

HOME STATION TRAINING

Center for Army Lessons Learned



Dec 2015 – May 2016

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS REPORT

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INITIAL IMPRESSIONS REPORT

HOME STATION TRAINING COLLECTION, DEC 2015 – FEB 2016

EVENT SUMMARY:

This report provides a summary of the observations from three Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) collection events concerning Home Station Training (HST) from December 2015 – February 2016. The collection team interviewed a total of over 250 Soldiers and Leaders from one Corps Headquarters, two Division Headquarters, three Brigade Combat Teams, and seventeen Battalions/Squadrons. This collection report includes analysis from the I CORPS Stryker Assessment dated January 2016. This report has been sanitized to remove unit identification.

Observation: Repetition in training

Discussion: Across units, leaders universally stated that repetition in training was the most important aspect of task mastery. This does not necessarily entail doing the same training event repetitively. Rather, it means training on the same *task*, with varying conditions, multiple times, instead of going from training on one task to training on a second task. This repetition includes ensuring adequate time for retraining, and building on conditions until the task becomes ‘muscle memory’, even under less than ideal conditions (such as in a CBRN environment or in limited visibility).

Many leaders stated that they felt as if their training was “rushed”, as if they were being forced to complete it to “check the block” on the task so they could move on to the next training gate. The examples given relate to conducting a platoon attack with only marginal success and instead of allowing the unit to repeat the event, declaring victory and moving on to the next event, such as a Company deliberate attack. Other examples include qualifying on individual weapons. Soldiers and leaders described how they were not able to try to qualify expert if they failed to do so during their first attempt. As long as they qualified, even as a marksman, that met the standard as far as their chain-of-command was concerned.

Although this sounds obvious, it takes deliberate planning and prioritization by commanders. With limited resources (especially time), units cannot be masters of everything. Commanders therefore have a choice – either train to minimum proficiency in many tasks or train to proficiency and mastery in few (three or four). To prioritize which tasks to train, and where to assume risk, commanders must have a thorough understanding of not only their unit’s Mission Essential Task List (METL), but of their higher headquarters METL, and the most likely tactical

utilization of the unit. Commanders can then focus on those few METs. For instance, an Infantry company assigned to a combined arms battalion that is habitually tasked as the breach force may prioritize “Conduct Breaching Operations” (71-TS-2116) over other METs. In addition, units that focus on and master the basic, high payoff tasks (the “block and tackle” tasks), are often well positioned to gain and maintain proficiency across their METs.

Likewise, leaders must deliberately plan to train to master a task. This involves conducting multiple iterations of the same task during a training event (with changing conditions), as opposed to going from one task to another. For instance, a unit training on “Conduct Area Reconnaissance” could conduct the first iteration in daylight at half speed, the second in daylight at full speed, and the third during limited visibility. This allows Soldiers and leaders to develop ‘muscle memory’ of the task.

Another example is for the task to Enter and Clear a Room. A squad or fire team can practice this task multiple times at various locations (including barracks rooms), with little to no equipment. Later, they can execute the task at their Maneuver Training Center using simulators. The leader can change the enemy situation and the mission each time to add complexity. Finally, they can culminate the event with a blank and live fire on their installation range.

One Field Artillery unit senior leader stated, “We always do abbreviated training because the FA Battalion is a training aid for the maneuver battalions”. Therefore, FA units must be trained and certify quicker than the maneuver units certify so they can support maneuver CALFEXs. This faster paced training does not allow adequate time for task mastery.

Leaders must allow for, and utilize, time for retraining. The often-overlooked eighth step of the Eight Step Training Model is essential for building task mastery by allowing Soldiers to correct deficiencies while the task is fresh in their minds. Leaders often overlook retraining as they balance their most important non-Soldier resource: time. Or, Leaders and Soldiers may look at retraining as punishment for “failing” instead of trying to master that task. However, this does a disservice to the unit, as retraining time can be very effective in raising a unit’s proficiency on a task.

Recommendation: The FORSCOM Commanders FY 16 Training Guidance states, “Our goal is to strive for mastery-level proficiency of our essential tasks, at echelon, through multiple repetitions and multiple iterations of training events”.

With often limited time, leaders should prioritize which tasks (one to three) they will train to mastery, and where (and how much) they will assume risk. Commanders must manage time with expectations, and train according to their set priorities. One iteration of a task will never result in mastery of the task, or ‘muscle memory.’ Rather, units should repeatedly train on those tasks that they intend to master. This includes planning for, protecting and utilizing retraining time. Repetition, however, does not necessarily mean that units must conduct it multiple times within a matter of hours at the same location.

Best Practice: As one senior leader pointed out, “repetitions can be conducted in a simulator, such as the Combat Crew Tactical Trainer (CCTT)”. You can run a crew,

section, platoon, or company through multiple scenarios before they ever execute it live. These may occur weeks before a field training exercise (FTX); however, these repetitions allow the unit to be at a higher training level than if they had not occurred. Units have entered the live training at a higher level when training in simulators first.

