



FOCUSING TRAINING The Big Five for Leaders

Colonel Jeffrey R. Sanderson, U.S. Army,
and Captain Scott J. Akerley, U.S. Army

FEW PLACES IN our Army today train Soldiers with as much intensity as our mobilization stations. With about 184,000 National Guard and Reserve Soldiers deployed to combat theaters of operation worldwide (60,000 in Iraq), mobilization training is at the forefront of the War on Terrorism.¹ Training these Soldiers is a decisive mission. Without their contributions, our Army—not to mention our strategic goals—would collapse.

Preparing for this war is not getting any less intensive, even as our Army gains experience. In fact, as combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have evolved in complexity and criticality, training requirements for units and Soldiers deploying to these theaters have increased. We are in a war of adjustments. We take emerging insights and lessons learned and incorporate them into our training with remarkable speed and accuracy.

While we in the 4th Cavalry Brigade train all applicable leader tasks during the mobilization cycle, we place special emphasis on five areas we call “The Big Five for Leaders.” The focus areas are—

- Troop-leading procedures (TLPs).
- Intelligence preparation of the environment (IPE).
- Ground assault convoys (GACs).
- Fire distribution and control (FDC).
- Counterinsurgency (COIN) tactics.

Based on personal experience, observation, and countless discussions and interviews with returning Soldiers, we believe these are the five areas leaders must master to enable their units to execute successful sustained combat operations.

We focus our Observer/Controller/Trainer certification program on these areas. Each of these critical skill sets is doctrinally important, easily taught, and provides immediate feedback. Old Soldiers will claim the “Big Five” are simply leader basics and should be givens. In our experience, however, they have not been ingrained in the leaders we train.

To those of you who believe strongly in cause-and-effect relationships, we say all tactical failure comes from the leader’s failure to integrate and execute the “Big Five.” We can teach skills in these areas in a classroom, but frankly, they are worthless until the chain of command practices them repeatedly in the field. Thus, we integrate them fully into all our training. Every mobilizing battalion executes a minimum 10-day Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) exercise during which we not only emphasize these leader focus areas, but also create opportunities for multiple applications in as realistic and time-constrained an environment as possible.

Colonel Jeffrey R. Sanderson commands the 4th Cavalry Brigade, First Army Division East, Fort Knox, KY. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Western Carolina University and master’s degrees from Western Kentucky University, the School of Advanced Military Studies, and the Air War College. COL Sanderson commanded C Company, 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and 2d Battalion, 69th Armor during Operation Iraqi Freedom I. He has served in a variety of command and staff positions in the continental United States, Korea, Kuwait, and Iraq.

Captain Scott Akerley is the 4th Cavalry Brigade planner. He holds a bachelor’s degree from the United States Military Academy and is a graduate of the Armor Officer Basic and Advanced Courses. He was a tank and scout platoon leader in Operation Iraqi Freedom I and is currently awaiting company command.

We all want to serve in good units with good leaders. Those officers and NCOs who embrace the five focus areas early in their training earn their Soldiers' trust and build sound reputations as high-quality leaders; their units improve dramatically. Those leaders who do not get the "Big Five" receive more time and attention and further training opportunities.

Troop-leading procedures are the foundation for all company-level and below planning and preparation. Once we ingrain their use as "the methodology," and they become routine, we see a significant improvement in time management throughout the unit and an increased emphasis on and attention to detail during pre-combat checks and inspections.

Intelligence preparation of the environment (previously called intelligence preparation of the battlefield, or IPB) appears to be a lost art in our digital, computerized age. The ability to "feel" a map and predict potential enemy locations is a critical leader task, but often overlooked, probably because our deployed units believe that they will learn and come to know the terrain they have to operate in. Yet, we are taking casualties inflicted by a "new enemy on old ground." Complacency is always our enemy, but by ingraining IPE as a critical leader task, we mitigate the risk of overlooking the terrain.

