CHAPTER 2

ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF THE COMPANY COMMAND POST

In the previous chapter, we learned about the importance of a proficient Combat Operations Center (COC). For a Combat Operations Center to be effective, it must receive accurate information immediately from the companies assigned to the unit. The line companies (Alfa, Bravo, Charlie) man the defensive lines that are the battalion's portion of the defensive perimeter in the rear area or the Forward Edge of the Battle Area (FEBA); therefore, they are the **"eyes and ears"** of the COC. Company command posts are established to help the companies maintain command and control of their perspective companies. This chapter provides detailed information about the company command post and how the data it provides to the COC is vital to an effective command and control system.

COMPANY COMMAND POST

The company command post (CP) is the central point from which company operations are directed. The CP is established to provide the company commander centralized command and control facilities for the platoons assigned to the company. The platoon commanders report all activities to the company CP, regardless of their magnitudes, concerning their perspective platoons. The company CP reports to the COC all information concerning the company.

The specific composition and functions of the company command post vary with the mission assigned to the company. The normal functions of the company CP are similar to the COC and include the following:

1. Receiving and recording operational reports from the COC.

2. Maintaining current maps and overlays of friendly and enemy situations within the company's area of responsibility. This information is displayed within the company command post.

3. Maintaining current maps and overlays of the company's patrol routes and other routes that may come in contact with the company's area of responsibility.

4. Preparing and submitting operational reports to the COC concering the company.

5. Providing dedicated communication channels for tactical and nontactical operations to the COC and to the platoon commanders.

6. Transmitting orders and tactical decisions of the battalion's COC to the platoons as required.

7. Monitoring the progress of the battalion's tactical operations and reporting immediately to the COC any significant event or incident concerning the company's area of responsibility.

LOCATION

The location considerations of the company CP are similar to the location considerations of the COC. The company CP must be hard to detect from enemy forces and must be easy to defend and easily accessible to battalion personnel. Other factors to consider am centralization, traffic, communications, and defense security.

Centralization

The company command post is located rear of the forward platoons manning the defensive perimeter or the FEBA and is centered among those platoons to enhance the execution of command and control operations.

Traffic

All of the traffic entering the company CP is by foot. Personnel approaching and returning to their fighting positions from the company CP should do so by alternate routes. When this rule is not followed, a beaten path leading to the company CP for the enemy to follow will result.

Communication

Communication is vital to the company CP for the effective exercise of command and control. The company CP must have constant communication with

the platoon commanders, the listening posts (LP), and the observation posts (OP). The platoon commanders must have constant communication with the troops on the front lines. A break in communication can cause massive confusion and could result in heavy casualties and the loss of lives. Communications is covered in depth farther on in this chapter.

Defense and Security

Defensive and security measures for the company CP are similar to that of the COC. The major exception is that the company CP is not as fortified as the COC. For example, barbed and tactical wire entanglements are not used around the company CP because of the constant flow of traffic entering the CP. The company commander is concerned principally with the defense of the company's area of responsibility.

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ORGANIZATION OF THE COMPANY COMMAND POST

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The internal organization of the company CP varies with each company or contingency operation. Written Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are established to avoid any confusion. Personnel duties, maps, and various boards are usually standard within any company CP.

The company commander is responsible for coordinating, organizing, operating, and training watch standing personnel for the company CP. The number of personnel assigned to the watch stations, which are manned on a 24-hour basis, is normally maintained at the minimum needed to meet operational requirements. The watch personnel and their duties are as follows:

Watch Chief

1. Before assuming watch, the watch chief should read the message board, be briefed on the current situation from the current watch chief, and then make liaison with the COC.

2. During watch, keep current on the tactical situation of the battalion, make routine decisions concerning the company, and notify the company commander of incidents of an unusual nature.

3. Read all incoming and outgoing messages. Take the appropriate action on messages received from the COC. Ensure the COC immediately receives accurate information pertaining to the company's area of responsibility.

