

# TRAINING NOTES



## Standardized BCT METL: CONSOLIDATING GAINS IN THE OVERHAUL OF INITIAL ENTRY TRAINING

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Over the past year, Initial Entry Training (IET), specifically Basic Combat Training (BCT), has undergone the most significant change since World War II focused on producing Soldiers who can immediately contribute to their unit following advanced individual training (AIT) in an Army at war. Gone are the days of sterile phase testing — Soldiers standing in line with a score card neatly tucked into the camouflage band of their helmet, while at a field table with a camouflage net over top, waiting at parade rest to be tested on an individual task. Sliced are the hours of perfecting drill and ceremonies, and falling asleep in large, lecture-style classes taught by committee. In place of sterile phase testing has come judgment-based training in the form of end-of-phase situational training exercises (STX), where Soldiers perform critical individual tasks under replicated combat conditions. Squad tactical movement, urban and convoy operations, have replaced many of the hours formerly devoted to marching. Small group, performance-oriented training, taught by a new breed of warrior-focused drill sergeants, characterize most of the instruction that was once taught by committee, or at the very least, in a classroom with a “platform” instructor addressing 220 students. Combat-focused courses are being constructed that force

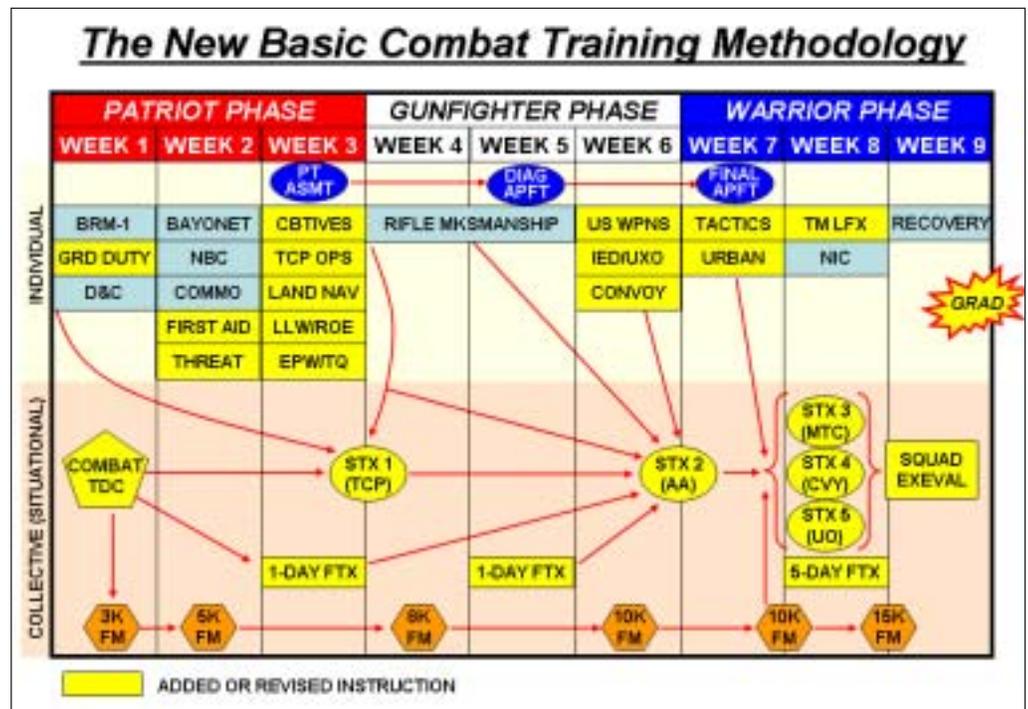


Figure 1 - New BCT Training Methodology

teamwork to happen in such events as litter carry, water and ammunition resupply, and fighting position construction replacing the noncombat-related Teamwork Development Course (TDC).

