

# A Constructive Leader Training Program Designed to Rapidly Increase Unit Training Readiness

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During his 2018 State of the Union Address, President Donald Trump directed the secretary of defense “to reexamine military detention policy and keep open the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay.”<sup>1</sup> That brief statement precipitated executive-level orders mandating assessments for the transition of Joint Task Force Guantanamo (JTF GTMO) from an expeditionary to an enduring mission: “Joint Task Force Guantanamo conducts the

safe, humane, and legal detention operations; collects, analyzes, and reports intelligence; and provides support for legal and administrative proceedings to protect the United States and its interests.”<sup>2</sup> The unit operates in one of the most complex operational environments (OE) in existence due to tremendous international and political scrutiny.

JTF GTMO has existed since 2001. It consists mainly of U.S. Army reserve component units rotating through U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay (NSGB) on a yearly basis. Soldiers belonging to the Arizona Army National Guard’s 850th Military Police Battalion (850 MP BN) arrived at NSGB only a few days after the president’s speech. 850 MP BN comprised JTF GTMO’s principal subordinate staff and, thus, found themselves immediately responsible for the preponderance of planning required to transition JTF GTMO to an enduring mission.

Though new to the physical environment, 850 MP BN was already intimately familiar with JTF GTMO’s complexity prior to arriving at NSGB. This was due to granular study of JTF GTMO’s OE initiated during a constructive leader training program (LTP) at the outset of their mobilization training life cycle (see figure 1, page 70). Modeled similarly to LTPs facilitated at combat training centers, the LTP methodology described in this article is specifically designed to speed reserve component mission proficiency by

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closely replicating experiences that units can expect to encounter during their deployments. This is achieved by constructing an environment that closely replicates the deployment OE's dynamic nature, then presenting deploying units with relevant multilayered problems currently challenging mission success in that OE. Using this methodology, 850 MP BN confidently applied the operational art they practiced throughout their training process and crafted innovative solutions to problems containing strategic consequences for JTF GTMO's long-term mission success.

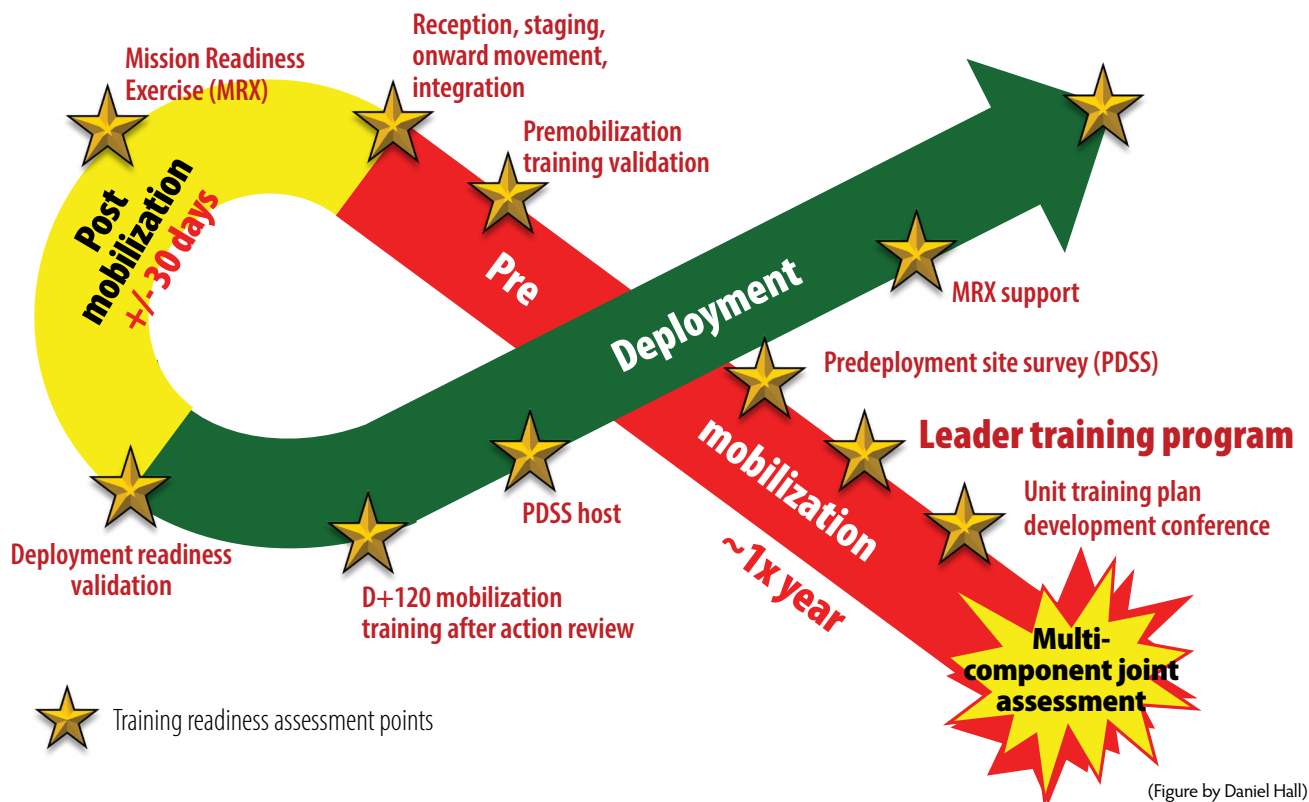
## **Mobilization Training Progression**

