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Should Commander's Time be Increased
in Army Training Programs?

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PREFACE

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Appreciation is extended to Colonel C. B. Smith, 3rd Infantry Division; Lt. Colonel C. W. Sample, 3rd Infantry Division; and the student officers of Infantry Officers Advanced Course Class Number 3, 1957, all of whom assisted the author in his analysis of the subject by conveying the benefit of their experience in various command and staff assignments.

The point of view expressed in this paper is that of the author and not necessarily that of the United States Army Infantry School or the United States Army.

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INTRODUCTION

The object of this monograph is to determine whether or not commander's time should be increased in Army Training Programs. For purposes of this paper, the scope will be limited to battle group level with emphasis placed on the rifle company. Army Training Program (ATP) 7-200 for Infantry Rifle Company and Airborne Rifle Company, dated 21 April 1954, will be used as a foundation for this paper.

The term "commander's time" is defined in ATP 7-200 as "that time used to compensate for interruptions, to bring units up to standard, to provide refresher training, or to introduce features considered essential, for example, organized athletics, special inspections, and special ceremonies".

The following assumptions will be made to place us on common ground: that the degree of efficiency of all company commanders is average; that the majority of training is being conducted by the unit, not committee system; and that special situations do not exist that make it necessary to modify the ATP.

Throughout this paper, reference will be made to the Advanced 3 questionnaire. This questionnaire was prepared and disseminated to the U. S. Army student officers attending the Advanced Infantry Course. It is felt by the author that this cross section of junior officers embodies a tremendous amount of command experience at company level and is indicative of the feeling among company grade officers toward the subject of commander's time.

DISCUSSION

The meaning of the term "commander's time" is understood by most officers but is, without reservation, the most misused and violated subject in the entire Army Training Program (ATP).

Originally intended as a cushion or period wherein the commander could emphasize required subjects, introduce new ones, or in general use as he saw fit, we now find that it is the "catchall" or crutch used from division on down the ladder. Instead of combat formations, we find it used for police of the reservation; and in place of concealment and camouflage, we find our troops cutting grass and painting rooms.

The training objectives as listed in ATP 7-200 for advanced individual and basic unit phases are "to provide additional training to qualify the individual for job performance in functions common to the unit and his Table of Organization and Equipment assignment" and "to produce a unit capable of functioning as a team and qualified to perform its operational mission".

To achieve these training objectives requires time, satisfactory instruction and instructors, adequate supervision, a minimum of interference, and the desire of the individual to learn. Much has to be accomplished in the few short weeks allotted to the advanced individual and basic unit training phases; and to teach an individual adequately the basic fundamentals of soldiering, we find a great need for conscientious use of commander's time, for it is here where the success or failure of a unit can often be attributed. The ATP does not possess the flexibility required of our modern-day Army in that allowances are not made for the numerous demands made of a unit, and in the end it is

commander's time that is utilized for the majority of our parades and miscellaneous requirements.

It is felt by the author that a great deal of dissension among unit commanders and higher headquarters could be eliminated if commander's time could be used as it was originally intended. Each faction desires to control the lion's share of this time, and the situation has not seemed to improve through the years. The majority of company commanders feel that they are in the best position to determine the capabilities and limitations of their units, and as a result they should have the authority to utilize commander's time in applying whatever additional training their unit requires, whenever they feel it is needed. It appears that most headquarters do not agree, for this occurs in few units.

In no two units in which the author has served has commander's time been used in the same manner. In the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment in late 1949 and early 1950, we were progressing from the advanced individual to the basic unit training phase, two periods that required a great deal of latitude in the use of the unit commander's time, for each week we were receiving filler personnel both out of basic training and Table of Organization and Equipment units, some of whom had a working knowledge of basic soldiering but the majority of whom were comparatively green. This necessitated a great deal of additional training beyond that which was scheduled by battalion; and due to the fact that battalion so heavily infringed on commander's time, we had to utilize weekends to prepare our companies for the forthcoming company tests.

Had we been able to schedule at least sixty per cent of commander's time at company level, the weekend instruction would not have been necessary and morale would have considerably increased. By comparison, the 1st Infantry Division during occupation duty in Germany in 1953 and 1954, was more liberal with commander's time at company level; and as a result the battalion in which I served had the highest morale and was the most efficient unit both in garrison and field that I have ever had the pleasure of serving with.

Is the excessive use of commander's time by higher headquarters an indication of a lack of confidence in junior leaders? Or is it because too many small unit commanders do not judiciously utilize it? Is this the primary cause of most of our training problems in the Army today? To determine the facts we must investigate each facet separately.

