

Training

and the Army of the 1990s

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This article by then Army Chief of Staff General Carl E. Vuono was prepared on the eve of Operation Desert Storm. Vuono's commitment to training readiness, even in the midst of mandated downsizing and calls for additional cost-saving measures such as "tiered readiness," comes across clearly, emphatically and, considering the success of Desert Storm and a host of other diverse and complex missions, very convincingly.

In no other profession are the penalties for employing untrained personnel so appalling or so irrevocable as in the Army.

—General Douglas MacArthur

IN THE SPRING of 1950, the United States was at peace—an exhausted and uneasy peace in which the world was still reeling from the great cataclysm of World War II. Nobody expected another war; nobody wanted one. Yet, on 25 June, the peace was suddenly and violently shattered as the armies of Kim Il Sung swept into South Korea. A small group of American soldiers was hastily organized into an *ad hoc* task force and was thrust into the breach to try to stem the tide of the North Korean onslaught. These men fought with courage, but they were ill-prepared, poorly equipped and, most importantly, inadequately trained for the tasks they were given. As a result, many of them never came home, and the United States was very nearly run off the Korean peninsula by the army of a backward and impoverished nation.

The lessons of those early days of the Korean War are many and varied, but they all reinforce a powerful message that has been pervasive throughout the history of armed conflict and is of singular relevance to the US Army of today. That message reminds us from across the ages that training is the decisive factor in the outcome of battle and the ultimate determinant of the fate of the nation.

In this article, I want to discuss the significance of training in the Army of today and the “why” and “how”

of training in the Army of tomorrow. For it is training that prepares soldiers, units and leaders to fight and win in combat—the Army’s basic mission.

The Army Today. As we enter a new decade, the US Army bears little resemblance to the force of 40 years ago. Indeed, as we have witnessed in a year of great challenge, the Army of 1990 is the finest fighting force this nation has ever fielded and the best in the world today. This is more than rhetorical flourish. It is a reality that has been repeatedly demonstrated in exercises throughout the globe, in the crucible of combat in Panama and in Operation *Desert Shield*—the most complex military undertaking in more than a generation.

This Army did not come about by accident. It is the product of a comprehensive and visionary plan that has as its foundation the Army’s six fundamental imperatives—principles that are the benchmark by which we measure every proposal and every program, and form the architecture by which we are building the Army of the future. These imperatives include an effective warfighting doctrine; a mix of armored, light and special operations forces; continuous modernization; the development of competent, confident leaders; and an unbending commitment to a quality force. At the base of each of these is the sixth imperative and the top priority for the Army in the field: tough, demanding, realistic training relentlessly executed to uncompromising standards.

For it is training that brings our warfighting doctrine to life; it is training that gives us the indispensable capacity to integrate the various elements of our mix of

forces into packages that are effective against specific threats we face. It is training that enables our soldiers to bring to bear the awesome potential of our modern weapons; it is training that builds the kinds of sergeants and officers that our soldiers deserve. And it is training that makes quality Americans commit themselves to join our ranks and quality soldiers commit themselves to a lifetime of selfless service. In short it is training that undergirds the Army of today, and it is training that

As we marvel at the collapse of the Soviet empire, we also witness the birth of a new era of uncertainty and peril, an era in which the threats we will confront are themselves ill-defined. Although we applaud the political trends that are occurring within the Warsaw Pact, we must also prepare for the implications of the instability and chaos that historically trail in the wake of the collapsing empires. It is, therefore, critical that we retain the high levels of training that we have achieved within the US Army.

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Why We Train. The fundamental importance of training—a truth that is self-evident to military leaders—is not widely understood by many outside of the profession of arms. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet empire, some have called into question the need to maintain readiness and training within the Army. After all, the argument goes, since the Soviet threat has receded and since the West would have greatly extended warning times of any renewed Soviet military challenge, we can afford to scale back the training and readiness of many of our forces. That is the same argument that we have faced after every war in our history, and the end of the Cold War is apparently no different.