Field Manual (FM) 7-0, *Train to Win in a Complex World*, mandates that regular Army and reserve component units conduct progressive training paths when preparing for mobilizations. In contrast to regular Army unit long-range training plans that span only one year, FM 7-0 states that "Reserve Component unit training horizons typically span five years."<sup>3</sup> In

U.S. Army Reserve soldiers from 422 Military Police (MP) Company, Bakersfield, California, conduct riot control training March 2018 at Fort Bliss, Texas, in preparation for their Joint Task Force Guantanamo detention operations mission. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Ryan Sarjent, U.S. Army)

reality, reserve component unit mobilization training plans are often initiated at a multi-component joint assessment, which occurs approximately one year prior to a unit's deployment. Thus, unlike regular Army units that can leverage all 365 days of a year to prepare for deployments, reserve component units that cannot train full-time only receive about seventy-five preparation days in the same training year.

As depicted in figure 1 (on page 70), reserve component unit mobilization training plans normally progress through a premobilization training period and a postmobilization training period. The progression begins with individual- and leader-level training tasks conducted during the premobilization period and culminates with collective tasks conducted during



**Figure 1. Depiction of the Mobilization Training Life Cycle**

the postmobilization period.<sup>4</sup> For simplicity purposes, this article links the two periods into one mobilization training life cycle since both are tightly coupled.

First Army is responsible for implementing the U.S. Army Total Force Policy, which is the integration of the two Army reserve components with the regular Army to create a single force.<sup>5</sup> First Army is therefore uniquely qualified at providing combatant commanders with reserve component units capable of succeeding in complex environments. First Army accomplishes this by assigning training support battalions to assist reserve component units with achieving increased stages of task proficiency throughout their mobilization training life cycle. Training support battalions like 3rd Battalion, 362nd Armored Regiment (3-362 AR), are responsible for providing training events that mitigate resource impediments that can seriously hamper unit deployment readiness. Given this perspective, 3-362 AR developed a constructive LTP that occurs early in the premobilization period and is designed to establish a band of training excellence spanning a unit's entire

mobilization training progression to help alleviate resource limitations.

## Leader Training Program Design

The LTP is designed to offset reserve component unit resource challenges by detailing deployment mission requirements early in the training process. Extremely condensed horizons necessitate training strategies that concentrate unit focus on core competencies aimed at dramatically increasing an organization's intellectual capital. Accordingly, the LTP serves as the seminal event that fuels a unit's rapid attainment of increased proficiency throughout their mobilization training life cycle. The LTP's end state is a baseline of experience and knowledge that facilitates unit ability to demonstrate high degrees of training proficiency during a rigorous mission rehearsal exercise (MRX), the culminating venue where deployment readiness is validated.