Should commander's time be increased in the ATP's? Lt. Col. C. W. Sample stated, "The company commander has been made responsible for so many additional projects that he has little time to emphasize those subjects in which training is weak. He should be relieved of many of those projects and granted additional commander's time to devote to the training of his unit for combat." (Annex B)

Sixty-three per cent of the officers indicated on the Advanced 3 questionnaire that the time should be increased. (Annex A)

Many officers whom I spoke to felt that by increasing the hours more time would be made available by higher headquarters at company level; while others felt that an increase of commander's time would just give higher headquarters more hours, the use of which they would dictate.

In the combined advanced individual and basic unit training phases, a total of 588 hours is allocated to cover the multitude of subjects required by ATP 7-200; of this total, 101 hours are designated as "commander's time".

Obviously the personnel at Department of the Army who were responsible for the editing and publishing of ATP 7-200 felt that commander's time was important, for it encompasses approximately 18% of the total hours allocated to the two training phases.

If the time is to be increased, it will of necessity require elimination of some subjects or a reduction of total hours of specific subjects. Another possibility would be the integration of applicable subjects. There is no reason why we could not integrate "Support of an Advance Guard", "Attack and Reorganization", "Defense", "Daylight Withdrawal", and "Delaying Action", in our platoon and company level problems,

thereby providing many additional hours for commander's time.

Colonel C. B. Smith stated, "There is no objection to reducing the number of hours of every subject providing the objectives are attained. Any savings made in the number of hours would be considered commander's time." He further stated: "The Army Training Programs are basically sound; and, depending upon the unit, any necessary modification could be made locally by the commander." (Annex C)

Lt. Col. C. W. Sample said, "Some subjects can be omitted completely. We are teaching our soldiers too much, too fast. We try to make a polished soldier out of a recruit in sixteen weeks, and this is impossible. . . . Some of this training can be given at a later date after he has mastered the fundamentals of soldiering." (Annex B)

If commander's time is to be increased, the author feels the solution lies not in the elimination of any subject, but in integration during training phases or in the extension of the training programs.

Should commander's time be decreased? Thirty-seven per cent of the Advanced 3 questionnaires indicated that it should remain the same. None of the questionnaires reflected a recommendation to decrease the time.

Colonel C. B. Smith felt "that the time was about right." (Annex C)

In the opinion of the author, we definitely should not decrease commander's time, for we junior officers have lost enough prestige without aggravating the situation.

Would the average company commander properly utilize additional time? The Advanced 3 questionnaire indicated the following: of the 63% who felt commander's time should be increased, 100% felt additional time would be properly utilized; of the 37% who felt it should remain the same, 53% were of the opinion that it would not be used properly, 37% felt it would, and 10% had no opinion. (Annex A)

Lt. Col. C. W. Sample stated that "most commanders would utilize it to a beneficial degree, but that the company commander should keep higher headquarters informed to the extent that it would in no manner limit their freedom of initiative". (Annex B)

Colonel C. B. Smith stated, "Most commanders would use any increased time to the best advantage and increase their units' efficiency." (Annex C)

It is the author's opinion that the vast majority of company commanders would properly use any increased commander's time, and a smoothly functioning, well-trained unit would in most cases be the end result. Battle group should offer guidance and demonstrate limited supervision. A possible solution to insure maximum utilization and compatibility at all levels would be for battle group to send each company commander a partially completed draft copy of the weekly training schedule, listing the necessary information as to mandatory subjects, training areas, parades and the like, and require each company commander to complete the draft indicating how he intends to use the commander's time available for that week.

If any changes were required by battle group, the company commander would be notified then, not when the training schedule was published. This would permit higher headquarters to keep their finger on the training pulse, keep them informed, and allow them to exercise necessary control. The company commanders would still be able to exercise their initiative, command and train their companies, and their prerogatives would not be encroached upon.

Will the standards of training be raised if the commander is given more time to utilize as he sees fit? Lt. Col. C. W. Sample stated, "The standards of training at company level should naturally be extremely high. To insure this, the maximum degree of cooperation and minimum degree of essential supervision must exist between the battle group and the company." (Annex B)

We will always have a few company commanders who will settle for mediocre efficiency, but the remainder can not be penalized because of those few. The majority would certainly capitalize on any additional time, and the standards could only go one way -- up.

To what extent should higher headquarters dictate the use of commander's time? Lt. Col. C. W. Sample stated, "Not over 25%, this percentage

to be used to conduct special training like combined arms. The advent of the ROCID concept has greatly increased the company commander's responsibilities. The battle group will be more widely dispersed and the companies operating on a more independent basis. This will call for increased initiative on the part of the unit commanders and the ability to operate independently. We must give the company back to the company commander if we expect him to obtain the desired results in combat." (Annex B)

Colonel C. B. Smith stated, "Battle group should let the company commander dictate the use of this time as much as possible, probably 75% to 80% of the time". (Annex C)

The breakdown on the Advanced 3 questionnaire answers to this question is as follows: of the 63% who felt commander's time should be increased, 32% felt that battle group should not dictate the use of any of this time; 39% thought it should control 25% of the time; 7% were in favor of a 50% controlling factor by battle group; 3% were for a 75% factor; and the remaining 19% felt it should be controlled only when necessary or required by higher headquarters.