4. Ensure incoming and outgoing messages follow established routing procedures.

5. Retain releasing authority on all outgoing messages.

6. Provide complete supervision of operations in the company CP.

Watch Petty Officer

1. Handle and process information relating to intelligence.

2. Gather and distribute information gained from intelligence sources.

3. Maintain overlays of the enemy situation map pertaining to the company's area of responsibility.

4. Promptly inform the watch chief of significant or unusual incidents.

5. Maintain overlays of the company's patrols and convoys.

6. Supervise the action of the communication personnel.

7. Verify correct communication security measures are being used by all assigned communicators.

Communicator

1. Monitor radio nets as assigned.

2. Use all necessary measures to minimize interception or jamming of transmission.

Messengers/Security

1. Perform all duties as assigned.

2. Ensure only authorized personnel enter the company CP.

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CHARTS AND MAPS

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The types of charts and maps required within the company CP vary according to the mission and the company commander. All boards and maps must be visible to all personnel in the company CP. This arrangement enables all personnel standing watch in the company CP to visualize current situations and to help them to respond to any incoming messages quickly and accurately.

NOTE: Also posted in the company CP is a clipboard that serves as an incoming/outgoing message reading file.

AREA MAP

Unlike the COC, there is only one map to maintain in the company CP. This map displays the "big picture" of the companies with emphasis on each company's fire plan and area of responsibility. The area map includes the following:

1. Friendly troop positions in the company's area of responsibility

2. Detailed company fire plan that includes claymore mines, tactical entanglements, listening and observation posts, and early warning devices such as trip flares.

3. On call targets with the designator of the target established by the COC

4. Current location of the COC

5. Location and status of patrols or convoys

6. Landing zone (LZ) locations

7. NBC corridors/fallouts

8. Overlay of known enemy positions

CHARTS

The charts posted in the CP give personnel a quick picture of the current situation. Items that need to be displayed on charts are not limited but should at least include the following:

- Company strength
- Report status of reports sent and in process
- Equipment status
- Call signs and frequencies
- Convoy status
- Food/water/ammo status of the company
- Enemy equipment/weapons
- Weather and astronomical data
- NBC corridors/fallouts
- Challenge and passwords including the alternative for the next 24 hours
- Current MOPP level

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Like the COC, a company communication plan needs to be prepared. Communication is essential for the company commander to pass information between the troops and the COC. An uncomplicated, reliable, flexible, and responsive communication plan will enable the company commander to carry out operational plans generated from the COC effectively.

The communication officer is responsible for the units overall communication plans. The company commanders work with the communication officer for the development of a company communication plan and communication assets needed by the companies. The company commander should include in the plan communication requirements for the company and a communication network.

COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

Communication requirements within the company CP vary according to the mission, but the communication equipment used to fulfill the requirements is the sane. Communication equipment includes the following:

1. AN/PRC-77 or AN/PRC-119A: Radios used to communicate with the COC, the convoys, the forward observers, the listening posts, and the patrols.

2. TA-312/PT (Field Phone): A direct phone line to the COC, to the platoon commanders, and from the platoon commanders to the troops manning the lines. Usually a TA-312/PT is run from the platoon commander's fighting position to the squad leader's fighting position or a crew-served weapon fighting position on the lines.

3. SB-22/PT: The switchboard used to connect numerous TA-312s.

COMMUNICATION NETWORK

A communication network is established similar to the one covered in chapter 1. The platoon commander should also submit a platoon wire net and radio net plan. The network should have a graphical display of all communication wire linkups and radio nets monitored by the company and platoons,

