



Trainees participate in combative training, one of the final events prior to the induction ceremony, Aug. 21, 2019 at Fort Jackson, S.C. (U.S. Army photo)

# Army Training

By 1st Sgt. Ian Trowers

Published in *From One Leader to Another Volume II* by the U.S. Army Command And General Staff College in 2014

*Make your plans fit the circumstances. Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.*

—Gen. George S. Patton

**E**very Soldier, noncommissioned officer (NCO), warrant officer, and officer has one primary mission – to be trained and ready to fight and win our nation’s wars. Success in battle does not happen by accident; it is a direct result of tough, realistic, and challenging training. Training is the process that melds human and materiel resources into required capabilities. The Army has an obligation to the American people to ensure its Soldiers go into battle with the assurance of success and survival. This is an obligation that only rigorous and realistic training, conducted to standard, can fulfill.

We can trace the connection between training and success in battle to our earliest experiences during the American Revolution. Gen. Washington had long

sensed the need for uniform training and organization, and during the winter of 1777-1778, while camped at Valley Forge, he secured the appointment of Baron Von Steuben, a Prussian officer, as inspector general in charge of training. Von Steuben clearly understood the difference between the American citizen-Soldier and the European professional. He noted early that American Soldiers had to be told why they did things before they would do them well and he applied this philosophy in his training. It helped the continental Soldiers understand and endure the rigorous and demanding training he put them through. After Valley Forge, continentals would fight on equal terms with British Regulars. Von Steuben began the tradition of effective unit-level training that still develops leaders and forges battle-ready units today for the U.S. Army.

The Army is renewing its focus on the basics of war-fighting. After more than 10 years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the Army honed and sharpened



U.S. Army Paratroopers with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, quickly move towards an objective during a company-level combined arms live-fire exercise at Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, Aug. 21, 2019. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ryan Lucas)

its counterinsurgency skills, Soldiers can soon expect to spend more time on more comprehensive training to meet a hybrid threat that could span guerrilla, insurgent, criminal, and conventional forces all in one environment. Called decisive action training, these new rotations are already underway at the Army's combat training centers and they are designed for units that are not identified for a specific deployment. The new training rotations are part of what the Army calls the Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE). Developed by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's Intelligence Support Activity, DATE is a notional operational environment that consists of five fictional countries named Ariana, Minaria, Atropia, Donovia, and Gorgas.

For some Soldiers, DATE and decisive action rotations may seem familiar or even appear to be a return to the training conducted prior to the attacks of 9/11. Over time, as the Army executes more decisive action rotations, more lessons learned, insights, and observations will be added to DATE. Those will then give commanders a larger library of training scenarios and training support packages to draw from.

DATE itself — and the five fictitious nations within it — will be continuously updated as real-world threats develop and evolve. Meanwhile, the combat training centers will continue to provide deploying units with training to prepare them for their upcoming missions. For example, in 2013, the National Training Center (NTC) conducted three counterinsurgency mission rehearsal exercises for deploying units in addition to five

decisive action rotations. As deployment demands decrease, the rotations will slowly shift to more decisive action rotations. In 2014, 19 of the 21 scheduled combat training center rotations involved decisive action training. With decisive action training, brigade combat teams will train on all their mission essential tasks even if they don't know where they might be needed next. It is really looking to the future and fighting against what we call a hybrid threat, an enemy that has a lot more capability than they've ever had in the past.

On today's battlefield, initiative and adaptability are paramount. Victory in war has always required

that our individual Soldiers and junior leaders possess these traits, but the burden has never been heavier on the shoulders of our young warriors. The immediate actions by a single private can have consequences that may reach well beyond their formation, all the way up to the theater commander or even the president. Although the enemy that we face today has difficulty matching us toe-to-toe in direct tactical engagements, it adapts quickly and confronts us asymmetrically.