All in-theater movement is tactical movement. We use the term *ground assault convoy*, or GAC,

to describe movement across, through, and around the operating environment. Although we plan GACs using TLPs, the actual conduct of a convoy requires the utmost in leader attention and skills. A GAC is battle-drill-based and requires "tactical thinking leaders" who are well versed in battle drills and prepared for simultaneous multiple forms of enemy contact.

FDC is the most underrated leader task in our Army. All Soldiers must know their weapons control status and posture. This is especially true in a COIN environment. Disciplined units control their fires. All Soldiers know their weapon system capabilities and limitations and the rules for escalation of force (EOF). In a formation while on the move, they all know their interlocking range fans.

All these leader tasks must be performed in a COIN environment in which we are after a "positive effect on the population." To achieve that effect requires not only leader training, but also—and, arguably, more importantly—leader education. We must educate our mobilizing leaders on the second- and third-order effects of bullying their way through crowded Baghdad streets and teach them the value of stopping and talking to citizens. We are convinced there is a correlation between the way we execute COIN and the enemy's improvised explosive device (IED) efforts. The better we train, educate, and execute what others have called "hearts and minds" COIN, the fewer and less successful the IED attacks will be.



U.S. Army/MSG Joseph McMullin

The 875th Engineer Battalion rehearsing prior to "flooding the zone" with nine assured mobility patrols during their battalion ARTEP, 7 September 2006, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

Troop-Leading Procedures

The five elements of combat power are maneuver, firepower, protection, leadership, and information.² These elements (and their application) determine a unit's ability to fight effectively. The more capable a unit is in each of these areas, the more combat power it brings to the fight. A unit can enhance all of these elements with proper planning, preparation, and execution. This is where TLPs come into play. Napoleon once said, "Strategy is the art of making use of time and space. I am less concerned about the latter than the former. Space we can recover, lost time never."³ Unfortunately, higher echelons or the enemy situation usually dictate—and limit—the amount of time we have to prepare and execute an operation. Junior leaders might not be able to give their subordinates more time, but they can maximize what they have by using TLPs, our company-level leaders' best weapon in the fight against time and the enemy.

For old Soldiers, the practical applications of TLPs seem self-evident. TLPs are a mind-set, a way of thinking stamped in our conscious and subconscious minds from years of experience. To our younger leaders, who are used to technological solutions and shortcuts, TLPs seem foreign, almost counterintuitive. But now more than ever it is vital that we coach and mentor our leaders in their use. Gone are the days when Soldiers received several warning orders before a full operations order. All too often our leaders are assigned "Hey, you!" missions that barely qualify as fragmentary orders. These missions have very short suspenses, and we execute them at platoon or below. Their smaller scale does not make them any less dangerous; in fact, they are usually the deadliest missions in theater. Our leaders have to prepare for them as such.

While mobilizing three assured-mobility engineer battalions at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, we saw overwhelming evidence that the application of TLPs increased unit effectiveness. The better a unit was at TLPs, the more successful it was during combat training, especially under the time-constrained duress of the 10-day ARTEP.⁴ Companies and platoons that properly analyzed their mission; effectively organized their time; and conducted reconnaissance, rehearsals, pre-combat checks, and inspections were more prepared for the challenges of simulated combat. They overcame the complacency associated with fighting on familiar

ground and developed multiple courses of action to combat an adaptive enemy. Those units that ignored TLPs or did them poorly found themselves with limited options and routinely failed in contact with the enemy. Preparation equals success. Units that understand this and practice it are more effective.

The bottom line is that proper time management leads to better preparation and saves Soldiers' lives. When executed properly, TLPs ensure our company-level leaders and Soldiers make the best use of the time available to them and are fully prepared for their combat missions.

Intelligence Preparation of the Environment

Many company leaders mistakenly believe that because the battalion S2 conducts IPE, they do not need to. They assume that if they need information, they can just go to battalion headquarters and ask for it. This is a poor way to prepare for a mission. Battalion S2s have a great number of resources to help identify trends and probabilities of enemy contact and to target high-value and high-payoff targets; however, research done at higher echelons cannot replace the analysis leaders should do before every mission. Leaders must understand that a photograph, diagram, or chart provided by higher is useless *unless it is applied to the immediate tactical situation*.