NOTE: Figures 2-1 and 2-2 are wire and radio plans pertaining to an ideal situation. The one you will be tasked to design should be tailored according to the assets available, the local terrain, and the area of responsibility assigned to the company.
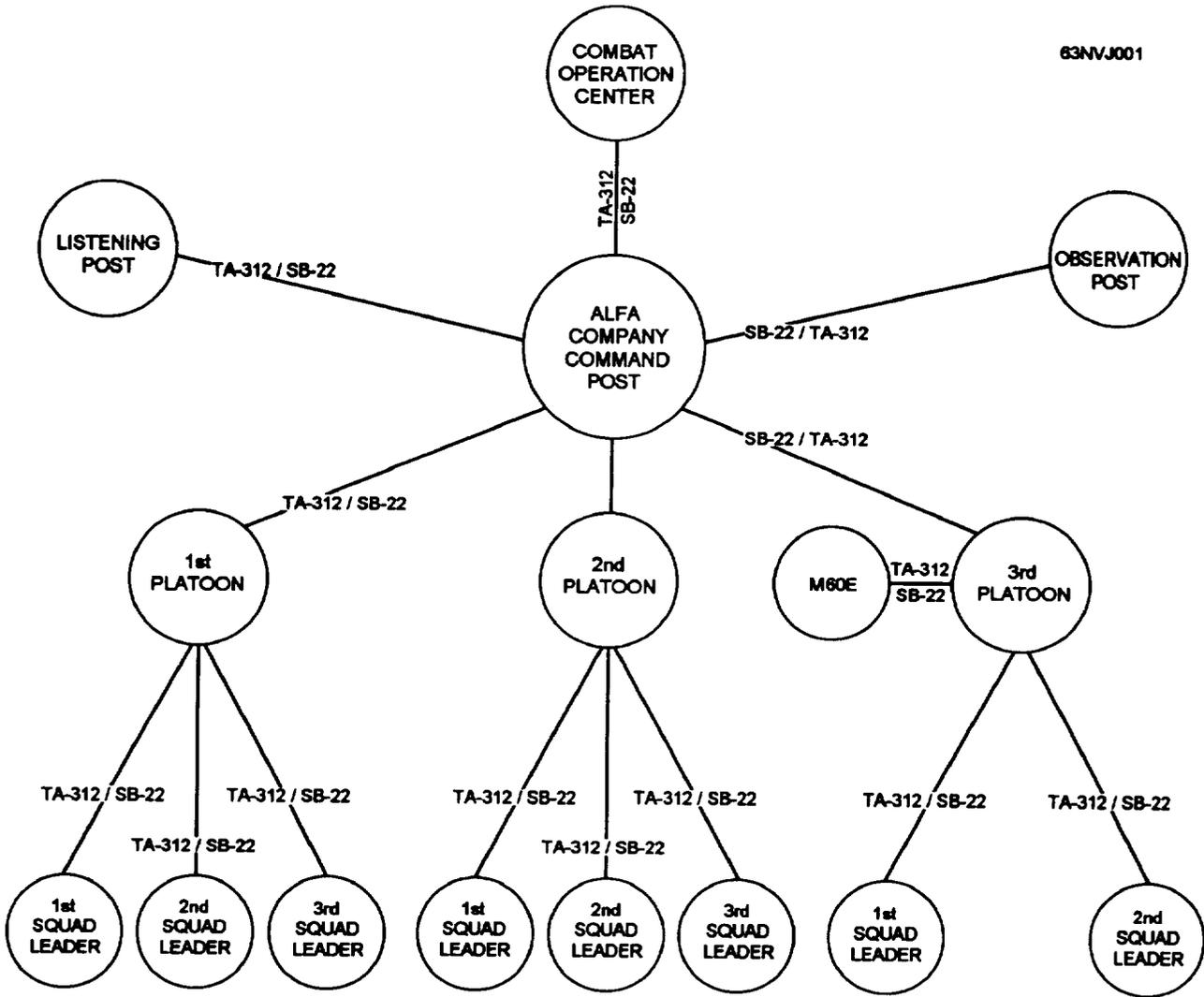
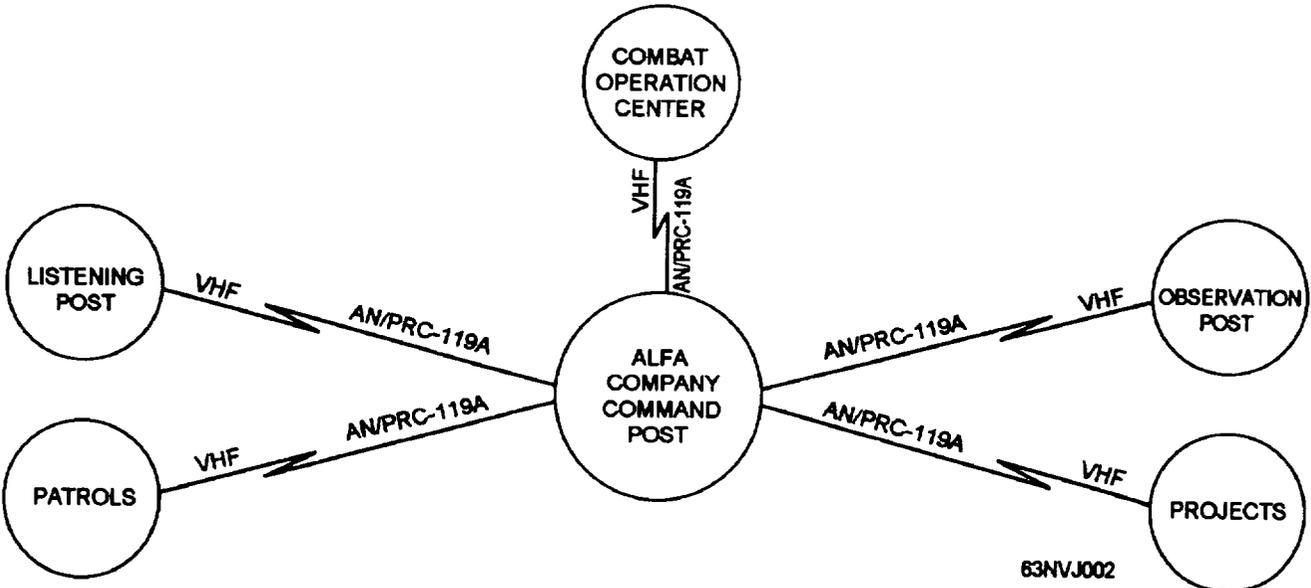Figure 2-1.—Company CP wire plan.

