

Training: Preparation for Combat

General William R. Richardson, US Army

The revolution in American military doctrine introduced by AirLand Battle spawned a need for corresponding revolutions in both combined arms and joint training. In this June 1986 article, General William R. Richardson, then US Army Training and Doctrine Command commander, challenged the Army's leaders to accept the new training responsibilities inherent in the acceptance of AirLand Battle doctrine.

IN 1973, GENERAL William E. DePuy, the first commander of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command, began a training revolution. His vision changed how the Army viewed training and how the Army trained soldiers, leaders and units. From top to bottom, the Army answered DePuy's call with an unprecedented dedication to training excellence to prepare the Army for war.

The training revolution continues. The Army's first priority in peacetime must be training. High-quality, well-trained soldiers demand that their leaders provide tough, well-planned unit training. That training must be realistic and challenging. Realism now means far more than live firing at Grafenwoehr or extended field problems at Fort Hood, Texas.

Excellent training means synchronizing maneuver, fire support and Air Force assets at the National Training Center (NTC). Excellent training means deploying to the maneuver rights area as combined arms teams with air defense sections, howitzer batteries and the tanks of the armored cavalry. Excellent training means exploiting the joint training opportunities of *TEAM SPIRIT* and *REFORGER* so that allied armies can fight side by side executing standardized procedures with skill and competence.

Our training must be backed up by expert leadership whose tactical and technical competence generates a great sense of confidence in those they lead. When this occurs, we will achieve high morale, tremendous pride in the unit, great satisfaction and increased combat effectiveness. The essence of leadership is to see that all of this happens. It can happen if our leaders and

commanders have the purpose of mind to train their units as if they had to go to war tomorrow.

Those leaders and commanders must have a compelling desire to make their units the very best possible. They must have a love for the field and an intuitive sense of how to fight that unit or have it provide support to units that do fight. They recognize that excellent training is the foundation for a strong, positive rapport between the leader and his soldier. Those leaders must be dedicated to their soldiers and to providing the best possible training for them and their units. If their dedication is anything short of 100 percent, they ought to be doing something else because they are not trainers.

The Leader

Leaders and commanders cannot expect to undertake the training of their units and get the proper results if they do not know how to fight and support. Knowing and understanding the doctrine is imperative. That requires study and more study, followed by practice and more practice. I sincerely believe that good tacticians make good trainers, and good trainers make good tacticians. This is founded on the key leadership principle—be tactically and technically proficient.

We must afford our junior leaders the opportunity to practice in the science and art of war. We need to let them learn the hard way, out in the field. They must have the chance to make mistakes and then be coached by their superiors on how to avoid those mistakes the next time around. Junior leaders and commanders need the coaching and teaching of the senior commanders who have already acquired the experience of the field.

They expect that, and they are due it. When we can provide our young leaders such a free opportunity to try something, and possibly make a mistake, we are teaching them how to take this initiative and how to take risks. They badly need this opportunity, and senior commanders must afford them that opportunity. Then, we will truly be growing superb practitioners in the science and art of war.

All training must relate to wartime missions. If an event does not, we should not train on it. We do not have time. Our troops do not want it. And we are depriving ourselves of the chance to improve our unit's performance and our own leadership skills.

Training requires the leader to work hard, to concentrate on long-term goals rather than short-term hurdles and to set objectives, plan, execute, evaluate and fix. If an operation is sloppily executed, then it must be done again. The principle is simple-do it until it is right. Time, fatigue and weather cannot weaken your resolve. Your unit must return to the assembly area either well-trained or with a clear understanding of what training improvements are necessary and how to achieve training success. Anything short of that results in a unit that is not prepared for war.

To be prepared for war, the unit must be tactically competent. Executing maneuvers and formations according to doctrine determines tactical competence. Leaders must understand how to analyze mission, enemy, terrain, troops and time available (METT-T) to organize for offensive or defensive operations. Based on the commander's intent, for example, leaders must know when a movement to contact can become a hasty attack. Tactical training requires a unit to practice operations over and over again until the unit executes orders as a combat team. From flank guard to battalion trains, leaders discipline their staff and subordinate commanders by insisting on high standards of tactical performance.

Leaders must master the fundamental skills they are developing in soldiers-from simple map reading to the proper use of terrain for cover and concealment to calls for fire and the employment of combined arms teams. Technical and tactical proficiency remains the mainstay of the leader's competence.

Training exercises at the NTC consistently show that bold and decisive leadership is essential to tactical success. Leaders who lack confidence based on tactical competence are not willing to take the initiative and the risk that comes with it. Their lack of confidence undermines their unit's ability to accomplish its mission.