The 37% faction, who felt commander's time should not be increased, voted this way: 42% stated battle group should dictate none of the time; 25% favored a 25% control; 16% were in favor of a minimum amount; 7% went all the way and indicated a 100% controlling factor; and 10% voiced no opinion. (Annex A)

The author feels that battle group should control no more than 25% of commander's time. This time would be used for battle group level inspections, parades, re-training, combined arms, ceremonies, or in whatever manner the commander decided.

The 75% allotted to the company commander must cover a multitude of subjects and considerations. Probably the most important is re-training; if the commander is not satisfied with the degree of efficiency of his unit in a particular phase of training, or if he feels that some individuals require additional instruction, then he has but one recourse

and that is to go over that particular phase of instruction again. No allowance is made in the ATP for this, so the only source is the commander's time block.

Another consideration for which the ATP makes no provision is make-up training. Here the commander must train those personnel who normally through administrative requirements such as guard, kitchen police and the like, missed a portion of the training phase. Any commander worth his salt, who desires to have a proficient unit must go back and pick up those personnel and present them the opportunity to catch up with the remainder of the company. Again, this time must come out of the commander's time block.

In considering specialist training, normally the companies will obtain sufficient quotas or have enough school-trained personnel to form a nucleus from which instructors can be drawn to instruct in such subjects as CBR, Communications, Fire Direction Procedures, and the like; for seldom if ever will a company have enough school-trained specialists to fill all authorized slots. This again is another consideration the company commander must keep in mind when he schedules his allocation of commander's time.

Care and maintenance of organizational clothing and equipment will also take a fair share of commander's time. Certainly it is a consideration the commander cannot overlook. Often the care and maintenance periods are misused: instead of the individuals taking care of the company's equipment, they generally are permitted to look after their own interests, the primary reason being that the company has not been granted sufficient time to cover this requirement. A sufficient number of hours that the commander can call his own would cover the items discussed and still provide adequate time wherein the company commander could provide his men with the special free time needed to care for those special problems that for the individuals concerned are the most pressing problems in sight.

The key to this complex problem is not to create additional command-

er's time, but to place the majority of the presently allocated time in the hands of the individual who can insure that the most beneficial utilization will result -- the company commander.

CONCLUSION

Commander's time should not be increased, but the allotted time judiciously controlled by giving the company commander a mission type directive and proper command guidance. An average unit commander will produce a far better company under these circumstances than an outstanding commanding officer who has been given no latitude in the accomplishment of his training objectives.

With the advent of nuclear weapons and the potential wide dispersion of units in combat, the initiative, knowledge and sound judgment required of a unit commander will be more pronounced than ever before. To fight his unit effectively, he must realize their limitations and capabilities and do so with the knowledge that his superiors and subordinates have 100% faith and confidence in him. A step in the right direction is to give him the majority of commander's time to use as he desires. This must be done now, not when the big payoff arrives.

Our command guidance must start at the top and work down if the proper utilization of commander's time is ever to be a reality. It will require delineation by division or higher and must be faithfully followed and supported by all commanders.

ANNEX A - Questionnaire and Results

Purpose: This questionnaire is designed to determine your opinions on the following subject: should commander's time in the Army Training Programs be increased?

Assumptions: For the purpose of this questionnaire, please make the following assumptions:

1. That we are dealing with rifle companies only.
2. That commander's time is limited to the advanced individual, basic unit and advanced unit training phases.
3. That the degree of efficiency of all company commanders is average.
4. That the majority of all training is being conducted by the unit (not committee).
5. That special situations do not exist in the area which make it necessary to modify the ATP.

Questions and Answers:

1. Do you feel that commander's time in the present ATP should be:
 - a. increased 63% of class (majority)
 - b. decreased no one
 - c. remain the same 37% of class (minority)
2. If this time were increased, do you feel that the average company commander would properly utilize it?

Yes	<u>100% of majority</u>	<u>37% of minority</u>
No	<u>not one of majority</u>	<u>53% of minority</u>
		No reply <u>10% of minority</u>
3. If you feel that commander's time should be decreased, do you consider that this time is not being properly utilized?

Not answered (see question 1.b.)