The training process begins with a multi-component joint assessment, where training support battalions



assist units with thoughtfully narrowing mission essential tasks (MET) to only those that precisely align with their assigned deployment mission. According to FM 7-0, this approach provides battle focus for the mobilization training progression, which best mitigates severe time constraints.<sup>6</sup> The LTP further narrows focus by identifying key prerequisite tasks that set conditions for overall MET proficiency. For example, 850 MP BN's deployment mission prescribed three METs with twelve supporting collective tasks. MET assessments resulted in the identification of two prerequisite tasks deemed fundamental for establishing the unit's training foundation: (1) develop running estimates and (2) perform staff administrative functions. Accordingly, these two tasks served as 850 MP BN's primary skill-based training objectives during their LTP. The 850 MP BN's LTP also incorporated contextual-based training objectives such as building the team, OE immersion, and knowledge management system development to spark shared understanding across the entire staff of the complex dynamics affecting JTF GTMO's mission (see figure 2, on page 72).

Given that LTPs are typically five-day events, the focused approach on palatable sets of clearly defined objectives allows training audiences to quickly digest and internalize desired learning outcomes. Thus, the LTP design promotes long-term

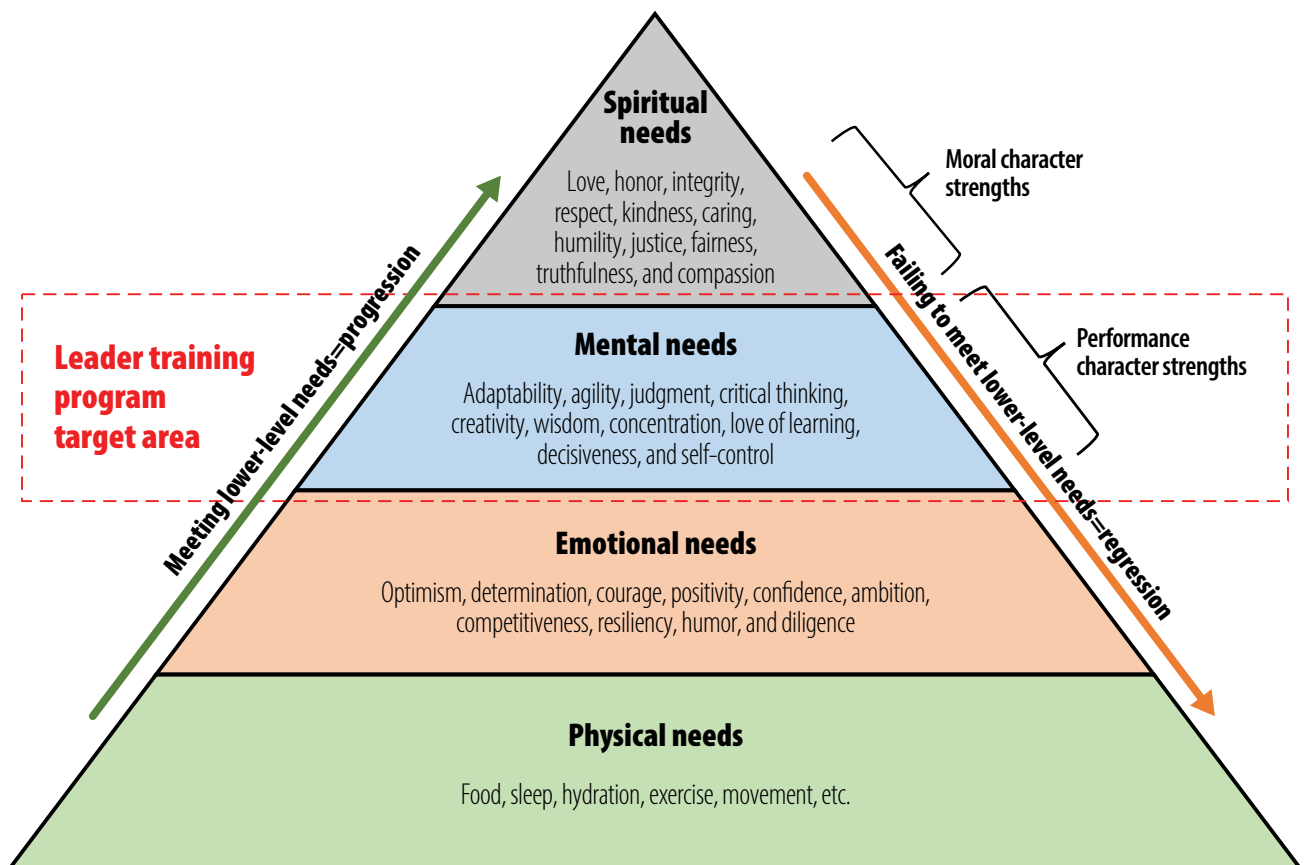


U.S. Army Reserve soldiers from 422 Military Police (MP) Company, Bakersfield, California, conduct forced cell extraction training March 2018 at Fort Bliss, Texas, in preparation for their Joint Task Force Guantanamo detention operations mission. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Ryan Sarjent, U.S. Army)

<b>Leader training program (LTP) training objectives:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop running estimates</li> <li>2. Perform staff administrative functions</li> <li>3. Build the team</li> <li>4. Achieve operational environment (OE) understanding</li> <li>5. Develop knowledge management systems</li> <li>6. Identify areas of continued improvement between the LTP and the mission rehearsal exercise (MRX)</li> </ol>	OE introduction  Receipt of mission  Mission analysis	Mission analysis  Mission analysis brief  Military decision-making process (MDMP) step 1 after action review (AAR)	Course of action development  Course of action brief  MDMP step 2 AAR	Course of action analysis  Course of action approval brief  MDMP step 3 AAR	Combined arms rehearsal  Final LTP AAR
	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Day 5</b>

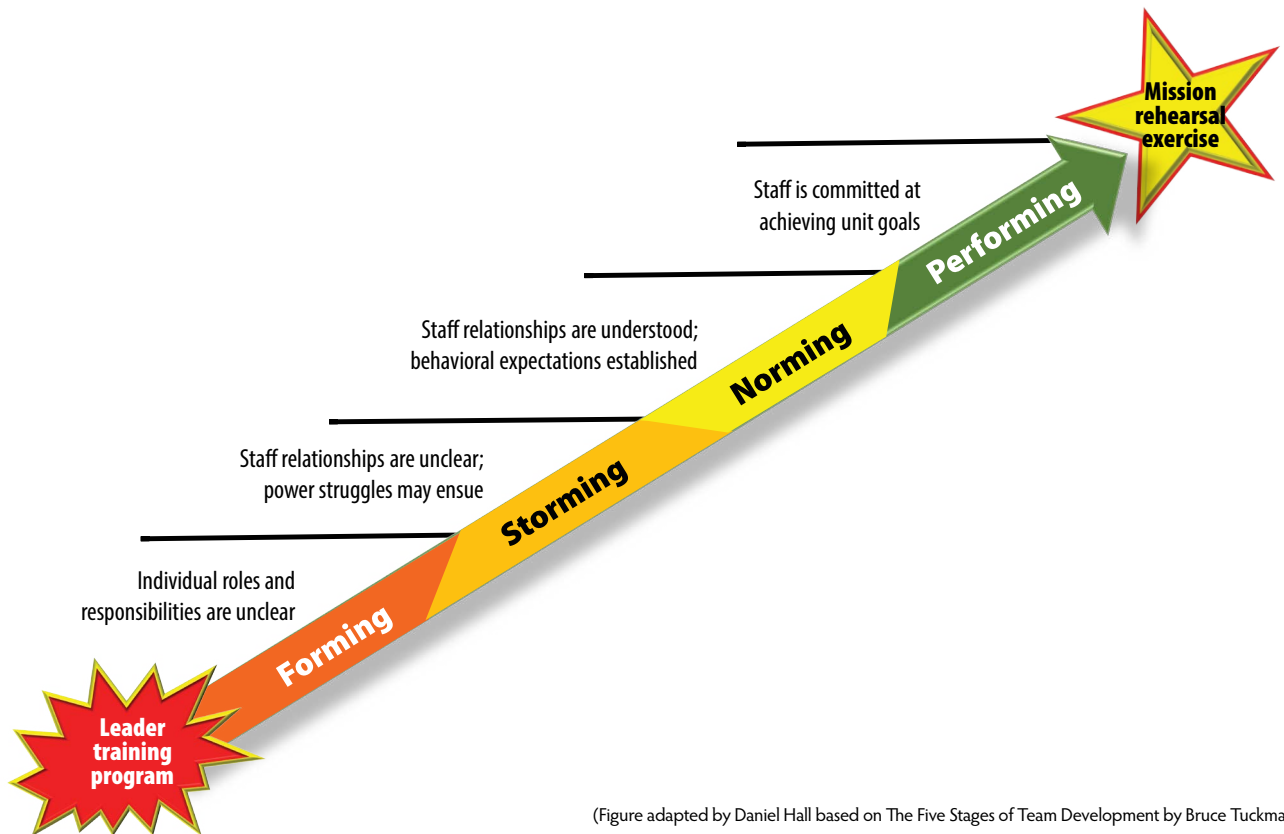
(Figure by Daniel Hall)