Observation: Maintenance is having a huge impact on training.

Discussion: Maintenance is one of the top three issues that prevent units from leveraging their sparse training time. One Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) commander stated, “95% of the organizational energy is on maintenance right now, and although that may not be unusual in an ABCT, they have more on their plate that they should be doing as well”. Others in the organization said a major contributing factor was the “quick turn between returning from NTC and deploying”, which resulted in no time for maintenance after their NTC rotation.

The culture is also contributing to the maintenance issues. One Battalion Commander stated that Soldiers seemed to feel that “I just drive this thing, I don’t know how it works and someone else takes care of it”. During the I CORPS Stryker Assessment it was observed that there was a lack of “pride of ownership” and that the Strykers were “used like rental vehicles...driven hard, rarely maintained by the operator, and parked until they are needed again.”

A contributing factor to the culture issue described in the paragraph above is command emphasis. In some units, the command team is not present while command maintenance is occurring. The most common cause of this is other non-battle rhythm events that the command team are required to attend. Leaders not being present lead to subordinate leaders and Soldiers not placing the right amount of emphasis on the maintenance of their vehicles and equipment.

Many leaders felt that vehicle maintenance suffers due to high OPTEMPO. Leaders described being unable to get vehicles repaired, due to factors including lack of funding for parts, lack of mechanics, and lack of time to reset vehicles. The result was that the unit conducted missions with a small subset of the unit’s vehicles that were fully mission capable (FMC).

Another issue noted from the Stryker Assessment and our observations was that vehicle operators stop filling out 5988s when they recognized that nothing was being updated. This led to a misrepresentation of readiness within the unit.

Recommendation: Performing Maintenance to standard takes time, more time than units are currently being given. This problem, coupled with the other issues, creates an environment where the right people are not participating in maintenance. Command teams and subordinate leaders are not always present while maintenance is conducted for a variety of reasons, such as taskings and other battle rhythm events. If maintenance is the priority it should be given priority over everything else. Leaders must be present to ensure it is conducted to standard.

Best Practice: One battalion’s Forward Support Company embedded mechanics into the companies, beginning during home station training and onward into NTC, as opposed to ‘doctrinal’ approach of establishing maintenance points. This habitual relationship

resulted in mechanics fixing most tanks / BFVs on the spot / in the field, greatly reducing down time.

Best Practice: One unit implemented a course named “Motor Stables 101” for junior leaders. This course took place in the motor pool and the topics covered ranged from conducting a thorough PMCS of a piece of equipment, to pulling the pack from a vehicle, to performing maintenance on their 25mm gun.

Observation: Personnel turnover leads to training issues.

Discussion: Soldiers and Leaders consistently rate personnel turnover as one of the top three issues that affect Home Station Training. Leaders view the Sustainment Readiness Model personnel system as being “out of touch” with a unit’s deployment cycle. This is especially true when a unit redeploys from one mission and only has 14 months until the next deployment. The large amount of personnel turnover makes it difficult for Armored and Stryker Brigades to maintain qualified crews. Many times, requalification of crews occurs because someone in the crew received unforecasted reassignment orders. One battalion commander stated, “We didn’t like ARFORGEN when it was here, but now we understand why they did it that way”. Most think that if the “reset” phase was longer, the units could manage because they would have the right people for training.

Often times personnel will report to the unit after their combat training center (CTC) rotation. These Soldiers and leaders must then be rushed through training, if time is available, to try to “catch up” with the rest of the organization before deploying.

Recommendation: Human Resources Command should review the process for assigning personnel and attempt to increase the amount of notification time prior to reassignment of personnel. In the meantime, unit leadership can manage qualified crews at the battalion or squadron level.

Best Practice: One successful unit managed crews at the Squadron level to stabilize them thru their CTC rotation and subsequent deployment. All 1SGs and the CSM met and went through every crew, one at a time, to ensure stabilization. If one Troop needed a Gunner or BC and did not have anyone, the Squadron reassigned from a Troop that did. In the event a Soldier was promoted to a higher position and was part of a qualified crew, they reassigned the entire crew to maintain integrity. This technique drastically reduced the number of crews the unit had to requalify because of reassignments.

Observation: Management of taskings

Discussion: In conversations with leaders from squad to battalion, the single greatest obstacle to training is support taskings. Units differ in management of taskings; however, units that aggressively manage taskings down to the Soldier level seem to be better able to protect training

time and Soldier predictability. Tasking management is closely tied to training management, and leaders feel the two should be inseparable, although they frequently are not. Leaders described how last minute taskings frequently derailed planned training events, and the effects of a constantly changing training schedule due to external taskings.