Figure 2-2.—Company CP radio plan.

The company commander should receive a copy of the Communication Electronic Operating Instruction (CEOI) to find out the radio nets the company is required to monitor. The contents of a CEOI are discussed in chapter 1. There are normally only two frequency nets that a company CP is required to monitor:

1. Battalion Command Net One: Establish communication from the companies to the COC for administrative and logistics issues.

2. Battalion Tactical Net Two: Establish communication from the companies to the COC for tactical purposes. Used for various reports, such as SPOT, SALUTE, AMMUNITION, CAUSALITY, and SITREPS.

OPERATION OF THE COMPANY COMMAND POST

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) instruction for the company CP should be prepared. All key personnel involved with the operations of the company CP should participate in the preparation of the SOP. Special consideration must be given to message-handling procedures and situation boards.

The following paragraphs contain a typical SOP for the company CP. The one you may be tasked to design may be different but should contain the same basic topics.

SOP FOR INCOMING MESSAGES

All incoming radio traffic should be written down on authorized message pads that allow the preparation of an original plus two copies.

NOTE: A guideline for handling messages is in chapter 1.

The communicator passes an incoming message to the watch petty officer who checks the message for format, spelling, and legibility. After checking the message, the watch petty officer should pass the message with all copies to the watch chief who will decide the appropriate action to take. The original plus one copy is then filed and one copy is placed on the reading board.

Incoming messages received by the runner or by the field telephone are handled in the same manner as incoming radio messages. When the watch petty officer is preoccupied with other events, messages should be routed directly to the watch chief.

SOP FOR OUTGOING MESSAGES

The watch petty officer prepares one original and two copies of all outgoing messages. All copies are passed to the watch chief. The watch chief reviews the message, signs the releasing block, files one copy, and forwards two copies to the communicator. The communicator logs one copy and transmits the message. After transmission, the communicator returns the original copy, with the time of transmission shown, back to the watch petty officer. The watch chief receives the original with the time of transmission noted. The original is placed on the outgoing reading board.

