

Saving Future Gallons: Overview of New Field Manual 7-0

by James L. Young Jr.

As the U.S. Army confronts its post-Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)/Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) missions, it faces a myriad of possible adversaries, threats and missions. Whether discussing the “Pacific Pivot,”¹ possible operations in sub-Saharan Africa or the seeming resurrection of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s mission against Russian ground forces, it is clear the next decade is unlikely to resemble the previous 15 years of warfare.

Despite being ever more interconnected, the world remains a complex environment that will present the nation’s civilian leaders with increasingly more dynamic challenges. Many of these situations will require land forces capable of deterring and defeating capable, diverse threats. This article will provide a short introduction on how the new Field Manual (FM) 7-0, *Train to Win in a Complex World*, helps accomplish this. With this understanding, unit leaders should see why it is imperative they read this FM as soon as possible.

Providing combat-ready units

As the title states, FM 7-0 focuses on providing Army leaders at all echelons the tools and structure necessary to train their formations to “win in a complex world.” With guidance and suggestions from across the entire Army, the Training Management Directorate (TMD) of the Combined Arms Center-Training (CAC-T) at Fort Leavenworth, KS, wrote the new FM 7-0 with five major goals in mind:

- First and foremost, the new FM 7-0 is designed to provide an easily understood and executable process for restoring the Army’s training culture.
- The previous training proficiency ratings of T (trained), P (proficient) and U (untrained) have been updated to T (fully trained), T- (trained), P (practiced), P- (marginally practiced) and U (untrained). This change gives commanders the ability to make evaluations more objective.
- FM 7-0 supplements the Training Publication 350-70 series in guiding Army proponents as they update their collective task and evaluation outlines (T&EOs).
- Previously successful training techniques and concepts such as “hip-pocket training,” the 8-Step Training Model and the band of excellence are now revised, fully explained and given the authority of formal doctrine.
- Finally, to train as Soldiers will fight, FM 7-0 addresses how important replicating the operational environment (OE) is to unit training proficiency.

How ready is ‘ready’?

Before this edition of FM 7-0, the Army’s assessment process was much more art than science. Commanders were expected to use their knowledge of the OE, existent Army doctrine and the experience of their unit’s senior officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to determine their unit proficiency (T, P or U) in a given task. With the increasing pressure to focus on unit deployment, unit leaders often made a conscious decision to modify or ignore doctrinal standards to prepare for and deploy in support of ongoing operations. This resulted in the Army’s gradual loss of its institutional knowledge on how to prepare for contingencies in lieu of the focus on deployments in support of OIF and OEF. Exacerbating this, most units’ training objectives, deployment gates and mission requirements were determined at higher echelons as senior leaders focused on meeting deployment timelines and conducting operational missions.

These factors, plus a lack of emphasis on training doctrine during professional military education, helped create a poor home-station training culture in the Army during the war on terrorism. By 2012, junior leaders and NCOs had little or no doctrinally based knowledge about how to plan, prepare, execute and assess unit training. After discussions with leaders and personal observations, the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) directed successive inspections by the Inspector General and mobile-training teams to assess the state of training across the Army from 2012-2014. The results confirmed the CSA’s belief that the Army had lost much of its ability to effectively

conduct home-station training. Subsequently, the CSA directed CAC-T to develop and publish an updated version of FM 7-0 to remedy these issues.

The new FM 7-0 addresses these issues by fully outlining how a commander receives training guidance from higher headquarters and the steps needed to perform an objective assessment of a unit's ability to provide the capabilities for which it was designed using proponent T&EOs. These newly developed T&EOs now contain specific, objective evaluation criteria that units apply to measure the performance of collective tasks. This increased objectivity helps ensure units train to, and are evaluated against, an approved objective standard. Unlike previous task-proficiency guidelines, the updated objective criteria take into account how personnel turbulence affects unit readiness. In addition, it requires unit leaders to truly develop a robust OE during the planning process to facilitate realistic unit training.

Figure 1 provides an example of the objective task-evaluation criteria matrix that is integral to each T&EO.

Plan and prepare				Execute						Assess						
Operational environment			Training environment (L/V/C)	% Leaders present at training / authorized	% Present at training / authorized	External valuation	Performance measures	Critical performance measures	Leader performance measures	Task assessment						
Squad and platoon	Company and battalion	Brigade and above														
Dynamic (single threat)	Dynamic and complex (4 + OE variables and hybrid threat)	Dynamic and complex (all OE variables and hybrid threat)	Proponent establishes training-environment standards		≥85%	>80%	Yes	≥90% GO	All	>90%	T					
											Static (single threat)	Dynamic (single threat)	Dynamic and complex (all OE variables and hybrid threat)	75-84%	75-79%	No
Static (single threat)	Dynamic and complex (< all OE variables and single threat)	65-74%												60-74%		
		60-64%										<60%	65-79% GO	P-		
<60%	<60%	<51% GO										U				
← Task dependent →											← Task independent →					
Key: C = constructive L = live V = virtual			P = practiced P- = marginally practiced			T = fully trained T- = trained U = untrained										
Note: The percentages used in this figure are for illustration only. See the collective task's published T&EO for the applicable percentages.																

Figure 1. Objective task-evaluation criteria matrix from FM 7-0.

Developing proponent T&EOs with this matrix removes much of the subjectivity that previous evaluation methods often fell prey to during assessments. No matter how well a unit at 80-percent strength performs its task, it cannot get higher than a T-. Similarly, units that do not perform tasks during the day and night cannot obtain a T.

Furthermore, with T, T-, P, P- and U fully defined in the new FM 7-0, there should be little difference between a light-infantry battalion's assessed readiness in a Pacific Command division compared to that of another unit in the continental United States. In this manner, staffs at all levels will be able to swiftly compare units of the same types when determining force structures for future contingencies.