Too often we see company leaders fail to take IPE seriously because they regard a mission as routine. These leaders fail to realize that with a thinking, evolving enemy, every mission is different from the previous one—they all require the leader to plan fully and thoughtfully. When a mission becomes routine and leaders complacent, Soldiers lose lives. This is unacceptable under any circumstances.

To help us break free from this routine-mission mentality, we need leaders skilled in the art of mission preparation. Technology greatly enhances our fighting force, but it does not replace our leaders' responsibility to think. We see company leaders who spend so much time watching blue dots move around a computer screen that they fail to develop that feel for the terrain that makes a leader successful. Terrain is just as important today as it was for Buford's cavalry on the first day at Gettysburg. We may view it on a screen instead of a paper map, and our technology might enable us to see it from multiple perspectives, but the skills required to ask



The 130th Engineer Battalion from Puerto Rico reinforces weapons discipline through NCO leadership, 15 September 2006, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

the right questions about it remain the same. Our leaders must learn to read and analyze terrain while using all available technological resources, and then see the terrain as it directly relates to enemy tactical possibilities. We cannot develop these skills overnight; they come from multiple repetitions of highly stressful training events. Therefore, we must take every opportunity to challenge mobilizing leaders with terrain analysis problems.

TLPs begin from the moment Soldiers receive a mission. For all leaders, this translates into IPE. A proper understanding of the four steps of IPE is crucial for all junior leaders preparing for combat missions. In Iraq and Afghanistan, where a mission is usually some kind of combat patrol or convoy and the threat comes in the form of IEDs and complex ambushes, leaders assess the environment by studying the roads on which they will travel and how those roads and surrounding terrain affect the mission.

Our leaders must relearn how to think through the enemy situation. Although we see a gradual increase in the complexity of the enemy's attacks, his tactics have remained consistent. He will continue to attack our Soldiers with IEDs because IEDs are his only successful means of attack. He will also supplement IEDs with small arms and rocket-propelled grenades to create confusion and exploit less-disciplined units. As we look at the enemy, we see trends develop in how he fights and then

anticipate the circumstances when he is likely to attack. We show skill by taking what we know of the enemy and applying it to the terrain we traverse. To do this, we need to think like the enemy. What will he do? How does the enemy want to kill or interdict us? And where? As the coalition develops successful countermeasures, is the enemy more likely to use command-detonated or suicide IEDs? Just as important, Who is the enemy? What are his goals? Most insurgent fighters do not want to die. The enemy pays them to attack coalition Soldiers, and they want to escape so they can re-engage later and make more money. What might the enemy's

escape routes be? The better we analyze the enemy, the more finite his number of options becomes. We develop an aptitude for understanding him by training the second half of IPE. A leader must create a doctrinal template of how the enemy usually fights and then apply it to his or her situation.

Sometimes we perceive war as a conflict between multiple combatants with the winner being the one who has the better weapons. On the contrary, history has shown that victory most often favors the force with the more intelligent and innovative leaders. Our junior officers and NCOs need to understand that all the technology of Blue-Force Tracker, FCB2, Falcon View, and CRYSTAL cannot replace the value of a thinking leader. IPE is a craft, a skill learned through study, developed through experience, and proven in combat. As our Soldiers and leaders become adept at seeing the terrain and understanding the enemy's capabilities and tendencies, they begin to process the IPE steps more quickly. Ultimately, with good training, IPE will allow our units to adjust rapidly to complex environments and volatile situations and develop courses of action to outmaneuver and defeat the enemy.

