

A New Battalion Commander's Command Focus Through the Application of LLOs

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Shortly after assuming command and after completing my initial assessments of the unit, my command sergeant major and I began formulating a plan to refocus and introduce concepts to improve the battalion — from systems and processes to the quality of training and care for our cadre. The method we chose coincided with the mental process I found myself using to address the challenges, applying logical lines of operation (LLOs). The application of this process has enabled our team to articulate our command focus in time, space, and purpose with the company commanders, first sergeants, and cadre. Further, it has helped define the endstates sought to successfully achieve our unit's mission as a Basic Combat Training (BCT) battalion.

Logical lines of operation form a cognitive operational framework to define and arrange actions and intermediate objectives towards a desired endstate, unified by purpose. Although LLOs are generally associated with campaign planning, it serves as a viable vehicle to mentally model the linkage of ends, ways, and means. As the method to depict our command focus, it has enumerable benefits in framing where we, as a battalion, need to go and how we will get there.

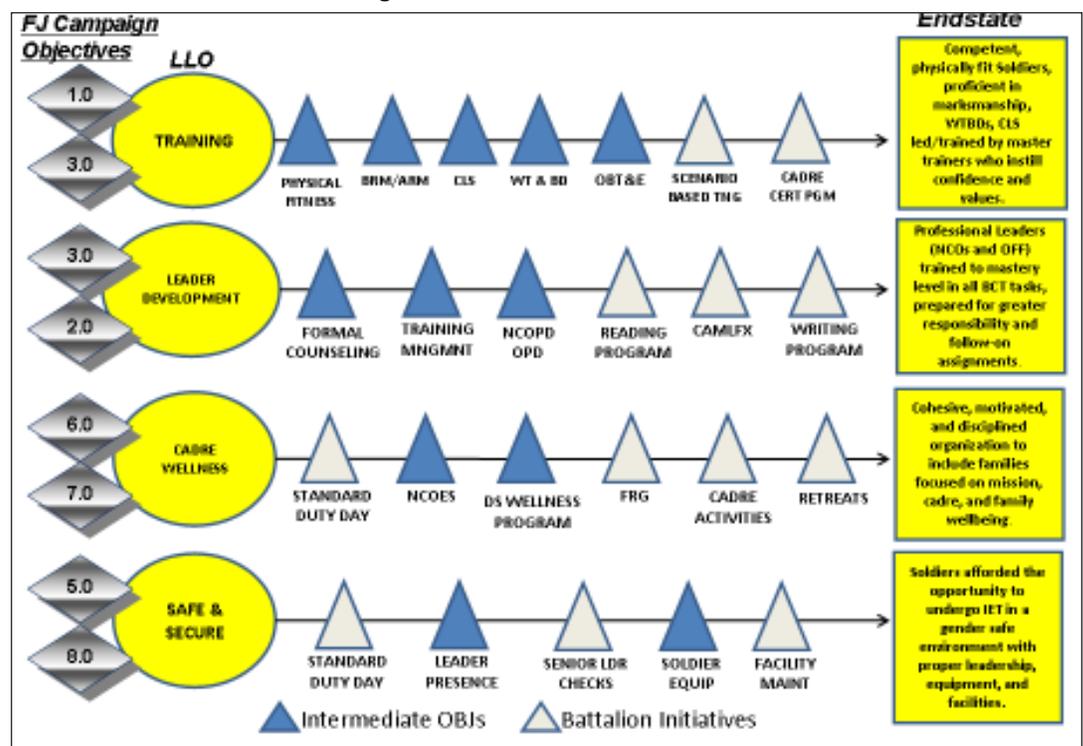
The four lines of operation we determined as necessary to meet our endstates are training, leader development, cadre wellness, and the safety and security of our IET Soldiers and cadre. These key areas were established based on an assessment of the desired endstates necessary to complete our battalion's mission to transform civilians into Soldiers that are prepared for combat. Along each line of operation are the intermediate objectives, i.e. focal areas, programs, initiatives, to achieve success and attain the endstate along the LLO.

The most important aspect of our mission is training. In order to develop Soldiers prepared for combat and their first unit of assignment, they must be competent, physically fit, and proficient in select tasks. The cadre responsible to train our Soldiers must also be master trainers who can instill confidence, competency, and values. To achieve this endstate, we focus on several key areas of required proficiency at the individual

soldier level such as marksmanship, warrior tasks & battle drills (WTBDs), and combat lifesaver (CLS) skills. These areas, along with physical fitness, represent intermediate objectives which require greater focus and resources to ensure they are trained to greatest extent possible. This focus allows commanders to understand training priorities in a resource-constrained environment with a multitude of obligatory training requirements. Along this LLO, the concept of outcomes-based training and education (OBT&E) is imperative. OBT&E provides an emerging model and methodology to train Soldiers. Not only does it depict the desired outcomes of Soldiers, but it describes the *ways* in which to achieve and train Soldiers through active learning, problem solving, and the understanding of purpose. In order to leverage training focused on outcomes, we have applied the standard of scenario-based situational training exercises or STXs. These STXs incorporate various tasks linked together within a realistic scenario Soldiers will encounter in combat to train and test both proficiency of key tasks and also critical thinking.