The majority of the units interviewed stated that they received 50% or more of their taskings less than a week in advance. The remainder were received between 1-2 weeks out; few were received at T+6, and CDRs stated that getting even 72 hours notice is unusual. Training is not protected and Soldier predictability is non-existent, as the training schedule is never accurate and Soldiers are 'used to' being told of missions when showing up for work. CDRs expressed frustration at trying to plan training several weeks out in the system. One stated, "The further out you plan, the more unrealistic it is" that you will conduct the training.

The use of a training management cycle (red-amber-green, support-training, etc.) does help to manage training distractors. When a HQ adheres to a training management system, subordinate units at least know that dedicated training time is protected, and when they can expect taskings. Since BCTs deploy separate from and on different timelines than their division, it is often impossible for divisions to run a traditional cycle through brigades. To add to this, many of the external taskings can only be accomplished by a specific type of unit, or a specific rank, further complicating efforts to manage taskings.

This dynamic environment requires echelons above brigade (EAB) to be both more creative and more detailed in their approach to tasking management. Although a traditional red-amber-green cycle is no longer realistic, this does not mean that EABs cannot designate a main effort (for training) and a support unit (for taskings). This protects BCTs conducting intensive training, and gives predictability to the 'support' unit.

Further, although the red-amber-green cycle currently is no longer feasible at EAB due to many installations having BCTs deployed, it is still useful at lower echelons. For instance, when a Battalion runs a red-amber-green cycle, companies know and can prepare for taskings when generating their unit training schedules. This allows tasked companies to plan less intensive training during this period, which would have less of an impact if superseded by taskings.

Like maintenance, commanders at all levels must be involved in the tasking process. The tasking unit issues taskings with the signature of the commander, and directs a subordinate unit to accomplish a task. The assumption, especially when the tasking is within the lock-in period, is that the tasking commander has determined that the task to accomplish is more important than what the unit has previously scheduled. When this is a training event, the message sent to Soldiers is that support taskings are more important than unit training is, and planning is unimportant. A First Sergeant summed it up, "We are teaching future leaders bad habits – shortcuts, compressed training events, 'check the block' events and reduced maintenance in order to focus on taskings."

Recommendation: Commanders should manage taskings in the same manner as they manage training. This starts with planning both concurrently, using the same timelines for planning taskings as training, to minimize required changes to training and build unit and Soldier

predictability. Units should designate which subordinate is responsible for taskings, at a minimum six weeks out, as opposed to assigning taskings ad hoc as they arise, until they have to task the last subordinate element. Finally, commanders must proactively manage taskings, and be given the authority to refuse them, especially when they would affect already approved training events.

FORSCOM will issue guidance soon that requires all taskings to be published well in advance. This should protect units from last minute taskings.

Installations should revisit their tasking requirements. The number of personnel required will vary from post to post, but commanders should make every effort to reduce unnecessary requirements.

Best Practice: One battery commander stated that he was successful in managing to train individuals and crews, even when heavily tasked, “as long as the taskings were planned in advance”. His unit achieved this by purposely over-training the required number in whatever certification was required for the tasking (gate guard, etc.) and then meticulously managing the tasked population to ensure that a minimum organic element (crew) was available to train. Although it was not much, it allowed the unit to jump start training during allocated field time. Although the battery had to retrain some individual crew tasks, the unit could quickly begin collective training, while other batteries might have had to start at the individual/crew level. When taskings were not forecast out (‘hey you’ taskings) was when training suffered.

Of course, this is situation dependent, and should be a prioritization decision by a commander. Just as commanders prioritize which tasks to train, they should also prioritize taskings – both which ones are necessary and which should not be done. One Battalion Commander phrased it well by saying “commanders are paid to decide what a unit does or does not do.”

Observation: Executing mission support taskings as training events.

Discussion: Multiple sustainment leaders described conducting routine mission support tasks as training events. For instance, if a Forward Support Company’s (FSC’s) distro platoon were delivering fuel to a supported unit, the FSC would conduct the task as a tactical mission. This does take command emphasis, as it is ‘easier’ to just conduct a non-tactical movement on a known route. However, taking advantage of any support tasking as a training event allows the unit to create training time. This is most effective when the support task is already one of the unit’s METL tasks. Then, leaders need only to add the conditions to turn the task into a training event.

This technique can be very effective in teaching individual and leader skills. Although not all conditions can always be added (i.e. limited visibility or enemy contact), routine tasks conducted

under otherwise tactical conditions allow Soldiers and leaders to become familiar with unit SOPs. Thus, the unit requires less time to move into collective training under combat conditions.

Recommendation: Commanders should look to use any mission as a training event. Leaders can add elements to routine operations to make them more tactical – for instance, the use of tactical radios, operations orders briefs, sand tables, adding graphic control measures (check points, phase lines) to routes.