Ground Assault Convoys

The battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan are not fields or open terrain, but the roads and highways that link us to our supplies. GACs occur across

Iraq and Afghanistan every day, but they are not everyday missions. GACs are combat missions, and the more training and planning we conduct prior to them, the more likely we are to kill the enemy while minimizing our casualties. Perhaps the most important thing the leader of a convoy can do is impress on his subordinates that, once they leave the confines of the base, they are no longer engineers, no longer a service support unit—they are combat Soldiers in a maneuver unit. Changing the mindset of our support units directly affects how they prepare for a mission. A unit that sees a mission as routine will treat every aspect of that mission as routine, including reacting to enemy contact. A unit that believes it is about to execute a combat operation will prepare for that mission with an increased sense of urgency and a belief that preparation will positively affect the mission's outcome. A convoy begins to take on the characteristics of a combat mission when a convoy checklist becomes a tool to accomplish pre-combat checks as opposed to a primary method of planning.

We have noticed an undeniable correlation in our GAC training between a unit's ability to adapt to changing enemy situations and its leaders' ability to grasp and apply TLPs and IPE. Commonly associated with successful combat preparation, these latter tools are essential when planning combat convoy operations because they allow our leaders to develop battle drills.

Our skill at battle drills determines the success of our convoys. GAC battle drills are established and rehearsed during TLPs based on IPE analysis. As leaders develop an increased ability to determine how the enemy is likely to fight on particular terrain, they begin to translate their analysis into tactics, techniques, and procedures for actions on contact. We cannot predict where every enemy action is going to occur, but if we know what forms of contact to expect, we can determine the actions needed

to defeat the attacks regardless of their locations. In this sense, it is critical that our convoy commanders and leaders think tactically.

There are seven traditional forms of contact: visual, direct fire, indirect fire, obstacles, air, electronic, and NBC. In the contemporary operating environment, we can never totally dismiss the last three, but the likelihood of their occurrence is remote. Therefore, we should concentrate our efforts on the first four. Insurgent attacks generally take the form of direct fire, indirect fire, or obstacles such as IEDs. We must focus our tactical efforts here. The insurgents' inherent camouflage—their hiding within the population—makes them likely to win the battle of visual contact, allowing them to initiate contact. Our leaders must prepare their Soldiers to respond reflexively with audacity and precision to quickly gain the initiative. For example, we must develop drills to react to IED contact, or (preferably) to gain visual contact with the IED before it detonates. The bottom line with any form of contact is that we must develop sound courses of action in the form of battle drills and rehearse them until they are second nature.

The key to executing successful battle drills in combat is rehearsals. Without them, leaders and



The 321st Engineer Battalion rehearses IED interrogation with the surrogate Buffalo prior to executing a platoon assured mobility patrol during its ARTEP, 29 August 2006, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

U.S. Army/SFC James Bowman

Soldiers must learn under direct fire, where they are likely to fail. Through rehearsals, leaders develop courses of action for enemy contact before the contact occurs, so that when they come under fire, the only command to give is “Execute.”

Rehearsals should not be confined to the unit level; they apply down to the individual Soldier in a vehicle. In training our mobilizing units, we emphasize three distinct kinds of rehearsals that must be conducted prior to each mission: crew, patrol, and mission-specific. Each member of our crew must know exactly what tasks to perform in any given situation and be proficient at every other position within the vehicle. They must know their jobs in and out of contact, during short halts, and on the move. When the vehicle commander is fully confident in his crew, they are ready to progress to patrol-level rehearsals. Here our leaders develop actions on contact and battle drills for every form of contact and scenario we might face. In the last phase, we rehearse our battle drills for the specific impending mission.

We must be disciplined as individuals and as a unit to continue the practice of these three phases of rehearsals, but if we execute effectively and intelligently, our units will react to contact without hesitation. They will gain fire dominance, seize the initiative, and defeat the enemy.