NOTE: When the watch petty officer is preoccupied, the watch chief prepares outgoing messages.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Reporting procedures must be established for the company CP to be effective. The use of standardized reports speeds information flow and simplifies support requests. Proper communication procedures, including encryption of sensitive information, must be followed in submitting all reports. Every person in the company must know the proper reporting procedures. Information from the lines must get relayed back to the company CP in an accurate and timely fashion. Formats for reports may vary from unit to unit. The two most commons are the SALUTE and SPOT reports.

The platoon commander receives information from the lines by landline or radio. The primary means of communication between the platoon commander and squad leaders are wire. Messengers, visual signals, personal contact, or whistles may be used when they are more appropriate than phones and radios.

As previously mentioned, the location of field phones on the lines is dictated by the assets available, the terrain, and the size of the area of responsibility assigned to the company. The platoon commander must be able to relay information quickly and accurately. The platoon commander must also have complete command and control of the squads and crew-served weapons assigned to the platoon.

The ideal situation is for the platoon commander to have a TA-312/PT (field phone) at each squad leader's fighting position or crew-served weapon position. The field phones will tie into a switchboard

(SB-22/PT) located in the platoon commander's fighting position. The platoon commander will be tied into the company CP. Figure 2-3 shows an ideal radio network.

The platoon commander relays the information to the company CP, using the acronym SALUTE (Size, Activity, Location, Unit, Time, Equipment). The company CP relays the information to the COC with a SALUTE report.

A SPOT report is a hastily modified SALUTE report containing less detail. An example of the difference between the two reports is when the

