

TRAINING NOTES



THE FIRST ARMY IED TRAINING METHODOLOGY



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“IEDs are the enemy’s precision guided weapons which allows them to conduct violent attacks at a time and place of their choosing.”

— Lieutenant General Russel L. Honoré
First Army Commanding General

A ground assault convoy moves along a dirt road as Soldiers scan the environment around them, constantly searching for anything out of the ordinary. A Soldier is in the gunner’s hatch of the lead vehicle armed with a .50 cal machine gun. He is the first to see it, a pile of trash with a barely visible blue wire

protruding from it. He quickly warns his vehicle commander, but he is too late. It explodes less than 15 meters from his position. The driver of the vehicle instinctively speeds up to get out of the kill zone. The following two vehicles do the same and drive through the blast area of the improvised explosive device (IED). The Soldier then hears a second explosion followed by small arms fire. He quickly scans to his rear and sees that a portion of the convoy is stopped and firing .50 cal machine guns and MK-19 grenade

launchers at the enemy. The Soldier begins to return fire as his vehicle commander takes charge of the three-vehicle element that made it out of the ambush. They move off road and begin to flank the enemy. Soon after, the enemy breaks contact, and the unit begins to reorganize, secure the area, and call up a spot report to its higher headquarters.

This incident didn’t happen in the desert of Iraq, it happened in the Desoto National Forest training area of Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where trainers of the 3rd Brigade, 87th Division (Training Support) have perfected the art of theater immersion



training. Currently, 3rd Brigade Soldiers have trained more than 17,000 Soldiers from four Army National Guard brigades, and training for elements of a fifth brigade is ongoing. Numerous smaller units have been trained for deployment during this same time period.

Theater Immersion

When training Soldiers to deal with IEDs, the number one killer on the battlefield, theater immersion is extremely effective. The purpose of theater immersion is to rapidly build combat-ready formations, manned by battle-proofed Soldiers, inculcated with the Warrior Ethos and led by competent and confident leaders, who see first, understand first, and act first. The theater immersion training concept accomplishes this by placing leaders, Soldiers, and units — as rapidly as possible — into an environment analogous to what they will encounter in combat. At the Soldier level, training is tough, realistic, hands-on, and repetitive, designed to provide Soldiers and small tactical units the tools necessary to respond to any threat they may encounter on the battlefield. This training environment replicates conditions in a multi-echeloned approach that thrusts formations into a theater analog soon after arrival at the mobilization station and stresses the organization from the individual to brigade level. Essentially, theater immersion is a Combat Training Center (CTC)-like experience that replicates conditions in theater, while training individual through brigade-level collective tasks.

The most obvious manifestation of theater immersion is the physical design of the training sites. Camp Shelby currently has four fully functional forward operating bases (FOB) — FOB Hit, FOB Arrowhead, FOB Hurricane Point, and FOB Blue Diamond. These FOBs have the capacity to accommodate at least a battalion-sized combat formation. Additionally, four populated villages — Al Jaffah, Trebil, Al Asad, and Al Qaim — are located in the training area and two more are being developed — Safwan and Al Kut. To populate these villages, 300 civilians on the battlefield (COBs) were hired, to include 80 Iraqi-Americans or 80 Afghan-Americans (depending on the unit's future area of operations). A highway overpass was constructed, and local roads were lined with guardrails. The villages have



Photos by Major Arthur Sharpe

Camp Shelby's theater-like training area is the perfect setting to conduct realistic, hands-on improvised explosive device training.

mosques, offices for civil authorities, markets, walled residences, tunnel complexes, as well as traffic circles and low-hanging telephone and electric cables that are typical of Iraqi and Afghanistan villages. Camp Shelby's theater-like training area is the perfect setting to conduct realistic, hands-on IED training.

The integration of IEDs into theater immersion focuses on a variety of areas to include interdicting an IED far in advance of its use; force protection measures to keep Soldiers protected; cultural immersion to readily gain valuable intelligence; pattern analysis to identify areas and times of risk; methods to reestablish control and shape the battlefield; and battle drills to close with and destroy the enemy after an attack is launched. Theater immersion achieves all of these goals.

Tenants of the Counter-IED Training Methodology

The counter-IED training methodology begins with the First U.S. Army tenants of counter-IED operations — Deter, Detect, Defeat, Prevent, and Respond. These tenants guide all counter-IED training the 3rd Brigade conducts. Additionally, collaboration with other Army agencies further enhances our IED training at Camp Shelby. The First U.S. Army regularly shares information with the National Training Center, Joint Readiness Training Center, Joint IED Defeat Task Force (JIEDDTF), U.S. Army Intelligence Center and School, and U.S. Army Engineer Center and School. For example, the U.S.

