

know about until much later in the operation—perhaps not until the mission has been completed. Company commanders and platoon leaders cannot accomplish a mission with a snap of the fingers; they must give their squad leaders time to develop the situation.

**The mobility of light fighters is a function of combat load, as well as terrain and climate.** Nothing new here. Experienced NCOs can usually make the right call on what their soldiers should carry. Commanders should let them be a part of the decision-making process and then conduct pre-combat checks to see that they are complying.

**Templating the enemy before the fight is a prerequisite to success in deep operations.** Squad leaders need this framework, because they probably will not get any intelligence updates from higher levels.

**Graphic control measures are critical.** To improve command and control—and to reduce the possibility of friendly

casualties from small arms all the way up to BAI (battlefield air interdiction)—the graphics must be easily understood by everyone.

**Combat service support is more manageable in Europe than in the desert.** Logistical packages can be infiltrated by vehicle and air; water is available in both streams and villages; Classes III and V can be foraged, as can transportation (some soldiers were moved by local farmers inside hay wagons). On REFORGER 90 our squad leaders were given small amounts of local currency to simulate foraging or to use as a backup in the event of resupply shortages. This seemingly small step reduced the initial soldier's load (Class I) and allowed the squad leaders to cross the line of departure knowing they had an alternative way to take care of their soldiers.

During this exercise, the 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry task force, as well as several other battalions from the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) proved that

deep infiltration is a realistic mission for light infantry. They generated intelligence, accurately adjusted indirect fires, and conducted limited direct attacks at night—each of which affected the enemy's morale and impeded his tempo of operations. In this way, the light forces complemented the friendly heavy forces, survived, and were available to fight in subsequent operations.

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# The NTC

## A Reserve Component View

MAJOR HOWARD L. HORTON

In July 1989 I had the rare opportunity to observe the performance of a large number of units operating in the Army's most realistic combat training environment—the National Training Center (NTC). As a National Guard officer participating in individual KPUP (Key Personnel Upgrade Program) training, I was assigned to the exercise management control center for the Operations Group during the rotation of two battalion task forces, their brigade headquarters, and a slice of combat and combat service support personnel of the First Cavalry Divi-

sion from Fort Hood, Texas. In addition, I helped supervise opposing force (OPFOR) activities in support of the rotation.

I became familiar with the duties of the shift positions and acted in those positions. I also became familiar with the operational plans and orders for the various battles, attended the briefings presented during my shift, and was prepared to brief as required by the shift leader.

My comments here are not intended to be a comprehensive discussion of tactical issues, simply a collection of impressions and opinions for future reference. These

comments relate primarily to DTOC operations, because that was the level of my primary focus at the NTC during my 18-day assignment.

My specific mission was to assist the operations section and to ensure that the training objectives of the rotational units were accomplished safely, in a tactically realistic environment, and in accordance with the published rules of engagement.

On one occasion, I rode with the chief of operations and plans to observe the performance of the Blue Force in a day-

light attack. I noted that the skillful execution of basic individual and small unit tasks is an absolute prerequisite for mission accomplishment. Small unit actions are not only the most important but also the most difficult to execute successfully, because it is at that level that individuals, weapons, and logistics are most affected by the unique terrain.

As a result, there are few absolute rules, only principles that are easy to understand on a chalkboard but tough to execute under the endless variety of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time) conditions. At the NTC, most soldiers are exposed for the first time to the many elements of stress inherent in combat, yet it is the actions of soldiers and junior leaders at critical but mostly unpredictable locations that win or lose battles for a battalion task force. The dispersion of units and the pace of operations are typically such that senior leaders simply cannot supervise and control in detail even a minor portion of the critical action. Therefore, the small unit challenge is as much a matter of leadership and discipline as of training. A unit that does well only those things that the boss checks will have great difficulty at the NTC.

The longer I observed, the more impressed I became with both the importance and the difficulty of such basic infantry tasks as conducting attacks in rugged terrain; killing armor at close range; securing, constructing, and breaching obstacles; conducting reconnaissance and surveillance; and providing close-in protection for critical assets.

Time and time again, a few skilled infantrymen made the difference between winning and losing a battalion or brigade level battle. They provided the detailed intelligence that permitted accurate targeting and greatly increased the odds of successful maneuver. They breached the pivotal obstacle and destroyed the key weapon, unhinging the enemy's defense. They conducted a night attack that caused the enemy's armor to reposition, thereby facilitating its destruction by friendly tank and antitank fire at first light.

Almost without exception, there were many more infantry missions to be performed than there were infantrymen



available—particularly in a modernized task force. While priorities varied as a function of METT-T, there were seldom enough infantrymen to provide close-in protection for tactical operations centers, trains, air defense artillery positions, and tanks. Except in the most extreme situations, all of these elements had to provide their own security and insure their own camouflage, light and noise discipline, and movement and deception.

