS while the battalions deploy, takes control of this property is a solution to this problem. When regiments do deploy, the personnel to manage the RBE can be sourced from several different sources. According to LtCol Beaudoin, these include "Reserve Marines...ADSW Marines on one year orders...[and] a team of former Marines to work this issue on contract."⁸ These are all viable solutions and would keep all equipment centrally located and under the control of one entity.

Supply Actions

With a system of centralized accountability, the HQ Co Supply Officer would undoubtedly bear the lion's share of the work. The basis of this system is that all gear and equipment left behind by a battalion (A, D and E TAMCNs)⁹ is turned over to the Regiment and subsequently transferred, via Z2M transaction,

from the battalion account to the regimental property records. This proposed RBE system is in violation of the current Marine Corps directive, as outlined in MARADMIN 566/06, which states, "All equipment and weapons not deployed forward will continue to be accounted for under home station AAC [account activity code]. Prior to deployment, the commanding officer will appoint a commissioned officer to serve as custodian for RBE accounting..."¹⁰ The Regimental Supply section would be responsible for preparing all gaining unit paperwork and ensuring that all Z2M transactions are processed prior to a battalion departing for deployment. The subordinate unit (battalion) supply sections would be responsible for the preparation of all losing unit paperwork.

The respective regimental level responsible officers would take custody of this equipment, i.e. the RO who is responsible for the motor transport CMR (consolidated memorandum receipt) would have battalion assets added to his account when the battalion deploys.

Once a unit returns from deployment, the process would work in the reverse order, and the battalion will receive an equipment set in like condition and in equal quantity. All property records will likewise need to be adjusted and checked for accuracy. However, the equipment they receive may be

different than that which they left behind. For example, if the regiment is able to fix a HMMWV from another battalion, which is not in CONUS, they can give it to a unit that has just returned in order to get them their full complement of equipment. This is one benefit of the program being managed at the regimental level.

Overall staff cognizance for this program would reside with the regimental MMO.¹¹ He will be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the DPR¹² and LM2¹³ and coordinating with the Division G-4¹⁴, MMO¹⁵, and Supply Officer to ensure that higher headquarters is current on the equipment status within the regiment. He will also be required to conduct (weekly) reconciliations of the entire account to maintain accuracy and accountability. The MMO will also be responsible for ensuring that all joint limited technical inspections (JLTIs) are completed prior to any equipment being transferred and that all requisite 4 cards¹⁶ have been submitted.

The Data Assurance Teams (DAT) and division Logistics Readiness Inspection (LRI) teams will also need to be on board with these programs, as they are the entities that will be conducting inspections to ensure accuracy of maintenance and accountability records. As Captain Matthew Milburn, former OIC of the 1st Marine Division LRI team points out, "Sometimes the

gear was given to a regimental RBE who did nothing with the equipment, so a returning unit was greeted with the same broken gear they left behind. The supply and MIMMS transactions were usually done at the last minute with many errors...However, most units received gear in as bad shape or worse than they left behind...RBEs were not properly staffed, JLTI¹⁷ and maintenance actions were not complete, and the lack of ownership of equipment, coupled with the time compressed nature of pre-deployment training, created an atmosphere of abuse of the gear and the procedures." He goes on to say that this proposed process can work if staffed, trained, and supervised properly.¹⁸ However, all inspection teams will have to buy into this program to ensure standardization across the Marine Corps. Also, they need to recognize the changes that will occur on regularly produced maintenance and supply accounting reports as a direct result of this process.

Civilianized Maintenance Force

One additional option is that of contracting out for maintenance and repair when battalions are deployed. The 1st Marine Division currently has multiple programs in place which are doing this right now. The programs are slow in getting started but are effective and have shown improvements. The 1st Marine Regiment recently sent 30 of its HMMWVs, which were in

need of the most repair, to the IROAN facility in Barstow, CA; 90 days later they returned and were nearly re-built from the ground up. The OshKosh Truck Corporation has also established maintenance facilities near major Marine Corps installations which will conduct maintenance on their series of medium vehicles. This has also served to increase readiness.

Overflow Maintenance Contact Team

Each regiment in the Marine Corps has a combat logistics battalion (CLB) in direct support of it. As the regimental HQ Co does not have the requisite amount of mechanics to accomplish all RBE tasks, these respective CLBs would provide, for five working days per month, a detachment of 5 to 10 3521 (motor transport mechanics) to augment the regimental HQ Co in the performance of required maintenance.

