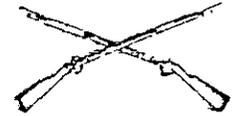




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Commandant's NOTE



DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN BRIGADE AND BATTALION COMMAND

One of the biggest mistakes I made as a brigade commander was trying to command that unit as if it were a battalion. As I talk to senior commanders and see units operating throughout the Army, I sense that this is also a problem today throughout the Infantry force. I am not saying that some of the units have not figured this out, because many of them have. But for those who have not, I will present one perspective on the challenge. It is not presented because it is necessarily right but because it is a means of addressing some of the issues so that some of our great commanders in the field can think through the solution in consonance with their own personalities and command perspectives. No one has a monopoly on good ideas for command; certainly no two commanders will command the same way.

It is important to initiate this discussion by looking at what brigades and battalions do in combat. Normally, platoons fire or maneuver, companies fire and maneuver, and battalions fight the battle by synchronizing their combined arms assets. Brigades task organize and fit their troops and units to the terrain, assess the progress of the fight, and redistribute their combined arms combat power and assigned terrain accordingly. (This redistribution normally equates to the employment of the reserve and putting in and taking out combat support and service support elements.)

The division applies force multipliers and sustainment assets and integrates tactical and operational plans and operations. The corps and the field army execute the operational level of war through intelligence, deception, support, major task organizations, and broad METT-T taskings of fire and maneuver.

Applying these general organizational concepts in peacetime, we find that a brigade must be principally a resourcing and assessment headquarters. That is what it does in war; that is what it must do during peacetime when training takes the place of operations. Resourcing can be broken down into time, dollars, people, and facilities.

At the same time, the brigade commander must ensure that a prime time training system is working in his subordinate units. He must establish clear time frames in which high-quality training can be con-

ducted and the units are not burdened with such diversionary missions as post support. The brigade commander and his staff have the time to analyze any incongruities and weaknesses in the prime time system and have the clout with division to sort them out.

With future budget deficits chasing high equipment, procurement, and personnel costs, training dollars will be limited and will demand the detailed attention of our brigade commanders. All units are different and require different levels of funding in many different areas. The brigade staff must be discriminating in its analysis of how to equitably divide funds for POL, ammunition, spare parts, and other needs. Battalions and companies simply don't have the time to conduct the level of analysis required in this important area.

In the personnel area, the brigade commander and his S-1 must keep close watch over the incoming and outgoing status of his company commanders, first sergeants, platoon sergeants, mechanics, supply sergeants, dining facility managers, and other critically important personnel assets. If this analysis and resource decision-making is left to division and higher headquarters, it will likely be fragmentary, reactive, and unwittingly biased in one manner or another. Again, the brigade commander and his staff have the time and the clout to purify the analysis and ensure that their subordinate units are getting the people they need.

As we modernize our Army and apply weapon systems with increased range and mobility to our maneuver warfare doctrine, we find that our training areas, ranges, and facilities are coming under severe stress. The brigade must think through the issues associated with these challenges and alleviate problems that could significantly affect the training readiness of its battalions and companies.

There are no magic solutions here. The brigade commander and his staff compare subordinate unit training plans and methods with available resources and make trade-off decisions. Although most units are complaining about a lack of training facilities of one sort or another, we find that the actual use of these facilities is abominably low. There are obvious exceptions, but across the board our brigade

commanders and staffs must better analyze the challenges and sort through the solutions. Otherwise, our battalions and companies will get bogged down with training management functions not rightfully theirs or will cop out of good training because of a perceived "lack of training resources."

As peacetime resourcing is to wartime task organizing, so peacetime assessment is to wartime battle analysis. After the assessment/battle analysis, a brigade commander is then in a position to redistribute his assets and to direct further operations through another round of resourcing or task organizing. This is the way brigade commanders and their staffs properly influence the action; they are not down directing the firefights on an hourly or daily basis.

Too frequently, however, today's brigade commanders and their staffs are down in the training areas, motor pools, supply rooms, and arms rooms on a daily basis directing the action and promulgating guidance in many different areas. And they are not the only ones, for division staff members, ADCs, and others are participating in this same endeavor.

These are all smart people with good experience and are in a position to help, but when they descend upon the line companies in an incoherent manner they become disruptive instead. The lives of our company officers, NCOs, and soldiers are too frantic. The division commander, for example, may be visiting Companies A and C, while the battalion commander may be in Company B's area, the ADC may be in the motor pool, the brigade commander may be checking arms and supply rooms, and the division G-1 may be in the area checking OPERS.