**Figure 2. 850th Military Police Battalion Leader Training Program Objectives**



(Figure adapted by Daniel Hall based on The High Performance Pyramid by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, "The Making of a Corporate Athlete" by Harvard Business Review, 2001)

**Figure 3. Adaptation of High Performance Pyramid**



**Figure 4. Adaptation of Stages of Team Development**

skill retention. This guards against task atrophy and supports continuous attainment of increased levels of MET proficiency as units proceed along their mobilization training life cycle.

### Leader Training Program Approach

Reserve component units can struggle with getting officers and noncommissioned officers in professional education qualification courses due to the frequency of mobilizations.<sup>7</sup> This results in many staffs possessing only rudimentary knowledge of the operations process. The relative lack in organizational experience is another significant hurdle that reserve component units must quickly surmount when building deployment readiness. Therefore, it is imperative that training programs target cognitive development needs when attempting to speed a unit's acquisition of expertise (see figure 3, on page 72).<sup>8</sup>

With this challenge in mind, the LTP leverages fundamental learning and team-building theories to structure an educational approach that expedites unit

mission comprehension, operational art application skills, and procedural abilities. The following paragraphs briefly describe how each theory is applied during LTPs to help units transform into high performing organizations akin to 850 MP BN.

First and foremost, the LTP employs an andragogical approach to place the onus of learning on the training audience. Andragogy posits that adults encode lessons faster and at deeper levels when learning is self-directed.<sup>9</sup> The LTP adapts Malcolm Knowles's four core principles of andragogy, or adult learning theory, to cultivate meaningful learning experiences:<sup>10</sup>

(1) Adult learners need to know why lessons are important to them. The LTP presents training audiences with relevant problems affecting the OE in which they will operate. For example, 850 MP BN was presented with real-time problems that encumber JTF GTMO's transition to a permanent mission. Introduction of pertinent problems compels learners to realize they have personal stake at identifying potential solutions to real dilemmas early in the training





process. This results in commanders taking responsibility for their unit's learning.

(2) Adult learners will self-direct their learning experience if appropriate information is available. The LTP provides a database of real-world information that immerses units into the multilayer dynamics affecting the OE in which they will operate. Training audiences sift through gigabytes of actual orders, maps, force flow charts, facility capabilities, etc., to achieve detailed OE context. This constructive method allows units to attain organizational clarity.

(3) Adult learners rely on mental models formed from previous experiences to process new information. The LTP employs doctrinal concepts as a common language to enable training audiences to leverage collective experiences when fusing unfamiliar data into usable information. The military decision-making process is emphasized as the central doctrinal process because it offers training audiences a familiar analytical model with which to steer their efforts at producing logical analysis while attempting to generate plausible solutions.

(4) Adult learners need help overcoming inhibitions about learning new material. The mental energy required to comprehend sophisticated and multilayered challenges existing within an OE is daunting. Accordingly, the LTP is conducted in a collegial setting where people are encouraged to explore, question, and create. Though the LTP's objectives are outcomes based, the outcomes are not measured in frequency of

right answers or the formulation of perfect solutions. The LTP is process oriented and values the training audience's honest attempt to apply lesson merits toward their organization's growth and maturation.