At the core of this transformation is the new basic combat training methodology (Figure 1). As noted in the upper “individual” band, the Soldiers are trained in key individual tasks that are relevant to the current needs of our force. Instead of “sterile testing” at the end of each phase of training, the Soldiers’ performance is validated during the execution of critical collective

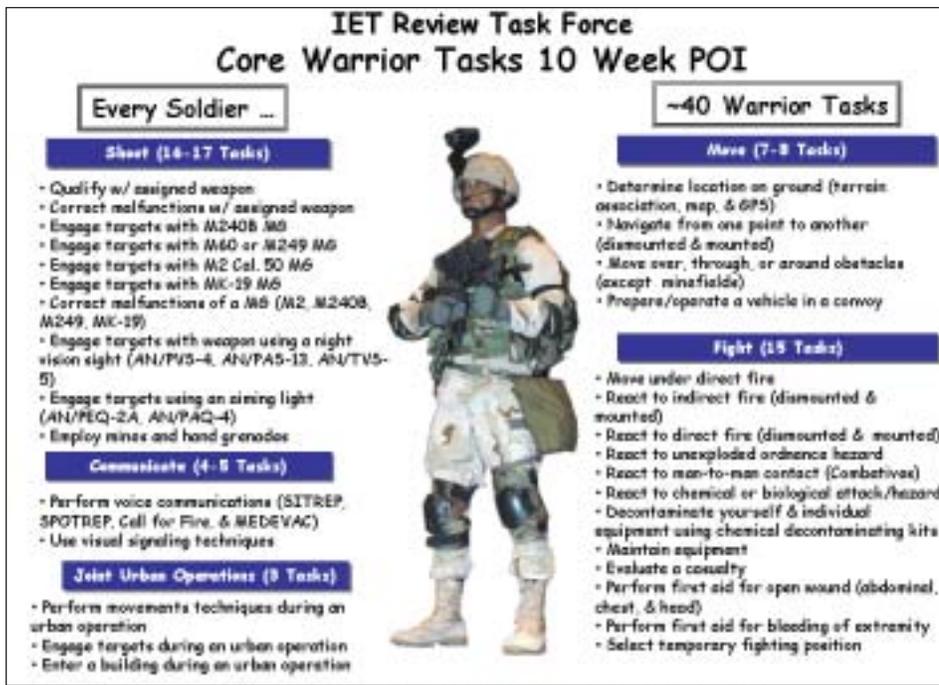


Figure 2

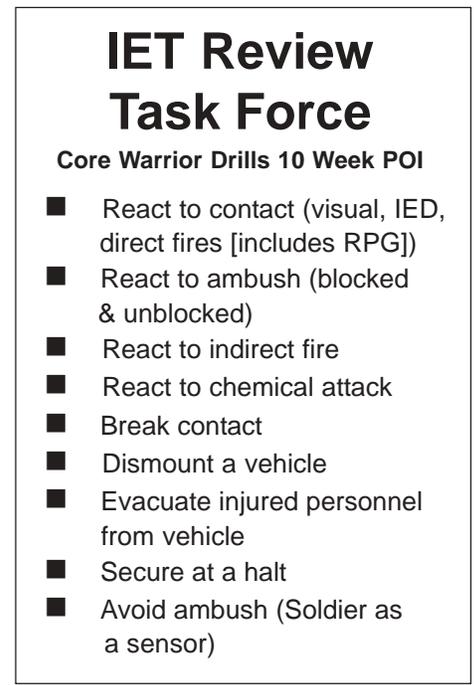


Figure 3

tasks in the form of STXs. Every effort is made to ensure these STXs are as realistic as possible — media, civilians, urban areas, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and a healthy dose of ambiguity, information overload and/or deprivation, uncertainty, and unpredictability. Just as in combat, Soldiers don't know what's going to happen next, and the standard is ultimately measured by mission accomplishment within the commander's intent rather than if performance measures were accomplished in some specific order.