The events of 2 August 1990 have dampened the public enthusiasm for this perspective, but we can expect it to surface again in the years ahead. So it is important that, within our profession, we clearly understand why training will remain so vital in the years ahead, and that we carefully articulate our training rationale to those whose support is so critical to our future.

The training imperative is driven by three basic and interrelated responsibilities: the Army's strategic obligations in the evolving international environment, the Army's requirement to shape the force for tomorrow and our sacred duty to our soldiers. Each of these responsibilities is of central importance to the Army and the nation.

The International Environment. Tough, realistic training has always been crucial to our national success, and in the years ahead, the nature of the international environment will reinforce that importance yet again. As we marvel at the collapse of the Soviet empire, we also witness the birth of a new era of uncertainty and peril, an era in which the threats we will confront are themselves ill-defined. Although we applaud the political trends that are occurring within the Warsaw Pact, we must also prepare for the implications of the instability and chaos that historically trail in the wake of the collapsing empires. It is, therefore, critical that we retain the high levels of training that we have achieved within the US Army, Europe and in those forces earmarked to reinforce our forward deployed units there.

But the days are over in which the major challenges to our national interests rested exclusively on the continent of Europe. The brutal and unprovoked aggression by Iraq against Kuwait is a vivid preview of the nature of the international system in the decade of the 1990s and beyond. Two features of the Iraqi attack underscore the enduring importance of training. First, the attack came with virtually no warning. Had our forces across the entire Army not been trained and ready, the credibility of our response would have been negligible.

Second, we no longer have the luxury of considering the developing world to be militarily insignificant. Iraq struck its neighbor with a sophisticated array of weapons and forces, and with demonstrated capabilities that were once thought to be reserved to the major powers. If we were to deter Iraqi aggression against Saudi Arabia and be prepared to defeat an attack if deterrence proved unsuccessful, our forces had to be trained and ready from the moment they arrived in the Arabian desert. Moreover, they had to be trained and ready to fight and win on a high-intensity battlefield—a battlefield that included the specter of chemical warfare.

Iraq's aggression in the Persian Gulf highlights the perilous nature of the evolving international environment and reinforces the undiminished requirement for the Army to be trained and ready. If the wave of the future is the "come as you are" war, then we must be ready to go at all times.

Reshaping the Army. The mandate for trained and ready forces is reinforced by our plan for reshaping the Army of the future. In response to revolutionary developments abroad and resource constraints at home, we have begun to shape a smaller Army—one with fewer soldiers and fewer units.

But even as we shape the future Army, our strategic responsibilities will continue to span the globe. So every soldier, every unit and every leader within our smaller force structure must be fully trained to fight and win.

We cannot afford to adopt a course which some have proposed—a course of so-called tiered readiness in which some of our units are fully trained while others are not. Under such a proposal, it is likely that the forces that are fully trained would be inadequate in number to deter or defeat Iraq-like aggression throughout the world, while short warning times and sophisticated adversaries would deny us the time necessary to bring other forces up to full readiness.

So if we are to be a smaller Army—and we will be—then we can never relax our efforts to establish and achieve the highest standards of training throughout the Army.

Commitment to Soldiers. Finally, we must train with our eyes firmly fixed on our sacred responsibilities to the sons and daughters of this nation who are entrusted to our care. Our soldiers depend upon their leaders to train them in peacetime so that they can fight, win and survive in battle. General “Light Horse” Harry Lee of Revolutionary War fame clearly captured our responsibility when he cautioned that “a government is the murderer of its own citizens when it sends them to the field untrained and untaught.” No leader in America’s Army must ever be guilty of that most inexcusable lapse of professional responsibility.

So whenever a sergeant takes the extra time to plan his training in precise detail, whenever he spends those extra hours executing his training to exacting standards, whenever he devotes that extra effort to scrupulously assessing his training, he is investing in the lives of his soldiers.

