Chapter 2

TOPOGRAPHIC ENGINEER OPERATIONS

EMPLOYMENT OF UNITS

Army topographic engineer battalions provide tailored topographic products and services in support of planning and operations. Army topographic engineer battalions also have the responsibility to provide joint service support if tasked by the unified or specified command within whose area they operate.

Topographic Units Within a Theater of Operations

These are components of the theater engineer topographic battalion. The theater topographic engineer battalion is responsible for topographic planning and control of all topographic assets in support of the operation. Detachments and companies from this battalion are located at EAC, corps, and division levels. They provide rapid-response, nonstandard, and special-purpose topographic products to aid the tactical commander. The theater EAC topographic company will assume the corps topographic mission during the deployment of the corps topographic assets and vice versa. Management and validation of topographic data bases is the responsibility of all topographic units.

The primary focus of topographic support is to the tactical commander. Priority is placed on providing the forward-deployed tactical units with timely, accurate, and tailored support. Support requirements that cannot be met by forward-deployed units because of priority workload or project complexity are done by the topographic unit at the next higher level of command.

Tactically deployed topographic units should use freed facilities such as warehouses, hangars, and barns for concealment whenever possible. Deployment considerations include—

- Air superiority.
- Ž Enemy nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) capabilities.
- Rear-area operations.

Selected facilities should provide the best protection from the effects of enemy air superiority and NBC, yet support the utilities requirements of topographic units. Dispersing the unit in wooded areas under camouflage nets degrades the unit's efforts to provide rapid, efficient support. Dispersion adversely affects production efficiency and creates a large electronic signal. Equipment configuration is constrained when power requirements are supplied by generators. The use of fixed facilities greatly reduces the battlefield signature and enhances survivability of scarce topographic resources.

The visual and electronic signatures of the topographic engineer unit must be considered when siting engineers near maneuver command headquarters. To lessen the effect of their signature, topographic commanders and staff personnel at theater, corps, and division levels should recommend appropriate employment locations of topographic units. *Figure 1-2, page 1-12,* depicts a typical employment concept for topographic units in a theater of operations.

Topographic Units Outside the Theater of Operations

These also have an important role. As they are not deployed, they have minimal force protection and sustainment requirements, As a result they can employ soldiers to maximize topographic production. While topographic units outside the theater cannot rapidly respond to immediate requirements, they may be employed in a supporting role to produce additional terrain analysis data base materials, which can be shipped to the theater. Electronic transmission of data should be used to the greatest extent possible.

COMMAND AND SUPPORT RELATIONSHIPS

General Relationships

Two kinds of relationships control topographic engineer units. They are—

- Command relationships.
- Support relationships.

All units within a theater of operations are assigned to the theater topographic battalion. This battalion provides topographic supply and maintenance of topographic equipment to all units within the theater. Usually a company from the battalion is placed in direct support of each of the supported corps. Terrain analysis detachments from the theater topographic battalion are placed in direct support or attached to each division in the corps. Topographic commanders, battalion S2 and S3, terrain analysts, and cartographers in the topographic company all require access to all-source intelligence information that is vital to the production of image maps and terrain data bases.

EAC

The ATTE element is assigned to the theater topographic battalion and is located with the theater army component command. The ATTE element is attached to the G3 and G2 in the event of deployment. It provides—

- Planning for MC&G support.
- Coordination of topographic support to the theater.

The ATTE is the topographic officer at Army component command staff. He provides advice to the theater army commander and staff for the theater topographic battalion commander on topographic matters (see *Figure 1-2, page 1-12).* He is responsible for determining support requirements for the theater. The element coordinates with higher-level joint headquarters, the DMA, and host or allied nations for acquisition of products, source materials, and data bases.

The topographic battalion at EAC ensures the full spectrum of functional support to all theater assets. This includes—

- Terrain analysis.
- Ž Precise positioning (geodetic) surveys.
- Production of MC&G products.
- Ž Data-base management—both hard copy and digital.
- Special product storage and distribution.
- Supply of topographic material.
- Intermediate maintenance support of topographic equipment.