Army Engineer Center's IED defeat tenants — Predict, Detect, Prevent, Neutralize, and Mitigate — are closely related to and complement the counter-IED tenants developed by First U.S. Army. This Army-wide collaborative effort ensures that IED training at Camp Shelby remains relevant and battle-focused.

Deter

In order to deter IEDs, it is imperative that a unit maintains situational awareness and establishes an aggressive posture. Units are trained to gain the initiative by targeting the enemy relentlessly through lethal and nonlethal methods. During training, units conduct aggressive and irregular combat patrols, both mounted and dismounted. They are trained to conduct surveillance on named areas of interest. Units are trained to establish beneficial relationships with the local leadership and population by conducting activities such as civil affair projects, providing medical assistance, and respecting the local customs and traditions. Force protection is also a deterrence-training objective and is accomplished by training units to conduct effective route reconnaissance operations continuously throughout the training model. Training on this basic tenant enables the unit to seize the initiative and keep the enemy off balance.

Detect

Training on the second tenant, detect, primarily resides in the training of staff and military intelligence elements. Because the

IED threat is ubiquitous, situational awareness and understanding must occur in all Soldiers and at all levels. The key to training this tenant resides in IBOS (Intelligence Battlefield Operating System) gunnery (a two-week block of intense Military Intelligence training), battalion ARTEPs (Army Training and Evaluation Programs), and brigade CPXs/MRXs (command post exercises/mission rehearsal exercises). It starts with effective pattern analysis, collection management and aggressive intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance planning. Pattern analysis training consists of developing analytical skills in MI Soldiers to predict when and where emplacing of IEDs will occur and how the enemy will utilize IEDs. Once a unit has effectively conducted training on developing enemy patterns, they must create a collection management plan that allows them to focus their limited assets on detecting IEDs. Detecting IEDs attempts to find the IED prior to it being employed. This includes identifying the bomb makers, the individuals who emplace them, and the caches which hide the components to make IEDs. The next step is to develop an Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) plan to actively pursue IEDs and their makers. During ISR training, units are taught that every Soldier is a sensor. This means that whenever any unit moves outside of the FOB, they are collectors and are given pre-briefs highlighting potential indicators of intelligence value. They also receive debriefs upon their return to collect the battlefield information acquired. Units also receive training on how to conduct aggressive and unpredictable reconnaissance planning and how to use various intelligence systems such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), signal intelligence (SIGINT) assets, and tactical human intelligence (HUMINT) Teams (THTs). THTs are a key source of intelligence in theater, and they train relentlessly to effectively collect intelligence information from the local populace.

Defeat

The defeat tenant brings technology to the battlefield. While Soldiers are trained on emerging counter-IED technologies, they are also taught not to forget that the most effective tool to defeat

IEDs is the American Soldier. Electronic countermeasures (ECM) training is integrated into ground assault convoy training. Leaders learn to employ ECM systems during movement, and Soldiers are familiarized on the operation of ECM systems. However, in order to defeat IEDs, units must defeat the enemy. Constant training on aggressive battle drills is necessary to ensure that Soldiers can destroy the enemy once an IED ambush is initiated.

Prevent

The focus of the prevent tenant is to instruct units to vigilantly maintain situational awareness of their surroundings. Changes in the environment are indicators of possible IED activity. This is reinforced through the numerous IED events that occur during training. Units are trained to vary convoy times and routes to keep the enemy off balance. Conducting cordon and search operations is also a key to preventing IED attacks. Confiscating bomb-making materials before they are turned into IEDs prevents future IED attacks.

Respond

The final tenant is respond, which focuses units on how to react if an IED attack occurs. Constant repetition on battle drills is key. Training is structured to instruct Soldiers on the variety of battle drills and responses that may be utilized. This ensures that Soldiers are adaptive, flexible, and thinking. Each IED attack that is replicated in training requires the unit to respond by executing their battle drills. The battle drills are designed to protect the force and to destroy the enemy when feasible. Training on fire support planning and execution is provided to teach how to support a unit in contact. Also, units must have a combat lifesaver capability. Soldiers receive combat lifesaver training while at Camp Shelby. The unit must also be capable of conducting casualty evacuation operations, detainee operations, and vehicle recovery operations to save lives and salvage equipment after an IED attack occurs.

Mission Training Plan

To capture the above tenants into a task, condition, and standards training model, 3rd Brigade, 87th Division (TS) developed an IED mission training plan (MTP) that was adopted by First U.S. Army. This MTP is used to augment various training venues to facilitate hands-on training as it relates to IEDs. This MTP has become the cornerstone of IED training at Camp Shelby. Furthermore, First United States Army has shared this MTP with numerous other Army agencies to include Forces Command, JIEDDTF, and the Engineer Center and School. This collaborative process has enabled the various Army agencies involved in counter-IED training to improve their training philosophies.