Best Practice: When executing routine taskings that are also a unit’s wartime mission, leaders should write an OPOD and give to their subordinates so they can go through their troop leading procedures as well.

Observation: Mission Command

Discussion: The philosophy of Mission Command charges Commanders to give intent, guidance and endstate to subordinates, and allow them to formulate plans and take disciplined initiative to achieve the desired endstate. This philosophy can apply equally well to training as it does to combat operations. The idea is that instead of planning and executing all training events at a higher echelon, commanders should charge subordinates with training one level down and evaluating two levels down.

This is not a new Army concept; however, in conversations with leaders, it is an often-violated one. Commanders violate it when Brigades train and evaluate squad situations training exercise (STX) lanes or platoon live fire events. The effect of this is to rob junior leaders of the experience of planning a training event, and from subordinate commanders the ability to evaluate their units. It hurts the development of agile and adaptive leaders, as these leaders no longer have to think through the planning of a training event – instead, they just show up. In addition, it stifles the spirit of mission command throughout the unit.

None of this is intentional. In speaking to senior leaders, when Commanders consolidate training, they view it as unavoidable, usually due to resourcing constraints (especially planning time). In a condensed timeline, when units are moving from one event to the next in order to meet training objectives, it is often easier for staffs at battalion or brigade level to plan and resource training events, even down to levels where they wouldn’t normally do so (such as battalions conducting squad training events). Commanders see this as taking the workload off subordinate units and allowing them to focus on executing the training events.

However, the process of planning, resourcing, executing and evaluating training should not be undervalued. By powering down training to the doctrinally correct level, commanders can turn training from ‘top-down’ training pushed from higher, to ‘bottom up’ training, where training is refined at the lowest level to address individual shortcomings. Additionally, planning training events is excellent leader development, and ensures that these leaders have an understanding of training management as they progress to higher positions.

Recommendation: Commanders should make every attempt to keep training at the right level. Although it may be necessary for commanders to elevate planning and execution of events at a higher level (due to time or other resource constraints), doing so should be a deliberate act.

Allowing subordinate leaders to plan, resource, execute, and evaluate training is more than just giving them the task. Leader must empower their subordinate leaders to make decisions (and seek guidance) within the higher commander's intent, resource them to conduct the training, and hold them accountable for the execution of the training.

Observation: Simulators are only as useful as how well they model reality and leader involvement.

Discussion: Overall, leaders had a positive view of many of the combat simulators available to them, such as the Engagement Skills Trainer (EST) and Close Combat Tactical Trainer (CCTT). The difference between a successful simulator and one that leaders do not like is in how closely the simulator models reality. For instance, a Battalion Command Sergeant Major gave praise to the EST and the Paladin simulator, because both act as a rehearsal of a future live event.

The Paladin simulator takes a crew through all steps of loading and firing the Paladin, including handling rounds, charges and fuses, and allows leaders to catch and correct mistakes before the crew is handling live ammunition. It also simulates the recoil of firing a Paladin; however, the system takes so long to reset between firing that it was difficult for crews to train on rapid firing. Another issue identified for the Paladin simulator was unavailability due to maintenance downtime. Because of these challenges, leaders preferred to train their crews on their actual Paladins, using the onboard training program. This method allows for a more realistic rate of fire, at the cost of only the lack of recoil. Likewise, the EST allows Soldiers to gain familiarity with range procedures and the sequence of fire, acting as a rehearsal.

Leaders have mixed feelings of the value of VBS3. Some leaders do not like it because it takes too long to set up and learn how to control it, based upon the "right out of the box" configuration. The system is not set up to model a Soldier's fighting load or equipment. Leaders state that the time used to set up and learn VBS3 can be better used conducting live, hands on training.

The VBS3 can be utilized to replicate known terrain or buildings. This capability can assist all units and agencies, especially first responders to an active shooter event. One installation had a requirement to conduct active shooter training in the event of an incident at one of the schools on the base. Prior to actually going to the school, the first responders rehearsed on an exact replicated model in VBS3. Thus reducing the amount of time needed for familiarizing themselves at the actual building. This proved effective because now the team can revisit this scenario at any time in VBS3.

Leaders also stated that units could use simulators to conduct training while simultaneously reducing the strain on Soldiers and equipment. The CCTT, for instance, allows armor units up to

company/troop level to conduct force on force training (against a virtual OPFOR), without having to deploy to a field site, set up MILES, and expend fuel. Overall, simulators can help build proficiency prior to major training events, without ‘burning out’ Soldiers and placing additional stress on Families.