Terrain assets of the theater topographic support company will support the special operations forces.

Corps

A topographic company from the battalion at EAC is placed in direct support of each of the supported corps. Capabilities of this

company include the full spectrum of topographic support as in the battalion, with personnel and equipment to provide products for corps area of operations.

Depending on the distance from the battalion and the tactical situation, the topographic company may be attached to the corps for administration and nontopographic logistics support. The topographic battalion at EAC provides topographic supply and intermediate maintenance for topographic equipment.

A terrain analysis element of the company is placed in direct support of the corps G3/G2 and another terrain element remains in general support of other customers, such as the G4, engineer, and signal. They furnish rapid-response and special-purpose topographic support to the corps staff for operations planning and IPB. The production assets remain available to all in a central location. The surveyors are normally operating throughout the corps area extending geodetic control.

Other elements of the company may be task-organized and placed in support of a supported division or task force for a limited time for a particular tactical operation. Requirements that cannot be met by the company because of priority workload or complexity are passed to the topographic battalion for completion.

The corps topographic engineer company is centrally located in the corps rear area. Selected personnel from this company provide forward support at the corps G3/G2. Terrain analysts working in the G3/G2 require routine access to all-source intelligence when preparing and updating products. Personnel require a top secret (TS) clearance and special background investigation (SBI).

Division

Division terrain teams should be in direct support or attached to their respective divisions. Tasking authority should normally be with the G2, with the advice and assistance of the Division Engineer.

Priority is placed on providing terrain analysis support to the division staff for operations planning and IPB. The terrain detachment at the division is collocated with the G3/G2 planning and operations staff. They have immediate access to all-source intelligence information that is vital when preparing updated products. Personnel require a TS/SBI clearance.

The terrain analysis detachment is typically attached to the division for administration and nontopographic logistics support. Topographic supply and intermediate maintenance of topographic equipment are provided by the topographic battalion at EAC through the company at corps level.

Other elements of the topographic company at corps level may be task-organized and placed in direct support of the division for a limited time. They provide expanded capabilities to support tactical operations as needed.

Operations

Preparation for combat begins in peacetime. To ensure success in combat, peacetime military unit operations and training have always stressed developing and maintaining a high state of readiness. The major purpose of topographic operations in peacetime is to prepare the tactical commander to execute wartime missions.

Topographic operations during peacetime are of utmost importance because of the need to gain knowledge about potential battlefield terrain. Wartime topographic operations are addressed in CONPLANs/OPLANs/OPORDs. Joint operations plans have a separate MC&G operations annex—Annex M (see Appendix). With contingency operations more likely in the future, rapid production of image-based products, terrain data bases, and tailored topographic products becomes more critical.

Terrain analysis is the key to obtaining information about potential battlefields in any part of the world. The information collected and stored in data bases is used to prepare special-purpose topographic products and decision aids for the commander to visualize and understand the battlefield terrain. These activities assist both military planning and tactical operations.

An important facet of operations carried out by topographic engineer units is production and reproduction of topographic products (hard-copy and digital). Data bases, imagery, and other information sources are used to make topographic products such as those listed in *Table 1-1, page 1-3.*

Support efforts play a direct role in military operations. For instance, the following topographic information must be known during prebattle activities:

- Mobility corridors.
- Obstacles (natural and man-made).
- Landing zones.
- Key terrain features.
- Gap crossings.
- Lines of communication.

During battle, support shifts to providing tactical commanders with updated products to support the tactical operation. During postbattle, the emphasis switches to—

- Updating terrain data bases.
- Preparing for the next battle.
- Supporting postwar cleanup.
- Humanitarian and civic actions.

Maintaining enough stock of technical supplies to produce special topographic products in the field is a vital topographic engineer support function. This function is explained later in this chapter.

