

Table of Organization Change Required for Logisticians

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Major AM Kelley, CG 13
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Welcome Aboard, Lieutenant

Upon reporting to the Commanding Officer of 2d Combat Engineer Battalion (2d CEB), 2d Marine Division, 2ndLt Puller, an 0402 Logistics Officer, is assigned as the battalion's Assistant Logistics Officer (S-4A) under Captain Butler, a 1302 Engineer Officer. As the S-4A, 2ndLt Puller will be involved with the planning, coordination, and conduct of all logistical support for the battalion's engineer companies. His collateral duties will include assignments as the embarkation officer; arms, ammunition, and explosives (AA&E) officer; ordnance officer; and safety/hazardous material officer.

In support of an upcoming battalion deployment, 2ndLt Puller will be required to coordinate the embarkation, movement, tracking, reception, and logistical support for more than 1000 Marines and Sailors, 1200 weapons, 100 containers, 100 vehicles, and 50 pieces of heavy equipment. The upcoming deployment represents a complex logistical event, and 2ndLt Puller lacks the experience necessary to efficiently accomplish the task.

Captain Butler is neither trained nor experienced as a logistician, and he is unable to provide 2ndLt Puller with any significant level of guidance or direction. 2ndLt Puller's only source of additional guidance or direction is the Division Logistics Section (G-4). Despite his marked lack of experience,

2ndLt Puller is viewed by most members of the command as the battalion's subject matter expert (SME) for logistics.

2ndLt Puller, like many junior logistics officers has been placed in a tremendously difficult position. His assignment as the S-4A, combined with his lack of experience, will detract greatly from the battalion's ability to deploy effectively.

Colonel David Ottignon, former Commanding Officer, 2d Combat Engineer Battalion, 2d Marine Division described the situation like this:

A newly minted Lieutenant assigned to the S-4 as his/her first assignment is not experienced to handle the multitude of responsibilities and therefore should be mentored and subordinate through the various functions of logistics and logistics planning.¹

The current tables of organization within the Marine Division must be revised in order to ensure the logistical

¹Colonel David Ottignon, former Commanding Officer, 2d Combat Engineer Battalion, 2d Marine Division, e-mail to author, February 18, 2009.

efficiency of the “independent battalions”² and provide for the leadership and development of logistics Marines.

Specifically, within each independent battalion, the billet of logistics officer (S-4) should be assigned to a Captain possessing the 0402 Logistics Officer MOS. The billet of assistant logistics officer (S-4A) should be assigned to either a 2ndLt or 1stLt possessing the primary MOS for that respective battalion. For example, within the tank battalions, the S-4 should be an 0402 Captain and the S-4A should be a 2ndLt possessing the 1802 armor officer MOS.

Independent Battalions

The platoons and companies within the independent battalions frequently develop habitual supported/supporting relationships with the various infantry battalions and regiments within the Marine Division to whom they attach. However, the independent battalions are not subordinate to the infantry regiments. Expressed in strictly organizational terms, the

²Tank Battalion, Combat Engineer Battalion (CEB), Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (LAR), Reconnaissance Battalion, and Assault Amphibian Battalion are referred to as the “independent battalions” within the Marine Divisions. Unlike the infantry battalions, these “independent battalions” lack a regimental headquarters.

independent battalions are subordinate to their respective Marine Divisions and lack a regimental level unit within their chains of command.

The lack of a regimental headquarters presents unique challenges to a young logistics officer. In the case of a junior officer assigned to the logistics section within an infantry battalion, additional guidance or assistance can be easily obtained from the regimental level logistics section. For an officer assigned to the independent battalions this guidance is only available from the Division Logistics Section (G-4). For many junior officers, the prospect of contacting a senior member of the G-4 staff can be intimidating and may serve as an additional obstacle toward accomplishing the mission.

Current Situation

Per their current T/O, the independent battalions rate an 0402 logistics officer with the rank of either 2ndLt or 1stLt to fill the following billets: Assistant Logistics Officer (S-4A), Motor Transport Officer (MTO), and Maintenance Management Officer (MMO). They rate a Captain possessing the unit's predominate MOS to serve as their battalion logistics officer.

Recommended Change

In each of the independent battalions, the billet of S-4 should be assigned to a Captain possessing the 0402 MOS. The

billet of S-4A should be assigned to either a 2ndLt or 1stLt possessing the predominate MOS for that respective battalion.

Billet Description

The specific billet description for a battalion logistics officer will vary significantly based upon the individual Battalion Commander's training priorities, leadership style, and overall intent. Certain commanders may focus on improving maintenance and readiness percentages while others place a priority on embarkation plans and mobilization exercises. Major Aaron Angell, a Faculty Advisor at Expeditionary Warfare described the varying role of a logistics officer like this:

Depending on the deployment and training operational tempo, the S-4 may be challenged across the spectrum of tactical level logistics functions, or he/she may only get involved with facilities maintenance.³

After accounting for differences in the respective commander's leadership style and overall intent, one constant remains: a battalion logistics officer is responsible for overseeing the coordination or conduct of all logistical support required by the battalion.

³Major Aaron Angell, Faculty Advisor, Expeditionary Warfare School, e-mail to author, February 11, 2009.

Why are non-0402 officers, in accordance with existing tables of organization, currently assigned as battalion logistics officers? A common opinion states that, because an individual is experienced in a particular occupational field, he or she possesses a thorough understanding of the logistical support which that field requires. For example, an experienced 1802 Armor Officer can be expected to understand the logistical requirements of an armor unit. This appears to be a logical statement – an experienced professional understands what he needs in order to do his job.

