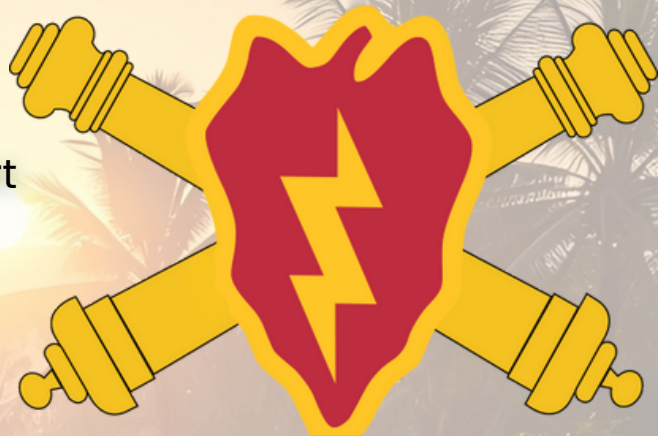


# Manning & Equipment

## Reorganizing the Fire Support Enterprise for Multi Domain Operations

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### **Cold War Tactics, COIN Lessons, LSCO Brilliance**

The evolution of fire support capabilities is consistently driven by technological advancements and shifting operational requirements. During the Cold War, massed artillery fires dominated large-scale combat operations (LSCO), with early innovations like the Overseer and Firebee drones extending observation and targeting reach. The 1980s saw the introduction of Combat Observation Lasing Teams (COLTs), which reshaped fire support by embedding highly trained teams with maneuver units. Their task organization enabled rapid, decentralized targeting, improving the lethality and responsiveness of indirect fires while enhancing integration with maneuver forces.

As formations transition from Infantry Brigade Combat Teams (IBCT) to a Mobile Brigade (MBDE), fire support must evolve. This shift requires restructuring fire support elements, adapting command-and-control systems, and integrating emerging technologies to ensure responsive, scalable fires in LSCO while maintaining agility for future conflicts.

Historical lessons highlight the critical role of task organization and technological adaptation in achieving battlefield superiority.

The Army now faces a similar imperative to innovate in response to the operational demands of MBDEs. MBDEs emphasize agility, integration, and technological superiority across all warfighting functions as part of the broader Transformation in Contact (TiC) initiative.





Therefore, the fires enterprise must align its capabilities with smaller, disaggregated formations while maintaining the ability to deliver massed fires when necessary.

Currently, critical gaps exist in fire support capabilities, particularly in Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) integration, mobility, communication, and targeting systems. Compounding this issue is the lack of alignment between task organization and MBDE operational demands, limiting the fires enterprise's ability to seamlessly integrate into multi-domain operations. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensuring that fire support can continue to serve as a force multiplier in complex, contested environments.