Timing

One of the most essential elements required to make the program successful is timing. Baring drastic changes, units have visibility of their upcoming deployment as does their regimental HQ. When these units are deployed, there needs to be a standardized process put in place. Colonel Craparotta, Commanding Officer of 1st Marine Regiment notes, "...that allows entire battalion sets to be re-worked over a six month period

that coincides with deployment and is fully integrated into the TEEP.”¹⁹ This is absolutely essential, maintenance must be performed on equipment belonging to a specific unit while they are deployed, if not, they will return to a state of readiness lower than when they departed.

Need for Standardization Across the Marine Corps

With this program, there is an overarching need for standardization, as the effects will be felt at the highest levels if there is not. When a unit signs equipment to the regimental HQ Co, that unit will now be reflected on maintenance reports as being “short” gear, while the Regiment will reflect as being “over” on gear. This is important as it will adversely affect HQMC equipment fielding initiatives. If they see a battalion listed as short, they will expect to see SAC-3 deficiencies identified on the unit’s SORTS²⁰ reports and will consequently push additional items to those units. Conversely, when they see a report from a regimental HQ Co reflecting gross overages in equipment, they will not push gear to them, even though they may need it. A Regimental HQ Co may have shortages in its own stocks, once it eliminates the battalion gear from its inventory upon a unit’s return. If HQMC recognized this process of a regimental level RBE, then they would accept a modified readiness and SORTS report which would reflect what

gear was owned by what unit, and what was over and short as a direct result of the RBE plan. PP&O²¹ would then need to adjust their fielding plans accordingly.

Counterargument

The counterarguments to this proposal are very simple; it is in clear violation of MARADMIN 566/06, and it creates supply paperwork problems. The amount of Z2M transactions which would need to be completed per battalion on both ends of a deployment could easily reach into the hundreds. This is very time consuming and errors will undoubtedly occur. Additionally, this consolidated RBE process will adversely affect HQMC equipment fielding initiatives by skewing units' reports as over and short when in actuality, the gear is at the regimental level.

Conclusion

The solution to the remain-behind maintenance problem for the infantry battalions is a standardized, Regimental-level program with an emphasis on accountability and readiness. This program will enable the regimental HQ Co to perform maintenance on all equipment while a battalion is deployed, as battalion level RBEs seldom have maintainers. Subsequently, HQ Co could affect redistribution within the regiment, as required to

provide returning units with an operable equipment set to begin their PTP.

1985 words

¹ LETTER OF INSTRUCTION (LOI) FOR DEPLOYMENT PREPARATION OF 1ST BATTALION, 1ST MARINES (1/1) IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF)

² MCO4400.150_

³ MCO4400.150_

⁴ <http://www.usmc.mil>

⁵ <http://www.usmc.mil>

⁶ 1st Marine Division LETTER OF INSTRUCTION (LOI) FOR REMAIN BEHIND EQUIPMENT (RBE) AND REMAIN BEHIND TEAMS (RBT)

⁷ LtCol Beaudoin's *Proposal to fix USMC RBE Problems, 26 Sept 07*

⁸ LtCol Beaudoin's *Proposal to fix USMC RBE Problems, 26 Sept 07*

⁹ MCO4400.16_

¹⁰ MARADMIN 566/06

¹¹ LETTER OF INSTRUCTION (LOI) FOR DEPLOYMENT PREPARATION OF 1ST BATTALION, 1ST MARINES (1/1) IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF)

¹² MCO4790.1_

¹³ MCO4790.1_

¹⁴ <http://www.usmc.mil>

¹⁵ MCO4790.1_

¹⁶ MCO4790.2C

¹⁷ LETTER OF INSTRUCTION (LOI) FOR DEPLOYMENT PREPARATION OF 1ST BATTALION, 1ST MARINES (1/1) IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF)

¹⁸ Electronic interview from Capt Matthew Milburn, former 1st Marine Division LRI OIC

¹⁹ Electronic interview from Col L.A. Craparotta, Commanding Officer, 1st Marine Regiment

²⁰ MCOP 3000.11_

²¹ <http://www.usmc.mil>

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