by Jed Chan

Editor's Note: Over the next week, we will be running a series of articles from 4-70 AR on their lessons learned at the National Training Center (NTC). Each article is unique in that it will present a different perspective from the organization's key staff members. Our hope is that these articles will help prepare you for success in your current or future roles in your organization.

You know more than you think you do. Unfortunately, it took me a few battle periods in "The Box" to realize it. Imagine you are taking a test – months before, you are given the practice test with similar questions and you are able to use a cheat sheet during the test. Now, replace the "test" with NTC; the practice test with your multiple reps at MDMP/FTXs; and cheat sheets with doctrine. You have everything you need to succeed as long as you take a step back and remember everything you have learned and rehearsed. This isn't to say that there aren't going to be speed-bumps. No FTX or battle period is the same. Challenges are inevitable. But as a leader, it is what you do to adapt and overcome these challenges that will make you successful at NTC.

1. **Manifest/Reverse Manifest Rosters**

Manifest rosters are not as easy as putting a butt to a seat. As much as you plan in advance, ever-changing guidance, seat allotments and required personnel for certain movements will affect your initial placement of personnel. I quickly learned that identifying the First Sergeants as direct points of contact for changes to the manifest alleviated having multiple sources direct changes; if a move was not confirmed by the First Sergeant, do not move a Soldier. Sitting down with First Sergeants in groups and in one-on-one meetings to review the manifest line-by-line to scrub your manifest against the 162 should be an implied task. Rear-Detachment NCOICs can be a great tool. The Rear-Detachment NCOIC needs to know any changes to who will be staying in the rear and can assist you in keeping accountability of specific Soldier's timelines i.e. when a Soldier is planning to PCSing.

2. **Pre-manifest and Accountability**

Managing manifest rosters is one thing, but actually manifesting Soldiers is a completely different challenge. As the battalion S1, manifest is your section's responsibility. You may think that having a finalized roster and taking accountability is the only thing that needs to occur, but your main focus is to ensure everything runs as efficiently as possible. No matter how many times you disseminate requirements for manifest, you will always run into a group of Soldiers that forget their CACs, do not show up, etc. I was lucky enough to visualize how unorganized manifests can get and developed a plan to mitigate confusion. By doing something as minute as establishing a formation area away from the Brigade and using a large poster as a battalion identifier, 480 Soldiers were able to find their way for proper accountability. The rest of the Brigade, on the other-hand, had to use some of their S1 shop's man-power as runners to herd their battalion to their formation areas. Now that I had established my formation area with no effect on my shop's personnel, I was able to use them to scrub manifests and 162s while I was able to focus on manifesting.

3. **Real-World Casualties**

480 Soldiers conducting 14-days of intensive training in an austere environment results in many real-world injuries. Not only do you have to continue tracking the casualty but you must also be ready to return the Soldier to duty when they are medically cleared. Depending on the type of injury, Soldiers are evacuated to different locations away from the FLOT

which makes them challenging to track. One of my first real-world casualties was transported to the Role-2 for a heat-injury then transported even further to the off-post hospital for a more in-depth evaluation. Communication with the Medical Platoon Leader and Battalion Physician's Assistant was the key to my success. Reflecting on that casualty now, I should have had the contact information (JBCP role name, Radio frequency) of the Role-2 in advance.

4. **Red Cross Messages**

During our rotation, I received a Red Cross message almost every other day. Before a Soldier can be removed from the front line, getting a Soldier back to home-station requires a Letter of Release signed by the Brigade Commander, approval from the Battalion Commander, and an approved leave form signed by the Battalion Commander, Company Commander and Soldier. The most difficult part of the process was not the transportation of the Soldier but the signature process. I identified that early on and recommended to my Battalion Commander that I have signature authority on his behalf if he verbally confirmed. This mitigated a lot of frustration of finding an opportune time for the commander to step away from the battle. Although they are real-world movements, transportation of Soldiers is handled the same as if they were a casualty, which is explained more in-depth below.

