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# Sustaining Division Engineer Battalions

By Captain Jonathan Emley

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**T**his article proposes updated practices for engineer staff and sustainment personnel supporting division engineer battalions. It examines how to sustain these battalions under recent Army Force Structure Memorandum 2024-2029 (ARSTRUC) developments and how to preserve the readiness of both unified and dispersed engineer units during large-scale combat operations (LSCO). This analysis integrates current doctrine with emerging concepts for self-sustaining engineer battalions operating within a division framework.

## Background

The Army's transformation toward the Army of 2030 has significantly reshaped its force structure. One of the most consequential changes in the fiscal year (FY) 24-25 restructure is the disbandment of brigade engineer battalions (BEBs) and the transition to dedicated engineer battalions serving as divisional assets.<sup>1</sup> Notably, only armor divisions (reinforced) will retain a subordinate engineer brigade; all other divisions will have a single engineer battalion within their force structure.

Supporting this new structure presents unique challenges for staff sections now tasked with sustaining the division's sole engineer battalion. The loss of organic BEBs and their dedicated brigade support battalions (BSBs) eliminates the traditional support relationships these units once relied on. Division sustainment brigades (DSBs) must now assume responsibility for routine garrison operations. Fortunately, DSB staff and companies can provide the commodity and

technical expertise previously delivered by BSBs, helping to minimize sustainment gaps in garrison.

A greater challenge arises in wartime, particularly during LSCO, when engineer battalions operate far from division support areas (DSAs) and the capabilities of the DSB. The current forward support company (FSC) structure is not sufficient to support both combat and field trains across widely dispersed engineer companies.<sup>2</sup> Without an organic BSB, sustaining engineer operations becomes significantly more difficult. However, adapting the sustainment-trains model outlined in Field manual (FM) 4-0 offers a way to integrate support into the two primary methods by which engineer battalions will operate in the field.

## Unified Operations

In LSCO, a division engineer battalion may lead decisive actions such as wet-gap crossings or major breaches. In these operations, the battalion functions much like a traditional line unit, with its combat trains command posts (CTCPs) positioned five to ten kilometers behind the forward line of troops (FLOT). Engineer companies and the Battalion Tactical Action Center push forward as required, while the FSC operates within the combat trains. After securing the objective, the engineer battalion may remain in place for several days to control the breach or crossing, enabling the division to continue its advance. As the FLOT moves forward, the division engineer battalion may remain 30-50 kilometers behind it until relieved.

This ensures timely resupply to combat trains or direct throughput from a BSB to engineer companies, enabling battalion-scale crossings or breaches.

Divisional staff must strengthen planning efforts to support engineer operations in LSCO. Planners should project engineer asset locations at least 72 hours in advance to enable the DSB and logistics staff (G-4) to surge sustainment for brigades augmented with engineers before breaches or crossings begin. If engineers are required to hold a breach long enough for the entire division to pass, sustainment planning should extend to 120

hours. Engineer units should anticipate operating for multiple days without a field train, as displacing the DSA requires additional time to coordinate efficient sustainment. Extended planning also improves integration with CSA capabilities, since engineer support company assets must support multiple DSBs across LSCO operations.

### DISPERSED OPERATIONS

Engineer battalions will primarily operate by dispersing their companies. Combat engineer companies will attach to BCTs under operational control (OPCON) as needed—two armor companies for armored brigades, one Stryker company for Stryker brigades, and one light company for infantry brigades.<sup>4</sup> These companies will operate at distance from a battalion positioned centrally within the DSA. Sustaining

