



A 173rd Airborne Brigade Paratrooper gives directions to his troops while participating in Immediate Response 2019 at Pocek Training Area, Slovenia, May 15, 2019. Immediate Response 2019 is a multinational exercise co-led by Croatian armed forces, Slovenian armed forces, and U.S. Army Europe. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Henry Villarama)

Integrating the Decisive Action Training Environment

Training for Near-Peer Threats

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Everything from politics, economics, religion, infrastructure, technology, and even social media has the potential to dramatically affect mission outcome. Incorporating these factors, as well as current operational environment (OE) variables are all part of the Army's Decisive Action Training Environments (DATE) training. According to the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), "DATEs are used in Multi-Domain Operations for training, professional military education, and leader development" (2018, para. 2).

The current issue in U.S. Army unit training is the lack

of standardization in preparation for these variables. According to TRADOC's Mobile Training Team, the U.S. Army G2 Operational Environment Team no longer designs unique multi-faceted OEs or individual scenarios for units, instead supplying expertise in assisting units in the use of the DATE OEs for continuity. Responsibility for scenario development and OE variables unique to unit training objectives has been handed to individual unit staffs. But without an established central liaison between Centers of Excellence (CoEs) and the TRADOC G2 for this information and



U.S. Army Sgt. Nathan Quitugua, a multichannel transmission systems operator-maintainer assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 18th Field Artillery Regiment, 75th Field Artillery Brigade, sets up a satellite transportable terminal during an external evaluation (EXEVAL), March 28, 2019 at Fort Sill, Okla. Soldiers of 2-18th FA conducted their final EXEVAL in preparation for their scheduled rotation to Korea. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Dustin D. Biven, 75th Field Artillery Brigade)

training, development of such products is a daunting task for inexperienced users and leaves units training to their own varied standards (O. Borg, TRADOC Mobile Training Team, personal communication, July 2019).

There are two locations where DATE training can be improved to enhance Army readiness. The first is at the individual unit level, especially during a pre-deployment phase. The second is at the U.S. Army's CoEs. This gives every noncommissioned officer (NCO) a chance to experience DATE training before running scenarios at their individual units.

The issue with the current CoE model, similar to the aforementioned varied unit standards, is CoEs with multiple military occupational specialties (MOSs) have not integrated DATE under one standardized training product where every MOS or branch is exercised simultaneously to the same objectives (O. Borg & T. Decker, TRADOC's Mobile Training Team, personal communication, April 2019).

Solution Overview

This article proposes two solutions to create a standardized and efficient way for the U.S. Army to promote DATE training throughout its units, to include cost, feasibility, and relevance to Army doctrine.

The first solution is to create a supplement to the CoEs as a means to integrate DATE training throughout course of instruction, especially during the final capstone phase.

The second solution is to create a DATE cell within each CoE dedicated to creating near-peer focused operational environments and custom-tailored scenarios from the latest guidance and operational trends.

This cell would consist of senior NCOs, contractors,

and possibly warrant officers who are highly trained and able to create immersive environments for deploying units within a short amount of time. It would be based on the Army's Red Team philosophy, defined by U.S. Army's TRADOC as "Red Teaming is a flexible cognitive approach to thinking and planning that is specifically tailored to each organization and each situation. It is conducted by skilled practitioners..." (n.d., p. 3).

Feedback used to tailor OEs would come from Cyber Center of Excellence Lesson Learned Forums, Council of Colonels, National Training Center, Joint Readiness Training Center, Asymmetric Warfare Group, Combined Arms Center, and units returning from deployment.

Utilizing these two solutions would promote DATE training more reliably throughout formations and decrease turnaround time for units requesting current training materials.

CoE DATE Supplement

If the CoEs were to adopt and implement the DATE training supplement proposal, students would be engaged in standardized scenarios throughout the entire CoE program of instruction (POI). The intent of each scenario and training evolution would be to nest individual critical tasks within operational roles.

This DATE training would not be a change to the CoE core curriculum POI. It would only modify the practical exercise information, imagery, and minor rearrangement of lesson plans. This method is flexible with few changes to how the process currently works for easy implementation.

The proposed DATE training involves students planning their missions and responding to crisis scenarios injected throughout. They then provide guidance to their commander. The training would start on day one



U.S. Army Maj. Lazaro Oliva, Jr. shows the potential effects of a tactical decision to other 1st Cavalry Division planners while conducting the Tactical Wargaming Analysis Model at Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 8, 2018. The Center for Army Analysis team conducted a two-day intensive seminar to train the First Team planners on the new wargaming model designed to improve the quality of the outcomes relating to wargaming. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Joseph Payton, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

and continue throughout the course until the students complete their capstone. From the beginning to the end of the CoE course, NCOs would execute all objectives with the commander's intent. Their final capstone would involve completing their events and culminate in a brief to a VIP, designated as a master sergeant, chief warrant officer three, captain, or higher.