Thus, it is clear that the nature of the evolving international environment, the Army’s responsibilities to shape the force for the future and our enduring obligations to our soldiers all require that the Army of tomorrow be as trained and ready as the Army of today. Accordingly, every Army leader—every sergeant and every officer—must understand, attain, sustain and enforce the highest standards of combat readiness through tough, realistic, multiechelon combined arms training designed to challenge and develop soldiers, units and leaders.

How We Train. That is the “why” of training. The “how” is embodied in the Army’s comprehensive training strategy. As we confront an environment of constrained resources, we must move forward aggressively to shape our training programs at all levels to make the best use of the assets we are given. Over the past five years, the Army has taken great strides in developing and articulating the training strategy that is presented in US Army Field Manual 25-100, *Training the Force*, and its companion FM 25-101, *Battle Focused Training*. FM 25-100 establishes the Army’s training doctrine, and

FM 25-101 applies this doctrine and assists leaders in the development and execution of training programs. Together, they are mandatory reading for every leader, sergeant and officer, in the Army.

The overarching principle that will guide our training in the decade of the 1990s will remain straightforward: we will train as we will fight, and we will train to exacting, uncompromising standards. This is an immutable principle that undergirds the entire Army and applies equally to combat, combat support and combat service support units in TOE (table of organization and equipment) organizations and in our general support forces.

Although conditions may change, our standards will not, for they are the yardstick by which we measure our readiness for combat. This fundamental principle means, at its most basic level, that we will train soldiers, units and leaders in combined arms and multiservice joint operations—the kinds of operations that will be required by an environment growing increasingly complex.

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Training Soldiers. First, we must develop soldiers who are proficient in battlefield skills, disciplined, physically tough and highly motivated. The training of our individual soldiers is now, and will continue to be, a primary responsibility of our noncommissioned officers—sergeants who, in this first year of a new decade, are the best in our history. Their unparalleled capabilities and unmatched professionalism provide the Army with a vast reservoir of expertise for training our soldiers. Gone are the days in which we had to rely on centralized and inflexible training mechanisms to ensure that standards were being met throughout the Army. Our sergeants are now fully capable of assuming principal responsibility for the development of every soldier.

The training of our soldiers will be focused primarily at home stations and will concentrate on the basics that

win in battle. For proficiency in the basics is an unalterable prerequisite for higher level training in every MOS (military occupational specialty).

Training Units. Well-trained soldiers are, of course, not enough; they must be molded into cohesive, effective units from squad to corps, and in combat, combat

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support and combat service support units throughout the Army. Collective training begins at home stations where basic soldier skills are integrated into small-unit proficiency. Unit training then builds warfighting capabilities in successively larger organizations while reinforcing the individual and collective skills upon which the entire structure rests.

The centerpiece of collective proficiency at battalion and brigade levels resides in our combat training centers (CTCs), the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Little Rock Air Force Base and Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, and the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC) at Hohenfels, Germany. The CTCs provide us the indispensable capability to synchronize all elements of the combined arms team in an environment that comes as close to actual combat as our technology permits. The value of the CTCs cannot be overstated, and the payoff is measured in the performance of our units in battle. In an analysis of the fight in Panama, commanders repeatedly said that the JRTC was the single most important element in their units' success. And a decade of investment in the NTC has created a level of proficiency in desert operations that is the foundation of deterrence—and the basis for victory if battle should become necessary—on the Arabian peninsula today.

A crucial element in achieving unit proficiency is the training of battle staffs. The battle staff, consisting of primary representatives from all staff and slice elements, must be trained to integrate the seven battlefield operating systems. These major functions must be executed if we are to fight and win in combat.

Special mention must also be made of the Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) which hones critical command and control skills at division and corps levels. BCTP represents the top of the training pyramid that rests upon the foundation of individual soldier skills and forms an Army that is trained and ready to fulfill its strategic mandate worldwide. BCTP is now being used by *Desert Shield* units to reinforce the skills required of commanders and staffs.