Second, it is well documented that timely corrective feedback is essential for effective learning.<sup>11</sup> Consider the detriment to a soldier's marksmanship accuracy if he or she does not receive timely feedback on target hits while at a rifle range. Appropriately, frequent periods of calculated feedback is the LTP's key approach to ensuring learners internalize correct lessons while the training is still fresh in their minds. Doctrinally referred to as after action reviews, 3-362 AR concentrates feedback on every warfighting function's application of the military decision-making process immediately following the conclusion of each major step. Trainers shrewdly employ the Socratic method to elicit self-discovered lessons from the training audience. This reflective technique promotes active participation, which further leads to enriched learning.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, FM 7-0 states, "Teamwork is the essence of how the Army operates."<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the LTP relies heavily on Bruce Tuckman's stages of team development to help units efficiently transform into high-performing organizations.<sup>14</sup> Due to manning constraints, it is common for reserve component units to receive people well after the mobilization training process has already begun. Unfortunately, the LTP is often the first training event in which all unit personnel are assembled. This is yet another severe resource





Joint Task Force Guantanamo Detention Operations Complex  
June 2018 at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. (Photo by Maj. Patrick Martel, U.S. Army)

constraint that units must quickly overcome and, thus, necessitates team building as one of the LTP's top contextual-based training objectives.

It is important to note that Tuckman's developmental stages are not rigid.<sup>15</sup> This means sequential graduation into each stage is not a precondition for teams to progress into other stages (see figure 4, on page 73).<sup>16</sup> Therefore, given its collegial atmosphere, the LTP seeks to help units form and to begin norming early in their training progression. The intended consequence is units are formed prior to arriving at postmobilization training so they "storm and finalize norms" (a term from adult education theory) during the MRX where stress, pressure, and friction are applied. As in 850 MP BN's case, the desired outcome is units understand how to perform their mission and are ready to do so immediately upon arriving at their deployment location.

## Leader Training Program Efficacy

To date, 3-362 AR has facilitated over a dozen constructive LTP events. When presented with the program's concept, commanders instantly realize the LTP's value for preparing their units for success and immediately opt to include the event early in their premobilization training plan. Though this article highlights 850 MP BN's detention operations mission at JTF GTMO as its primary example, 3-362 AR also successfully facilitated constructive LTPs for units deploying on security force advisory missions with the Ukrainian armed forces as part of Joint Multinational

Training Group-Ukraine, demonstrating that the constructive LTP's methodology is extremely effective at setting conditions for the rapid increase of unit training readiness regardless of mission type.

Perhaps the program's best characteristic is commanders do not need external entities such as 3-362 AR to facilitate LTPs for their units. A firm doctrinal understanding of training plan development and thoughtful employment of the concepts described within this article are the base ingredients required to train operations processes that rapidly increase readiness. Regardless of who provides the training, the final analysis of the LTP's efficacy suggests units that conduct an LTP are more ready to achieve success during MRXs and subsequent deployments than those who do not.

## Conclusion

Reserve component units ready to deploy and proficiently execute operations that achieve combatant commander goals are essential for the Army's success. Unlike active duty units that can leverage 365 days to prepare for deployments, reserve component units may only receive as few as seventy-five preparation days in the same training year. Limited time, lack of



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organizational experience, and manning constraints are among the chief resource shortfalls that can significantly hinder unit preparatory efforts.

Consequently, reserve component units must quickly overcome these deficits to build readiness. 3-362 AR developed a constructive LTP to assist units with rapidly increasing readiness. Conducted at the beginning of the mobilization training life cycle, the LTP serves as the seminal event that enables units to continually attain higher degrees of proficiency as they progress through the training process. This is achieved by closely simulating the OE to which a unit will deploy and replicating experiences that the unit can expect to encounter during its deployment.

Furthermore, fundamental learning and team-building concepts are expertly employed during the LTP to support unit ability to execute prerequisite tasks that lead to overall MET proficiency. Feedback collected during numerous after action reviews at the completion of mobilization training life cycle events supports the LTP's value at increasing training readiness. Units like 850 MP BN embody the LTP's efficacy at preparing organizations for mission success. ■

## Notes

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