## Trains Concept – DEB Engineers (Unified)

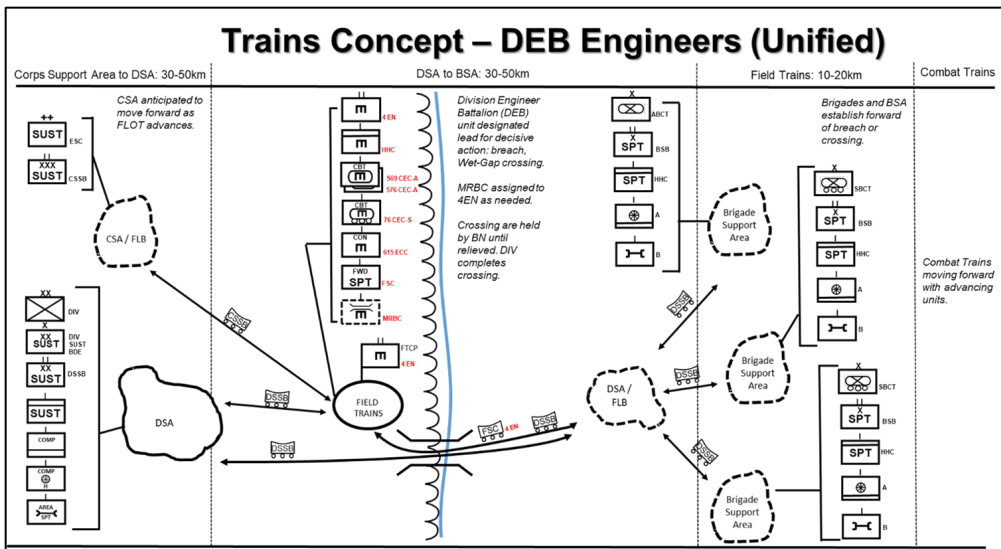


Figure 1. Trains Concept–DEB Engineers (Unified)

As part of wet-gap crossings or breaches, multiple brigade combat teams (BCTs) and sustainment units will operate within the engineer battalion’s operational area, positioned to exploit the crossing once it is established. Brigades will establish a brigade support area (BSA) using their organic BSB, which becomes the most effective means of sustaining the engineer battalion. The FSC and engineer battalion staff must integrate their field-trains command post into that BSA. The brigade closest to the engineer battalion’s decisive operation will assume the consumption patterns of a former BEB until the breach or crossing is complete. For planning purposes, establishing a direct-support relationship between that brigade and the engineer battalion is the most effective approach.

Once the breach or crossing is established, all division brigades will use it to continue their advance, while the engineer battalion retains control of the site. As BSBs move forward, direct support transitions to the DSB. Eventually, the DSB will displace beyond the crossing, requiring resupply to flow opposite the direction of brigade movement.<sup>3</sup> If DSB demand becomes too high, the engineer battalion’s organic FSC can push logistics packages (LOGPACs), or corps support area (CSA) convoys can deliver commodities forward, past the crossing, to the battalion. Because nondispersed engineer battalion operations indicate decisive action, they should receive priority support.

## Trains Concept – DEB Engineers (Dispersed)

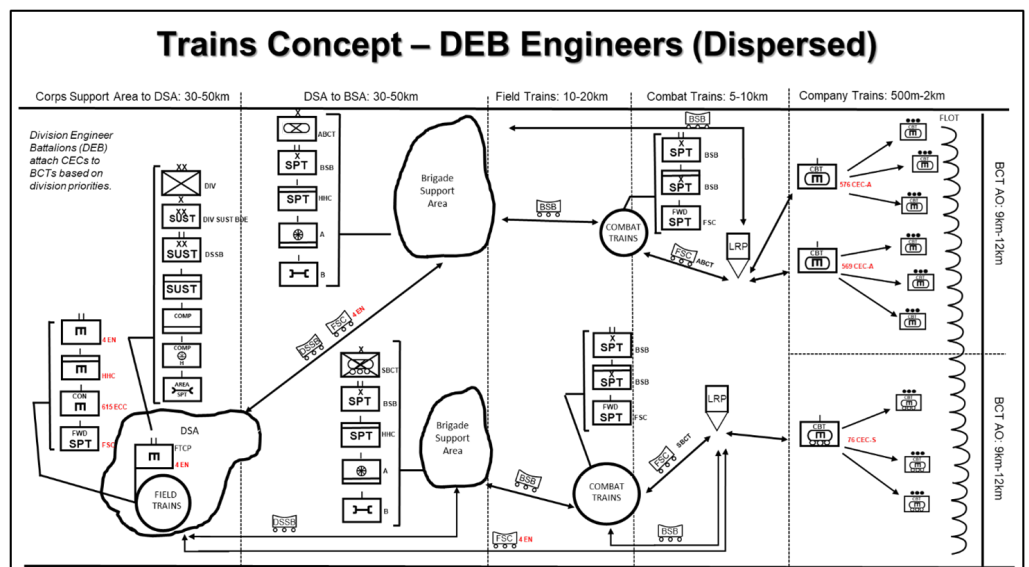


Figure 2. Trains Concept–DEB Engineers (Dispersed)