When the enemy does choose to engage us directly, it strikes hard at a detected weakness and then fades away like a ghost. The enemy is adaptable, flexible, and smart and we must overmatch him. Of course, training is the key. This is how we prepare to fight, both individually and as a unit. The way in which we train goes a long way in determining how our Soldiers and leaders will perform when confronting the complex problems of the battlefield. Even as we continue examining wartime lessons, transitioning to an army of preparation and realizing the digital revolution's potential, we are confronting a number of crucial decisions. What we already know is that any future progress rests upon inspiring this young generation of Soldiers.

The Army is a profession. Competent and confident leaders are a prerequisite to the successful training of ready units. It is important to understand that leader training, development and certification are integral parts of unit readiness. Leaders are inherently Soldiers first and should be technically and tactically proficient in their own basic Soldier skills.

While advances in the science of human learning and training help us train Soldiers faster, the truth is that it can barely keep up with the expanding list of training requirements. The Army is working on giving commanders the tools which will help them train more tasks quickly in almost any training environment. The potential for simulations in training cannot be overemphasized. Moreover, the use of simulations is grounded in our history. Thousands of hours in tank and aircraft simulators produced the best armor and Apache crews and in the world.

Live-training remains essential, however, in a busy training schedule simulations provide commanders

with options for certifying leaders, building fundamentals, and training on tasks that may be too expensive or dangerous for live-training. While some lean toward live-training, this generation understands the potential of simulators, simulations, and games. Their combat experience, coupled with their instinctive understanding of technology, enables them to blend live, virtual, constructive, and gaming events in order to train faster and achieve greater proficiency than we ever imagined possible. The future of digital training lies in low overhead drivers at the point of need, not large simulation centers. Furthermore, experienced trainers know that unit assessments and training preparation are often the hardest and most labor-intensive aspects of training.

Prior to arriving here at Fort Benning, Ga., I was assigned to 2nd Cavalry Regiment in Vilseck, Germany. When the Army conducted the first two DATE events in October 2012, one was executed at the National Training Center and the other at the Joint Multinational Training Center, which the 2nd Cavalry Regiment was a part of. I saw how untrained our senior NCOs had become on certain tasks that my platoon sergeant, when I was a private, was quite proficient at. Now we can say it was all due in part to 12 years of conflict, but the fact of the matter is the DATE rotation showed how untrained at the senior level we really are. I saw young first sergeants who did not know how to conduct a logistics package as well as not know how to feed their company in the defense or set up an ambulance exchange point.

After serving as an instructor/writer and drill sergeant, I saw the full circle of training of our new Soldiers. As a drill sergeant you are constantly in training mode, meaning you use every second of the clock training your Soldiers. I would bring out barriers and train the Soldiers on buddy team movement or break out engineer tape and set up a "glass house" and train them on entering and clearing rooms. As a drill sergeant, I was expected to be the subject matter expert on all the skill level 1 common tasks.

As an instructor, you were the



Staff Sgt. Latasha Leflore, a U.S. Army Drill Sergeant, gives corrective training to new recruits of Echo Company, 2-58th Infantry Battalion, Class 9078 on their first day at Fort Benning, Ga., Aug. 31, 2019. Referred to as "Day Zero" this marks the beginning of the recruit's journey through Basic Combat Training, where each one will transition from a civilian to a Soldier. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jessica Means)

subject matter expert of a specific task. For me that was training Soldiers on the M203 grenade launcher, both its uses and application. I enhanced the training by adding a competitive event at the culmination of the program of instruction (POI) materiel. After training them on both the leaf and quadrant sights, I would have them engage targets with five rounds at various distances alternating from the standing position to the kneeling, all in two minutes. The Soldiers always welcomed the challenge and that extra bit of training.

In conclusion, as today's Army faces challenges on

a level similar to those we faced in the post-Vietnam era - reduced size, budgetary uncertainty, and domestic priorities - our environment demands that all leaders in the U.S. Army find more creative and cost-effective ways to prepare our Soldiers. We must also continue to develop doctrine that will enable us to understand and conduct unified land operations and its two components of combined arms maneuver and wide area security.

If you would like to learn more about this topic I recommend you take the time to read Army Doctrine Publication 7-0, *Training Units and Developing Leaders*. ■



<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

<https://www.instagram.com/ncojournalofficial/>

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

