

CS13 Q&A

Brigade communications officer insights

By Claire Heininger and Amy Walker

Briefly describe your current responsibilities.

I am in charge of all the communications, including the new CS 13 equipment, for an approximately 3,600-man element. I am responsible for running the BCT's computers across all the Army networks, both on-the-move and in their headquarters buildings.

What were some of the challenges when CS 13 was first fielded to 3/10?

The sheer density of systems made prioritization and time allocation paramount. If you have a "fix" where you have to go out and work on every key-leader vehicle, you have 48 separate nodes that you have to touch. So you have to prioritize with various upgrades and changes to the network – you can't have everything.

Where it's been especially challenging for the units is at the company level, where you've now got the intersection of the SNE, the SNAP terminal, and all of the lower Tactical Internet systems. They are really covering an incredibly broad spectrum with minimal signal personnel. Nothing's impossible, but it's a question of prioritization and time. CS13 is a work in progress. Those issues that the 3rd and 4th Brigade Combat Teams, 10th Mountain Division identify should help future capability sets to improve their product.

How is CS13 going to support SFAB missions?

SFAB missions involve teams pushing out to assist their Afghan counterparts, and Soldiers might not be going to a U.S. base with tremendous network capability. Now they can take the network with them, and that is incredible. The other thing is just as we begin to look at reducing our footprint in Afghanistan, it gives you that capability to have the network up until the point that you leave. There is no gap anymore – you can stay because the network stays with you.



(U.S. Army photo by Amy Walker)

MAJ Graham Wood, brigade communications officer (S6) for 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (inset and left) talks with a Soldier in front of a Warfighter Information Network-Tactical Increment 2 Point of Presence-equipped vehicle during pre-deployment training at Fort Drum, N.Y. in April 2013.

How will WIN-T Increment 2 as part of CS 13 help in your new mission?

The biggest thing that CS 13 brings with the WIN-T Increment 2 vehicles such as the SNE and the PoP, is the ability to have Internet and phone capability on-the-move. Having that capability in a dispersed environment allows us to stretch our communications well beyond our previous communication capabilities.

Additionally, in the past we would be tied to our vehicles to have our position and location information reported. Now we have that capability extended to dismounts, with the lower tier Nett Warrior devices, routing all the way back up to our operations center.

With the new SFAB mission, WIN-T Increment 2 provides the capabilities traditionally only available at the brigade and battalion tactical operation center, and more recent capabilities at the company command posts, all strictly static locations. It can give a mobile team, such as an SFAB team, that data capability on-the-move, in a manner that allows them to be

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consistently shifted. They are no longer tied to a single point; they can take that upper tier phone and Internet capability and move it wherever they need to go to support their mission. That is very important with these types of missions, because you are no longer tied to your U.S. base and to U.S. forces; you are projecting more toward assisting the Afghans.

How does on-the-move network communications enable you to communicate at the pace of battle?

The other big piece is that our networks, data, emails and Internet access were tied to stationary locations, to our headquarters facilities.

With CS 13 we have actually taken those capabilities and pushed them forward into vehicles, so that on-the-move as well as at-the-halt, you can access the network, you can pull down reports, you can make a Voice Over Internet Protocol phone call. A lot of those resources are now in your vehicle, and that is a tremendous capability.

CS 13 is going to change how we fight because it is going to pull communications down to the lowest level. And you are not going to have to come back to a TOC to get new orders, you can get them on the fly and that is certainly going to enable a faster

pace of warfare. It is a game changer.

How is pushing the network down to lower echelons supporting dismounted elements?

It is doing a couple of things. It is getting Soldiers' location information down there; it is giving them messaging and quick capabilities. Dismounted Soldiers don't have to do long drawn-out requests anymore, because there are applications built into their End User Device that can hasten the process.

Soldiers don't have to go back to their vehicles anymore; those needed capabilities are right there on their chests, on their EUD devices called "Nett Warrior."

If you look at the Nett Warrior and the lower TI, having those blue force tracking capabilities and other applications down at the lower echelons certainly enables commanders to better control their lower formations. Then if you look at the WIN-T Increment 2 equipment, the PoPs and the SNEs, at the upper TI, they run mission command software applications that enable Soldiers and commanders to communicate with their higher headquarters. So they might not have to get called back to attend a meeting, they can participate remotely. There are different tools at different echelons to support the mission.

Can you see the Army using

Capability Sets for other missions beyond SFAB?

Certainly. As an Army we are transitioning away from just fighting on forward operating bases to being more mobile with lighter headquarters. CS 13 is the way ahead for that. We fought one type of war in Afghanistan and Iraq that was really static-based. In future warfare, if we anticipate more of a mobile battlefield, and CS 13 is actually better suited for that because you won't have to stop and continue to jump your headquarters building, which was the old solution. Now your network is on-the-move.

Also, the fact that CS 13 and future capability sets have an open architecture is going to allow us to tailor it. It doesn't have to get tied into a large, cumbersome development program anymore. It can be worked for each mission. Soldiers can provide feedback and we can work with the project managers to make these systems more functional and more tailored to the needs of the unit.

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ACRONYM QuickScan

3/10 - Third Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division

BCT - Brigade Combat Team

CS - Capability Set

EUD - End User Device

PoP - Point of Presence

SFAB - Security Force Assistance Brigade

SNAP - SIPRNet/NIPRNet Access Point

SNE - Soldier Network Extension

TI - Tactical Internet

TOC - Tactical Operations Center