these dispersed elements presents significant challenges and requires flexible, adaptive planning across both brigade and battalion staffs.

Combat trains supporting dispersed operations mirror standard combat-trains structures, with field trains operating out of the DSA and engineer companies positioned at the FLOT alongside their attached BCTs. The battalion field trains—along with headquarters elements and any nondispersed companies—remain in the DSA. Engineer companies attached to other brigades are integrated into those brigades' field and combat trains.

Support relationships in dispersed operations should be determined by whether the engineer company's mission requires direct or general support.<sup>5</sup> If engineers are conducting a decisive action, planners should ensure direct support through the brigade's organic BSB and FSC. While general support is more common and provides greater flexibility for brigade sustainers, planners must prioritize engineer sustainment when their role becomes critical to mission success.

The engineer FSC adapts to operational needs within the trains concept. It can attach assets such as M978s or M1120s to dispersed engineer companies, extending their endurance for key commodities (CL III, IV, and V) prior to brigade-level resupply. Operating from the DSA, the FSC reinforces distribution across combat and field trains but does not have the capacity to fully resupply all companies. It can also provide emergency throughput from the DSA, although BSB throughput is often more efficient due to distance and distribution constraints.


## CONCLUSIONS

In LSCO, the actions of division engineer units are critical for enabling mobility wherever the decisive operation occurs. Under the Army of 2030 structure, most combat power resides in divisions that field a single engineer battalion. The battalion headquarters can expect to coordinate engineering tasks for the division by either dispersing companies or massing engineer assets as required. Even under conditions of attrition, remaining engineer forces can be consolidated or redistributed by the next higher headquarters to maintain capability during LSCO. In some cases, divisions may rely on the DSB as that higher headquarters. The primary sustainment challenge arises during the employment of dispersed or nondispersed operations for the engineer battalion.

The most effective solution is to account for engineer units within the existing combat-trains model as they become attached to, or operate within, a brigade's area of operations. Adjustments to the trains models outlined in FM 4-0 can help mitigate the challenges faced by an engineer battalion operating without an organic brigade sustainment battalion. Once planners understand how dispersed and nondispersed engineer operations affect consumption rates, sustainment staffs within—or supporting—division engineer battalions



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can develop effective plans to sustain engineer assets as they maneuver across the battlefield in support of the division's decisive actions. 

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Andrew Feickert, "The 2024 Army Force Structure Transformation Initiative," (Washington, DC, 2024), <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/r47985>
- <sup>2</sup> Department of the Army, *Sustainment Operations, FM 4-0* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2024), [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/dr\\_pubs/dr\\_a/arn41683-fm\\_4-0-000-web-2.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/dr_pubs/dr_a/arn41683-fm_4-0-000-web-2.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Department of the Army, *Division Sustainment Operations, ATP 4-91* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2022), [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/dr\\_pubs/dr\\_a/arn39820-atp\\_4-91-001-web-3.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/dr_pubs/dr_a/arn39820-atp_4-91-001-web-3.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> Department of the Army, *Engineer Operations, FM 3-34* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2020), [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/dr\\_pubs/dr\\_a/arn31353-fm\\_3-34-000-web-1.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/dr_pubs/dr_a/arn31353-fm_3-34-000-web-1.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> Department of the Army, *Division Sustainment Operations, ATP 4-91* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2022), 36-37, [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/dr\\_pubs/dr\\_a/arn39820-atp\\_4-91-001-web-3.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/dr_pubs/dr_a/arn39820-atp_4-91-001-web-3.pdf)