PREPARATION FOR TOPOGRAPHIC OPERATION

Data Bases

In Army topography, databases are assembled to form the basic reference material needed to produce special topographic products. Responsibility for assembly of these functional data bases lies with the topographic unit commander, other army agencies, and the DMA. Information in each topographic functional area data base may be combined or exchanged with the others. Data bases can be digital, image-based, or hard-copy information from a variety of sources.

Geodetic Positional Data Bases. This consists of a listing of geodetic control points set up within a given geographic area and keyed to standard topographic maps (trig list). In addition, the PPDB and digital point positioning data base (DPPDB) produced by the DMA is included in the survey data base.

The Survey Information Center. This center does the following:

- Receives data and information from surveyors.
- Reproduces and disseminates positioning information.
- Provides technical interpretation of survey data to users.

The topographic engineer unit commander must consider all aspects of required survey data and acquire the data necessary to satisfy operational requirements. Data acquired may be used to satisfy eventual combat needs such as siting—

- Air defense systems.
- Field artillery weapons.
- Communication systems.
- Aviation inertial navigation positions.

Terrain Analysis Data Base. Terrain analysis teams acquire as much terrain data as possible for their respective areas of interest. The DMA is responsible for producing the planning terrain analysis data base (PTADB) at a scale of 1:250,000, and the tactical terrain analysis data base (TTADB) at 1:50,000 scale. Terrain teams use the data bases to support the maneuver commander's needs. The DMA produces standard DTED and ITD used by terrain teams. In any area of the world where coverage is not available and the commander's OPLAN considers the area(s) operationally significant, the terrain analysis team must prepare these digital and hard-copy data bases. Much of the peacetime operations is dedicated to this effort.

The terrain analysis data base also contains information from any source deemed appropriate by the terrain analysis supervisor at EAC, corps, or division levels. The DMA and the Army TAC of the Topographic Engineering Center provide information appropriate for this data base. Both produce transparent terrain-factor overlays for many areas throughout the world at map scales of 1:50,000 and 1:250,000. For each map sheet, the overlays depict—

- Vegetation.
- Surface configuration (slope).
- Surface materials (soils).
- Transportation.
- Obstacles.
- Surface drainage.
- Bridge information tables.
- Water resources (1:250,000 scale for selected arid regions only).

Standard digital data includes-

- DTED Level I - Contour information is equivalent to 1:250,000 scale mapping. It is the basic data base for portraying landforms, slope, line of sight, and elevation in digital format.
- DTED Level II - Contour information that approximates a 1:50,000 scale map.
- ITD - These are six factor overlays at a scale of 1:50,000 that is the digital equivalent of TTADB, or at a scale of 1:250,000 that is the digital equivalent of a PTADB. This is designed to provide digital terrain-analysis data for systems being fielded before the production of standard tactical terrain data (TTD). The Digital Topographic-Support System (DTSS) uses this information to perform automated analysis for-
  - —Terrain visualization.
  - —Route or site selection.
  - —Mobility or countermobility planning.
  - —Intervisibility.
  - —Cover and concealment.
  - —Communication planning.
  - —Landing and drop zones.
  - —Navigation.
  - —Fire-support planning and execution.

Each unified and specified command and select federal agencies identify to the DMA (through command channels) those areas of the world that need standard terrain factor overlays and digital data. After the DMA produces these terrain analysis overlays, they are provided by automatic distribution to Army topographic units and included in their terrain-analysis data base.

Besides supporting the standard DMA program, the TAC produces various other types of standard and nonstandard, worldwide terrain products for many different users. Regional area studies and operational guides for desert, arctic, and tropical areas are examples.

Various agencies produce geographic studies and analyses. The Defense Intelligence

Agency (DIA), the US Geological Survey (USGS), allied nations, and commercial agencies maintain their own type of terrain data bases. Imagery from digital and analog sources is included in the terrain analysis data base. Sometimes imagery is more complete or more current than map overlays and can be used to augment or update overlay information. Imagery is available through Army intelligence, TEC, and the DMA channels. Additional information may be obtained through the intelligence-collection process from the tactical units. Other units involved in providing this information are from the following elements:

- Reconnaissance units.
- Engineers.
- Combat and combat service support elements.

