



CompanyCommand

Building Combat-Ready Teams



To: Company Commanders

From: Company Commanders

Leading Your Unit Through 'Reset'

One deployment rolls right into the next. Although doctrinally we should have time to "Reset" before beginning "Train up" for the next deployment, in reality these processes must occur simultaneously. As soon as we redeploy home after 12–15 months of war, we and our Soldiers have to reintegrate with our Families and civil society, receive and account for our equipment, welcome incoming Soldiers, say farewell to outgoing Soldiers and begin training for the next deployment. Sometimes we have to accomplish all this while

reorganizing unit structures or changing home stations. Almost always, we undertake Reset amid a wholesale turnover in unit leadership, from squad to brigade levels.

Given the high operational tempo and fast-changing environment, our success is tied to our ability to learn from each other. Listen in as commanders who have been through Reset share their experiences and lessons learned, driven by their desire to help the Army excel during this challenging period in its history.

Mike Schmidt

C/3-71 CAV, 3/10 MTN

Prioritize to enable future success.

Reset is chaos. Mission-essential equipment is being pushed out for overhaul, key leadership is changing over, Soldiers are coming and going. All of this is happening simultaneously, and in the back of your mind you know that your unit has to be recocked and ready to fight in the next year or so. It is a daunting task.

I'd like to say that I aced Reset and set up my successor for success, but I would be lying. I came back from our extended deployment and knew that I would be changing out of command within the next month. I was burnt out and all too happy to go with the flow and maintain the status quo. It wasn't until months later, as I watched my successor and his first sergeant rebuilding the troop from scratch, that I figured out what I could have done to better set the conditions for their success.

In my opinion, the greatest asset a company commander brings to the fight is leadership. My three recommended priorities are not wasting Soldiers' time, physical fitness and training.

Don't waste your Soldiers' time. We

were working half-day schedules during the first month back. Our primary focus was reintegrating Soldiers with their Families. During those half days, only the key leadership was engaged in doing something constructive. Too often, the rest of the Soldiers were sitting around, staring at each other, wondering why the first half of their day was being wasted. My lesson learned is to find something worth-

Capt. Mike Schmidt stands with his fellow officers of Troop C, 3-71 CAV in Naray, Afghanistan, after conducting rehearsals for the final mission of their 16-month deployment. From left to right are 1st Lt. Clay Huffman, 1st Lt. Mark Cleveland, Capt. Danny Quinn, Schmidt and 1st Lt. Alika Itchinose.



Capt. James Dayhoff coordinates with an Iraqi army company commander during a Joint operation to resupply the village of Umm Shababit, Iraq, just west of Tal Afar.



James Dayhoff

HOW, 2/3 ACR

while for them to do. Give them missions such as building training records, uploading data into DTMS [Digital Training Management System], capturing lessons learned, scrubbing the company TACSOP [tactical standard operating procedures] and updating it with all the things your team learned while deployed, etc. Don't go crazy and keep them late doing this stuff, but do use their time wisely. They are still going to get home at the same time, but now each Soldier will go home satisfied that he did something worthwhile for the unit during that half day he had to spend away from his Family.

Physical fitness. We all come back from our deployments with our demons. Coping with those demons and preventing them from affecting your personal/family life is much easier when you keep fit. Additionally, the majority of your Soldiers are either going to stay and deploy again or PCS to a new unit where they will be judged initially on their level of fitness. Being physically fit will help them succeed either way. Physical training during Reset has nothing to do with becoming bigger, faster or stronger; it has everything to do with readapting to a healthy lifestyle and building a base for more demanding PT during train up.

Training. Although it is true that your Soldiers are extremely proficient at the tasks you did routinely during your last deployment, that proficiency does not directly translate into proficiency for the next deployment. The mistake I made here was thinking that there was not a lot I could do to plan and execute worthwhile training during Reset. Our mission-essential equipment was not available, and I knew that the Soldiers who were in my troop then would likely not still be with the troop on the next deployment. But that should not matter. Every Soldier will deploy again eventually. Just like fitness, it is important to build a base in training as well. No matter who you are, what you do or where you go, the fundamentals are fundamental—always. Allow training during Reset to be fun, and craft it so that your leaders have to make decisions that are different from what they did on the last deployment. It will make the training easier to swallow for all involved and will help your team transition from “where I have been” to “where I am going.” Forget your METL [mission-essential task list]. What is important is not the collective end state; rather, what matters are the countless individual and leader tasks that are being accomplished along the way.

