

# CS13 Brings the network to the Soldier

*By Claire Heininger and Amy Walker*

For SSG Stephen Kovac, getting important information and instructions to the rest of his platoon was a struggle – let alone disseminating it throughout his brigade.

He could radio back to higher headquarters and wait for the calls to filter back down, losing precious seconds during an operation. Or, he said, he could “yell and scream back to the rear, use hand and arm signals, anything possible to get it across.”

That was before SSG Kovac began training with Capability Set 13, an integrated tactical network that extends digital communications down to the lowest echelons.

“Using CS 13, you can send reports and you can see reports from individuals on the ground in order to manipulate my team leaders and squad leaders,” the platoon sergeant said. “Even the lowest Joe can send me information, and get it to me within seconds.”

SSG Kovac is part of the 3rd Brigade Combat

Team, 10th Mountain Division, the Army’s second brigade to deploy with CS 13, an advanced, mobile communications network that represents a significant upgrade over capabilities previously available in theater. CS 13 provides enhanced network and mission command capabilities at every echelon, from the brigade commander down to the dismounted Soldier.

For small unit leaders like SSG Kovac, CS

13 delivers Smartphone-like handheld devices that pinpoint the locations of fellow Soldiers, and connect to lightweight radios to transmit data such as text messages, Medevac requests and photos.

“In Afghanistan in 2003, we had to take our digital camera with us, and we had to take all this extra equipment that we had. Now you’re bringing it into a phone,” said SSG Lee T. Hamberger, who used the handheld Nett Warrior system and Rifleman Radio during training exercises. “If I saw something suspicious, I would take a picture of it – basically anything we saw that could help with information for



(U.S. Army photo by Amy Walker)

**A Soldier with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) checks his Nett Warrior handheld device during training at Fort Polk, La. The Smartphone-like device pinpoints the locations of fellow Soldiers, and connects to lightweight radios to transmit data such as text messages, Medevac requests and photos.**

future patrols; they were able to have a better view of everything that was going on.”

The advantages of CS 13 at the lowest levels were apparent during one of the brigade’s mission threads at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, La. A 3rd BCT, 10th Mountain Division platoon was required to assist Afghan National Security Forces role players in questioning a suspected insurgent. After searching the suspect’s car, they found explosive materials and a map that led to a weapons cache in the woods nearby. The platoon’s CS 13 capabilities enabled the squad leader at the scene to inform the entire brigade of the event so an Explosive Ordnance Disposal team could be called in to safely dismantle the explosives.

To get that critical information from the depths of the woods to the commanders across the brigade, the squad leader simply typed the location and information into his Nett Warrior device. His Rifleman Radio sent that signal to his platoon’s vehicle, which was equipped with CS 13 capabilities. Since his unit’s networked radios retransmit signals, he didn’t have to be within range of the vehicle; his radio could just hop through other radios in the area to get the signal back to the vehicle.

Back on the dirt road, the platoon’s vehicle housed the satellite-based Joint Capabilities Release, which plots and transmits friendly and enemy force locations and other battlefield information throughout the force. The JCR system transmitted the squad leader’s report of the IED

cache, which reached higher headquarters’ tactical operations centers and Warfighter Information Network-Tactical Increment 2-equipped vehicles across the brigade. In a matter



(U.S. Army photo by Claire Heiningner)

**A Soldier from the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) uses the Rifleman Radio to communicate during a training exercise at Fort Polk, La. The Rifleman Radio is a key component of Capability Set 13, which extends the tactical network down to the dismounted Soldier.**

of minutes, everyone involved in the operations, both at the TOCs and on-the-move in the networked vehicles, had the complete operational picture. If needed, the WIN-T network could pass that information all the way back to the United States.

Down at the ground level, dismounted leaders say CS 13 empowers them to make more informed decisions, while ensuring their subordinates are safe and have the resources they need to accomplish their missions.

“We can see exactly where they are,” SSG Kovac said. “If I had to reinforce them, I could look down and see where I’m going, rather than getting a grid where they are – you can already start the planning prior to moving to the objective.”

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## ACRONYM QuickScan

BCT - Brigade Combat Team  
CS - Capability Set  
JCR - Joint Capabilities Release  
JRTC - Joint Readiness Training Center  
IED - Improvised Explosive Device  
TOC - Tactical Operations Center  
WIN-T - Warfighter Information Network-Tactical