The NTC teaches combat doctrine in a straightforward way. The battles I witnessed were hard-fought. The action continued day and night in temperatures as high as 125 degrees Fahrenheit and as low as below freezing. The dirt, dust, tear gas, smoke, and merciless sun all contributed to the realism.

The "wounded" had to be evacuated, replacements provided, damaged vehicles removed, and new equipment requisitioned. Units that failed to bring up ammunition did without it. If the food was lost, everyone went hungry. The soldiers who misplaced their gas masks suffered from simulated chemical attacks.

On another occasion I spent two days in the desert with the opposing force and had an opportunity to attend its operations

order briefings, to ride with the OPFOR as an observer from an M-72 tank (a modified U.S. Sheridan), and to attend the after action review conducted in the field.

Since the OPFOR uses Soviet doctrine, this experience confirmed for me that the Soviets react quickly to isolate and attack the weakest link in their enemy's defense system. The OPFOR, to isolate the enemy position, uses terrain and scouts to avoid the enemy's fire and to exploit gaps in his defense; uses smoke to cover its own rapid movement; employs artillery, mortars, mines, and smoke well forward to suppress the defender's fires; and attacks adjacent positions by direct fire and movement.

In recognition of the high quality training conducted at the NTC, the Army has added the U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) leader training program to NTC rotations. This program was developed for brigade and battalion commanders and selected staff officers from Active Army and Reserve Component divisions and brigades, including the Active Army units overseas.

A direct result of the FORSCOM leader training program at the NTC, and a

by-product of the visiting units' experience there, is the improvement of tactical skills in the Army's officer and noncommissioned officer leaders.

The NTC gives a battalion task force commander an unequalled opportunity to exercise the full range of his force in conditions that closely approach those of actual combat. The harsh terrain and climate serve to intensify the stress and fatigue for both men and materiel.

No other training exercise approaches the realism that is routinely achieved at the NTC, and no other training presents the combination of scope, scale, and intensity of effort that is captured there. The NTC's instrumented, one-of-a-kind battlefield provides instant feedback and

increases learning at all levels. Soldiers, leaders, and units train, learn, and improve their fighting skills without actually suffering casualties or losing equipment. They do not just go through the motions of war; they actually live them.

As a result, commanders train as they will fight. Soldiers learn the limits of men's minds and bodies and the durability of their equipment. They also learn not to repeat their mistakes. From each learning experience, a task force grows in competence and confidence. At the end of its 14-day combat cycle, a better task force emerges—not perfect, but harder, tougher, and smarter.

To win the next war, the Army must eliminate during training the mistakes

that inexperienced soldiers and leaders make in combat. War is not the place to learn from mistakes. The learning environment at the NTC is designed to provide such learning experiences and to help the Army win tomorrow's key battles. Most important, the NTC is a place where a soldier or leader can make a mistake, learn from it, and still survive.

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# Family Support Program

LIEUTENANT COLONEL MARSHALL L. HELENA

Many of the Army's units have to be prepared to go to war within 18 hours, and others have to be ready to deploy on short notice to support disaster relief operations. When that happens, many of the soldiers in these units leave behind family members who have difficulty fending for themselves.

Some of the junior soldiers' wives, in particular, may never have experienced Army life or had to manage on their own. To some of them, the mysteries of repairing the car, balancing the checkbook, paying the rent, or going to the hospital may seem monumental. And if a soldier's wife writes to him and burdens him with the problems back home, his morale drops and his stress and frustration increase. Then his concentration is split between his family situation and the combat or training mission, and the results can be fatal, both in combat and in training. Back home, too, the consequences are sometimes tragic.

A good battalion family support program designed to resolve family fears, concerns, and crises can help prevent these problems. Such a program contains several elements:

**Telephone Tree.** Each company commander must establish and maintain an up-to-date wives' telephone tree (sometimes called a "chain of concern") with the wives' names, addresses, and telephone numbers. When the troops deploy, this gives the battalion an internal method of notifying all the families of the reason for the deployment, where the unit is going (if possible), its anticipated return date, and the schedule of information briefings. The notification sequence also works in reverse, enabling wives to communicate their problems to whatever level may be necessary to get help in solving them.

The rear detachment commander must have copies of each telephone tree. Maintaining such a roster is not easy, with

families constantly arriving and departing, but it is the keystone of the program.

The notification process should be rehearsed, especially before the unit assumes an alert status, much the same way battalion and company alert rosters are rehearsed. In fact, these rehearsals should be required by the task force standing operating procedures (SOPs). From these rehearsals, the wives will gain more confidence in the system, and the telephone numbers can be corrected at the same time.

**Routine Activities.** If activities for wives and children are routinely organized and conducted, a greater sense of kinship can be developed, and a soldier's family members will feel that they are part of his work.

Meetings to put out important information can often be combined with holiday parties, picnics, all ranks balls, and unit sports days. Some units treat the wives