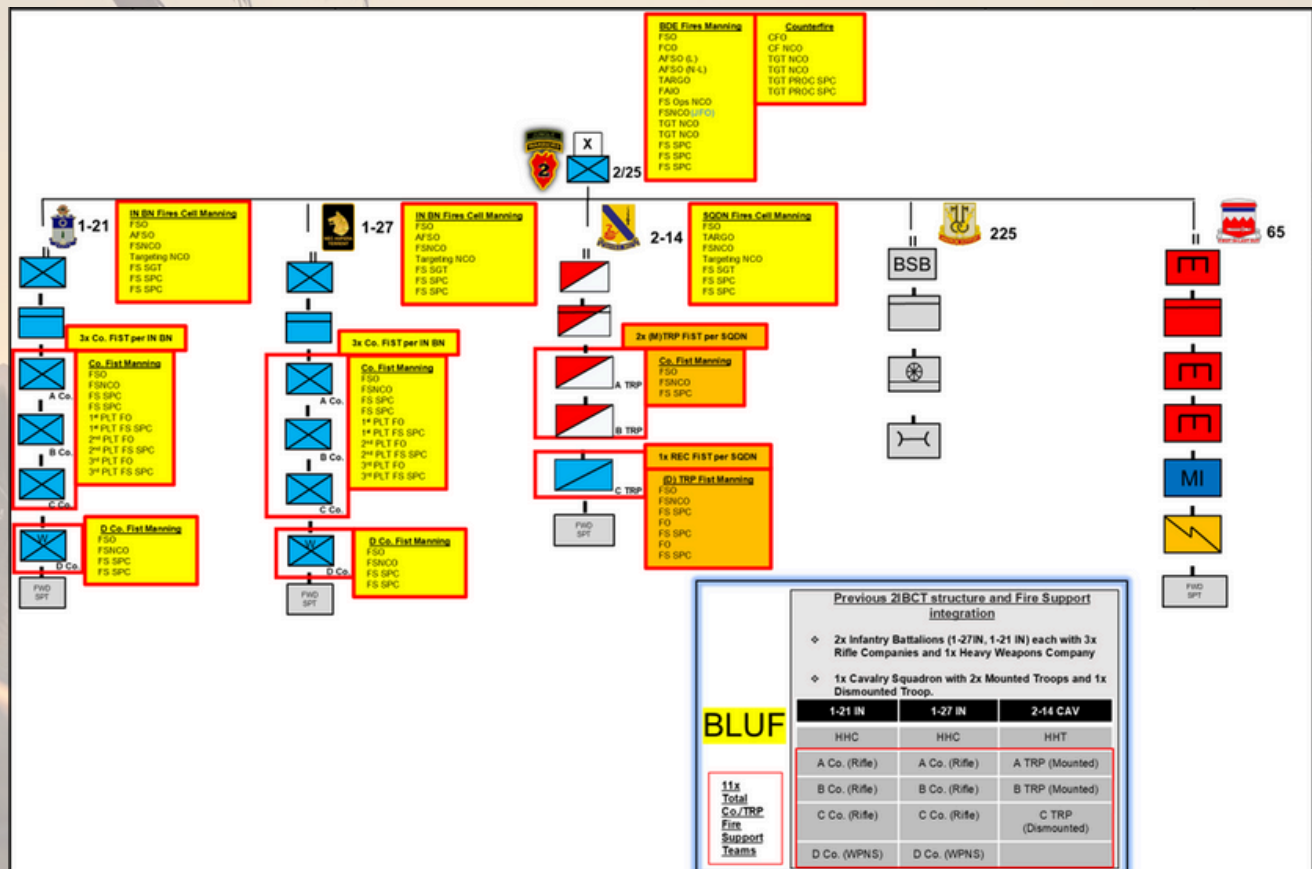
This article examines the current state of fire support within the MBDE framework, focusing on manning and equipping the fire support enterprise to keep pace with TiC initiatives and meet the demands of the current operational environment. It draws on lessons learned from 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division's recent Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center (JPMRC) rotation and provides detailed analysis of strengths, weaknesses, and gaps.