PLATOON WIRE NET WITH SB-22 SWITCHBOARD LINE

SB-22

FIELD PHONE

1st SQD

PLT SWITCHBOARD AND FIELD PHONE

2d SQD

FIELD PHONE

3d SQD

TO COMPANY SWITCHBOARD

PLATOON HOT LOOP WITHOUT SWITCHBOARD

1st SQD

2d SQD

3d SQD

PLT LDR

TO COMPANY

PLATOON RADIO NET

1st SQD SQD RADIO

2d SQD SQD RADIO

3d SQD SQD RADIO

PLT LDR SQD RADIO
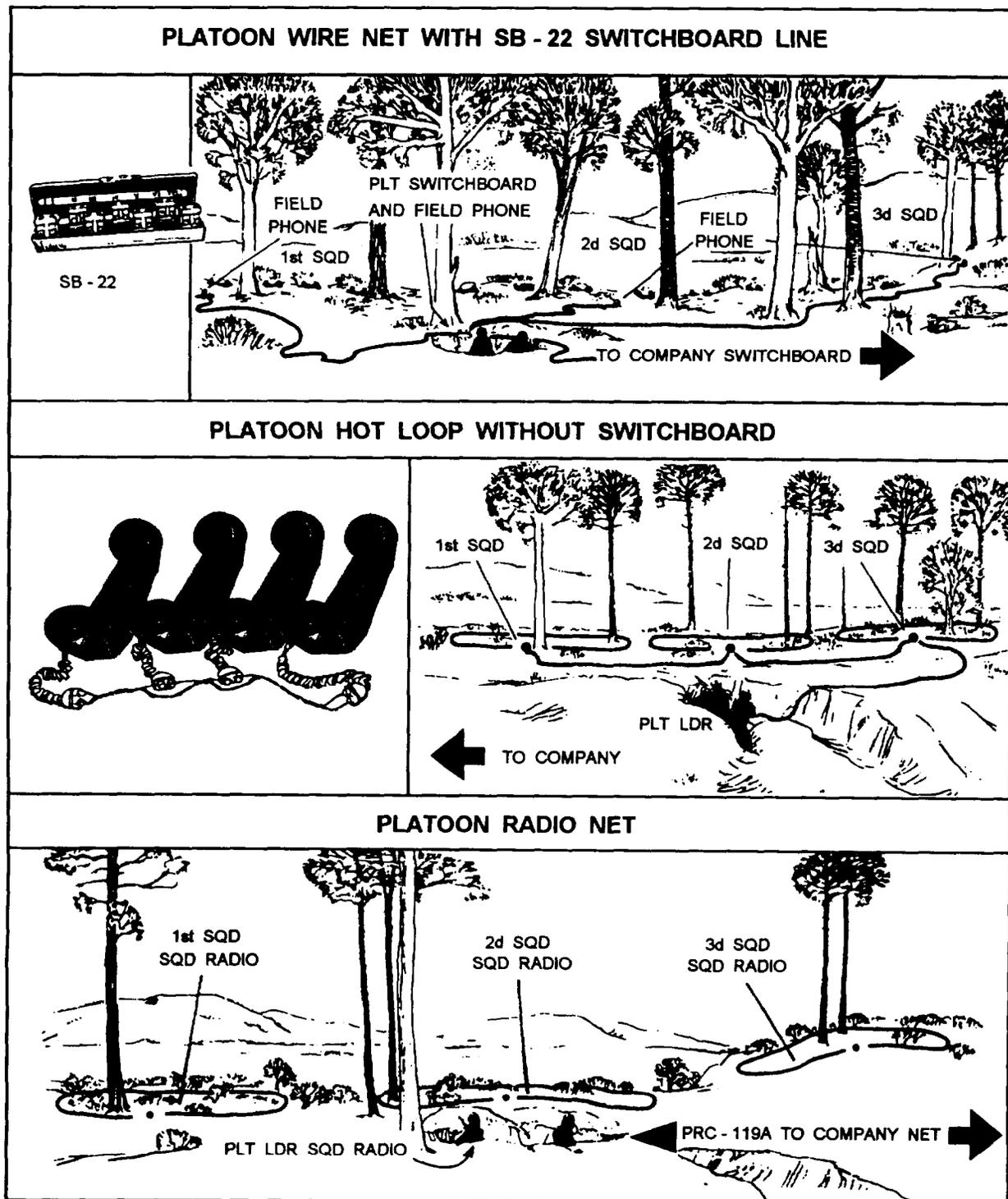
PRC-119A TO COMPANY NET

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Figure 2-3.—Various platoon and radio net illustration.

company is engaged in a fire fight on the lines. The platoon commander must concentrate on the fire fight and has little time to send a formal SALUTE report to the company CP. Several SPOT reports are used to maintain communication with the company CP. The company CP is also busy concentrating on the fire fight and will relay several SPOT reports to the COC. When the fire fight is over, the company CP will send the COC a formal SALUTE report based from the SPOT reports.

A SALUTE report is used when the observed activities of the enemy do not pose a threat to the company. This gives the platoon commander and the company CP time to evaluate the situation and to send the COC a formal SALUTE report.

The important thing is to keep the COC informed of everything and maintain the top priority of defending the company's area of responsibility. **What may not seem like vital information to you may be vital information to someone else.** When in doubt send a SPOT or SALUTE report.

AREA MAPS AND CHARTS

The watch petty officer is primarily responsible for maintaining the situation map and other tactical information aids; however, this task is usually shared with the watch chief. The watch chief ensures that any information requiring the updates of maps or charts is quickly carried out.

SUMMARY

As you can see from this chapter, the company CP plays a vital role in relation to the COC and the overall defense plans of the battalion. The organization of the company CP is similar to the COC but on a smaller scale. The primary difference is the communication from the defensive lines or the FEBA to the company CP. Emphasis is placed on defending the company's area of responsibility while keeping the COC informed. A SPOT report is a rapid way to inform the COC of vital information and should be followed up with a SALUTE report. The COC depends on the company CP for accurate and concise information. Strong coordination between the COC and the company CP can ensure a victorious outcome for any combat mission assigned to a Seabee organization.