The Power
Of the Quarterly Training Brief

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Field Manual (FM) 25-101, *Battle Focused Training*, requires company commanders to brief their brigade commanders on their quarterly training plan. Commanders often ignore this aspect of the Army's training doctrine, since FM 25-100, *Training the Force*, states only a requirement from battalion to division. This is a misconception that must be corrected because it is detrimental to the Army's purpose in maintaining a trained and ready force.

Army training doctrine should reemphasize the importance of brigade-level quarterly training briefings (QTBs), because they provide the critical azimuth check to ensure that training is conducted in accordance with that doctrine and also because they are an invaluable leader development tool.

In fact, the brigade-level QTB is a much more valuable tool than the division equivalent. The planning and execution of most training occur at company level, and these plans, due to their importance to the force, deserve more attention than they usually get. In addition, the leader development aspect of briefing the senior rater (and rater), with lieutenants and senior sergeants present, is vastly greater than that between division and battalion commanders. At this level, true mentoring relationships are formed that are vitally important for both the senior and the subordinate.

In order to present and manage QTBs effectively, commanders must understand them. Some units conduct them religiously. My experience as a company commander included doing a QTB every quarter, six to eight weeks out, for two years. But no other brigade commander in the division required a QTB from his company commanders. An informal survey of my contemporaries in the Command and General Staff Officer's Course revealed that only about half of them had ever briefed a QTB as a company commander. Many senior commanders recognize the value of brigade-level QTBs but fail to ensure that their subordinate commanders conduct them. This occurs because they either do not understand the requirement or assume that it is common knowledge and accomplished accordingly, but this is not the case.

The question then is whether brigade-level QTBs are important enough for the effort they require. Perhaps the collective wisdom is that they are just one more administrative requirement that takes commanders away from training to go to war. If you examine this issue from the time perspective alone, there is some argument: It is another training event that will probably take at least two hours per battalion for the actual briefing, or at least six hours of a brigade commander's time every quarter. Both battalion staffs and company commanders have to prepare, which takes even more time. But preparation time can be limited to only a few hours, especially for a commander who is actively involved with his training strategy and needs on a daily basis; for example, establishing a standard briefing packet and piggybacking on the higher level QTB (conducting the brigade QTB after the division's to ensure the higher plan is approved first). A company can adequately brief its plan in 20 to 30 minutes (including time to respond to the brigade commander's questions), and a battalion's companies can finish their QTBs within two hours.

Another issue concerns when to conduct the brigade-level QTB. Doctrine states it is to be conducted before the lock-in window (at least six weeks out) for training and after the publication of the quarterly training guidance. Since the QTB results in a training contract between the senior and subordinate, this

makes sense, and it needs to be far enough out not to change near-term training but close enough that the plan has some coherence. But when should this briefing take place, before or after the battalion commander's briefing to the division commander? It must go *after*, for the practical reason that the higher contract (division to battalion) should be signed first to avoid multiple changes to the company commander's training plan. The practice of briefing the company plan before the battalion's briefing is largely an effort to fine-tune and rehearse the battalion effort. In fact, the company commander does not have the clarity of guidance and resources necessary to prepare his training plan until after the battalion's plan has been developed and approved. Thus, his briefing must follow that of his battalion commander (approximately two weeks, to allow preparation and modification time), and he still needs to brief before the near term training lock-in, ideally before the period to be briefed becomes a topic during his company training meetings (closer to eight weeks out). This sets the time window for both division and brigade-level QTBs—ten to twelve weeks out for the former and seven to nine weeks for the latter.

The next question is whether the time is worth the result, the QTB. The answer is a definite yes. First, it is vitally important that the brigade commander review and approve the training plans of his companies. Using the QTB process, he can ensure that his brigade is planning to conduct the appropriate battle-focused and multiechelon training needed to ensure success in its wartime mission. The briefing also verifies to the commander that his guidance is being followed and that his company commanders have a firm grasp on how to plan for, assess, and manage their training. In addition, the brigade commander can make any necessary adjustments to the company (and battalion) training plans during the QTB. These adjustments occur far enough out that a unit and its personnel can easily make them, ensure that training detractors are kept to a minimum, and keep the entire unit working toward a common goal.

Perhaps most important, most of the training is done at company level. Every day is a training day for all combat arms companies and for most combat support and combat service support companies as well. Staffs and higher level organizations plan training, support daily operations, and occasionally execute training. But units at battalion level and higher execute training far less frequently. The company commanders are the Army's primary trainers who do it every day. For training events to achieve standards, their planning and preparation must meet standards as well. The brigade-level QTB is the brigade commander's azimuth check to ensure that the company commanders' plans are feasible, acceptable, and suitable.