Topographic units must be prepared to rapidly create data bases to support contingency operations. By their nature, contingencies cannot be accurately forecast and standard data bases from DMA and other sources may not be available. The primary responsibility for collecting and processing data base materials in a contingency is with the topographic company and battalion.

Topographic units can prepare for likely contingencies by acquiring imagery of potential contingency areas in advance. MSI should be requested through command channels. Close coordination with intelligence staffs is required to assure access to national imagery and other intelligence data early in a crisis. Topographic units must routinely practice the production of image-based products and hasty terrain analysis from imagery and other nonstandard data sources so products can be provided to early deploying contingency units.

The TEC and the Intelligence and Threat Analysis Center (ITAC) have capabilities to quickly produce topographic data and terrain intelligence data during national emergencies. This data may be in hard-copy or digital form. Topographic battalions should maintain liaison with TEC and ITAC to ensure access to any production capabilities available.

As a contingency operation continues, topographic units will continue to produce products and continue to build, expand, and densify the data base. Topographic unit commanders must aggressively manage this dynamic, growing data base to ensure all potential data is incorporated; data is checked for validity before incorporation into the data base; old, inaccurate data is removed when superseded; copies of the current data base are pushed to subordinate topographic support units; and collection of critical terrain information is tasked to appropriate units.

Production. Topographic production includes graphic portrayal of information (usually in cartographic and photographic format) and reproduction of these graphics.

The cartographic and reproduction data base used by topographic engineer units includes at least a single copy of every available 1:250,000 and 1:50,000 scale military map or local national map in each unit's area of interest. A map may be used to produce a negative and a positive film copy. This copy is placed in the cartographic or reproduction data base. The copy is used to produce a black-and-white (monochrome) reproduction of the standard, four-color topographic map. This monochrome reproduction base can be used as the background for—

- Operations or situation map overprints.
- Terrain analysis map overprints.
- Crash grids.
- Other kind of map overlays or overprints.
- Route reconnaissance overprints.

The cartographic and reproduction data base may also include separate color flats used by the DMA to make a standard, multicolor topographic map. These flats, or reproducibles, represent separately each color found on the map. They can be used when a multicolor map base is required for updated or operational overprints. By using the color flats and updated graphics to print both the map base and the overlay or other information in the same press, the overprinting problems with using DMA printed products are eliminated.

Analysis of the Area of Operations

Analysis of the characteristics of the area of operations and an estimate of its effect on friendly and enemy capabilities occurs during the planning sequence as well as during the conduct of operations. It is generally presented as a document with accompanying graphics.

Mission Analysis

Topographic, particularly terrain analysis, support provides friendly staff elements with essential information used in the mission area analysis and course of action development as well as in the preparation of many of the annexes developed for an operations order (see FM 101-5). This support integrates the same aspects and graphics described below for the IPB (threat) analysis as they apply to friendly operations and equipment.

IPB. The IPB is a systematic and continuous approach to analyzing the enemy, weather, and terrain in a specific geographic area. Much IPB activity takes place before the battle, allowing commanders to make advance decisions that affect possible CONPLANs/OPLANs/OPORDs development. This approach integrates the following.

- Enemy doctrine.
- Weather and environmental effects.
- Terrain.
- Enemy capabilities and vulnerabilities.
- Courses of action.

NOTE: See FM 34-130.

Graphics are basic to IPB analysis. Staff members involved in the IPB process use—

- Annotated military maps.
- Multiple overlays.
- Annotated image maps with overprinted grids.
- Map substitutes.
- Textual studies.

Graphics are often digitally created and stored so current information can be integrated quickly. These graphics are the basis for many aspects of intelligence and operations planning. They serve, too, as an extension to the analysis of the area of operations and the intelligence estimate.

