"Let Us Try" to Implement FM 3-0:

Challenges of LSCO at the Engineer Company Level

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With the current Russian aggression toward neighboring Ukraine and China's territorial disputes in the South China Sea, many are beginning to question the status of the United States as the leading military superpower. Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, starkly reminds us that "The Army no longer enjoys superiority across all the warfighting functions. Peer threats, particularly Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran, can contest the U.S. Army and the joint force across all domains."[1] Given this reality, company commanders will need to step up and lead during upcoming engagements but they will do this with a myriad of challenges.

Analysis of the new FM 3-0 and the shift to large-scale combat operations (LSCO) reveal obstacles that will affect company level leadership in all branches of the Army. This article showcases those challenges by highlighting key friction points in the U.S. Army Engineer Branch. Company level engineer leaders face fierce challenges, including attaining a level of understanding of peer level adversary capabilities sufficient for incorporation into training; maintaining the resiliency necessary to push through significant losses; and ensuring the ability of their units to provide mobility, countermobility, and survivability capabilities to joint maneuver forces.

Over the past 2 decades, U.S. near-peer competitors have met or surpassed the capabilities of the United States. These competitors ". . . fielded more professional forces with advanced capabilities, improved training, and combined arms formations designed to contest us and our multinational partners across all domains."[2] Engineer companies must understand current enemy capabilities so that they can plan and train accordingly.

For example, consider Russian unmanned aerial vehicles and their "overwhelming disparity in information collection."[3] Companies must respect the Russian unmanned aerial vehicle range of 200–500 kilometers, which exceeds the U.S. capability of 150 kilometers, and incorporate that information into their plans. The longer range in Russian forward reconnaissance will make obstacle and battle position emplacement challenging and may result in reduced obstacle effectiveness due to rushed execution. Training must reflect these expedited execution requirements.

The advantage of Russian unmanned aerial vehicles, coupled with their longer-range artillery assets, allows for early detection of engineer assets and "destruction with massed fires."[4] This makes the execution of breaching, bridging, and route reconnaissance a far greater challenge for engineers. Over the next decade, engineer companies will be required to resource and train with consideration for near-peer capabilities in accordance with FM 3-0.[5]

The last time the Army conducted a joint multidivisional campaign was in Iraq in 2003. Since then, the Army has not participated in major combat against near-peer or veteran opponents. With adversaries who can outperform the Army—most notably, in the area of indirect fire—commanders and their companies must demonstrate the resiliency that was necessary during the Vietnam War and before. This resiliency will be manifested by the drive to continue the mission, even in the face of mass casualties and equipment losses.

In his article, entitled, "Bringing Order to Chaos," Lieutenant Colonel Peter J. Schifferle details how LSCO will change our perception of war, indicating that we must ". . . come to grips with the impact of significant U.S. casualties and become more comfortable with the sheer violence of modern combined arms battle" and that "we must be prepared to deal with the attendant horrors of mass casualties and the likely destruction of entire units . . .."[6] In the past, engineer commanders assumed a 50 percent loss of person-

nel and vehicles when conducting a breach. In the future, commanders must be resilient enough to push through "an enormous kill zone while defeating and bypassing maneuver forces seeking to [hold the enemy in a specific location], all while subject to artillery overmatch in both range and number of systems."[7] All commanders can expect greater casualties, but engineer commanders must be committed to pushing through up to 100 percent personnel and vehicle casualties, knowing that the entire maneuver force is dependent on what they can accomplish.

In a maneuver support role, engineers must provide freedom of maneuver throughout the battlefield while concurrently conducting countermobility and survivability operations. For the past 2 decades, the Army has leaned on its domination of warfighting functions. Current peer threats have the ability to jam communication platforms, making it increasingly more difficult to conduct offensive and defensive operations.

Decisive action serves as the foundation of the Army's operational concept in LSCO environments.[8] The requirement to conduct simultaneous offense, defense, and stability tasks most certainly causes engineers to be displaced throughout the battlefield. At the company level, leaders must not only train their units to operate remotely, but also train themselves to command and control squads and platoons that support multiple maneuver battalions throughout the area of operations.

Engineers must enable mobility of friendly maneuver forces while simultaneously disrupting and disabling the enemy to win the fight. It is a daunting mission for engineer companies to conduct simultaneous offensive, defensive, and survivability operations while under fire from a peer or near-peer threat. The same conditions also cause challenges for Soldiers, equipment, and company leaders who command the troops.

LSCO present complex problem sets across all aspects of company leadership. Preparing for a hostile environment under a peer or near-peer threat is a tall order. Success depends on engineer company leaders being prepared to provide mobility, countermobility, and survivability capabilities across hundreds of square kilometers of the battlefield.

Engineer company level leaders face several considerable challenges as the Army adopts the new FM 3-0 and redirects to LSCO. By beginning to understand the capabilities of peer-level foes for integration into training, sustaining the strength and resiliency needed to continue in battle despite incurring considerable losses, and ensuring that units can effectively execute their key combat engineering tasks for the ground force, these leaders can begin to navigate the new problem sets.

Endnotes:

[1]FM 3-0, *Operations*, 1 October 2022.

[2]Michael D. Lundy, "Meeting the Challenge of Large-Scale Combat Operations Today and Tomorrow," *Military Review*, Special Edition, September–October 2018, p. 112.

[3]Sam Fishburne et al., "Field Manual 3-0 Doctrine Addressing Today's Fight," *Military Review*, January–February 2019.

[4]Ibid.

[5]FM 3-0.

[6]Peter J. Schifferle, "Bringing Order to Chaos," *Military Review*, September–October 2018, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/military-review/english-edition-archives/september-october-2018/chaos/>, accessed on 4 August 2022.

[7]FM 3-0.

[8]Ibid.

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