5. **Transferring KIAs to the PHA**

Depending on the type of casualty (wounded in action or killed in action), Soldiers will be transported to the Role-1, Role 2, or PHA. As reports come in through JBCP and radio transmissions, your job is to verify as the casualties move to the Role-1. Through missions from previous Field Training Exercises, I had already anticipated that the casualty reports sent to the CTCP from the companies, if any, would be expired information and to expect more casualties or wounded in action Soldiers that died of wounds. As casualties are being treated by the medics, the KIA Soldiers are staged in an area away from the medics. From that point, your S-1 clerk will obtain the Soldier's information from their dog tags. Killed in action Soldiers will remain at the CTCP until transportation can be coordinated. What I did not know is that killed in action Soldiers must remain separate from the wounded in action Soldiers as they are treated as Class II/cargo. Coordination must be made between the S1, CTCP and S4 to transport the casualties during LOGPAC. It is advisable to include the Commander or Executive Officer of the FTCP so they can confirm the receipt of the casualties for proper accountability.

6. **Obtaining casualty information-Medics and PA will Become your Best Friends**

Casualty information, as covered briefly in the previous point, is harder to verify than one might think. Time is of the essence and establishing a good relationship with your Medical Officer and Physician's Assistant will pay dividends. Almost all of the information that the medical team gathers will help you assess and compile your replacement operations and expedite the process. For example, the Role 1 and the S-1 will need to know the Soldier's name, company, time of incident, description of incident and if they anticipate the Soldier to die of wounds. Providing an S-1 runner that collocates with the medics as casualties arrive will minimize the time between them arriving and you getting the information. I thought of the company's reports of casualties being transported to the Role-1 almost as a WARNO for my shop to be staged and ready to retrieve information. The MEDO and PA are also the most in-tune with the Role-2 and can be used as a stable point-of-contact between you and the location of the casualties that were transported to further care.

7. **NIPR/Electricity**

NIPR connection is not a viable form of communication in the desert. Searching for a way to send reports or pull Soldier data via NIPR is not feasible when you are working against time. Similar to searching for NIPR connection, you will come to realize that electricity is hard to find. As odd as that sounds, S1 runs on electricity for computers and NIPR. The best but most tedious recommendation before coming to the National Training Center was to pull every Soldier's document for casualty packets and provide that information on a disk to the Brigade S1. Whenever a casualty occurred, a simple JBCP message to the brigade S1 team with a Soldier's battle roster number allowed them to quickly pull the premade casualty packets from the disk to immediately begin replacement operations.

8. **Manually Tracking Personnel**

Learning how to manually track personnel was something I thought I was fluent in; this was not the case. As mentioned above, computers and NIPR are not reliable. You are not able to ask companies in the middle of a fight to send up PERSTATs. Assisting the HHC Commander with battle tracking enables the S1 to understand where companies and Soldiers are on the battlefield. As reports of notional casualties, real-world casualties and red-cross messages came in, I had to cross reference the 162s and crew rosters against the reports companies were sending. As the tempo of the mission died down, I confirmed with the First Sergeants the personnel I was tracking to verify my manual PERSTAT.

My time during NTC rotation 21-10 did not pass without hiccups. I came in thinking I knew enough about personnel accountability and came out learning more: establish a good relationship with the S4, CTCP commander and MEDO; be well-versed and prepared to manually tracking personnel and companies; take some time to really think of the resources you will not have in an austere environment. The National Training Center seemed intimidating at first, but all you need to do is take a step back and think about what you've learned because *you know more than you think you do*.

CPT Jed Chan is a Branch detailed Infantry Officer. After completing IBOLC in 2016, he became a Tank Platoon Leader with 1st Battalion 77th Armor Regiment. After his 3 year tenure, he graduated Adjutant General Captains Career Course and was assigned as the Battalion Human Resources Officer with 4th Battalion 70th Armor Regiment in Fort Bliss, Texas.