Ideally trained and equipped to aid in this process, topographic units are vital to the success of IPB. Engineer terrain analysts analyze the battlefield terrain and the effects of weather and environment on it. They predict the impact of terrain on military operations. Intelligence order-of-battle analysts correlate aspects of terrain with enemy combat system capabilities. Both types of analysts combine their talents to analyze the military aspects of terrain (OCOKA). Together they provide the tactical commander with more valuable information than either could provide separately.

Factors Affecting Operations

Topographic engineer operations, like all military operations, are affected by the factors of METT-T. Different types of military operations affect the type,

frequency, and amount of topographic support required. Examples of different operations include—

- Offense.
- Defense.
- Rear-area combat.
- Military operations on urbanized terrain (MOUT).
- Special operations.

Communication networks and unique technical supplies essential for topographic support affect the degree to which and the efficiency with which this support can be provided.

Topographic engineers have little organic protection from attack and require outside assistance to maintain security. As a result, these units must carefully select battlefield locations that offer maximum unit survivability.

The ever-changing battle space of military operations may be a factor affecting the availability of topographic support. Forward-based combat units can be positioned several hundred kilometers away from rear-based support activities. Thus, it is important that these forward units have adequate topographic engineer support readily available to reduce their reliance on rear-based support.

SUPPORT TO MILITARY OPERATIONS

The topographic engineers provide support to all types of military operations. The topographic engineers perform the majority of their warfighter support in the predeployment and decisive operations phases of force projection. Topographic support is also provided in nation assistance and disaster and humanitarian relief missions.

Force Projection

Predeployment Activities. The majority of the topographic work effort occurs during the predeployment activities. During this phase, a threat to our national interest is recognized, its nature determined, and a series of options developed to resolve the threat. The primary mission of topographic engineers is to gain maximum knowledge of the potential area of operation and impart that knowledge in a quick, simple, useful format to commanders and their staffs. Topographic engineer functions are organized, support operations are initiated, terrain and survey data is collected, and initial products are produced and distributed before deployment of forces. Topographic assets are task-organized and tailored to the mission. This stage of military operations requires the largest amount of topographic preparation. Commanders use current CONPLANs/OPLANs/OPORDs to anticipate and identify, through command channels, their topographic support requirements.

The DMA compiles, produces, stores, and supplies—

- Bulk standard maps, charts, and related products.
- Standard terrain analysis data bases (both digital and analog).
- Digital topographic data.

Using all-source intelligence and the DMA products, topographic units develop functional data bases for specific geographic regions. Contingency operations may occur on short notice in an area where few standard DMA products or data bases exist Topographic units must be prepared to quickly access all-source intelligence and other sources to quickly build a data base. This can be used to produce hasty products to support planning and execution of the contingency missions.

The data bases provide the basic reference for the production of special-purpose topographic products to support the planning requirements of the tactical commanders. Collection and maintenance of the topographic data base is a primary function of the topographic unit.

DMA produces, maintains, and stores the bulk of standard MC&G products required during the first 60 days of combat. The products are stored in map depots throughout the world. The DMA continues to provide the bulk of standard topographic products needed for the decisive operation. Topographic units supplement and enhance the DMAs efforts by providing quick, combat-oriented topographic information products to Army commanders and staffs at theater, corps, and division levels.

Information is provided orally, by quickly prepared image-based products, quick-response graphics, or by video display terminal.

The first level of topographic support will likely be collected from fixed (such as DMA, DIA, and TEC) CONUS and forward-deployed organizations, Imagery will be obtained with remote sensors. In some cases, the information may reflect data gathered during previous exercises, deployments, or nation assistance efforts. National systems need to be accessed to provide unique data to topographers. Data sources and products include, but are not limited to, multispectral imagery and image maps, local maps, climatology, geography, demographics, and digital data. Other sources of data include DMA-produced standard digital data, DTED, DFAD, ARC digitized raster graphics (ADRG), ITD, TTD, station descriptions, and trig lists.