The NTC also affirms that soldiers want to succeed and, to do so, they look to us-their leaders. Clearly, we set the example. Our technical and tactical competence

builds our confidence and inspires confidence in our soldiers. The execution of quality training is arduous, but we cannot recoil from that responsibility. In times of uncertainty, confusion and stress, soldiers seek leadership. Soldiers learn more from what we do than from what we say.

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Training Realism

Fundamental to training realism is the unit's wartime mission. Every exercise and every training activity must prepare the unit for war. Mission analysis yields the key tasks that a unit must execute. Those key tasks and associated standards are contained in Army Training and Evaluation Programs (ARTEPs), Mission Training Plans and drills. When actual wartime tasks are known, realistic training begins.

Combined arms training must be automatic. Only with such training will our leaders and commanders understand how to synchronize maneuver with fire-power plus all of the other functions of combat that go into a successful battle. We simply must find the time to put units in the field to practice that combined arms experience. Failing that, our units will be inadequate to fight against the enemy.

While the Army may fight as a single service on limited occasions, joint and combined operations will be the rule rather than the exception. Deployment and operational training exercises with allies provide the realistic, mission-oriented training necessary for success in war. Joint training offers an unparalleled peacetime opportunity to exercise and refine war-fighting capabilities. Training requires units to apply joint doctrine and tactics, rehearse the techniques and procedures of integrated command and control, and attack the full range of problems associated with operational and logistical interoperability. Without integrated, synchronized training of both combat and support elements from our allied forces, our capability to fight and support will be dangerously weakened.

Unit training must realistically reflect the confusion and frequency of change in combat. Our scenarios

must challenge commanders and staffs to task-organize and deploy to accomplish on-order missions quickly, at night and in mission-oriented protection posture (MOPP) IV. Field training must be planned for extended periods of time. A three-day trip to the field, for example, will not impose the hardships of fatigue, stress and physical discomfort that a soldier must be prepared to face. Adverse weather should not shorten a field exercise. Safety must always be a primary concern, but the dangers and risks of bad weather can simply not be avoided. If a unit is not trained in a tough environment, then it is not prepared for war.

Disciplined Training

Training must reflect the fundamentals of the AirLand Battle. ARTEPs and drills provide the disciplined structure for training collective tasks at crew, team, squad, platoon and company levels. Combined arms training demands standardization of fundamental tactics, techniques and procedures. Bradley fighting vehicles fight alongside Abrams tanks. Aviators must understand restrictive and permissive fire control measures. Engineer minefields must be depicted in the squadron tactical operations center exactly as depicted on the combat engineer platoon leader's Scatterable Minefield Report. The armor, infantry, field artillery, aviation, air defense artillery and engineers will not fight effectively as a combined arms team without standardization of tactics, techniques and procedures. The execution of standardized doctrine requires disciplined training.

Improved intelligence-gathering and communications technology provide a proliferation of information to commanders and staffs. Through training, our commanders—from brigade through corps—must discipline their staffs to prioritize information, to adhere closely to METT-T, to develop a lucid understanding of the commander's intent, to concentrate combat power in time and space and to integrate communications,

logistics and sister service support. Staff training must be steeped in AirLand Battle doctrine—not with casual familiarity but with an in-depth understanding of how to execute the tenets of AirLand Battle. Clearly, disciplined, precise training of the battle staff is essential for combat success.

Training Quality

Training excellence inevitably returns to the leader—the warfighter. The warfighter is a special breed of soldier. From squad leader to corps commander, the warfighter knows how to fight on the battlefield. With remarkable clarity, the warfighter's purpose is fixed in his mind, and he sifts through all of the annoying distractions to focus tenaciously on what is right and how to achieve it.

The warfighter knows he is right. To prove it, he stands daily with his fellow soldiers as their example of professional competence, knowing he is good. His confidence is contagious. This is not because he is arrogant and others want to hide behind his cockiness. It is because his unblinking dedication to do what is right demands that he train until it is right. Others then learn from his audacity to be disciplined and tough on themselves.

The warfighter's toughness pays off. He knows that Erwin Rommel was right when he said, "The best form of welfare for the troops is first-class training." Training excellence improves equipment maintenance, personal and billets appearance, re-enlistment and cohesion. Morale soars as his unit excels. The warfighter who trains his unit and soldiers also trains himself because the best way to learn is to train.

Leaders must build on excellence in training. Doctrine is in place. Training guidance is abundant. Resource constraints demand tough decisions but, above all, training must predominate. Leaders must move to the field and train their commands and sections with the intensity and fervor of combat. Only then will our forces be prepared for war. **MR**

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