Fire Distribution and Control

Our Army has put a considerable amount of effort into ensuring that its Soldiers are aware of and know how to properly implement prescribed rules of engagement (ROE) and EOF procedures. Higher headquarters provides ROE to clearly define the criteria we must meet before engaging a threat, and when an engagement does occur, EOF procedures ensure we take adequate steps to avoid collateral damage. However, while these procedures can reduce unnecessary casualties, they do not teach a Soldier weapons discipline. We want our Soldiers to respond with lethal force based on instincts learned from extensive training and an understanding of their tactical situation. This rote muscle memorization and split-second decision-making is a foundation in today’s best combat units. It is a skill that must be drilled into all our Soldiers and preached by our company leaders.

A precursor to developing a unit full of disciplined Soldiers is success in the critical leader task

of properly planning and controlling fires. Good FDC ensures that priority targets are engaged first and with the correct weapon system. Simply put, our tactical units are more effective when they plan for when, where, and how to shoot. When we develop and implement a fire plan, everyone in our convoy or patrol knows his or her sector of responsibility. We increase our units’ lethality by covering a broader area and by focusing our automatic weapons systems where they are most effective and needed. Disciplined units control their fires and are more effective in killing the enemy and avoiding unnecessary loss of civilian life.

We have noticed that the most definitive indication of an undisciplined unit is the regular mishandling of weapons. Soldiers who habitually leave a weapon on fire, keep their fingers in the trigger well, or do not maintain muzzle awareness tend to be unreliable in battle. A unit’s lack of weapons discipline is a leadership failure. Our leaders are responsible for teaching and reinforcing the principles of weapons control status and posture. When we teach and coach these basic Soldier skills properly, we build a foundation for weapons efficiency. They must be integrated into all of our training. The live-fire exercise at the National Training Center shouldn’t be the first time our Soldiers are forced to practice FDC; we must make them do it during force-on-force exercises too. We must train as we fight, and that means executing all training as if we are firing real bullets with real consequences.

Weapons discipline in the form of observed fire control measures won’t just yield benefits in direct-fire contact; it will also reduce the number of negligent discharges we see in training and especially in combat. In Iraq last year, our Army lost two Soldiers and suffered 26 injuries from negligent discharges.⁵ Such blows are devastating to the morale and cohesiveness of a unit, and they are totally avoidable.

Fire control is also a catalyst for successful COIN. If our Soldiers can learn to maintain awareness of their weapons and discriminate between civilian and enemy targets, they will limit the number of fence sitters we push the insurgents’ way. Understanding and applying proper weapons posture (e.g., knowing to place crew-served weapons on “hold” as opposed to “tight” in a crowded marketplace) is a leader responsibility that can prevent unnecessary

deaths. Prescribing a weapons posture tells our Soldiers the “who” and “when” of deadly-force escalation. Equally important is the selection of which weapon to shoot. Before contact ever occurs, leaders should designate the caliber of weapon to be employed in a given situation. The force protection provided by a .50 caliber machine gun does not outweigh the collateral damage and hatred created by killing a child with a stray round. In an already difficult fight, the more people we can keep from supporting the insurgent cause, the more we will succeed. Our leaders need to understand this.

Counterinsurgency

One of the American Army’s staples of success has always been that it empowers its junior leaders to make decisions as the situation dictates. We give our leaders a commander’s intent, and they execute their mission based on that intent. Because of their excellent training and competence, our leaders more often than not make the correct decision with the information they have. This being the case, it is crucial for our junior leaders to fully understand the dynamics of COIN. In today’s operational environment, countering an insurgency *is* the commander’s intent. The more our leaders understand this, the more successful they will be.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are highly scrutinized. If the tactical battlefield is those countries’ highways and roads, the strategic battlefield is the

television screen, the Internet, and the covers of newspapers and magazines around the world.

We fight these wars at company level and below, and the only way to win them is to educate junior leaders and Soldiers about the kind of war they are fighting. Today, every Soldier is in a sense an ambassador—at times, a lethal ambassador, but an ambassador nonetheless. Our staff sergeants and lieutenants make tactical decisions daily that can turn up on worldwide TV at night, with strategic consequences. They must understand these consequences if they are to make correct decisions. In our current COIN missions, our leaders must remember that killing the enemy is not our main objective; rather, we are fighting to win the support of a civilian population and to establish the legitimacy of a fledgling government. This is the one type of fight where you must use firepower with discretion. If you don’t, you could win a battle but contribute to losing a war.