## **Doing More with Less: Proposed Manning Solutions**

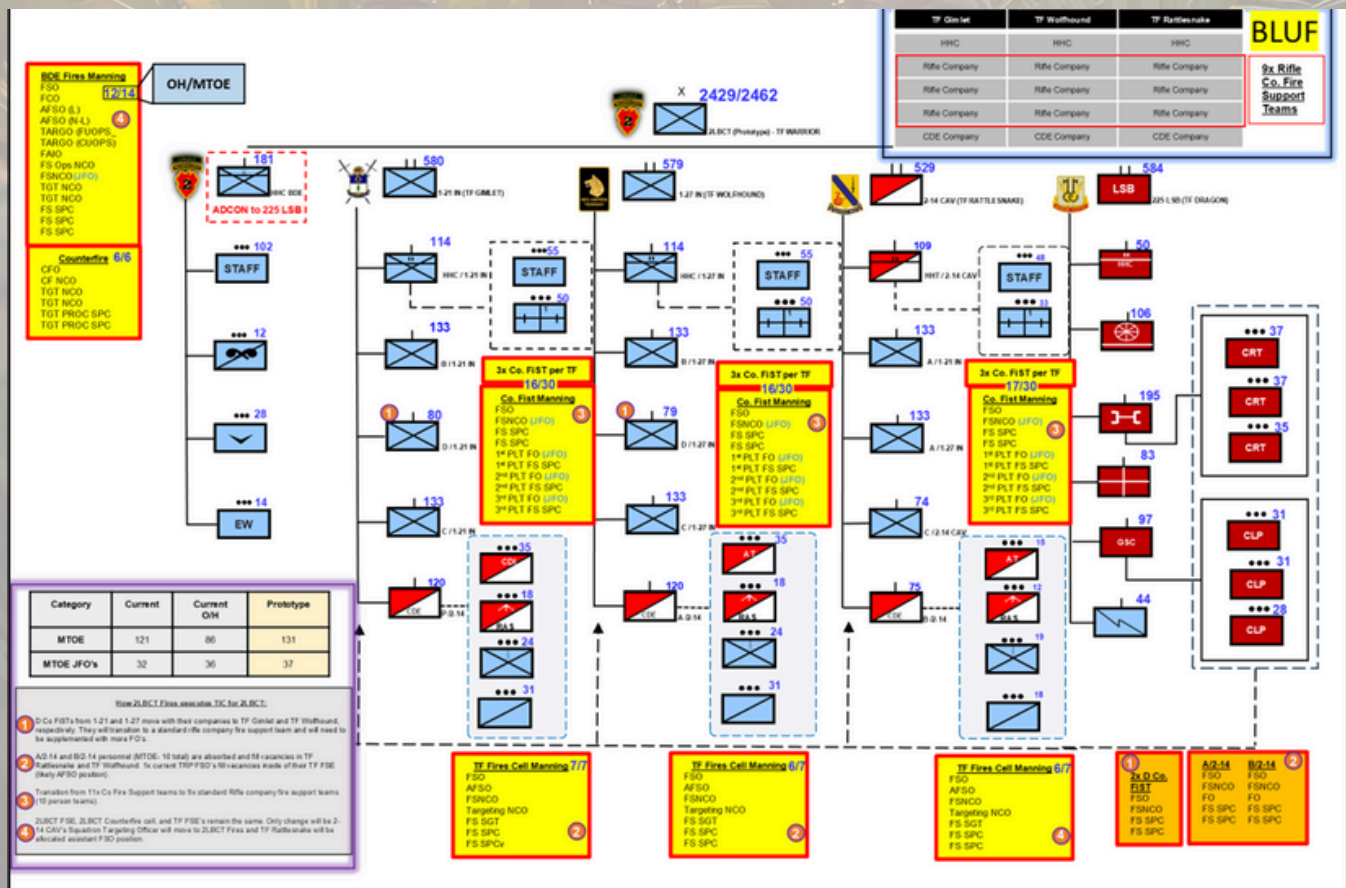
Current fire support IBCT Modified Tables of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) reflect manning for pre-TiC environments. The graphics below depicts line and block charts of the FSE prior to the realignment of 2-25 IBCT into an MBDE, and ongoing developments for proposed FSE realignment in support of 2-25 MBDE's transformation. Leaders from across the Division quickly identified additional requirements for fire support and reconnaissance tasks at the brigade level and within the newly formed Multi-Purpose Companies (MPC) not addressed during TIC 1.0..







## 2-25 IBCT - Fire Support Element Task Organization



## 2-25MBDE Fire Support Element Task Organization - TiC 1.0





As of TIC 1.0, the proposed MTOE for the 2-25 MBDE FSE totaled 131 personnel. However, this structure failed to account for critical requirements, including fire support elements for the newly established Multi-Purpose Companies (MPC) and a brigade-level reconnaissance element. In response to these shortfalls, two courses of action (COAs) were developed, each aimed at reducing the overall MTOE by 10 (to 121) or 19 (to 112) personnel. These COAs were curated through the 2MBDE, 3MBDE, and DIVARTY Commanders' guidance, feedback from battalion commanders and fire support elements, and a clear understanding of existing manning shortfalls. This reorganization prioritizes flexible employment of fire support teams at the brigade and battalion levels, maintains integration and functionality within Rifle Companies, and establishes fire support capabilities in an MPC.

The core of the reorganization effort was the creation of Joint Fire Support Teams (JFSTs) at the brigade level and consolidated Task Force Joint Fire Support Teams (TF-JFSTs) at the battalion/task force levels. Assessments indicated platoon forward observers embedded in Rifle Company Fire Support Teams were underutilized and not positioned to observe or integrate fires effectively.

Consolidating these observers into JFSTs and TF-JFSTs optimized their roles, offering brigade and battalion commanders greater flexibility to employ fire support assets for targeting and fire support integration, and accounts for the advent of short-range reconnaissance (SRR) drones at their respective levels.

The two COAs differ primarily in the size and scope of the brigade-level JFSTs. COA 1 proposes a seven-person JFST, led by an NCO, capable of operating independently and self-sustaining at or forward of the Forward Line of Troops (FLOT) for short durations.