DATE Cell

In contrast to the relative ease of implementing a CoE instruction supplement, the second solution involves creating and standing up an entire team (cell), preferably located within a CoE since they specialize in updating U.S. Army doctrine. With a dedicated DATE cell, units are provided the same high-level resources, regardless of individual unit resources or responsibilities.

In theory, the following steps would occur between the unit and the DATE cell:

1. Company level training is scheduled and training areas reserved.
2. The commander submits a ticket with at least three 10 digit grid coordinates and a specific area of operation in which the commander wants to simulate.
3. The DATE cell builds a fully functional operation and provides custom maps, last known enemy locations, and guidance for operational forces.



A U.S. Army M1A2 Abrams assigned to 2nd Armored Brigade Combat team "Blackjack", 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, fires at a simulated target during Decisive Action Rotation 19-06 at the National Training Center (NTC) in Fort Irwin, Calif., April 19, 2019. Decisive Action Rotations at the NTC ensure Army Brigade Combat Teams remain versatile, responsive, and consistently available for current and future contingencies. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Taylor McGinnis, Operations Group, National Training Center.)

4. The latest trends and threats are built into the simulation.
5. Training is completed and the unit deploys to their operational theater fully prepared.

The DATE cell would have multiple products available online that units could download for immediate use. Also, each training and evaluation report would have multiple scenarios and OEs for commanders to use, including those outside of traditional battlefield concepts.

For example, scenarios could now include reacting to drone swarms (Kallenbron, 2018). Or how to monitor and plan for space weather phenomena like plasma bubbles, which is now a recognized occurrence and is thought to have caused the radio interference during the Battle of Takur Ghar, Afghanistan, 2002, which resulted in the deaths of U.S. Army Rangers. According to Charles Choi in *Popular Mechanics*, "Giant bubbles around 60 miles wide can form in the ionosphere; these pockets...are known to bend and disperse radio waves, interfering with communications" (2014, para. 5).

These types of training scenarios would be updated constantly by a dedicated team that tailors training operations to units of all sizes.

Relevancy

Mission Command Philosophy

Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0: Mission Command, defines mission command as "the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations (Department of the Army, 2012, p. 1-1).

The proposed DATE solutions complete five of the six guiding principles of mission command: *build a cohesive team through mutual trust, create a shared understanding, provide a clear commander's intent, exercise disciplined initiative, and use mission orders* (Department of the Army, 2012, p. 2-1).

Providing DATE scenarios would build our teams at the unit level. At the institutions, classes would have mutual trust with one another to be successful throughout the entire course. The DATE cell would create shared awareness across the force with up-to-date and relevant information which will execute the commander's intent at all levels. And team leaders would exercise disciplined initiative in executing orders successfully.

Costs and Manning

To effectively train for future wars the U.S. Army needs a DATE cell consisting of individuals with operational experience and the ability to design scenarios that target

training shortfalls and emerging threats. This team would need to consist of an experienced field grade officer or chief warrant officer, and several senior enlisted NCOs. It would also need civilian employees to ensure continuity and prevent high personnel turnover (Lopez, 2015).

For equipment, it would need workstations with multi-display setups and office space to produce products. Additionally, it would require a ticket-based website, phone lines, and a public relations initiative including branch emails, student briefs at their respective schools, brochures, etc.

For training, Soldiers would attend the Mission Command Training Program or the five-day Mission Command Exercise Planning course.

The DATE cell would have the capability to provide units with entire operations, including operation orders, maps, and multiple scenarios. Once operational, the DATE cell alleviates the burden placed on unit training developers.

The Future

If successful, the DATE cell could increase in size to become a full-fledged organization. It could expand to fulfill joint requirements, pushing the same high-level training material across the joint force. Scenarios would then include Joint Special Operations Command, Marines, Navy, Air Force, and others.

Conclusion

Integrating the Decisive Action Training Environment across the Army requires multiple organizations' cooperation and a "team of teams" approach (McChrystal, 2015).

Both proposed solutions are force multipliers and place Army readiness at the forefront of the conversation. These solutions are adaptable and will prepare Soldiers for the future fight, regardless of MOS or operational domain. They are affordable, especially considering the end result: Better prepared units result in fewer casualties. ■

"Efficiency remains important, but the ability to adapt to complexity and continual change has become imperative."

— retired Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal
(McChrystal, 2015, p. 5)

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