The most successful units had an observer/facilitator who provided feedback to the organization. This helps by letting the leader participate in the exercise while still being responsible for the training. The observer/facilitator does not “validate” the element being trained, but rather provides observations from an external source who understands what was supposed to happen and what actually happened. An example of this was a Bradley section training in the CCTT. A field grade officer from the BCT sat outside of the simulators and watched the actions on a computer screen. After the exercise was over the observer/facilitator consulted with the section leader and passed on their observations. The section leader then conducted an AAR with the section.

Recommendation: Sustain the use of simulators as a rehearsal. Ensure that all simulators model reality as closely as possible.

Best Practice: The Maneuver Training Center at Ft. Riley, KS. has adapted the VBS3 with “X-box” type controllers that Soldiers are more familiar with, thus drastically reducing the time required to learn how to use the system. Our collection team observed a squad go from initial instruction to moving their avatar in a simulator in less than 15 minutes. After thirty minutes of running through an individual training scenario, they were ready for a squad mission.

Consider using the Ft. Riley best practice of substituting use of the keyboard and mouse for maneuvering avatar for the use of a more familiar game controller.

Consider providing an observer/facilitator who can observe from outside of a simulator and see the entire event. This will enhance the AAR by providing the extra set of eyes that can see the big picture.

Visit the [MilGaming](#) forum on milBook to share best practices and lessons learned.

For additional scenarios and updates for [VBS3](#) visit the milGaming repository.

Observation: Mission Essential Task (MET) crosswalks are critical for leaders to determine high payoff training tasks and to allow subordinate leaders to prepare effectively for collective training events.

Discussion: A MET crosswalk is a matrix that relates mission essential tasks to supporting collective and individual tasks. The crosswalk is an old but simple method for identifying high payoff tasks, which are tasks that support more than one MET. In talking to leaders, a thorough MET crosswalk was a useful tool for determining which tasks to train on, especially with limited time to train individual tasks.

Additionally, the MET crosswalk is useful when rehearsing for tactical operation. A platoon leader discussed how he and his platoon sergeant used their MET crosswalk to determine key tasks to rehearse prior to conducting an Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise (EDRE). Due in part to this reference, the platoon was able to conduct the exercise to standard, despite not having trained collectively on the task prior to the EDRE.

Recommendation: Leaders should continue to utilize MET crosswalks. Current tools, including the Army Universal Task List (AUTL) and the [Combined Arms Training Strategy](#) (CATS), are useful in building a crosswalk, but cannot replace it. In addition, leaders should not undervalue the process of building a MET crosswalk at platoon and company level, as this process yields insight into both training and task requirements. This site will allow the user to enter the proponent type and then search for a task, for example, “Establish a Perimeter Defense”. The site will display the Task, Condition, and Standard for that task, along with all of the performance steps and supporting individual and collective tasks.

Observation: Sergeants Time Training as Leader Development

Discussion: Senior leaders have often viewed Sergeants Time Training (STT) as an opportunity for junior NCOs to train Soldier on individual and small unit tasks. STT used to be a protected training event, its time untouchable. Recently, however, leaders across units indicate that STT is no longer viewed as necessary for developing Soldier skills, and it’s time is being condensed or eliminated to make way for competing demands. Commanders often justify this as a necessity, and feel that they can accomplish training on Soldier skills through other events.

However, this changes when leaders view STT primarily as a leader development tool. Multiple Battalion Commanders and Command Sergeants Major described utilizing STT as their primary leader development program. Through planning, preparing and executing STT, junior NCOs learn how to utilize the 8-step training model to plan training events; how to request resources such as land, ammunition and training aids; and how to identify critical supporting individual and small unit tasks that support the company Mission Essential Task List (METL).

This approach also allows training to be conducted bottom-up instead of directed top-down. Under this system, Commanders give company leadership a protected block of time for STT. With their knowledge of upcoming collective training events, company command teams can then give guidance to their NCOs, who will identify the supporting tasks to train. This allows the leaders at the tip of the spear – platoon sergeants, squad and team leaders – to assess their training shortfalls, build training plans to address them, and plan, prepare and execute the training. These leaders are then empowered with ownership of the training event. This system helps to build competent and confident NCOs who are skilled at training and knowledgeable of how their Soldiers learn.

The key to this approach is that the time must be protected, and STT must be a deliberate effort. Battalions must protect STT, which must be a full day and not merely 30 minutes or an hour after PT. Further, Commanders must minimize distractors from the actual planning and

execution of STT, to allow leaders to concentrate fully on the training event. These distractors can include visitor books / briefings, “pretty butcher boards,” and anything else that does not add to the training outcome.

According to several senior officers “all training is leader development training”. One CSM stated that “Junior leaders are better today [than before] in many ways; they are able to operate independently without oversight. However, many have lost the art of training Soldiers. Sergeants Time Training (STT) is a leader development tool which teaches everything in training – PCI/PCCs, rehearsals, planning, resourcing, identifying tasks to train”.