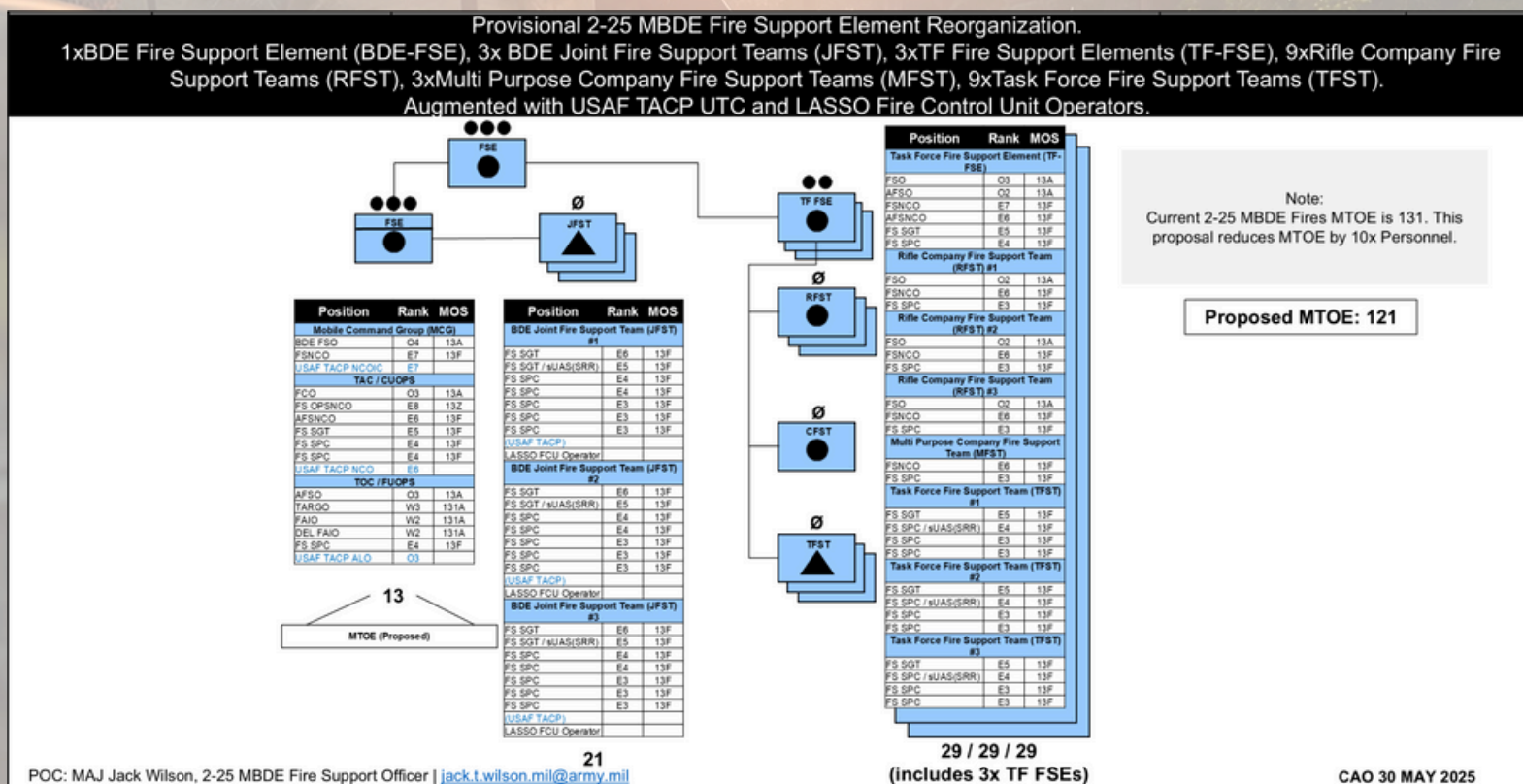
This configuration enables comprehensive support for brigade-level targeting and fire support integration. COA 2, by contrast, creates a smaller, four-person JFST, also NCO-led, which integrates directly with a Brigade echelon Multi-Function Reconnaissance Company (MFRC). These JFSTs would form part of cross-functional "Strike Teams," capable of operating forward of the FLOT and sustaining operations while supporting brigade-level targeting. At the conclusion of JPMRC, the Division and Brigade level After Action Reviews (AAR) highlighted the need for Brigade level MFRC within an MBDE.