Deployment and Entry. Deployment and entry of topographic engineer forces (terrain teams and surveyors) may be early. Early collection of local data is of primary interest. Terrain teams will continue the collection of data to enhance analog and digital data bases. All available information from allied and local sources will be incorporated. Data may include maps, country studies, lines of communication (LOC), water resources, hydrologic information, books, pamphlets, reproducible material, and imagery. Limited reconnaissance may be required to validate the terrain information. Surveyors will establish geodetic control in the theater as soon as possible to support artillery, aviation, intelligence, and signal operations. They must be able to convert local datums to the DMA standard datum for use in our weapon systems.

Topographic support should be well established in the area by this phase. Rapid collection and production of topographic products is used to support the continuing IPB process and operational planning in a timely manner. Rapid response is paramount. Geodetic control is extended throughout the region.

Data collection and data base management continues upon the entry phase. As the operation matures, data base maintenance and topographic support will peak. Topographic units will update digital data and provide map backgrounds and tactical decision aid (TDA) support for the Army command and control system (ACCS) suite of systems as well as a multitude of other automated systems. In this situation, it is the Army topographic engineer's responsibility to supplement DMA's standard support to these systems. information may include—

- Analysis through deep-battle target interdiction.
- Information on mobility and countermobility.
- War damage.
- Weather analysis impact.

Information is provided orally, by quickly prepared image-based products, or by quick-response graphics.

When resupply is interrupted or products no longer portray up-to-date conditions, topographic units also provide expedient substitutes. These products are prepared in limited quantities to meet critical needs. Topographic units are responsible for updating data bases with current information as it becomes available. Changes to these data bases are managed intently and redistributed as required by designated topographic units. Verification of these for incorporation into master data sets will be accomplished as soon as possible and normally requires the assistance of DMA.

Topographic survey units provide quick and accurate positional information needed by command, maneuver, weapon, and support systems. This is done through the establishment of a survey information center located within the topographic battalion or company.

Decisive Operations. The focus in this phase is the culmination of all previously collected topographic information with tactical and operational planning. The tactical commander is provided with expedient, tailored and updated topographic products to assist in planning and control of the battle space. Fast responses, especially at the corps and division level, allow the commander to—

- Visualize the terrain.
- Make rapid decisions.
- Anticipate the impact of terrain and weather on the current and future operations.

The IPB process plays a primary role m prebattle support. Engineer, weather, and intelligence personnel work together. It is important that the topographic engineer company at corps maintain direct contact with the corps all-source analysis section and SWO. This contact ensures that intelligence materials required by terrain analysts are available, such as—

- Imagery.
- Enemy obstacle information.
- Target locations.
- Enemy order of battle.
- Enemy equipment characteristics.
- Weather data.

Conventional and digitally produced material are important during this stage of operation. These products must be readily available before combat. Prior to combat actions in the decisive operations phase, tactical commanders and topographic engineers must jointly establish priorities for products and coordinate their production. Common terrain products are to be “pushed” to the customers by the topographic units. This ensures that commanders are provided with accurate and timely support.

The IPB process is continuous. Maneuver commanders will require mobility information in order to move their units on the battlefield. The data bases used, which include the latest information of the operational area, are supplemented by the topographic engineers. Quality assurance by the terrain analyst ensures that all maneuver elements are provided defined avenues of approach and that trafficability information is correct, ensuring synchronization of the force.

Maneuver forces are not the only elements that require topographic support. Combat service needs terrain information for convoy routing, cover and concealment, and storage sites.

Topographic engineers use real-time intelligence to produce tactical decision aids identifying changes on the battlefield in time to influence the battle. As the battlefield changes, topographic units must be able to respond quickly to new requests for information. Due to the dispersed nature of the force, critical topographic data must be delivered electronically across the battlefield.

Restoration and Redeployment. Combat capabilities lost during the decisive stage

must be regenerated. Restoration of the force ranges from sustainment (rearm, repair, recover, or replace) through reorganization and regeneration to redeployment.

Topographic engineers provide a variety of products to the force during restoration. Updating the topographic data bases is their most important task. This prepares the reconstituted force for the next operation.