The integrated training tasks matrix will help ensure that the company commanders are planning to accomplish what is necessary. This matrix is added to the standard type QTB format and is shown simultaneously with the company's monthly training calendar, and follows the unit's mission essential task list (METL). *(See Major Spiszer's article, "A Tool for Commanders: The Integrated Training Task Matrix," in* Infantry, *November-December 1996, pp. 5-9).*

The matrix is a tool to assist in the identification, preparation, and integration of the tasks the unit will conduct during training. It integrates collective, leader, individual, and drill tasks, both before and during training. It highlights retraining requirements as well as Sergeant's Time tasks. On one or two matrix slides per calendar month, a company commander, along with his first sergeant, can articulate in terms of time and effort how he plans to prepare for and conduct training and how the training is integrated from individual to collective level. By reviewing the matrices and calendars immediately after the METL assessment slide (or by posting the unit's METL assessment on an easel where it is visible during the entire meeting), the brigade commander can check to make sure the company has the appropriate battle focus. When the matrix is shown with the calendar, the brigade commander can verify that the training is appropriate in relation to other events. Showing as Sergeant's Time those tasks to be done prior to collective training, and those that require retraining, allows the brigade commander to ensure that thought has gone into preparation, NCO responsibilities, and evaluation of past training. In short, the use of the integrated training task matrix, along with the METL assessment and unit training calendar, is an invaluable tool for the brigade commander. He can tell at a glance whether planned training is in accordance with the METL and his guidance. Furthermore, since the brigade-level QTB occurs after the division level, it also allows the battalion commander to ensure that the planned training is in accordance with his just-concluded training "contract" and guidance.

INTEGRATED TRAINING TASKS

____WEEKS OUT WEEK ____

COLLECTIVE TASKS	LEADER TASKS	INDIVIDUAL TASKS	DRILLS
DURING GREEN/AMBER CYCLE	DURING COLLECTIVE TNG	DURING COLLECTIVE TNG	DURING COLLECTIVE TNG
FUTURE TASKS WK	PRIOR TO COLLECTIVE TNG	PRIOR TO COLLECTIVE TNG	PRIOR TO COLLECTIVE TNG
	RETRAINING	RETRAINING	RETRAINING

SERGEANT'S TIME

The use of these matrices also shortens and focuses the QTB. The focus gained is on those truly critical aspects of training: *Why* are we training, *how* are we going to train, and *when* are we going to train. Shortening and focusing QTBs will make them less time-consuming and easier to conduct, give the brigade commander more time to give his verbal guidance, and result in a more valuable session for everyone attending.

Preparing the matrices (and the thought processes necessary to the preparation) requires the company commander and his subordinates to truly plan and integrate their training. They must understand and articulate why they are training, how they are training, and the reasons they have prioritized specific tasks above others. In addition, preparing these matrices for the brigade-level QTB adds substance to the company's training plan for the next quarter. In essence, the matrices and calendars are a company commander's quarterly training guidance. Further refinement provides an excellent tool for the final planning, preparation, evaluation, execution, and review of training during weekly training meetings. The integrated training task matrix is a multi-use tool that deserves as much emphasis as the QTB. It is indispensable to a focused and productive QTB at the brigade level.

Finally, the brigade-level quarterly training brief is one of the premier events a brigade commander has for leader development. During this session, he will have an entire battalion's leaders present, probably down to platoon sergeant. This is the single best opportunity a senior leader has for imparting his training philosophy to his subordinate leaders. The section on "Senior Leaders and Training" in FM 25-100 provides ten important reasons for senior leader involvement in training, from communicating their vision to eliminating training distractions. The QTB is the one scheduled training event in which the brigade commander can accomplish all of this with all of the primary trainers in a battalion present.

This is also an excellent opportunity for the commander to give his overall intent for the conduct of military operations; that is, how he intends to employ his brigade. The discussion of training tasks and their integration (and their importance to the unit's METL) can and does lead naturally to this subject. Subordinate leaders can gain valuable insights into the way their brigade commander will employ their units during combat. The brigade-level QTB provides the forum for leader, staff, and unit development in this fashion. In fact, it is much more meaningful than QTBs at higher levels since the leaders participating have far less rank and less experience. The brigade commander can greatly affect the development of his leaders through the QTB session.

Brigade level QTBs can definitely provide benefits far greater than the time and effort they demand. They can ensure that the unit is planning its training in line with doctrine, the METL, and the commander's guidance. They provide a forum for professional discussion, learning, and leader development. Reemphasizing the importance of this element of training management is necessary. Senior leaders, the Department of the Army Inspector General's office, and our institutional training base should all play a part in ensuring that brigade-level QTBs are part of every unit's planning for training.

If and when our training doctrine is revised, it should also reemphasize the importance of the quarterly training brief. Doctrine must ensure that there is no disconnect between the two principal training manuals and that they both clearly articulate the requirements and benefits of conducting brigade-level QTBs.

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