Training Leaders. Even as we develop the combat skills of our soldiers and units, we must continue to ensure that our leaders are fully trained at every echelon as an investment in the Army of today and tomorrow. For, in the profession of arms, there is no substitute for the leadership of a team of professionals who are competent in the art of war, responsible for their soldiers and committed to the defense of the nation.

Training of leaders is the primary focus of the Army's leader development program—a progressive, sequential and comprehensive approach that embraces officers, sergeants and civilians. It rests on the three pillars of institutional education, operational assignments and self-development, and has been embedded in a range of Army courses, regulations, field manuals, pamphlets and circulars. In the near future, the Army will promulgate a single, capstone document that will provide guidelines for leaders at all levels to ensure that their subordinates grow into the kinds of leaders that the Army will need in the future.

Our leader development program has already produced legions of leaders—sergeants and officers—who form an unbreakable team and who are competent and confident in leading our magnificent soldiers. Moreover, as a result of our leader development program and the commitment of our leaders today, tomorrow's Army leaders will be even better.

The requirements to train soldiers, units and leaders are no less prominent in our Reserve Components. Indeed, as we have seen in Operation *Desert Shield*, the Total Force concept is fundamental to the defense of our nation in an era of increasing uncertainty and challenge. Today in the Arabian desert, soldiers from the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard are serving shoulder-to-shoulder with their Active Component counterparts and, together, they form a single Army force that has deterred Iraqi aggression and is poised to respond to the call of the president.

The rapid assimilation of Reserve Component forces in *Desert Shield* is a testimony to the standards of training that these units have achieved. In the future, these standards must not be relaxed. To be sure, training in the Reserve Components presents unique challenges that are not faced by Active Component forces. In recogni-

tion of this fact of life, the Army's Reserve Component Training Development Action Plan (RCTDAP) has been specifically designed to focus reserve component training and to help commanders make the best use out of the resources (time and money) that they are given. As in the active forces, the conditions may change, but the standards do not.

Training Mandate. Thus, the Army's training strategy, our "how to" principles, are based on our enduring commitment to train as we fight, and to train each of our soldiers, units and leaders to exacting, uncompromising standards that must be maintained in every combat, combat support and combat service support unit throughout the Army.

As we look to the future, we must build on this strategy, and we must design our training programs to maximize the efficient use of the resources we are given. We must fully exploit the opportunities afforded by simulation technology to polish battlefield skills at all levels while continuing to conduct realistic maneuver and live fire training. We must train with imagination, diligence and innovation, while maintaining a steady course towards our ultimate objective: an Army that is trained and ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Nearly 40 years after the tragedy of those first days of Korea, the Army was again called upon to confront a threat to our nation's security, this time in Panama. But, unlike the Army of 1950, the Army of 1989 was trained and it was ready. Striking with deadly precision and overwhelming force, the Army's airborne, Ranger, mechanized, armor and special operations forces crushed the enemy in a massive, coordinated strike and restored freedom to a people long oppressed.

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Seven months later, that same Army was directed to meet the challenge of ruthless aggression in the Middle East. Responding to a complex requirement with unprecedented success, the Army projected more combat power over greater distances in a shorter time than at any other point in the history of armed conflict. Aggression was stopped and a multinational alliance headed by the United States stood ready to execute any option elected by the president. *Just Cause* and *Desert Shield* were successful only because the soldiers, units and leaders of the US Army were trained to fulfill their strategic responsibilities to the nation. That is the final stand-ard that we, as leaders in the Army today, must achieve in this decade and far into the next century.

Training remains the Army's top priority; it prepares us to fight. As leaders-as sergeants and officers-it is our sacred responsibility to ensure that no soldier ever dies in combat because that soldier was not properly trained. The American people—and America's soldiers—expect and deserve no less. **MR**

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