

Summer Training at USMA

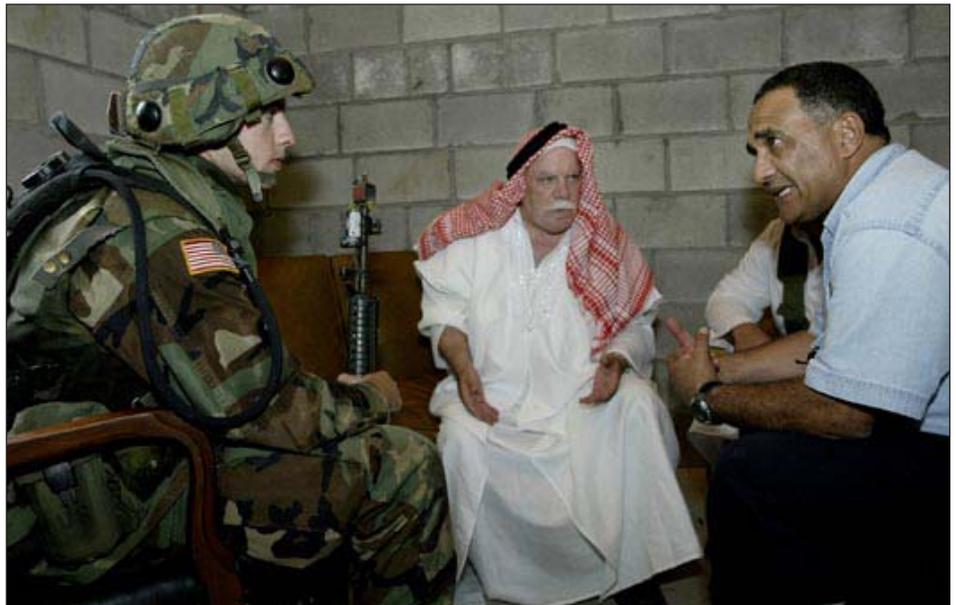
Academy Updates Cadet Field Training

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The mission of the Department of Military Instruction at the United States Military Academy states that it will "...train, educate, and inspire cadets in the essence of Warfighting and the Profession of Arms ... in order to develop competent future Army officers." For as far back as most can remember, that mission has been fulfilled by using a Cold War model for training. That has now changed.

Cadets, in their first two years, go from being civilians to small unit leaders. Cadet Field Training (CFT), the training conducted at West Point for the second-year cadets, follows the crawl, walk, run method spread over two four-week details. The first detail, crawl and walk, focused on individual training. Land navigation, basic and advanced rifle marksmanship, patrolling, combatives, and first aid are just a sample of the training conducted during the first detail. Up until the summer of 2006, the second detail training was focused on offense, defense, raid, recon and ambush operations. These were separate events that took on a focus of operating in the woods and away from built-up areas. The training was good and useful but in light of the global war on terrorism, not as relevant as it needed to be. The academy realized this and made a radical change.

The change came not as a slow, multiple-year process, but in the course of about two months the new plan was instituted, and the planning and resourcing started. The new training for CFT still followed the crawl, walk, run model; however, now the run phase looks more like a sprint. All of the training during the first detail now directly supports Operation Highland



Courtesy photos

During the training exercise, a cadet company commander speaks with a village sheik through a translator.

Warrior (OHW), which is the second detail. Camp Buckner was transformed into a forward operating base (FOB) complete with access control points. Cadets also implemented a complete weapons immersion program, and training turned into a continuous operation where all of the committees interacted with each other. The new committees for OHW are Cordon and Search, Search and Attack, Access Control Point, Quick Reaction Force, Squad Live-Fire Ambush, and Convoy Reaction. The academy also hired Arabic linguists to provide Cadets with experience in dealing with a language barrier and to also learn more about the Muslim religion and culture.

When asked to put into context the changes for the 2006 training, Major Bill Conde, the regimental executive officer, explained that "the training at CFT has evolved since my first experience back in 1992 ... This past CFT we took the training to a new level by using current scenarios we are experiencing in the GWOT. The deliberate defense, for example, has changed to defend a forward operating base and establish access control points. Other missions the cadets experienced this

summer were search and attack, convoy operations and cordon and search. All of which our force is executing daily while forward deployed."