4. To what extent do you feel that battle group should dictate the use of this time?

Not at all	<u>32% of majority</u>	<u>42% of minority</u>
Twenty-five per cent	<u>39% of majority</u>	<u>25% of minority</u>
Fifty per cent	<u>7% of majority</u>	<u>None of minority</u>
Seventy-five per cent	<u>3% of majority</u>	<u>None of minority</u>
Other: "only when necessary"	<u>16% of majority</u>	
"when required by higher headquarters"	<u>3% of majority</u>	
"a minimum amount"	<u>16% of minority</u>	
"100% of the time"	<u>7% of minority</u>	
no opinion	<u>10% of minority</u>	

5. Describe best solution you have encountered concerning this problem.

ANNEX B - Interview with Lt. Col. Charles W. Sample
Commanding Officer
2nd Battle Group 4th Infantry

Question: Should commander's time in the Army Training Program be increased?

Answer: Yes. The company commander has been made responsible for so many additional projects that he has little time to emphasize those subjects in which training is weak. He should be relieved of many of these projects and granted additional commander's time to devote to the training of his unit for combat, that being his primary mission.

Question: If company commander's time were increased, would the average company commander properly utilize it?

Answer: Yes. Most commanders would utilize it to a beneficial degree. He should inform the battle group commander how he intends to use it and have the freedom of doing so. The commander must have complete confidence in his subordinate commander and give him sufficient leeway to do the job properly. This confidence is necessary if they are to attain the desired state of leadership. By permitting the company commander to exercise his initiative to the nth degree in the training of his command, we will achieve this goal. It is possible that ten per cent of the company commanders will not properly utilize this time. However, the majority should not be penalized for the actions of a few. I feel that the company commanders should keep higher headquarters informed at all times, which should in no way limit their freedom of initiative.

Question: To what extent should the battle group dictate the use of commander's time?

Answer: The battle group should keep this to about twenty-five per cent. This time will be used to conduct special training at the battle group level such as combined arms, make-up, retraining, ceremonies, and so forth. With the advent of ROCID concept, the responsibilities of the company commander

have greatly increased. The battle group will be widely dispersed, and the companies will be operating on a more independent basis. This will call for increased initiative on the part of the company commanders. Additional emphasis must be placed on the ability of these units to act independently. To accomplish this, we must give the company back to the company commander. How else can we expect him to obtain the desired results in combat?

Question: Can any subject in the Army Training Program be omitted?

Answer: Yes. Some can be omitted completely. We are teaching our soldiers too much, too fast. We try to make a polished soldier out of a recruit in sixteen weeks, and this is impossible. Some of this training could be given at a later date after he has mastered the fundamentals of soldiering.

Question: Will the standards of training be raised if the commander is given more time to utilize as he sees fit?

Answer: Yes. The standards of training at company level should, naturally, be extremely high. To insure this, the maximum degree of cooperation and minimum degree of essential supervision must exist between the battle group and the company.

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Charles W. Sample
Charles W. Sample
Lt. Col. Inf.

ANNEX C - Interview with Col. C. B. Smith
Commanding Officer
1st Battle Group 15th Infantry

Question: Should commander's time in the Army Training Program be increased?

Answer: Col. Smith stated that the following considerations should be included in the study.

1. Retraining. Any training conducted by the company that was found to be unsatisfactory through inspection should be rescheduled. Normally this rescheduling would be done upon order of the company commander. However, the battle group commander may also reschedule any training that does not meet his standards. Col. Smith felt that this consideration was the most important because it would correct the greatest number of deficiencies and would make the individual soldier better qualified.

2. Make-up training. The company should keep a list of the individuals who miss certain portions of training and schedule classes for them at a later date. This will insure that all personnel are trained in every subject and will insure the same standard of training for the entire unit.

3. Care and maintenance of equipment. As it is important that both individual and organizational equipment be properly maintained, Col. Smith felt that this was another use of commander's time. This should be scheduled when necessary by the unit.

4. Ceremonies. While this consideration does not take up a great deal of time, it is important; and the time required will be taken from commander's time.

5. Holidays. While holidays do not comprise many days, they do reduce time that is available for training. This time will be taken from commander's time.

Col. Smith said that he thought that commander's time was about the right amount. He further stated, "There is no objection to reducing the

number of hours devoted to subjects providing the objectives are attained. Any saving made in the number of hours should be considered commander's time and be utilized in any of the previous considerations mentioned."

Question: Can any subject be omitted from the Army Training Program?

Answer: Col. Smith believed that the Army Training Program was basically sound and, depending upon the unit, any necessary modification could be made locally by the commander.

Question: If commander's time were increased, would the average company commander utilize it properly?

Answer: Col. Smith felt that most company commanders would use any increased time advantageously to increase his unit's efficiency.

Question: To what extent should the battle group dictate the use of commander's time?

Answer: Col. Smith thought that the battle group commander should let the company commander dictate the use of this time as much as possible, probably between seventy-five and eighty per cent of the time. However, there are some instances where the battle group must dictate the use of commander's time, as in the case of a parade.

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C. B. Smith
C. B. Smith
Col. Inf.

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