A number of the units visited established “job books” which contained the tasks that a leader or Soldier should be able to accomplish before moving on to the next leadership level. The topics covered were tactical and administrative tasks, including maintenance both in the field and in garrison.

Recommendation: Commanders and Sergeants Major should view Sergeants Time Training not only as a training event for individual and small team tasks, but also as a foundation of a leader development program. Commanders should protect STT and minimize distractors. Commanders should delegate the identification of tasks to train to the lowest level leadership, with the guidance that the tasks must be linked to upcoming collective training events. Finally, tasks must be included on the training schedule so Soldiers can prepare for the training.

STT can be used as a tool for leader development. STT, with tasks directly linked to upcoming collective training, should be one of the commander’s top priorities, to be protected at the command level. STT trains NCOs on the 8-step training model, how to resource training, how to identify supporting individual and crew/team tasks, and gives CDRs/1SG the ability to mission command their units by empowering NCOs. STT helps grow competent NCOs that understand not only how to train, but how individual tasks support collective tasks. One successful battalion stated they use STT and job books as main driver of leader development.

Best Practice: One unit used NCOPD sessions to teach junior NCOs how to select high payoff tasks that support multiple collective tasks. They continued their sessions with how to follow the 8-step training model to prepare for training, to include certification by their PSG as a trainer for that particular task. The Company Commander and 1SG conducted spot checks during the entire process. Since the company established the standard and trained the leaders, STT has improved and junior leaders are more confident in their ability to train their Soldiers. This also led to Soldiers having more confidence in their leaders.

Observation: Quantity of AR 350-1 training requirements and online training.

Discussion: Many leaders interviewed stated that the sheer magnitude of mandatory training per AR 350-1, and online training requirements, were impossible to complete while preparing units for a Decisive Action Training Environment, especially under a condensed schedule. Faced with

this, many commanders have elected to assume risk by not completing 350-1 requirements. Just as Commanders determine priorities in METL training, Commanders also should prioritize administrative training requirements.

Many leaders, especially noncommissioned officers, lamented the Army's reliance on online training. Although online training is supposedly easier to facilitate, in reality it poses a challenge to leaders, as unit's computer resources are often limited. Most units do not have a computer lab where dozens of Soldiers can complete online requirements. This forces leaders to find outside alternatives to get their Soldiers to complete requirements, including education centers, libraries and personal computers in Soldiers rooms. Since most online training is CAC enabled, this adds an additional obstacle to completion. Some units have purchased CAC readers to sign out to Soldiers so they can complete online training during non-duty hours.

Leaders further expressed their concern that online training further takes the NCO leader away from training Soldiers. One 1SG put it "instead of putting the Soldiers in front of an NCO to train them, we put the Soldiers in front of a computer to train them."

Recommendation: Commanders should be empowered to prioritize 350-1 training requirements along with other METL training, and given the latitude to accept risk in not training certain areas. This is akin to how Commanders accept risk in not training, or under training, some METL tasks in order to build mastery at others, and how they arrive at these decisions through deliberate risk analysis and dialog with senior commanders.

The Department of the Army is in the process of reducing the required tasks and empowering commanders to make the decision of the type and frequency of non-mission essential training to conduct.

Observation: Commanders must understand how their higher HQ will employ their unit tactically in order to conduct the most effective training.

Discussion: Several interviews with company grade leaders showed that units where the Commander understood how their battalion would tactically employ their company were able to more effectively train and were successful during CTC rotations. While this appears to be common sense, the level of understanding went beyond understanding just the unit's Mission Essential Task List (METL) tasks and the supporting doctrine.

For example, a Paladin battery commander described how his knowledge of how the FA battalion would utilize self-propelled artillery to support a fast moving mechanized fight allowed him to better train his battery. This is significant as the Field Artillery Battalion and Brigade Combat Team had modified FA doctrine to take advantage of the increased mobility of the Paladin system. Therefore, simply understanding the doctrinal tasks that made up his battery's METL was no longer sufficient. Rather, he had to understand how the BN and BDE expected him to execute those tasks to best support the BCT's fight. This understanding allowed him to develop a training strategy for his battery that emphasized mobility, decentralized control, and

rapid displacement from firing positions. All during periods of limited visibility. Due to this emphasis during training, the battery was very successful during an NTC rotation.

An interview with another commander yielded similar insights. The unit's METL tasks were doctrinal and derived from the Army Universal Task List. However, no field manual describes the methods the unit utilized. Rather, it was a method which 'made sense' in the context of the higher unit's METL. Knowing this context and having the methods already developed allowed the commander to successfully train her unit. The unit then could truly train as it would fight, even without participation of the higher echelon in the training event.

Recommendation: Commanders at all levels must understand how their METL tasks nest into their higher echelon METL tasks, just as it is critical to understand the mission and commander's intent two levels up. Units should codify how they will conduct operations (to the extent possible) into SOPs, so that their subordinate units can train as they fight. This knowledge is a pre-requisite for commanders to be able to plan realistic training for their units.