Home-station training

Since 2001, most home-station training has been governed by the need to provide forces to OEF and OIF. As the Army transitions back to a predominantly home-station training environment, FM 7-0 provides the framework for relearning some of the institutional knowledge that has eroded. Rather than a distinct theater mission, FM 7-0 serves as the guide for providing units that are as prepared for high-intensity operations in the Baltics as they are for humanitarian assistance in Micronesia. The foundation for this is the "plan-prepare-execute-assess" training framework that relies on the military decision-making process (MDMP) and troop-leading procedures (TLPs) to achieve success. At company-level and below, MDMP and TLPs are augmented (but not replaced) by the 8-Step Training Model. Combined, all these serve as the initial guidelines that start leaders onto the path for success (even if they do not guarantee a positive outcome).

Plan-prepare-execute-assess is the Army's operations process that guides leaders in ensuring their subordinates are given the tools to succeed. Applying this to training should not differ significantly from the same process employed for military operations. In both cases, commanders should leverage their own experience and that of their staff to create training events to help ensure unit readiness. FM 7-0 guides commanders and their staffs on how to apply the MDMP to prepare a unit training plan. Much as a commander and his/her staff should be able to prepare mission orders after reading Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 5-0, all Army officers and NCOs should have a clear understanding of their role in the revised training process after reading FM 7-0.

FM 7-0 will also benefit Army officers and NCOs when it comes to training capability, not just as they detail the planning process. The new *Train to Win in a Complex World* guides leaders during the concurrent "prepare" phase of Army training. With sections that detail everything from T-week checklists to the 8-Step Training Model, the new FM 7-0 helps even the most inexperienced leader/staff to plan and coordinate training resources. There are examples in the FM that lend themselves to scheduled or impromptu officer professional-development programs and sergeants' time training. In this manner, units can begin educating leaders during the planning phase and reinforcing these lessons during preparation before execution.

Defining OE

As can be seen from both the example T&EO chart and definitions, the path to a T assessment is heavily dependent on both the opposing force and other shifting OE factors. ADRP 5-0 defines the OE as "[a] composite of the conditions, circumstances and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander." FM 7-0 leverages this definition and the 7-100 series of manuals produced by U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's G-2 (intelligence) to ensure units are required to craft a truly objective training environment.

Or, put another way, to be considered fully trained, commanders at all levels must meet all facets of their intended OE. This includes, as a minimum, a thinking, adaptive opfor that will challenge the training audience.

To assist brigade and battalion commanders' processes to replicate an adaptive opfor, division and corps staffs have to partner with installations to determine necessary resources going forward. The new FM 7-0 facilitates this by bringing terms such as "static," "dynamic" and "complex" from esoteric opfor manuals to the forefront of the Army's revitalized training culture. In reading FM 7-0, leaders will see that these terms are not only critical to proper training and employment of operational variables – in other words, the political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment and time variables – but they are actually quite easy to apply to a thinking, resourced hybrid threat, too. Rather than being confronted with rote, formulaic opfor to obtain a T,

Army leaders should have to adapt to, outsmart and outmaneuver the same level of thinking adversary they are expected to meet in a contingency.

In all cases, OE changes should be made with an eye toward both the training environment (live, virtual or constructive) and an endstate of fully trained companies, battalions and brigades.

Trained-and-ready force

FM 7-0 makes clear that the endstate of the execution phase is a trained and proficient force. This is achieved by leveraging published T&EOs, leader observations and the after-action-review process to develop a plan to ensure units become proficient in the objective, published standards. While assessment occurs concurrently with all phases of the plan-prepare-execute cycle, it is critical during execution to ensure resources are properly planned and coordinated. This goes beyond merely conducting long-range planning for resources to be available; it also applies critical thought to using resources to achieve unit training objectives.

Given the Army's planned methods for evaluating and assessing unit readiness, it makes little sense for a brigade to give a maneuver battalion whose companies are all at T an extra task iteration if a sister combined-arms battalion still has companies at P or T-. Conversely, if all the maneuver battalions in a division are assessed at T- in "defend," a division commander anticipating high-intensity operations would be prudent to ensure that assigned artillery battalions can perform counter-fire tasks to a similar level rather than conduct more force-on-force lanes. In both cases, leaders' assessments use a combination of experience, knowledge of the intended OE and resources at hand to facilitate the training process.

Train today to win tomorrow

This article is merely a summary of what can be found in the new FM 7-0. While not a panacea for the training atrophy that has occurred during the last 15 years of combat, *Train to Win in a Complex World* is a vital first step to return the Army to a broad base of readiness rather than focusing on a specific set of skills. By providing a framework to units on how to train, the new FM 7-0 helps develop a "common language" across the Army for what correct training looks like. In turn, leaders who read it will be able to maximize the returns their units receive for their investment in "training sweat."

If deterrence fails, it will be the sweat paid today and in the near future that saves Soldiers' blood in the initial phase of the conflicts to come.

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Notes

¹The "Pacific Pivot" refers to former President Barack Obama's stated strategic policy of focusing on the Pacific Ocean as the United States' primary focus.

Acronym Quick-Scan

ADRP – Army doctrine reference publication

CAC-T – Combined Arms Center-Training

CSA – Chief of Staff of the Army

FM – field manual

MDMP – military decision-making process

NCO – noncommissioned officer

OE – operational environment

OEF – Operation Enduring Freedom

OIF – Operation Iraqi Freedom

T&EO – task and evaluation outline

TLP – troop-leading procedure

TMD – Training Management Directorate