Firepower is an element of combat power, but in today’s combat environment, firepower is linked to another element of combat power: protection. On contact, our Soldiers can quickly gain fire dominance to protect themselves, but sometimes, particularly when our response is disproportionate or less than discriminate, our firepower disrupts society, breeds hatred, and fuels the insurgency.⁶ The insurgents’ goals are to see the government fail and to turn the public against us. Our junior leaders need to understand that improper actions



U.S. Army/SFC James Bowman

The 130th Engineer Battalion learns to interact with civilians on the battlefield while simultaneously maintaining security, 14 September 2006, Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

aid the insurgent cause and that fighting an insurgency requires courage, patience, and, above all else, discipline.

Focusing on the “Big Five”

The “Big Five” have their place in Army doctrine, but the training of these critical tasks *as a set* is our formula for leader development. We are not implying that our leaders’ predeployment training should be limited to these five areas; we are merely suggesting a method to focus that training. Because mobilizing Soldiers do not routinely practice these crucial leader skills, we coach, teach, and mentor them until they are competent in each area. We have finite time and finite resources; therefore, it is incumbent on us to focus our training efforts. We concentrate on junior leaders, and on those areas we know we can train efficiently and effectively.

The big picture, as we see it, is that we are fighting a war unlike the kind our Army had grown comfortable with. We designed the “Big Five” to build upon one another. They are nested in their purpose of preparing our junior leaders for the increasingly complex combat environment of a counterinsurgency. Our young leaders must relearn the art of thinking through

a conflict. We do not win a counterinsurgency with military muscle alone; we win by expending mental as well as kinetic energy.

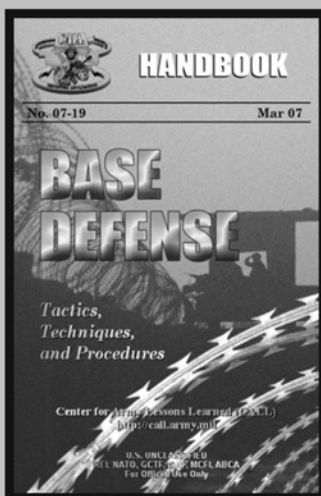
Our mobilizing Soldiers may be the decisive factor in the War on Terrorism. They need and deserve the very best leaders, and we are determined to ensure that they get them. That’s why we focus our leader training primarily on pre-combat preparation—TLPs, IPE, GACs, FDC, COIN. We want—we *need*—to build competent, confident units whose leaders have prepared them to execute under fire and defeat the enemy. **MR**

NOTES

1. Russ Rizzo, “With more older troops on battlefield, Army sees rise in non-combat ailments,” *Stars and Stripes*, European and Pacific Edition, 13 March 2005, <www.estrupes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=26839&archive=true>.
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4. Major Gary Caudill, training officer, 4th Brigade, 85th Division, “Assured Mobility Engineer Battalion Final AAR [After Action Review]” for mobilization training conducted 20 July 2006 through 25 September 2006 for the 130th, 321st, and 875th Assured Mobility Engineer Battalions.
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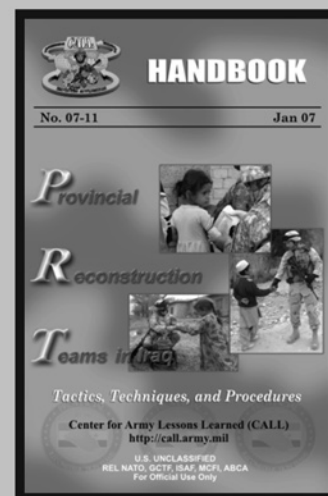
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