

INFANTRY WARFIGHTING FORUM WRAP-UP

The following are key points discussed during the 16 October 2025 Infantry Warfighting Forum (IWF), hosted by LTG Greg Anderson, commanding general of the XVIII Airborne Corps and mobile brigade combat team (MBCT) senior mentor. This IWF focused on how to drive excellence in small unit fundamentals. LTG Anderson emphasized that leaders must expect excellence, demand it, evaluate/measure against it, and determine if units have the level of proficiency needed to win the fight at the company-level and below. Leaders must stay focused on the fundamentals and create excellence in warfighting at the tactical level.



Company and Below Proficiency

BG Matt Hardman, 1st Infantry Division Deputy Commanding General-Support, discussed his training observations from 38 Combat Training Center (CTC) rotations as a task force senior split between the National Training Center and Chief of Operations Group (COG) at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). Poor proficiency in individual and small-unit tasks at the company level and below has been identified as one potential problem. He discussed several contributing factors and provided background on potential causes. At the CTCs, units tend to lose big and fast at the company level, resulting in unsolvable problems at the battalion and brigade level. Units need to arrive for a CTC rotation with companies at a high state of readiness. He prefaced the discussion with a quote from GEN James Rainey: “The real impact of technology is that it will increase punishment of unskilled commanders and untrained formations.”

Key points from this discussion include:

- **Fundamentals are the foundation:** Technology should not hamper our formations, and it should not replace fundamentals. Technology should accelerate, enhance, and make them more lethal. You can't pile technology on a foundation that is not strong and expect results.
- **Training progression:** Units should not rush to higher echelon training. Don't move to platoon-level exercises until Soldiers are proficient at the squad level; the same goes for progressing from platoon to company-level training. Training is progressive and linear.
- **Mastering the fundamentals** is not something that can just occur during a few weeks of training at a CTC rotation. Leaders must continually reinforce battle drills, marksmanship, and training at home station — this is how you get to excellence.
- **Training prioritization:** Brigades and higher must help unburden company commanders and first sergeants when it comes to training prioritization. Commander-to-commander dialogue will help leaders determine a unit's focus areas and how to prioritize training time.

Training Management

COL Chris Brawley, commander of 1st MBCT, 11th Airborne Division, discussed his BCT's approach to rectifying some of the issues regarding fundamentals that were previously mentioned. The two major concepts they worked through are the Two-Year Training Path and the Triple Loop Training Methodology. At the onset, they noticed that big training events looked good at the macro-level, but when they zoomed in to the squad/team level, they discovered issues. Units were moving from one major training event to the next with no time to train on small unit fundamentals. COL Brawley referenced LTG (Retired) Arthur Collins' book *Common Sense Training* to highlight the approach they used with their training calendar events: “The key to all successful training lies in raising the quality of individual and small unit skills. Other things being equal, the army with the best trained small units will prevail.” Key points from the discussion below:

- **Training Meeting Trends:** Some company-level training meetings are not happening (prevalent in headquarters and headquarters companies/forward support companies). The actual format of some training meetings looks more like a long-range training calendar. When this happens, the company is not getting into the requisite amount of detail and can skip through weeks of training without talking about how the training is getting resourced, how they are training and certifying leaders, etc.
- **NCO Development:** CSM Jeremiah Waggoner, CSM for 1/11 MBCT, discussed how the Triple Loop approach has placed NCOs in charge of training. Many events had been top-down driven with many NCOs, especially junior NCOs, waiting to be told what to do by the higher headquarters. This approach holds NCOs accountable to plan, resource, and execute their training.
- **8-Step Training Model:** CSM Chris Donaldson, then-CSM of the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, stated that NCOs must own the 8-Step Training Model. Commanders must take things off the calendar to enable NCOs to own the training and the time. At company/battalion training meetings, NCOs should be briefing where they are in the 8-step model. LTG Anderson agreed and stated there is a tension between company commanders trying to get all the various tasks done and NCOs trying to own training. Ultimately, dialogue between the NCOs and company leadership creates the communication needed to fight in combat; it's all interconnected.
- **U.S. Army Infantry School Updates:** The Advanced Leader Course (ALC) has made revisions to focus on implementation of unit training management at the squad level to help NCOs understand their role and how they participate

in the training management process. Additionally, NCOs attending ALC will also soon attend the follow-on Infantry Master Trainer Course. LTG Anderson stated between better training management for both NCO and officer professional military education and the introduction of TE&Os as you evaluate units/planned training you see complementary efforts. Use T&EOs to plan training and you will start getting the standard and steps you need directly.