The AARs also highlighted the success of the provisional MFRC as well as the augment of the JFST concept tested during JPMRC.

At the battalion level, the TF-JFSTs remain consistent across both COAs. Each TF-JFST is comprised of four personnel, led by an NCO, and is designed to enhance battalion-level fire support capabilities. This streamlined construct ensures fire support employment is effective and scalable, while addressing operational gaps and optimizing personnel and resources.



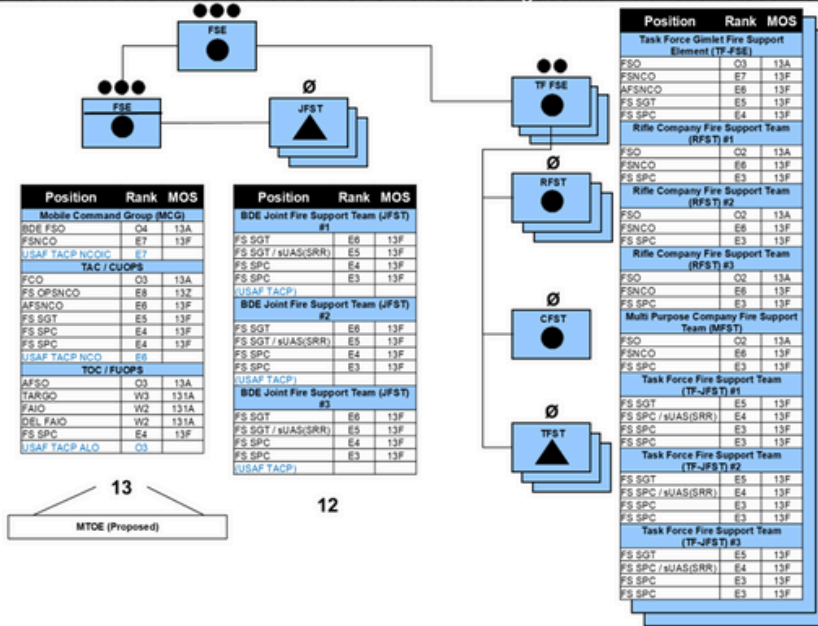
## 2-25 MBDE Fire Support Task Organization COA 1: Standalone BDE JFST



## Provisional 2-25 MBDE Fire Support Element Reorganization.

1x BDE Fire Support Element (BDE-FSE), 3x BDE Joint Fire Support Teams (JFST), 3x TF Fire Support Elements (TF-FSE), 9x Rifle Company Fire Support Teams (RFST), 3x Multi Purpose Company (MPC) Fire Support Teams (MFST), 9x Task Force Joint Fire Support Teams (TF-JFST). Augmented with USAF TACP UTC. BDE JFST enables Brigade Multi-Function Reconnaissance Company (MFRC).

This provisional task organization was validated during 2-25 MBDE's Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center (JPMRC) Exercise 25-01 and is the current task organization of 2-25 MBDE FSE



Note:  
Current IBCT Fires MTOE valid in FMS Web is 116.

Current 2-25 MBDE Fires MTOE (as informed by TIC 1.0) is 131.

This proposal reduces MTOE by 19x Personnel.

Additional proposals would reduce MTOE to 99.

**Proposed MTOE: 112**

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(includes 3x BN/TF FSEs)

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## 2-25 MBDE Fire Support Task Organization COA 2: BDE JFST Augments Multi-Function Reconnaissance Company

During the initial phases of TIC 1.0, and the transformation of the Cavalry Squadron to an Infantry Battalion, 2-25 MBDE did not possess an element that could see, sense, or strike targets within the BDE fight. 2-25MBDE created the Multi-Function Reconnaissance Company (MFRC) to address that capability gap. The Provisional Brigade MFRC incorporates Electronic Warfare (EW), Low Altitude Stalking and Strike Ordinance (LASSO), ground observers (JFST and BDE Scouts), and Long and Mid-Range Reconnaissance (LRR and MRR) UAS systems. JFST augmentation to the Provisional MFRC serves as the connective tissues in the Brigade Kill Web, enabling brigade

targeting and fire support integration. As currently proposed, the MFRC takes a cross-section of their organic capabilities (EW, LASSO, JFST, Ground Recon, Aerial Recon) and forms cross-functional "Strike Teams" called Multi-Domain Reconnaissance Teams (MDRT) to move out to or past the FLOT to enable Brigade Targeting, and answer PIRs out to the Brigade forward boundary. This brigade-level MFRC reports directly to the Brigade Reconnaissance Officer (BRO) and FSO, focusing on seeing, sensing, and striking Brigade-level targets in support of targeting and shaping efforts.