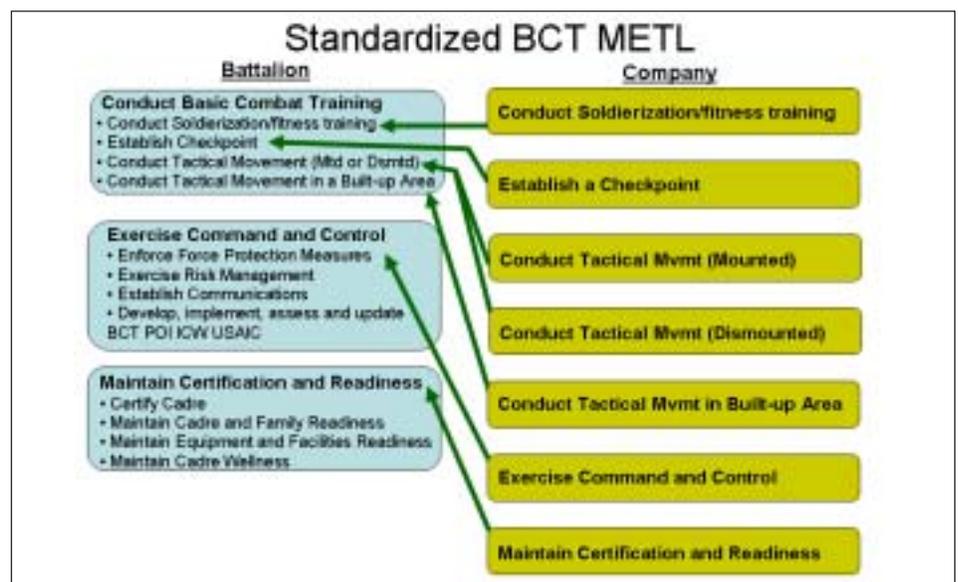
During the final five-day field training exercise (FTX) the Soldiers conduct an intensive squad external evaluation (EXEVAL) that challenges both the Soldiers and the drill sergeants in the execution of the Warrior Tasks and Drills. By the end of nine weeks, Soldiers have been exposed to many of the same situations that they will face in combat and will make tough decisions like they will have to make in combat, and for many, combat is just around the corner. The STXs and the final EXEVAL add focus to BCT and require the drill sergeants to develop their own training strategy to prepare themselves and their Soldiers for the events. Result — battle focused training throughout that improves both the Soldiers and the leaders.

The goal now is to preserve this methodology and consolidate the gains

made over the past year making BCT more realistic, relevant, and rigorous. This happens, in part, with the TRADOC-approved changes the Infantry School recently made to the BCT program of instruction (POI). However, having the resources is only part of this effort. The other critical part of is to ensure that BCT battalion and company METLs are battle-focused. "Conduct BCT" has far too long been the usual METL task briefed by nearly every BCT battalion and company commander. This task might work at the

battalion level, but it's not adequate to focus company commanders and their cadre. As FM 7-0, *Training the Force*, states, "Battle focus is equally applicable in TDA organizations" and mission essential tasks should include "critical training tasks." The critical training tasks in the new BCT are the foundation of the STXs: Establish a Checkpoint, Occupy an Assembly Area, Conduct Tactical Movement (Mounted and Dismounted); and Conduct Tactical Movement in an Urban Area. Moreover, accomplishment of these collective tasks