LTG Anderson's Closing Comments

We are what we design ourselves to be. We design ourselves through training management, our use of time, our prioritization, how we see risk, and where we put our resources. Don't be afraid to slow things down and do it right — to give more time to a subordinate and let them struggle with something but with the understanding that they will own it and move it forward, if coached, evaluated, and assessed. See also "Close Fighting Fundamentals" (<https://www.army.mil/article/289567>), which may help leaders visualize the types of skills we need to develop at the tactical level as part of the hedge against uncertainty. Commanders should think through this on their own terms; it's not a task list but describes what right looks like. Lastly, T&EOs are coming back, and smart officers are going to own and train against them; you will be evaluated and assessed against T&EOs at CTCs. Continue to command on the offense, ruthlessly prioritize, accept risk on things that are no longer necessary or important. Do not have an untrained formation.

The purpose of the Infantry Warfighting Forum is to enhance infantry/mobile brigade combat team leaders, leader teams, unit training, and operations. This forum helps provide feedback for identification/resolution of problems through senior leader channels and provides a venue for shaping Infantry initiatives to make our Infantry more relevant for today's environment.

INFANTRY BRANCH UPDATE

Welcome From the Infantry Branch Chief

Fellow Infantrymen,

We salute you and your formations for your tireless commitment to excellence! Congratulations to the Infantry NCOs promoted to sergeant first class (SFC) and to those entrusted with battalion command — your leadership drives our legacy forward. In this special edition, we unveil the forward-leaning vision of the U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC) Infantry Branch and spotlight the dynamic trends defining how our Infantry force is built, led, and employed on today's ever-evolving battlefield.



The Infantry Branch stands resolute in educating our force about assignment opportunities, mentoring every Infantryman to reach new heights and communicating the cutting-edge trends reshaping our profession. Our mission is to deliver honest, transparent, and actionable information that fortifies readiness across the Army. As always, we strive to synchronize individual Soldier aspirations with Active Component Manning Guidance (ACMG), ensuring the right leaders are in the right place at the decisive moment.

Enlisted Infantry Update

Enlisted Market Cycles (EMC). The EMC remains the cornerstone for strategically aligning Infantry Soldiers to the Army's evolving operational demands. Each Soldier is purposefully matched to a six-week EMC window, determined by their Year-Month Available to Move (YMAV), ensuring our formations remain agile and mission-ready.

EMC Cycle	Market Opens	Market Closes	Report Months
EMC 27-02	29 APR 2026	02 JUN 2026	JAN–MAR 2027

NCO Career Progression. Advancement to SFC and master sergeant (MSG) is anchored in the time-tested Professional Development Model (PDM) for MOS 11B, 11C, and 11Z, as established in Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 600-25, *U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Guide*. Leaders are charged with actively guiding Soldiers to understand and achieve the key milestones that define competitiveness for promotion and assignment to positions of greater responsibility.

EMC Preparation is Critical. EMC preparation is a team effort, demanding proactive engagement from both Soldiers and leaders. Infantry leaders must champion education on EMC procedures, set clear expectations, and proactively address common pitfalls identified by career managers.

1. Recognizing Critical Development (CD) requirements before entering the market is essential. CD stabilization ensures SSGs and SFCs meet minimum career model requirements in accordance with DA PAM 600-25. NCOs who enter the EMC without meeting CD requirements should preference operational assignments that allow them to complete these milestones and remain competitive.

2. Stabilization timeline. For SGT(P) through MSGs, requests for individual, organizational, or nonroutine stabilization must be submitted to HRC no