Understanding how fire supporter realignment is task organized is critical to their effective employment. As part of this effort, the BDE FSE will field three JFSTs, each reporting directly to the BDE FSO. Each battalion fields three TF-JFSTs totaling nine teams across the brigade, reporting directly to their respective Battalion FSOs.

To support JFST, TF-JFST, and MFST creation, the Rifle Company Fire Support Teams reduce in size while maintaining their ability to integrate fire support at the company level. This redistribution of personnel ensures fire support capabilities are preserved and optimized to provide comprehensive support across all brigade echelons. Finally, the personnel cost saving allows each battalion to establish the MPC fire support teams.

The reorganization of the 2-25MBDE FSE reflects a deliberate effort to enhance flexibility and precision in fire support operations. This structure ensures seamless integration of fires at every level of command by reallocating fire support personnel and capability at each echelon. This reorganization strengthens the FSE's ability to provide effective and timely fire support integration to the MBDE.

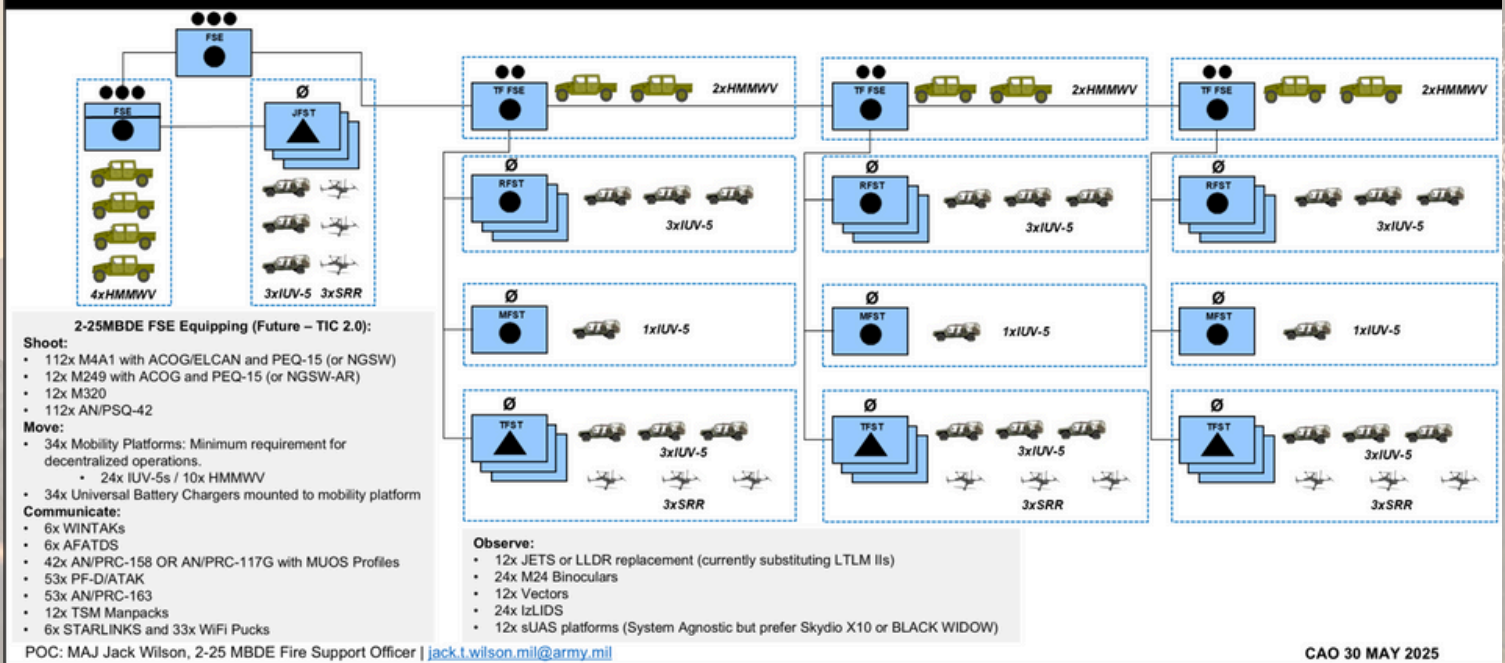
When it comes to personnel, the FSE can do more with less; this is made possible by equipping these organizations to win.