Figure 4



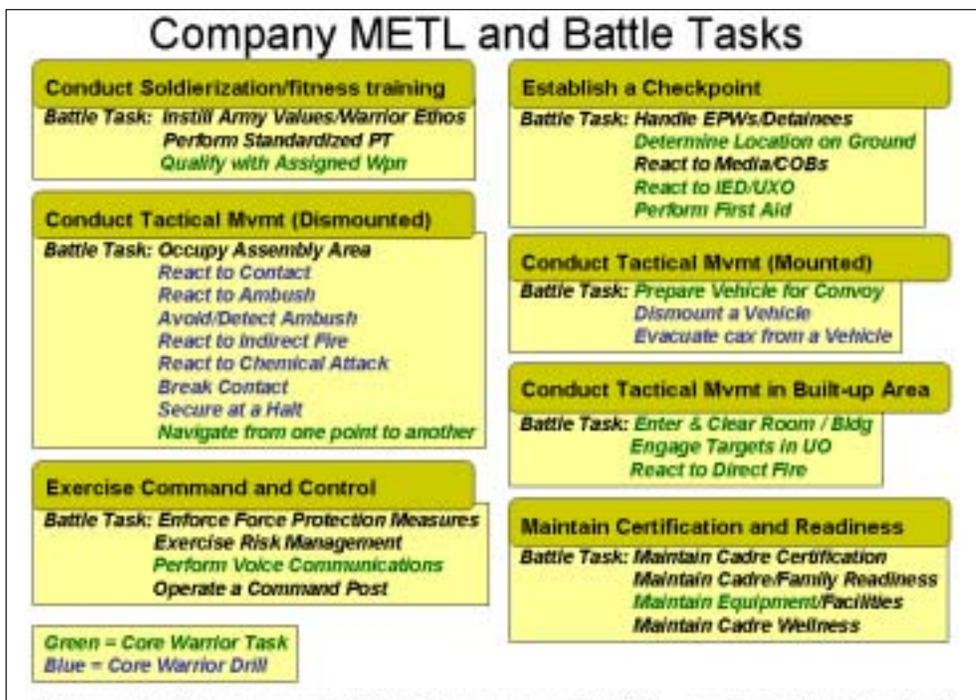


Figure 5

enable execution of many of Task Force Soldier's recommended 40 Core Warrior Tasks and Nine Core Warrior Drills (Figures 2 and 3).

No matter which BCT battalion or company in our Army, all must accomplish the same functions to make the most out of the new BCT POI. For this reason, we are proposing that every BCT battalion and company in the Army adopt a standardized METL for those tasks that are common to all. At the battalion-level, the METL can be organized into three essential tasks: Conduct BCT, Exercise Command and Control, and Maintain Certification and Readiness. Each of the battalion's METL tasks have supporting battle tasks that logically feed into the company's METL (Figures 4 and 5). For example, the battalion METL task of Conduct BCT has supporting battle tasks of Establish a Checkpoint, Conduct Tactical Movement (Mounted and Dismounted), and Conduct Tactical Movement in a Built-up Area. The company's METL would then include tasks, such as Establish a Checkpoint, Conduct Tactical Movement (Dismounted), Conduct Tactical Movement (Mounted), and Conduct Tactical Movement in a Built-up Area. The company battle tasks then logically become critical collective and/or individual tasks on which drill sergeants can focus their effort. For instance, the company battle task of Establish a Checkpoint would have supporting battle tasks that include tasks such as Handle EPWs/Detainees, Determine Location on Ground, React to Media, Perform First Aid. The majority of these battle tasks, critical collective tasks, and critical individual tasks are, in fact, core warrior tasks and drills as identified by TF Soldier.

It is important to note how the assessment of this METL differs from an MTOE unit. The assessment of this METL is largely *cadre-focused*, as opposed to being focused on the METL

task proficiency of squads, platoons, companies and battalion. Focusing on the Soldiers'-in-training ability to accomplish these tasks would be something too perishable and the unit would be untrained at the beginning of every cycle. True BCT unit proficiency is measured by cadre proficiency to accomplish *and teach* the task. Therefore, focusing primarily on the cadre and measuring success based on cadre proficiency is the key to the assessment of this METL. Cadre proficiency is measured in performance of these collective tasks during the Squad EXEVAL and provides a real assessment of training rather than the statistics used in the past. Using this approach, commanders at all levels can ensure that cadre training during cycle breaks is battle-focused and targets key areas to improve training for the upcoming cycle.

The warrior focus of an Army at war provided the necessary momentum to effect change within the approach to basic combat training. These changes result in cadre who remain challenged and continue their professional development throughout their time as a drill sergeant. Drill sergeants from all MOSs continue to develop their warrior skills while simultaneously improving as trainers. The end product is Soldiers better prepared for combat and leaders better prepared for follow-on assignments after their time on the "trail." Our challenge is to consolidate these gains for our predecessors to ensure this warrior focus is not lost in the normal personnel turbulence of our organizations. The best way to accomplish this is through the use of this battle-focused METL across BCT. It provides flexibility for our changing environment, focuses our company commanders and drill sergeants, and capitalizes on the gains achieved through the new BCT training methodology. Finally, adopting this standardized METL enables commanders to more rapidly adjust their battle tasks, critical collective tasks, and individual tasks as we incorporate lessons learned from OIF and OEF to defeat an ever changing enemy.

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