Several staff officers or commanders may be in the same company during the course of one day. Too much guidance from too many sources creates a frantic environment for our battalions and companies. The best way our senior leaders and staff officers can influence the action at company level is to resource properly, promulgate well-thought-out, long-range guidance, and then, at a practical time, assess the performance of the line units.

I would therefore propose that brigade commanders put out quarterly guidance that would embrace measurable training, maintenance, administrative, and logistical objectives. At the end of a quarter, the brigade commander and his staff should determine how the units have implemented that guidance, sampling down to company level. The brigade commander might insist on setting aside five days out of the quarter during which he and his staff could do this assessment—say, three days for tactical assessment and two days for maintenance, administrative, and logistical assessments. This could be accomplished to high standards through the proper organization and training of the brigade staff.

During the other days of the quarter, the brigade commander and his staff should be assisting the companies by executing their resourcing functions and mentoring/teaching the battalion commanders and their staffs. They should not be in the company areas on a daily basis and should do their best to keep others away. Assessment day is the proper time for these visits.

This way of doing things will not only lead to a less frantic training environment in the line companies but should alleviate the zero defects, reactive environment that is endemic to those units. It will also allow the companies to make daily mistakes and learn by them so that when the day of assessment arrives, they can perform to high standards. This approach will also be more in line with developing the type of leadership—bold, imaginative, and non-reactive—that we need at the company and battalion levels to execute our current maneuver doctrine.

Now, let's talk about the battalion commander and his staff. Battalions synchronize and fight the battle in wartime. Similarly, and based on the brigade commander's guidance, a battalion must syn-

chronize its training, maintenance, and administrative/logistical programs during peacetime.

Just as a good battalion commander cannot command properly from a TOC during a battle, neither can he command properly from his headquarters during peacetime. He must be the one at the point of battle, knowing exactly what is going on and supervising various functions throughout his command. He must manifest his command guidance on the ground through his words and actions. His own staff officers become the companies' staff officers, and their feet must be held to the fire for the management and assessment of training, maintenance, administration, and logistics, and for operational support, if necessary. In my judgment, if a battalion or company commander is in his headquarters or orderly room for more than three hours a day, he is mortgaging the success of his outfit.

The battalion commander must be constantly assessing the training environment and solving problems on the spot, inspiring people with his command presence and calling on brigade for assistance when necessary. Daily, he must sense the status of his units' morale, maintenance, supply accountability, leader proficiency, and diversionary mission requirements. He must look in a discriminating fashion at how the mission is being accomplished in regard to who is being trained, to what tasks and standards, and how that training is being conducted. He must know whether it is the soldiers, NCOs, platoon leaders, company commanders, or small or large units that need to be trained.

He must determine whether Soldier's Manual tasks, collective tasks, ARTEP missions, marksmanship, gunnery, maintenance, or administration need more attention. He must decide how to integrate physical training, NBC, night operations, MOUT, maintenance, and motivational tasks and how to integrate the "who to train" with the "what to train." He must determine whether battle drills, individual skill stations, TEWTs, CPXs, or FTXs are to be conducted, or whether EDREs, CAPEXs, CALFEXs, or Admin/Log stations are to be implemented. He must insist that multi-echelon training be conducted—vertically, squad through company, and horizontally, across functional area tasks in combined arms areas.

To ensure that a risk-taking leadership is developed in his line companies, the battalion commander on a daily basis must place an umbrella over his companies to free them from diversionary missions and over-supervision. All these issues must be dealt with in a mentoring role and on the ground, if they are going to happen. In short, the battalion commander must command and lead his unit during peacetime just as he would during wartime, and he cannot have brigade and higher level commanders and staff officers interfering with his firefight. He can exercise his command functions only with the assistance of his higher level commanders, and particularly his brigade commander, who is in a position to place him in an environment where this can occur.

Officers who have served in command positions both during war and during peace much prefer combat conditions. Why? Well, it's because combat conditions dictate that divisions, brigades, and battalions perform the roles and missions for which they were designed. Regrettably, in peacetime, the command lines related to those roles and missions become blurred, and we find higher level commanders and staffs performing the business of lower level commanders and staffs.

If we can get the command and staff responsibilities performed in peacetime aligned with those performed during war, we will develop more positive command environments, better combat leaders, and higher unit readiness. At least, that's what I think. But you should think through the issues and do what is right for you. Drop us a line if you disagree or have ideas worth passing along.