However, the billet description of a battalion logistics officer cannot be accurately summarized as, “understand the logistical requirements of your assigned battalion?” Battalion Logistics Officers are expected to understand their unit’s logistical requirements, but they are **responsible** for the planning, coordinating, and supervision of all aspects of the logistical support required by that assigned unit. Simply understanding what logistical support is required does not equate to understanding how to provide that support.

Knowledge / Training

Logistics is often described as a combination of both science and art. Formal instruction and a tremendous amount of

“on the job training” and experience are all essential for an individual officer to become an effective logistician.

Upon their arrival in the operating forces, all junior (2ndLt or 1stLt) logistics officers have received formal instruction as students at the Logistics Officer Course (LOC) given at the Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools (MCCSSS), but they lack the MOS experience necessary to serve effectively as the “de facto” subject matter expert for logistics within a battalion. Major Matthew Seay, a Faculty Advisor at Expeditionary Warfare School, described his experience as an assistant logistics officer like this:

Expectation was that I was a SME (subject matter expert) from day one. Took six months of OJT (on the job training) to figure out what was important. Took another six months to figure out how to be effective.⁴

Existing Precedence

There is an existing precedence which supports assigning a Captain 0402 as the S-4 within an “independent battalion.” This precedence is found within the artillery regiments/battalions. Artillery battalions, due to their regimental headquarters, are

⁴Major Matthew Seay, Faculty Advisor, Expeditionary Warfare School, e-mail to author, February 12, 2009.

not considered "independent battalions." However, the T/O for artillery regiments and battalions essentially serve as a bridge between the infantry regiments/battalions and the "independent battalions."

The tables of organization for 10th Marine Regiment, located on Camp Lejeune, NC, and 11th Marine Regiment, located on Camp Pendleton, CA, each list a Captain 0402 as the regimental S-4 and a Captain 0802 artillery officer, supported by a 2ndLt/1stLt 0402 S-4A, as the battalion S-4.

This table of organization, equivalent to that within the various infantry regiments/battalions, provides each of the respective battalion S-4 officers with the ability to contact their respective regimental S-4, an experienced 0402 logistics officer, in order to receive additional guidance or assistance when necessary.

The overall situation is markedly different for 12th Marine Regiment. The regimental headquarters for 12th Marine Regiment is located in Okinawa, Japan. 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, the regiment's sole "firing battalion" is located in Hawaii. The battalion's physical location and lack of a local regimental headquarters essentially render 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment an "independent battalion" within 3rd Marine Division. This distinct difference has been reflected in a

significant difference in T/O for 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment.

The T/O for 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment lists a Captain 0402 as the battalion S-4 and a 2ndLt/1stLt 0802 artillery officer as the S-4A. 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment lacks the benefit of a regimental headquarters, including a regimental logistics section, and the battalion logistics section has been augmented to account for this shortfall.

The marked difference in T/O within the artillery community reflects the United States Marine Corps' identification of a need to have a trained, experienced logistics officer either within the individual battalion or, at a minimum, assigned to a regimental headquarters. This requirement exists for 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment and it exists for each of the independent battalions.

Logistical Efficiency

A 2ndLt 0402 has been trained as a logistician, but he or she does not enjoy the benefits of experience that is derived from operating within the occupational field. A Captain who possesses a non-0402 MOS may have experience involving logistics, but he or she lacks the training and education

required to develop a comprehensive knowledge of the planning and processes required to effectively support a unit or mission.

Officers who possess the 0402 MOS and a significant amount of experience within that occupational field are significantly more qualified to serve as a battalion S-4 than are Marines from either of the populations listed above.

Colonel Michael Micucci, former Commanding Officer, 2d Combat Engineer Battalion, 2d Marine Division accurately summarized the requirement to have an 0402 Captain serve as the battalion logistics officer. When asked if he would support this change in T/O, he replied, "Yes I would. The more experienced a Marine is in their MOS, the better off the Battalion will be."⁵

Developing Subordinates

Many company grade officers within the Marine Division lack the knowledge and experience required to effectively lead a logistics section. Battalion Logistics Officers require a depth and breadth of logistical knowledge and experience. The logistical support they oversee and provide includes a wide variety of tasks representing the 6 functional areas of

⁵ Colonel Michael Micucci, former Commanding Officer, 2d Combat Engineer Battalion, 2d Marine Division, e-mail to author, February 12, 2009.

logistics (maintenance, transportation, general engineering, health support services, supply, and other services).

In addition, the Marines they lead possess multiple MOS's and complete countless tasks. In any of the "independent battalions" the S-4 must be knowledgeable and capable of leading Marines in the following MOS's: ground supply, ordnance, ammunition, food service, embarkation, motor transport, maintenance, and maintenance management. In order to effectively lead a logistics section, a battalion S-4 must understand the tasks assigned to his Marines, possess the knowledge required to effectively support them, and hold the experience necessary to develop them into better logisticians.

Conclusion

Providing effective logistical support to is based upon matching identified requirements with available resources or capabilities. The Marine Corps has identified a need to have trained, experienced logisticians either assigned or, at a minimum, available as a source of guidance and assistance at the battalion level. In the case of 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment this requirement has been satisfied by assigning an 0402 Captain to serve as the Battalion Logistics Officer. The same requirement exists in each of the independent battalions within the Marine Divisions. The tables of organization for the

independent battalions should be revised in order to ensure the logistical efficiency of the battalions and provide for the leadership and development of logistics Marines assigned.

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