IED Training Execution

"We train Soldiers the way they will fight, and the standard comes from theater. We are constantly adjusting our training based on current conditions down range. The theater



Soldiers must learn how to react to an IED attack. Constant repetition of battle drills is key.



immersion concept provides the flexibility to do that in near real time.”

— **Colonel Daniel L. Zajac**

Commander, 3rd Brigade, 87th Division (TS)

Theater immersion IED training starts with all Soldiers receiving classroom training based on their future area of operation. This training focuses on the most recent TTPs in use by the enemy and lessons learned from theater. This develops a situational understanding of the environment in which they will be operating. Each Soldier also receives the DA G3 JIEDDTF level I brief, which is given by 3rd Brigade, 87th Division (TS) Soldiers who are DA G3 JIEDDTF level I/II qualified. Also, the DA G3 JIEDDTF provides brigade and battalion commanders and staff's level II and level III training that focuses on the holistic approach to defeating IEDs in theater.

Once this baseline of knowledge is established, the theater immersion concept comes to the forefront. Due to the ubiquitous IED threat in theater, there is no single, discrete IED training event at Camp Shelby. IEDs are nested in all events ranging from land navigation and weapons qualification to battalion ARTEPs, brigade CPXs, and brigade MRXs.

For example, during brigade MRXs and battalion ARTEPs, brigades/battalions conduct a rigorous field training exercise involving missions such as FOB defense, cordon and search, raids, hostage rescue, and ground assault convoys. Villages, such as Trebil, Al Qaim, Al Jaffah, and Al Asad, are populated with civilians on the battlefield, to include Arabic speakers. These COBs perform roles such as mayors, police chiefs, merchants, blacklisted insurgents, etc. IEDs are emplaced on routes throughout the training area. The brigade/battalion operates in a scenario

with actual patterns of IED emplacement and indirect and direct attacks. OPFOR operates as insurgents, and civilians in the villages may be pro-Coalition, anti-Coalition or neutral. Blacklisted insurgents are present and may be detained if identified and caught. Village residents are more willing to provide information on insurgent attacks, such as IEDs, if the U.S. units treat them with respect and attempt to assist the local population. The success of the brigade/battalion battle staff to apply the tenants of IED defeat is exercised during these exercises.

This training method requires units to react to IEDs in any environment at anytime. It is repetitious and deliberate, which continuously allows units to reinforce lessons from classroom training and the continued study of lessons learned from theater. Soldiers not only learn battle drills to counter-IEDs, but they gain a comprehensive understanding of the overall IED threat. This allows Soldiers and their leaders to understand that different battle drills and counter-IED techniques may be brought to bear for different circumstances. As a result, thinking, agile, and adaptive Soldiers are developed. This approach is designed to create a training environment where every Soldier encounters a minimum of 30 IED events during post mobilization training. This training technique establishes a mentality in Soldiers that IEDs are the enemy's precision guided weapons and can occur at any time and any place.

IED Master Gunners

The final element to IED training at Camp Shelby is the IED master gunner concept. The commander, 3rd Brigade, 87th Division (TS) has given the role of brigade IED master gunners to the brigade

intelligence officers. The role of these master gunners is to ensure recent, relevant enemy IED tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) are incorporated into Camp Shelby's various training events. The master gunners data-mine NIPRNET and SIPRNET sites to track new trends in TTPs to insure training remains relevant and up to date. They relay this information to battalion IED master gunners. The brigade IED master gunners also manage the MTP and ensure new lessons learned from theater are incorporated into the MTP. The battalion IED master gunners take this updated intelligence on our enemy and execute current, relevant, battle-focused IED training. The battalion IED master gunners are also responsible for coaching, teaching, and mentoring mobilized unit leaders as they continually train on counter-IED tactics and techniques.

The 3rd Brigade, 87th Division (TS) has established this theater immersion counter-IED training methodology to create a realistic and interactive environment that trains every Soldier on the most updated enemy IED TTPs. This provides the best possible training to deploying Soldiers in order to defeat the enemy and save lives.

We have a nonnegotiable contract with the American people to prepare her sons and daughters for war. We must use imagination and innovation to do this better than we ever have before. We can not, we will not fail in this task.”

— **Lieutenant General Russel L. Honoré**

First Army Commanding General

The Soldiers of the 3rd Brigade, 87th Division (TS) take the First U.S. Army commander's training philosophy to heart, and we will not fail.

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