

ADAPT OR DIE

COMMAND POSTS – SURVIVING THE FUTURE FIGHT

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Following a painstaking movement into position, the division commander was eager to get the CP up and running before the next phase of the Corps fight kicked off. Moving the 20+trucks and trailers into position was agonizing but the area where the division main was set up seemed tactically sound, with decent cover and concealment; but the CP was still pretty easy to recognize if you knew what you were looking for. After what seemed like an eternity, his CoS finally told him the systems were up and running—just in time, as the lead BCT was only a few hours away from the division attack. The commander concluded the update with his subordinate commanders and walked over to his vehicle to prep to move to the LD with his lead BCT. As he sat down and opened an MRE for a final meal before the attack, he looked up noticed a small UAV. “That’s odd,” he thought. Suddenly, the nearby IFPC roared to life engaging the UAV and several targets out of the range of his vision. Realizing what was occurring - but before he could react - he witnessed a tremendous explosion in the middle of the CP... →



The last thing the division commander saw was a bright white light as an SS26 warhead detonated five meters from where he was standing. He, as well as 80% of the DMAIN staff and equipment, were killed or destroyed by an enemy surface-to-surface missile minutes after it received FMV footage from the small UAV.

As the Army increases focus on large scale combat operations (LSCO), there is a renewed emphasis on assessing vulnerabilities. Recent events in Eastern Europe demonstrate that command posts (CPs) are not only susceptible to detection but that they can be destroyed within minutes if they do not adapt. To address this, the Army must understand how a peer adversary will exploit CP vulnerabilities; and then develop improved survivability approaches to mitigate detection and attack, while maintaining effective command and control (C2) that ensure the success of the operations they are designed to orchestrate.

Today's Command Post

Army CPs at all echelons are vulnerable to interdiction by forces with advanced ISR and long-range fires. A significant problem is that legacy CPs are not only large but technological advances make them especially vulnerable to signature detection (physical, electromagnetic, thermal, acoustic, etc.). This, combined with insufficient mobility and hardening create the conditions leading to this article's opening vignette.

While many commanders try to mitigate what they can control, the Combat Training Centers show that most units still struggle with command post survivability. CPs remain high-payoff targets for adversaries and the Army's success in the future will be grounded in the ability to operate from CPs that can survive where advanced technological capabilities will be

employed against them - in contested, large-scale combat operations.

What We Are Doing Now

As part of ongoing modernization efforts, the Army is working to assess and develop solutions that improve CPs' ability to survive in the next major conflict. To address enhanced EMS capabilities, Army Futures Command (AFC) established a Focused Research Team dedicated specifically to the signature management problem. The broad approach includes experimentation, studies, interim infrastructure enhancements, trend analysis, and Research and Development efforts. Collectively, these efforts seek to understand the problem by assessing adversary capabilities, identifying friendly vulnerabilities, and formulating solutions that address them. Adversary Signals Intelligence is assessed as the most dangerous threat, providing enemies the ability to rapidly detect CP signatures. A detected CP is quickly targeted by enemy indirect fire, delivering rapid and lethal area munitions while Cyber and EW attacks effectively "fix" friendly systems. To maximize survivability CPs must make themselves harder to detect by reducing or obscuring emissions and they must remain highly mobile to mitigate the threat from indirect fires – remaining able to displace within minutes. Some near-term mitigation efforts are already underway.

The Army begins fielding the first generation of CP Integrated Infrastructure (CPI2) early next year. CPI2 should enable more dispersed operations, reduce footprints, allow continuous operations through redundancy, and improve signature management through enhanced camouflage and concealment. Furthermore, studies identify the requirement for CP leadership to see their own electronic signature, allowing them to increase survivability and signature management operations.



Multiple mid- and far-term technical solutions are also aggressively under development.

Together, these technical and operational solutions will address the full range of survivability and signature management challenges—and, if used collectively, will significantly reduce risks.

CP Survivability & Signature Management Requires a Holistic Approach

No single approach provides a complete solution. A combined approach, integrated across DOTMLPF-P provide the best option to defend against the range of adversary counter-C2 capabilities. CPs must remain undetected from threat surveillance systems while maintaining effective C2. Commanders must balance survivability with effectiveness, realizing that all components need to be considered: supporting units, protection, emitters, power, personnel density, and size.

Many non-technical means are available to maintain combat effectiveness inclu-

ding establishing an integrated defense (air defense, security, etc.), frequent movement, dispersion, concealment, deception, camouflage, and protective positions.

Additional non-technical changes include recent organizational changes like force design updates to the headquarters at division and corps level that account for survivability by creating redundancy in all staff functions. Army leadership must understand the significance of the situation and this begins with an institutional introduction to the problem, reinforced through education and training.

Lessons learned highlight practices that can be trained now to reduce vulnerability. These techniques such as PACE plans, frequency hopping, limiting transmission times, standardized reporting formats, antenna masking, and the use of directional antennas reduce both threat detection and targeting.

Emissions control (EMCON), control measures used to manage signatures, should be doctrinally described, imple-

mented, and enforced by all echelons. Training good practices, such as cell phone discipline and radio procedures, are also critical to developing a survivable CP. Training can also focus toward proactive enemy interdiction methods such as how to recognize jamming (communications, radar, satellite, and GPS) and how to implement responsive techniques against jamming.

Moving Forward

Continued analysis, research, experimentation, development, and training are required to mitigate CP vulnerabilities now and in the future.

Even with new capabilities on the horizon, the commander must assess risk and operate their CPs in the most effective manner to maximize force survivability and ensure mission success. Science and technological advances will continue to lay the groundwork for future capability development, but individual and unit training must complement and enhance these new and improved capabilities.



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