

Reengineering Unit Training

The Motor Pool as an Assembly Area

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U.S. military operations are changing from a forward-deployed presence to a force-projection mode. Based on current operations—too much to do, too little time, and dwindling resources—we are compelled to recon-

sider our approach to training. Commanders at all levels must reengineer unit operations to focus on integrated, multi-echelon training. One aspect of this strategy establishes motor pools as assembly areas, which makes it possible

to integrate mandatory training with training based on unit mission essential task lists (METLs).

Field Manuals (FMs) 25-100, *Training the Force*, and 25-101, *Battle Focused Training*, were written with a

General Defense Plan Army in mind (fixed, predictable enemy and long lead-time training plans at every level). Part of reengineering for a contingency based Army is the idea of the commander's running estimate. Our current environment requires that we obtain continuous, focused information (commander's critical information requirements, or CCIRs) and make adjustments to keep pace with shifting realities instead of staying on course with a set of outdated priorities.

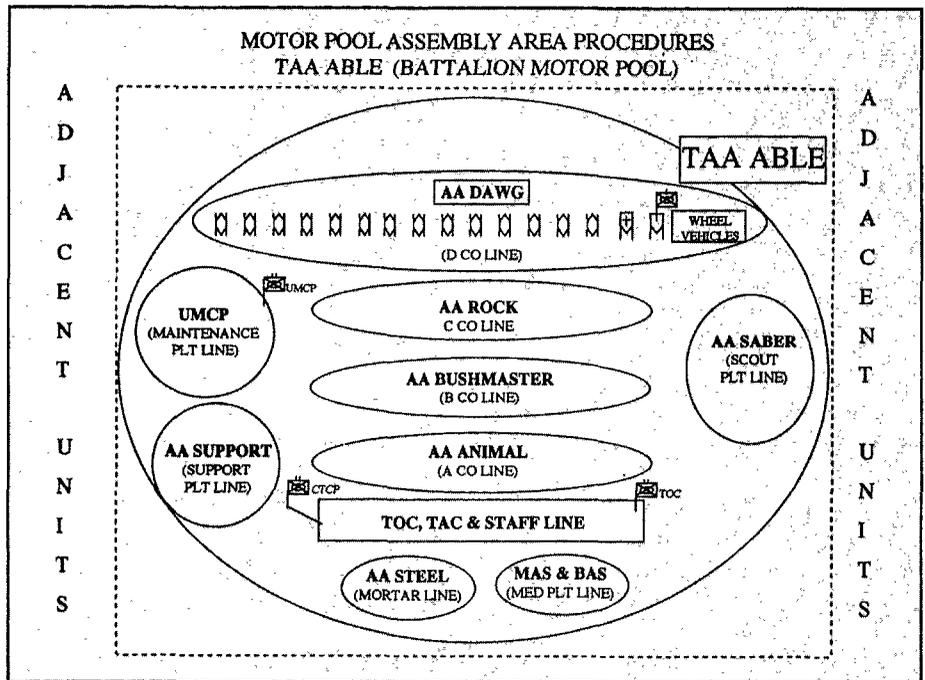
The philosophy of our strategy includes the fundamentals of battle command: *See yourself, see the enemy, and see the terrain.* Leaders must know the status of all vehicles, equipment, and personnel; identify, request and use resources and deflect training distracters; and apply all assets to accomplish the mission—that is, battle-focused training. All of this is accomplished while maintaining a running estimate and the proper orientation through a clear understanding of the commander's intent and visualizing the desired end state.

FM 71-123, *Tactics and Techniques for Combined Arms Heavy Forces: Armored Brigade, Battalion/Task Force, and Company Team*, addresses types of assembly areas; it states that administra-

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tive assembly areas are organized and occupied with an emphasis on unit integrity, ease of operations, command and control, and the efficient use of facilities. As part of its reengineering effort, the 2d Battalion, 7th Infantry, 1st Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, has turned its motor pool into an assembly area.

Most units spend their maintenance day, typically Monday, performing command maintenance and the rest of the week chasing the faults, deficiencies, and parts. Soldiers are engaged for a very limited amount of time in performing preventive maintenance checks



and services (PMCS). The rest of their time is spent waiting for the mechanics to verify the DA Forms 2404/5988-E, identify the appropriate parts numbers, and order the parts. The commander should verify the parts requests, but he and the first sergeant are often in training meetings or other scheduled events.

Motor pool assembly area (AA) operations include more than just PMCS. These operations focus on preparing equipment and soldiers—conducting PMCS and bringing all combat systems to combat readiness; performing pre-combat checks (PCC); and concluding with a leader's precombat inspection (PCI). The skill, knowledge, and ability required to bring combat systems to combat readiness are perishable, but focusing the unit's efforts each week can keep soldiers proficient in these skills.

Consider this operation in relation to preparing for Bradley Table VIII gunnery: You must conduct PMCS on the vehicle, ensure that the 25mm gun and the coaxial machinegun are functional and boresighted, and ensure that all communications are operating properly. In this area, you are ready to go down-range, or to combat, except for having live ammunition on board.