In addition to providing support to the regenerating forces, topographic engineers must also be able to react to the reconstitution process. Sufficient special materials must be on hand to replenish exhausted stocks. Equipment must be repaired or replaced as necessary. The topographic support teams must remain flexible and be able to respond to mission or task organization changes.

The events of a military operation are cyclical. The majority of the reconstituted topographic support forces will be task organized to provide support for the next operation.

Nation Assistance. Topographic operations assist in documenting changes to the areas or provide initial information. Long-term programs can generate skills and jobs. Nation assistance can occur in areas where few standard products are available. Extensive topographic effort may be required to prepare topographic data bases which will be used to produce products in support of the forces providing nation assistance. Nation assistance missions offer opportunities to build and manage a dynamic and growing data base.

Humanitarian and Disaster Relief. Operations of this nature are likely to occur in areas where standard product coverage is not available. Topographic units must aggressively coordinate with the military headquarters providing support and local, city, state, and national civil authorities to gain access to available data. This ensures the widest possible dissemination of any products produced by Army topographic engineer units. Topographic products should be pushed to military forces and other relief agencies until they have an opportunity to state their specific requirements.

During contingency operations, peacetime engagement, disaster relief, or nation assistance, topographic support must be task organized to provide the required support. Allocation of topographic engineer units must be made based on an estimate of the magnitude of the topographic mission. The estimate must consider—

- The size of the operations area.
- The availability of the standard topographic products and data bases.
- The time available.
- The level of backup support available from DMA, TEC and ITAC.
- The size of the unit supported.

An entire company or battalion may be required to provide rapid response to forces conducting a short-notice contingency in an area that is not well mapped. Early in the deployment it may be best for major elements of the supporting topographic company or battalion to remain at the home station, where they are assured access to source materials and no loss of productivity due to preparation for movement. Products can be produced, printed, and shipped forward until it is appropriate to deploy the topographic engineer assets.

Communications

Topographic engineer units have limited radio and wire capabilities. In order to carry out effective missions they rely upon communication networks of supported units. The unit commander must establish communications to lower headquarters and to supported units. This, along with internal communications, will effectively use all the unit's available communication assets. Topographic units will usually require additional support from supported units.

Technical Supplies

Topographic engineer units require large quantities of low-density supply items, such as—

- Map paper.
- Printing inks.
- Drafting supplies.
- Map-size photographic film.
- Lithographic printing plates.
- Chemicals for photographic developing and printing.

In some topographic functional areas, it is impossible to provide support without these supplies. Because topographic technical supplies are low-density, the unit commander must start proper and adequate logistic coordination in order to get supplies from the unit providing support. This is especially important during peacetime.

Contingency stocks of wartime supplies, such as map paper, must be planned for by topographic and logistical commanders. For the contingency stocks to remain usable, perishable materials (shelf-life items) must be rotated.

Because topographic engineer units at corps level and below are not collocated with their battalions, getting supplies can become an administrative and logistical problem. The higher unit headquarters must attempt to help lower headquarters in dealing with problems associated with providing topographic technical supplies.

Technical Maintenance

Properly scheduled and performed maintenance is the cornerstone to success in combat. Failure to execute a successful maintenance program for the topographic equipment can lead to failure to meet mission requirements. The low-density topographic technical equipment usually cannot be readily repaired. Commanders must ensure that the unit has properly trained maintenance technicians and uses them in the most effective manner possible. The Defense Mapping School offers courses for additional skills in reproduction equipment repair and survey instrument repair. These courses provide units with capable repair technicians for the topographic equipment. Commanders must ensure that the repair technicians are used to the fullest extent. Additional duties and details assigned to these individuals may adversely effect the unit's topographic equipment maintenance program. Commanders are responsible to ensure that the nonmission capable (NMC) topographic equipment is properly documented and reported. A tendency to overlook a nonreportable piece of NMC topographic equipment may lead to the inability to accomplish a mission. Proper documentation and historical files on topographic equipment assist in obtaining equipment upgrades and or new items.