Today's Soldiers now operate in environments where the lowest-ranking member may be responsible to make decisions that may have strategic impacts. They must be trained and placed in demanding scenarios to test their wit and ability to comprehend the cause and effect of their actions and our expectations of them in the

Figure 1 — Command Focus LLOs



contemporary operating environment. Finally, the quality of training given to our Soldiers is only as good as those providing the instruction. Our cadre and their proficiency in training the numerous tasks within BCT are paramount to the mission's success. As a unit, we understand the strengths and weaknesses within this system and have developed a detailed program to ensure all of our cadre, regardless of Military Occupational Specialty, are master trainers and capable to provide the best instruction to our new Soldiers.

Perhaps one of the most under-appreciated components within a unit is leader development. In the Initial Entry Training environment a great deal of emphasis is placed on the Soldiers in training but not on the cadre. Junior commanders and NCOs require continuous training focused on their development for both their current and future assignments. Due to the current operational tempo and more rapid promotions, many junior officers and NCOs are propelled into positions of greater responsibility with insufficient experience or training. Shortfalls exist in critical areas such as training management, leadership, tactics and doctrine, and administration. These shortfalls are correctable with a deliberate and sustained leader development program focused on training key competencies expected of Army leaders throughout their service. Many cadre members will return to deployable units in positions of greater responsibility, and the senior leadership must make a concerted effort to ensure they are prepared. Our focus is to develop our junior officers and NCOs through professional development programs (OPD/NCOPD), reading and writing programs, counseling, and developing maneuver live-fire ranges such as the Combined Maneuver Live-Fire Exercise Program, which enforces understanding both the art and science of training. A well-resourced leader development program, sustained over time, builds not only the competency level of leaders within their current position, but postures them for greater success in their military career.

The most noticeable challenge the CSM and I have faced since taking command is the welfare of our cadre. Many of the NCOs and junior officers within the battalion are recent veterans of combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, the majority with multiple

deployments. Several cadre members, as well as their families, assumed that an assignment in the U.S. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) would provide a needed break from the operational force. Unfortunately, shortly after arrival, it becomes apparent that the environment within a BCT is just as demanding as any deployable unit. Hours are long, and weeks consist of working six-to-seven days straight without a break. For many drill sergeants this places an enormous burden on their personal life, especially if they have families. By analyzing the requirements to take care of our cadre and the demands of basic training, we determined that any necessary movement along any line of operation to achieve the desired endstates would require addressing this area first. Our primary purpose along this line of operation is to build a cohesive, disciplined, and motivated organization focused on the mission, the cadre, and family well-being. Achieving success here equates to stable, professionally focused NCOs and officers. Implementing policies that ensure our subordinates conduct high quality training along with providing appropriate supervision while balancing cadre personal time is essential. As a unit, we have invested in certain initiatives that target strengthening the individual and family wellness. These include ensuring NCOs get to the required schools for professional development and advancement, reestablishing a battalion-level Family Readiness Group focused on cadre wellness and communication, offering single soldier and married couple retreats, and other activities such as military formals, leader calls, and sports competitions to build camaraderie and esprit de corps. By simultaneously working on these objectives, we set the necessary conditions to work on the other lines of operation and endstates.

The final line of operation is much broader and addresses the necessary endstate of a safe and secure environment for Soldiers and their cadre to train within. This includes the command and cadre climate that new Soldiers are expected to be part of for their first 10 weeks in the Army. Basic training has changed over the years and so has the manner in which newly enlisted Soldiers are treated. Soldiers require good leadership and a safe atmosphere to

train, regardless of gender. Providing this environment, coupled by professionalism and high standards, is critical and ensures that they can learn the necessary skills to be successful in the Army and, more importantly, combat. Key objectives to support this endstate are providing proper supervision and senior leader involvement, which we have established within our standard duty policy and senior leader checks. Our focus also recognizes that in order to train Soldiers well, they require the best facilities and resources available. We continue to strive for the best facilities and training resources for our cadre and Soldiers and employ them throughout the training cycle. Although it is a constant battle due to limited resources, we must ensure that training is first class and the equipment, support, and services on the installation are maximized to support our units' mission.

In developing our command focus to achieve mission success, we found our LLOs as the best method to provide the needed contextual framework to focus our efforts. The actions and objectives within our lines of operation depict causal relationships that are both linear and nonlinear, and are represented, in some cases, on more than one line of operation because they occur simultaneously and are supporting. We reviewed our immediate objectives many times to ensure their suitability and feasibility to the defined endstates and desired outcomes of IET. We also cross referenced them with our installations' campaign objectives and found them similar and mutually supporting. As we continue down the road as a new command team with a demanding mission, the logical lines of operation will serve as the road map for our unit to collectively understand where we are going and how we will get there. This most important impact will be the new Soldiers' ability to rapidly integrate into their next unit as a professional and competent member of the U.S. Army.

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