The access control point mission was an opportunity for cadets to not only be exposed to the difficulties in defending a fixed site but the necessity of all Soldiers having to deal with difficult tactical, ethical, and cultural decisions at a high visibility location — the front gate of an American compound. Cadets were trained and evaluated in the actual setup and execution of an ACP by conducting vehicle and personnel searches. However, they were further challenged when the enemy tried to infiltrate the ACP using a variety of methods which included vehicle-borne and personnel-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs, PBIEDs), peaceful and aggressive protests, and full-out attacks. Each of the situations required cadets in all positions to make tough decisions on the spot.

Search and attack operations focused on traditional patrolling techniques. The necessity for all cadets, and future lieutenants, to understand the principals of a combat patrol is critical to current

operations in many theaters of operations. This mission centered on the security of the FOB by conducting combat patrols in the surrounding hills looking for enemy mortars and caches.

Convoy operations occur on a daily basis in OIF/OEF, and this led to the development of a convoy reaction mission. This mission not only focused on the ability of executing a convoy and conducting react-to-contact drills, it also trained the cadets on route clearance missions, resupply missions, and reacting to IEDs. Cadets were able to focus on eight of the 9 Warrior Drills while conducting this mission.

“The cadets are pushed a little harder, hold more responsibility as cadet leaders and actually learn techniques and procedures they can take directly to the Army as platoon leaders,” MAJ Conde said.

Cordon and search is the only company-sized mission of OHW. This mission consisted of an extensive planning period, an air assault, establishment of a patrol base, then the actual cordon and search that has the propensity to escalate into an urban attack. This mission allows cadets the opportunity to conduct deliberate troop leading procedures and mission rehearsals. When the cadets are entering the village, they must establish contact with the village leader (who was played by an Arabic linguist from Iraq).



A cadet interacts with a villager during the training exercise.

The cadet company commander, through an interpreter, discusses the operation with the sheik, tries to gain his trust and cooperation, and execute a safe, controlled search of the village. The enemy has also infiltrated the village, and the cadets must then search and clear the buildings with the enemy in them. After the battle, the cadet commander must return to the sheik and repair the relationship damaged by the enemy attack. This is an eye-opening experience for most cadets, from having to talk through an interpreter and deal with the obvious, and not so obvious, cultural differences, to conducting building and room clearance in a company operation.

The quick reaction force (QRF) interacted with all of the other missions in addition to conducting its own separate missions. The QRF had priorities of planning given to it by the regimental commander, and it conducted TLPs in support of this guidance. In addition to supporting each of the other missions, the OPR conducted searches for mortar teams, downed aircrew rescue, and medical evacuations (MEDEVACs). This mission gave cadets the opportunity to conduct planning along multiple timelines, and to coordinate with multiple units to support their mission.

One huge difference that stands out with the summer training of 2006 from previous summers was that the operations, across the entire summer, were continuous. The regimental commander and staff had the challenge of managing all aspects of the cadet's summer. They organized training, events, and activities for down time (what little of it there was). The staff conducted mission planning for all missions and training events, and coordinated with the eight company commanders in daily battle update briefs. The result was a summer training program that was run by cadets for cadets from the first day to the last.

“Compared to past years, CFT was a truer reflection of training in the real Army,” said Cadet Command Sergeant Major Amelia Wiershem.

The field training conducted by cadets during the summer of 2006, more so than in recent years and especially during Operation Highland Warrior, exposed cadets to what they can expect to see when they graduate. The objective is not to make all cadets experts in all of the missions, but to place cadets in situations that take them out of their comfort zone and force them to make difficult decisions. The overall purpose of Cadet Summer Training is to train, instruct, test, and validate cadets and new cadets on specific Basic Officer Leader Course I (BOLC I) tasks, Military Program Required Tasks (MPRT), and the Chief of Staff of the Army's Warrior Tasks and Drills focused by the global war on terrorism within the contemporary operational environment, and this last summer was a resounding success.

Captain Ryan Morgan is the Cadet Summer Training S3 at the United States Military Academy. His previous assignments include serving as commander of C Company and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) during Operation Iraqi Freedom I. He has also served as an Infantry Requirements Analyst at the Futures Center, Headquarters, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command.