Observation: Training Management is a challenge in the current operating environment.

Discussion: There is a diminished institutional understanding of the application of unit training management doctrine as a result of an ARFORGEN driven training process. A shift in training doctrine occurred with the publication of ADP/ADRP 7.0; however, no training management doctrine is contained in these two publications.

Some commanders and leaders viewed training meetings as an "academic exercise", done "only because they are mandated, but no one believes in them". Instead, daily planning is done off the tasking order on a day-to-day basis.

Less than 50% of the company commanders interviewed published training schedules. Instead, they published training calendars with general information. This frustrates the subordinate leaders and Soldiers and affords little predictability to Soldiers in what their day entails.

The overwhelming majority of commanders expressed their dissatisfaction with the Digital Training Management System (DTMS). DTMS is not user friendly. The online training Soldiers complete are not linked to DTMS, which means their completion certificates must be manually uploaded into the system. This takes a lot of time from training rooms. "It's not like the old days where a commander could sign a memo saying all of his Soldiers had completed the training". What was trumpeted as a "one stop shop for training management" really is not.

Recommendation: All Professional Military Education (PME) courses should place more importance on training management. With the new Objective-T, the Army is making unit training ratings more objective and attempting to provide commanders with more training time for their units. Commanders must maximize this additional time to ensure that units are ready to execute their mission. Leaders at all levels should take advantage of the [Integrated Training Environment](#) website. This site provides best practices and links to resources that enable leaders to improve training effectiveness.

Company Commanders should take advantage of online training available in the DTMS Knowledge Base repository. At this site you can view videos of instruction, conduct practical exercises, download the DTMS user manual, and see other units' Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for DTMS.

Observation: Commanders who understand their BCT Commander's intent are better able to focus their training efforts.

Discussion: One Battalion Commander stated that the most important piece to the unit's train up for NTC was understanding the BCT Commander's intent on the level of training proficiency he expected (i.e., force on force, live fires, CALFEX, etc.). It seemed that the commander's intent was initially not well communicated, leading several battalions to train in the 'wrong direction' – focusing on the wrong skills.

BNs whose commanders sought out and clarified the BDE Commander's intent made good use of the two months to train required supporting collective and individual tasks for the BDE training events. Other battalions trained primarily on COIN tasks.

Recommendation: Commanders at all levels must ensure that subordinate commanders two levels down understand their intent. Subordinates determine how to achieve that commander's intent. Initiative and innovation is encouraged to achieve the standards and meet the training objectives. A clear intent will allow subordinates to determine the collective tasks the unit must be able to perform. According to ADRP 7-0, [understanding the commander's intent] "allows the unit to focus on training the few collective tasks that will best prepare it and its leaders to accomplish a mission or adapt to the requirements of a contingency mission".

Observation: Doctrine needs to be updated and/or clarified.

Discussion: A number of mid-level and junior leaders stated that updates to doctrine are needed to capture the realities of the current environment. The examples given were spread across the proponents. Specific observations were:

- ADRP 7-0 is confusing because it lists training models such as the eight-step training model as a "guide, and not lock-step processes that can be useful, but they are, effectively, just modifications of either the MDMP or TLP".
- The Combined Arms Training Strategy (CATS) has timelines on how much time it takes to complete training on a task, but in reality, units are not given that amount of time because of the compressed training cycle.
- There is a lack of common understanding of the roles/capabilities/ and use of the Brigade Engineer Battalion (BEB) throughout the Army.

- Multiple Field Artillery (FA) commanders stated that the minimum training required of a battery was insufficient to guarantee success. Gunnery tables were frequently shot from a known, surveyed location under ideal conditions.
- Current FA doctrine is based entirely on pre-digital artillery and is not suited for self-propelled howitzers.
- Multiple leaders requested that the Centers of Excellence (COEs) who are proponents for enablers, write example annexes for a Division and CORPS orders so they “know what right looks like” when participating in a CPX/WFX.

Recommendation: Proponents should review current doctrine and update as required and produce gap-filling products to fill the need until doctrine can be updated. The Center for Army Lessons Learned published a handbook on the [BEB](#) that units may find helpful.

Update the CATS to reflect reality, or, commanders allow units the time allocated in CATS to conduct training to standard.

Observation: Commanders must synchronize the People, Training, and Resources to set the conditions for effective training to occur.

