Initial Concept/Contest Submission

Background/Problem Framing

Over the past 4 to 5 years the Marine Corps and the DoD has seen a shift from the full-scale MAGTF-level operations of OIF and OEF to operations that are primarily focused on special operations use. Whether because of the optics of Special Forces in the media or the flexibility and freedom of movement of specialized units, the concept of employing a full MEU-SOC force, MEB, etc. is highly unlikely in the near future. What this means for the infantry battalions and the Marine Corps as whole can be seen in the special operations truth of “Most Special Operations require non-SOF assistance.” Whether it is a MEU-SOC putting companies or QRFs ashore in support, or individual battalions in CONUS deploying companies oversees, there is a focus of these small contingents being employed in a supporting role. The idea of this application is focused on that second group- a CONUS-based infantry company being sent oversees separate from a MEU or SPMAGTF.

First, a brief background of the experiences that brought about the application. While serving as the S4-A for BLT 1/6 in 2016, the theme of the deployment for the BLT detachment aboard the USS San Antonio was a company level response to real world crisis. Whether this was off the coast of Africa or the coast of countries in the Middle East, our primary planning was focused around supporting a 40 to 120 Marine force put ashore to assist or extract US personnel in theater. On the logistics-side of this, my team aboard the San Antonio was comprised of myself, an embark chief, and a MT chief on the BLT side. We had the capabilities to communicate with the MEU CE aboard the LHD, but more than once lack of signal connectivity highlighted a key point- that if we had to execute the entirety of Marine Corps Planning Process it was going to be a First Lieutenant on his first deployment planning and executing the logistics support. It was a daunting task only amplified by time restrictions, field grade questions at all hours of the night, and the real world nature of what we were being asked to plan and prepare for. On top of that pressure, you need to sort through classes of supplies to figure out consumption rates for Class I, total range for Class III, what effects do three trips from the beach to extract versus two have on your planning, how many vehicles are up, what can we take and what is ready now???

Application Use/Problem Solution

Now imagine that you’re a company commander of an infantry company deployed from Camp Lejeune, NC to a country in Africa to support SOF units in theatre. You have about a month to plan and the entirety of the logistics team to prepare your Marines for the first 30 days in theater. And then you get in country, 30 days come and go, and then communication channels with your SME support on logistics, communication, etc. is gone. What do you do? The SOF unit comes to you and says they can submit a logistics request through alternate channels but it has to be in the next 10 minutes. I can tell you that as a logistics officer I needed a hot minute to figure all that information out with 6 hours to plan. But 10 minutes? What if I could just pull out my phone, press in all the data from my Company Gunny on personnel and vics, and have answers? And that is where the USMC S135 App came from.

In response to the drills on board the San Antonio, I built an excel document that planned out operation support requirements for Classes I, III, and V. With built in numbers on everything from vehicle types and fuel consumption to the effects of the weather conditions on MREs and water, it could give me the information in ten minutes that it use to take six hours to compile. More importantly- it made that possible for any user- 0402 or not. A LCpl Riflemen or an O6 MEU CO could enter the data and come out with the same calculations.