Carrying out this concept requires the battalion to establish the assembly area (see diagram). We will review this pro-

cess at both battalion and company levels:

Battalion. AA operations are best conducted with a battalion formation in the motor pool, with the battalion commander and command sergeant major addressing the unit. This sets the tone for the day's operation.

The battalion tactical operations center (TOC) is established along with the command net, including the combat trains command post (CTCP) and the administrative/logistical net. A unit can then conduct significant integrated training, such as training a new battle captain or a new specialist, instead of doing this during a division or brigade command post exercise.

The TOC monitors the company combat power, which retrain the staff as well as the companies on radio communications, specifically the perishable skill of frequency hopping and the associated tasks. TOC personnel may gather hourly combat power updates and prepare updates for the commander at any time, providing him with an expedient running estimate instead of waiting until the end of the day for an update and possibly a surprise or two.

The CTCP and unit maintenance collection point, which run their respective nets and monitor combat power, are capable of updating the TOC to ensure that the same information is

being passed across the command net. This also allows the battalion maintenance officer (BMO), the battalion maintenance technician (BMT), and the battalion maintenance sergeant to monitor and track deadlined systems and cross-level parts within the battalion as needed. The right people or parts are now on the net, just as they are in the field. This system also gives the BMO or BMT up-to-date information and enables them to contact the direct-support unit as the need arises instead of waiting until the end of the day to get information or until the next day to get a part. It also reduces deadline time, an improvement dear to every commander's heart, and reduces the number of entries on the front of the DA Form 2406.

The battalion commander has the option of running a maintenance management review or a modified commander's meeting at the end of the operation. With the battalion executive officer, company commanders, and BMO, the commander can assess the day's AA operations and base additional guidance on the results. The BMO has an opportunity to gather additional information directly from the company commanders. On the basis of the commander's guidance, the battalion executive officer and BMO can focus or redirect the battalion's maintenance efforts and resources.

Company. Each company establishes its command post at the first sergeant's M113. The commander and first sergeant are located in the CP with the maintenance team chief. CP personnel monitor the battalion command net, the administrative/logistical net, and the company's internal frequency. It is imperative that the maintenance M113, tool truck, toolboxes, parts manuals, and maintenance personnel be on the vehicle line.

While the soldiers are removing the tarps from the vehicles, opening engine compartments, and preparing to conduct PMCS, each company maintenance team chief conducts a maintenance class for leaders (usually Bradley commander and above) on a particular PMCS check, or a command highlighted problem that

requires more focus and a better understanding of the operator's manual. As each crew approaches this highlighted check during the PMCS, the leader provides them with additional instruction from his maintenance class.

The flag system, similar to the draw yard at the National Training Center, is incorporated during AA operations. Red flags represent the gun system or turret; yellow flags, the communications system; and green flags, the hull. The flags are used to signal the company maintenance personnel that a particular PMCS has been completed and verification is required, or that a deadline item has been found and needs the maintenance team's assistance.

As the DA Forms 5988-E and 2404 are turned in to the maintenance team chief; the company executive officer

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and the team chief review them, order the required parts immediately, and redirect the mechanics, using priorities of work to make the best use of that limited resource.

Along with the PMCS, each platoon turns in to the company CP the pre-fire checklist for each Bradley or combat system. This provides the status of the weapons, fire control, and other systems in each platoon, allows the master gunner to establish his maintenance priorities, and updates the commander on the unit's combat power. The commander can use this as part of his PCI to assess a crew's proficiency with its system and to train and evaluate his lieutenants. Maintaining the company CP enables the company commander to keep a running estimate and update the battalion commander at any time.

Platoon leaders and platoon sergeants are required to personally examine every deficiency on all of their tracks.

Knowing their platoon ensures that they also know their running estimate. A company commander must likewise understand every deadline deficiency on every vehicle in the company, thus reinforcing that he knows his running estimate by knowing all of the company's deadlined equipment.

The company commander can run a number of additional training events in the assembly area. Among these events are Bradley gunnery skills testing, bore-sighting, leader training, tracking board, and gun manipulation. The dismount soldiers can also be used and trained instead of being sent back to the company to clean weapons. Based on the commander's priorities and guidance, new soldiers can be familiarized with the vehicles, prospective drivers can help maintain the vehicle, or a leader may conduct dismount drills. By having the unit concentrated in one area, a commander can maximize training and eliminate distractions.

The most important training precept is to train as we fight. Although the 3d Infantry Division is a force projection unit, we still experience resource restrictions, and we spend a significant amount of our time in a garrison environment. This means that much time is spent maintaining and sustaining the heavy force. This reality has driven us to internalize the reengineering strategy to make the most of the resources we have available.

Reengineering the old command maintenance day into AA operations focuses on preparing equipment and soldiers by bringing all systems to combat readiness. It emphasizes training that is METL-based, hands-on, multi-echeloned, and fully integrated. This type of training will provide focus and development for our future leaders. We cannot afford to waste the most precious of resources—time and soldiers.

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