Discussion: Synchronizing people, training, and resources takes more than just the efforts of the commander. It takes Human Resources Command and those that are fielding units new equipment, or providing training. This is not a new issue, but is exacerbated by the downsizing of the Army and continuous deployments across the world. The goal is always to get the right people to train on the right equipment at the right time. This sounds as difficult as it actually is. However, some instances are in the control of those who will read this report. Some examples are:

- A BCT S3 felt like his Leader Training Program was too close to the NTC rotation, so although they learned a lot of lessons / best practices at LTP, they had no time to train their units on them prior to NTC.
- A squadron is ‘bypassing’ section level training due to lack of time in current NTC train up.
- Because of the condensed timeline, there is very little (2 weeks) time given to Battery commanders. CDR acknowledges this is ‘unacceptable’ but does not see a way around it. ‘Condensed timelines force BDE and BN CDRs to micromanage’.
- A BN was forced to send 25% of mechanics to a month long class on a piece of equipment that the BN does not have and will not have for 2-3 years because it was a DA requirement. This is having an adverse impact on the BN’s effort to get equipment maintenance conducted, and will have no positive impact on the BN/BDE, but the unit was required to comply anyway. CDR suspects it was ‘to feed a contract’.
- The quick turn between returning from NTC and deploying meant that there was no time for maintenance after NTC. Having a longer turn means that the unit could perform the

required maintenance on their vehicles and bring them to a fully mission capable (FMC) standard before deploying. Because that did not occur, and the maintenance was not conducted during the deployment (fleet was left behind), the unit is scrambling to get all vehicles back to FMC.

Recommendation: Synchronizing these three resources is a difficult task that takes foresight and assistance from outside agencies. However, empowering junior leaders to make decisions and recommendations to achieve the commander's intent will greatly assist a unit to ensure the right people are trained at the right time.

Observation: Training area and range challenges.

Discussion: This is a two-part discussion, one for ranges and one for training areas.

Ranges: Soldiers and Leaders from all of the units interviewed had plenty to say about training areas and ranges at each of the posts visited. Most of them described the mounted maneuver ranges as "canned" because they are restricted to driving down a range road and know from where they will engage targets. They generally like the feedback and targetry however.

Many of the Leaders expressed the opinion that range control is an agency that must be worked around, rather than with. Range Control should never say "you can't do that", but rather, "here's how we can help you do that better". The one location where this perceived attitude was the exception renamed their Range Control to Range Operations. Although this seems like a minor change, it seemed to make a huge impact on how the new Range Operations viewed their supporting role. Leaders of that post noticed an almost immediate change as well.

According to one installation's Director of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, "we build great ranges but don't maintain them well". This is a significant issue for Installation Management Command.

Range utilization is also an issue. A Corps Chief of Training stated that he believed the "no-show" rate for ranges on his installation was at or below 10%, which was down from a high of 25%. Leaders at the unit level concurred; however, they stated that the "no-show" rate was artificially low. Because a "no-show" rate includes cancellation within 14 days, most units will have an NCO sign for, open and close a range or training facility within an hour to avoid being a "no-show". The reason given for not being able to conduct the range was last minute taskings, which was discussed in an earlier observation.

Several company commanders questioned why they have to forecast ammunition 90 days out, but land 60 days out, then finally confirm land 30 days out. If they do not get the range or land and turn the ammunition back in, they cannot use it for 60 additional days.

Training Areas: Only two issues were identified concerning training areas. Commanders on one installation stated that there is only one training area to conduct a platoon and company CALFEX, let alone conduct Battalion and Brigade operations with all enablers.

The second issue was more widespread. That issue was the limited amount of land and airspace to effectively train Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) operators. The areas the UAS can operate were not suitable maneuver areas. This challenge frequently prevented commanders from integrating UAS assets into maneuver training.

Recommendations: There is a balancing that must be struck between state of the art technology that provides feedback to units on ranges and freedom to maneuver to a firing position that the crew selects. One unit overcame this by creating a maneuver live fire range on land near the impact area where vehicles could maneuver freely. This was a labor intensive process, but the Soldiers and Leaders of the unit thought it was a great training event.

The lack of maneuver space is an issue that will not be solved anytime soon. Units must incorporate Live, Virtual, Constructive-Integrating Architecture in their maneuver training.

Observation: Ammunition challenges.

Discussion: Many Leaders mentioned the Standards in Training Commission (STRAC) as a limitation to training. Leaders described how there was only enough ammunition allocated for qualification of their weapons systems.

A separate issue is the new 5.56 mm round cannot be fired in the shoot houses because of the higher muzzle velocity and increased range. Units can overcome this issue by using the older ammunition, which is still available, until shoot houses can be reinforced to handle the new ammunition.

Recommendation: Commanders need to follow the procedures outlined in DA PAM 350-38, which states “each year, unit commanders use the approved standards and strategies in [this pamphlet] to determine their training ammunition requirements for the following year’s training events. Total Ammunition Management Information System (TAMIS) is used by units to review, validate, and submit their ammunition requirements to G-3”.

Units should also request the older 5.56 mm round until shoot-houses are reinforced to provide the right amount of protection.

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