

NCOs Challenged, Rewarded By Training in Multinational Environments

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Then-Sgt. 1st Class Tyler Bell facilitates a hot wash with a Czech Republic Artillery Battery after conducting a Situational Training Exercise lane at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center. (Photo courtesy of 1st Sgt. Tyler Bell)

A multinational environment provides a noncommissioned officer in the U.S. Army with a fulfilling yet challenging mission at home station, overseas or on the modern battlefield. To be successful, one must be doctrinally sound, flexible, adaptable and a professional.

A recent call-for-fire class with a partner nation at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) provided an example of how all of these tie into one training event. The class was scheduled for 90 minutes. However, about 15 minutes into the class, it became evident that it was going to become a map-reading session. To use the time efficiently with the limited number of English speakers, the class broke into two groups. One group focused on the basics of map reading while the other continued to follow the established lesson plan. This is one of the unique abilities of the Army's NCO Corps. Our core competency training allowed the instructor to teach the lesson plan as well as conduct other training to a high standard without hesitation.

Although the original lesson was altered, new training was conducted on demand to meet the needs of the soldiers, in addition to the call-for-fire class initially started. As a result, the trained unit came out of that class with two distinct groups of certified trainers who were able to go back to their units and train on map reading as well as calling for fire.

To make Soldiers effective in combat, the crawl-walk-run method is essential to training. The trainer must understand the unit's tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs). Obtaining copies of the partner nation's doctrine, translating it, and understanding it thoroughly beforehand is crucial. Unlike most U.S. military units that go through a large-scale training exercise, the majority of multinational units are not working toward the validation of their TTPs or tactical standard operating procedures (TACSOP). They may not even have a strong grasp of their training objectives. If they do, you must strive to learn them before you put together your training plan, along with any training objectives identified by the command team in advance, if applicable.

By pre-planning the intended training, as well as remaining flexible throughout the unit's progress, the instructor will enable the unit to get the most from the training. Again, try to base the training or classroom instruction off the partner nation's doctrine, if available.

Understanding partners' leadership is critical to understanding the nature of the decisions being made during the training. Are the junior leaders

allowed to make decisions or is it all top-driven from the commanders? This can often turn into a friction point for a trainer. A lack of understanding of units' command structure and order flow can discourage and confuse both the unit and the trainer.

During a mounted react-to-contact lane, this lack of understanding was demonstrated quite painfully. A platoon-sized element was on patrol with the platoon leader in the mounted element, and the company commander was at the headquarters. When the platoon became engaged in an unblocked ambush from small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire, the platoon leader sent up reports to the commander and waited to receive the next order. However, the commander wanted more information than was necessary to tell that unit to move out of the kill zone. Because of the lack of decision-making authority, the platoon sat in the kill zone for more than 10 minutes and continued to receive the barrage of fire. During the after-action review, the platoon leader was questioned about his decision to stay in the kill zone, to which he responded that he was neither given the order to break contact nor was he given a new position to occupy. The U.S. military is structured in such a manner that this scenario should never occur because leaders are empowered to assume command and control when necessary. An in-depth understanding of the mission attained through briefs and rehearsals ensures that the transition occurs seamlessly.

When employing unit elements from different nations, conducting mission analysis and proper planning are crucial, especially in a multinational training environment. When a Czech Republic artillery battery falls under a hybrid Bulgarian-American mixed battalion, under an American brigade, the command and control relationship becomes difficult to manage. The key to success is understanding how different units operate.

Again, this goes back to learning their doctrine before execution. Given the command structure stated above, one may already know that it takes the Czech artillery battery about 10 minutes from the receipt of a fire mission to rounds-on-target. Would that be a good option for targets of opportunity? Most likely not, when you have the American battery that can provide fire support much faster. Knowing this, the trainer may be able to recommend a superior course of action for each element. Maybe the Czech battery can cover time-on-target and pre-planned missions for different phases of the operation, while the American batteries can focus on counterfire and targets of opportunity. It is unreasonable to expect units from different backgrounds and capabilities to be able to accomplish the same mission. However, knowledge of units' operations can help everyone find their place.

Try to pinpoint friction points that may arise because of cultural differences. Look for things a U.S. unit may overlook. A multinational unit may stop training and become engaged in 20 questions, all of which can be attributed to training scenario limitations. Cultural differences play a significant role when working with multinational partners. Time permitted, it is best to have training resources lined up well in advance. The Training Support Center (TSC), Class IV yard, and Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) will become a best friend. An example of a "show-stopper" would be ensuring dummy weapons are available for a simulated cache, rather than the unit's soldiers' or the opposition force's weapons. One may run into the issue of a partner nation unit asking, "Why do we have to give the weapons back to them? We have found them. If they are given back they will be able to use those against us later." There is sometimes no clear translation for "training purpose and training purposes only," which is why there is the TSC.

