

should organize and administer impartial practice and actual APFTs throughout the year. For example, a rifle company practice test might be organized by the first sergeant using selected NCOs and PT fitness badge holders as testers. The results should be tabulated down to squad level and disseminated throughout the unit. The improved integrity of the test, along with the pressure of the competition, will lead to a steady improvement in unit fitness (and to fewer surprises on the first day of an EIB test).

If a commander wants to take stock of

a unit's discipline and cohesion, as well as the training and leadership skills of its chain of command, all he has to do is join that unit for daily PT. This is a unit's most focused and predictable routine training, and it is safe to assume that if the basics (in the broadest sense) aren't being emphasized here, they are being neglected elsewhere as well.

Commanders who are truly committed to shaping combat ready units will establish PT programs that seek to accomplish two goals: to produce physically fit soldiers and to promote discipline and teamwork and develop

top-notch trainers and leaders. Through practice, a chain of command will find these objectives mutually reinforcing.

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# Staff Training

## Observations from the NTC

**MAJOR KURT W. MILLER**

Observations at the National Training Center (NTC) indicate that battalion and brigade task forces do not conduct enough realistic and tough task force level multiechelon training. Home-station training for most units focuses primarily on warfighting skills that test individual, crew, platoon, and some company mission essential tasks. Staff level skills, individual and collective, are trained only through combat simulations and are not measured against an exacting standard of combat conditions.

As a result, many task force staffs at the NTC lack the skills to carry out the tactical decision-making process to standard; commanders must therefore focus on controlling their units instead of commanding them. And if the commander has to spend most of his time at the main command post (CP) supervising the staff, he cannot properly supervise

the critical events that make his intent clear—such as attending subordinate unit operations order (OPORD) briefings and rehearsals. Neither can he make a firsthand assessment of the task force's preparations for combat.

Aside from a lack of training, many staff officers are also lacking in experience. The typical battalion task force at the NTC often fits the following general description:

At field-grade level, the executive officer (XO) has not served with troops for two or three years—or he has served as S-3 and still tries to do the S-3's job. The S-3 is a recent graduate of the Command and General Staff College, or was deferred from the course to take the -S-3 position, and has little recent experience at task force level.

At company-grade level, the first lieutenants in the S-3 Air, S-4, S-1, fire

support officer (FSO), and S-2 positions have only recently completed—or have not yet attended—the officer advanced course and have had little or no staff experience. The chemical officer is often a second lieutenant straight from an officer basic course. The Air Defense Artillery and Engineer officers may be in their first assignments at task force level.

These staff officers may have served as shift officers in an administrative CP during unit collective training, or as range safety officers for company-team gunnery exercises, and some may have participated in orders drills but rarely during field training. Their only training in the orders process has usually been during a command post exercise (CPX) or a simulation exercise while preparing for the unit's NTC rotation.

Many leaders contend that a task

force staff can be adequately trained through controlling and supporting squad or platoon level exercises, plus one three-day CPX. But it is hard to understand how an S-3 section and main CP—manned at half strength, managing 15 combat platoons, the scout platoon, and the mortar platoon executing five to eight training lanes over 20 to 30 kilometers—can train on all the command and control tasks described in ARTEP 71-2 MTP, *Mission Training Plan for the Tank and Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force*.

The only way a staff can practice the planning process and CP operations is in multi-echelon collective training. Mission essential task list (METL) training for staffs should be conducted monthly. All this training requires is a little imagination and planning.

There are several techniques a battalion task force can use to train its main CP and staff in garrison or in the field:

While in garrison, the main CP should conduct separate training for staff tasks and noncommissioned officer (NCO) or soldier tasks. The officers can conduct biweekly bag-lunch seminars, beginning with mission analysis and then progress through the planning process in accordance with Field Manual (FM) 71-2, *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force (How to Fight)*, FM 101-5, *Staff Organization and Operations*, and FM 101-5-1, *Operational Terms and Symbols*. The staff can train on doctrinal terms and symbols and the intelligence preparation of the battlefield process, or review the standing operating procedures (SOPs).

It should not be difficult to assemble a battalion staff for training in garrison, since most staff members work within walking distance of the headquarters. In any event the XO must not allow the absence of one or two staff members to stop the training. It is easier to train one or two staff officers who missed the training during a training exercise than it is to wait until the entire staff can be assembled.

While the officers are working on the planning process, the NCOs can

use maintenance days to set up the entire main CP, including attached elements. This will allow the NCOs to treat the main CP as a system of subelements—mapboards, tables, radios, extensions, lighting—that all require maintenance.

During sergeants' time or other training time, the NCOs can train the junior enlisted soldiers on the other skills required for a functional CP and planning process. Among the numerous soldier tasks, some that require constant attention are the doctrinal symbols on standard operations overlays, radiotelephone procedures, battle tracking, and internal information flow.



The main CP should deploy to the field at least quarterly and conduct its own training exercises, with the focus on critical task training. Initially, the CP can conduct separate staff and NCO or soldier training. The operations sergeant can train on main CP displacements during both daylight and limited visibility. This training will refine procedures and turn out a true SOP instead of just some "good ideas" written down two weeks before a deployment.

At the same time, the battalion staff can practice the orders process in a GP medium tent, possibly with the help of the brigade staff. The exercise can fin-

ish with the complete staff and main CP conducting an orders drill that includes reproducing the final products.

Finally, during task force-controlled company-team exercises, such as situational training exercise lanes or a fire coordination exercise, the battalion task force can develop a scenario that also portrays other company teams, adjacent unit actions, and spot reports. This scenario will facilitate a simulation for the main CP that allows the staff to conduct after-action reviews and develop a system for gathering, analyzing, and disseminating critical information. The simulated reports allow the staff to define battle tracking roles while the XO or S-3 coaches the staff on how to process and analyze information during the battle. In such an exercise, the commander can observe the staff and discuss the amount and type of information he expects during an engagement, and the staff can design main CP configurations that support the flow of information.

The tactical decision-making process is designed to help a task force commander command his unit. By using both commander and staff estimates, a unit can develop a plan that uses its combat power effectively against the enemy. It is the commander's trust and confidence in the staff that will enable him to conduct his own estimate and then supervise the preparation of his plan.

There is no doubt that success on any battlefield requires a combination of command and control. But the Army's efforts in this area should emphasize command and de-emphasize control. Task force commanders must train their staffs to conduct the complete tactical decision-making process with minimal supervision.

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