### **See, Sense, Strike: Addressing Equipment Shortfalls**

Significant fire support equipment shortfalls were identified during 2-25MBDE's transformation. The arrival of TiC 2.0 makes great strides to address some of these concerns and shows equipping fire supporters to keep pace with maneuver transformation efforts can make task organization changes feasible. Coupling existing TiC 2.0 equipment projections and proper alignment to fire supporters is the critical component to do more with less.







## 2-25 MBDE Fire Support Reorganization – Baseline Mobility and Equipment Requirements

To meet MBDE operational demands effectively, the fires enterprise must address critical capability gaps across numerous warfighting functions. The ability to see and sense targets is hindered by outdated targeting systems, such as the legacy LLDR-2H, which are no longer repairable. Upgrading to modern Joint Effects Targeting Systems (JETS) or Laser Target Locator Modules (LTLM) is essential to provide fire support teams with the precision required for effective engagement.

Additionally, as we prepare for LSCO and phasing out the RQ-11B Raven, the need to equip Forward Observers with new and advanced sUAS (e.g. Skydio) becomes essential to enhance

their ability to rapidly gather real-time intelligence, conduct precision targeting, and maintain situational awareness across dispersed and contested battlefields. Restructuring to smaller and more agile fire support teams equipped with enhanced capabilities spread across the battlefield allows for more operational flexibility that will meet the operational demands of an MBDE while keeping manning costs low.

Similarly, night lethality poses a significant challenge, as current AN/PSV-14-night vision devices lack the capabilities necessary for parity with maneuver forces.





Equipping fire support personnel with AN/PSQ-42 ENVG-B systems and M4 carbines outfitted with advanced optics, lasers, and suppressors will ensure effective observation and engagement during low-visibility operations.

Limited mobility platforms and insufficient sustainment resources constrain the ability to move and sustain fire support operations. The 2-25MBDE Fire Support Element requires at least 30 mobility platforms, including a mix of high-back HMMWVs and Infantry Utility Vehicles (IUVs) to enable decentralized and dispersed operations. Fire support teams cannot integrate seamlessly with maneuver units or maintain flexibility on complex terrain without these platforms. Additionally, sustainment remains challenging due to inadequate battery supplies and charging solutions for communication equipment. Universal Battery Chargers (UBCs) and increased battery allocations are critical to ensuring continuous operations, particularly for teams operating independently or forward of the FLOT.

Communication shortfalls significantly limit coordination and situational awareness, especially with the creation of the SBU-E Fires Network Architecture at the Brigade and below level.

The fires enterprise faces shortages in advanced radios like AN/PRC-158s and AN/PRC-163s, which are essential for secure and redundant communication. Furthermore, additional WINTAK systems, AFATDS, and personal ATAKs are required to enable digital sensor-to-shooter communication, ensuring seamless data flow and integration across the MBDE, up to DIVARTY and the Division, as well as across the Joint Force. Addressing these communication gaps will enhance the fires enterprise's ability to synchronize fires and maintain a common operational picture across disaggregated commands.

In summary, bridging these equipment shortfalls across the See, Sense, Shoot, Move/Sustain, and Communicate domains is essential to ensure MBDE fire support teams can operate effectively in complex, multi-domain environments. These investments will enable the fires enterprise to deliver the precision, agility, and lethality required for future conflicts.

## **Conclusion**

The Army's TIC initiative has reshaped Brigade Combat Teams into agile, strategically mobile formations capable of dominating a complex operational environment.





However, as this article demonstrates, the fire support enterprise lags in modernization, leaving critical gaps that undermine the effectiveness of MBDE's. Lessons from the Cold War and COIN eras underscore the need for adaptability, precision, and technological integration—qualities essential for MBDE's success. Without targeted improvements in areas such as sUAS integration, mobility, communications, and night lethality, the fires community risks becoming a liability rather than a force multiplier. Reorganization efforts within the 2-25MBDE, including JFSTs and MPCs, provide a blueprint for success, but significant resource shortfalls constrain these innovations. Manning and equipping to win: we can do more with less.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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