Plan as much specialty training as possible into the schedule — for example, Call For Fire Trainer (CFFT), High Mobility-Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) Assistance Trainer (HEAT), Engagement Skills Trainer 2000 (EST 2000) and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) awareness training. Finally, check with the home station/training area for a list of available training enhancers. If video assets are available and one can plan a script from a partner nation's doctrine, consider making a training video to send to the units. Never miss an opportunity to take pictures of the group and the training taking place. The assets the U.S. military has at its fingertips for training are cutting edge, and most of it is mandatory training for Soldiers. These training events are held in high regard by many of the Army's partners and going through it together can strengthen the bond among units.

Ensure that during the planning process the unit understands the right questions to ask when working in a multinational environment. What assets are available to help accomplish the mission? Indirect Fires, Close Air Support (CAS), military working dogs, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)/Information Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) are all examples of assets that can be brought to the fight. Some units may only plan for what they have and not inquire as to what is available.

It's important to help multinational units develop their NCO corps. Suggest the idea of empowering their NCOs as the U.S. military does. Teach them how to certify the intermediate leaders as trainers. That way they will be able to teach the junior enlisted and subsequently build trust in their NCOs. In turn, this will instill trust in their leaders such that they no longer need to actively manage the training at that level.

Introduce them to the 8-Step Training Model and teach them how to properly use it. Work on the concept of rehearsals all the way down to the team level. Rehearsals are a powerful tool, not only for war gaming, but also for leaders to ensure everyone is on the same page. A good tactic to use during rehearsals is to call on members of the team and ask them to go over a battle drill, or ask them the communication PACE (Primary, Alternate, Contingency and Emergency) plan. This does several very important things. First, it disseminates the information to the rest of the group so they are aware of the plan or drill. Second, it reassures you that this soldier has paid attention and is ready to execute to mission. Finally, it allows lower enlisted soldiers to be a part of the rehearsal by having an active role in briefing their leaders, peers and subordinates.

Placing an emphasis on safety throughout training is one of the most important leadership responsibilities at all levels. When working with our partner nations, one will often find that some of the safety measures the U.S. Army has in place are not observed. It can be difficult to impress upon our partners the importance of high standards for safety. Some of this is because of lower standards, but most of it is directly related to a

upon our partners the importance of high standards for safety. Some of this is because of lower standards, but most of it is directly related to a lack of equipment and the knowledge that such measures can be put in place to reduce often fatal accidents. Enforcing that all personal protective equipment (PPE) is not only worn, but worn properly is paramount in ensuring safe operations. Introduce equipment and ideas that may be new to these units, such as the Gunners Restraint System. Pre-combat checks and pre-combat inspections (PCC/PCI) are a great way to empower the lower ranks in the preparation process.

Expectation management is critical when working in an ever-changing multinational environment. A unit or trainer must ask, "How much of a lesson or training exercise do you think you will accomplish?" and, "What are the significant takeaways you want to come of the lesson/training if you get derailed for one reason or another?" The practice of educating, coaching and observing will allow the trainer to draw conclusions and create expectations for the partner nation. One way to manage expectations for training is to give the unit a mission and sit through its planning process. After the mission is planned, rewind and walk through it. Ask leading questions and tweak the plan slightly by suggesting doctrinally sound guidance. It may be surprising how many units take the plan and develop it. Then help with preparation and be engaged during rehearsals. Take a step back, observe the mission and oversee an AAR afterward. You will find a lot of the U.S. military doctrine does not mesh with these units' command structure or culture. Keep in mind how a unit uses our TTPs and starts to blend them with its leadership style. This is a great way to see if a unit is learning and adapting to the threat environment. Always force units to create a standard for their battle drills. They will probably become a hybrid version of our battle drills.

The end state of all the lessons and training is to update or create a TACSOP for the unit to use and add to. Most of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Doctrine does not cover actions below the company level. It's the trainers' responsibility to force the action of implementing these guidelines to partner nations, along with providing as many resources as possible to aid the unit in building its TACSOPs. Before disseminating any information, consult the foreign disclosure regulations (what can and cannot be released and to whom) for any products, TTPs or doctrine. There are a few options to ensure the right information is released. The trainer should contact a Foreign Discloser Representative (FDR) at battalion or a Foreign Discloser Officer (FDO) at brigade or division.

Some kind of a gift exchange after the training is complete is commonplace. Many U.S. units rely on the Certificate of Achievement (CoA) as the standard. A multinational counterpart will more than likely have something that is representative of its country or unit. If it can be arranged to present them with something that represents one's state along with a CoA, it will be received with great respect. In turn, unit patches are always acceptable and are looked upon the same as a military coin.

Embrace the willingness to learn, the thirst for knowledge and the challenges presented in the multinational community. It is an ever-changing environment, the partnerships and bonds made with these brothers-in-arms is a rewarding experience that will endure. If you challenge yourself and your team to take on the responsibility of preparing and shaping the future of combat operations, one will find that members of both parties emerge as stronger leaders.

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