Maintain property accountability.

I took command in the early part of OIF-1, redeployed, trained and then led the battery back for OIF-3. Property accountability nearly smoked me. How could I redeploy with half of my inventory, reintegrate, conduct predeployment training, deploy again—and account for my property? I am sure it sounds all too familiar. I wish I had done a few things better.

I should have accounted for as much of my property as possible before leaving Iraq and prepared the paperwork ahead of time. It's hard to do but not impossible if we get our supply sergeants and platoon sergeants involved. If I could do it again, I would take digital photos of every item as it is packed into its container. Once redeployed, it's important to get your property book straight as soon as you can. You will have to balance property accountability with predeployment training, leave and schools. Waiting until the end of your command to get your property book straight is stupid. Trust me. Finally, and most importantly, be very honest when it comes to the FLIPLs [financial liability investigations of property loss]—your integrity will go miles.

Justin Jennings

1744th TC, ILARNG

Talk to your Soldiers and Families about PTSD.

The one “golden nugget” I would like to pass on for Reset of any unit is the ability and willingness to effectively teach all Soldiers and their Families about PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. Many Soldiers do not understand what it is, what its signs are or how to get help. One training session on PTSD is simply not enough to effectively prepare the Families and the Soldiers for the Reset period.



Gregory Wallsten
HHC/2-69 AR, 3/3 ID

See that awards/evaluations are done right.

In January 2006, I was an HHC commander when we returned from Iraq, and it was initially difficult to shift focus from combat operations to reintegration and Reset. I have collected a few thoughts concerning Reset that I believe will benefit commanders returning from overseas deployment.

It is very important upon landing stateside that your awards and evaluation reports are current. There will be a large turnover in leadership, so I recommend that before signing an OER for a platoon leader, you first confirm that all of his or her Soldiers have their awards and NCOERS squared away. Use a tracker to maintain situation awareness, and update it accordingly. In the excitement, these kinds of personnel actions can easily be overlooked until they become a big problem, one that could have been prevented with some tracking and enforcement.

In addition to awards and evaluations, other important aspects of Reset are safety, property, misconduct and training.

Safety, on and off duty. Adjust and update your safety briefings and risk-reduction programs. Your Soldiers hearing it from you has a positive impact on their lives. Your words can save someone's life, even if you never know it.

Property. The redeployment, the turnover in leadership and the excitement of leave can contribute to problems with hand receipts that, if left unchecked, will identify them-

Capt. Justin Jennings conducts a reconnaissance of a firing range south of Samarra, Iraq.

selves at your change-of-command inventory.

Soldier misconduct. A few Soldiers will get into serious trouble upon redeployment. Enforce the UCMJ strictly from the beginning. This will prevent your good Soldiers from following the wrong role model into their own demise.

Training. Start reviewing your plan for the upcoming months for training and attempt to get the ball rolling as soon as possible. That will build a "training mind-set" from the beginning. As we all know, training is very important, and the short turnaround between deployments only creates the need for even better training management. Your Soldiers will utilize their training in very dangerous places. Without a solid plan, you will waste your Soldiers' time. Wasting their time robs them of what they need most during Reset—quality training and time with their Families.

Christopher Vitale

B/4-31 IN, 2/10 MTN

Train with the Soldiers you have on hand.

During Reset, train your unit, regardless of how many Soldiers you are short. Build up to live-fire exercises, even if you are short some key sergeants. The personnel shortages of Reset create a great opportunity for younger Soldiers to step up and do the team-leader or squad-leader job. This is what we did, and it paid dividends. Our training developed a base of knowledge and skills that we were able to build upon during the train-up period. Don't ever put off training. You don't have that luxury.



Capt. Christopher Vitale, commander of Company B, 4-31 IN, shows the damage done to his wrist-mounted global positioning system by a sniper's round. His commitment to continuous training probably made the difference.

Capt. Nora Flott, who commanded Company B, 302nd MI, recommends detailed planning to reduce the chaos of Reset.



Nora Flott
B/302nd MI BN
Plan ahead.

My recommendation is to plan ahead as much as possible. The more detailed the plan, the better. It's much easier to adjust later off a detailed plan.

1. Supply

- Prior to redeployment, conduct 100 percent inventories and develop thorough load plans, taking digital photos of everything.
- After redeployment, ensure that no ISUs are opened without the hand-receipt holders present. This may mean waiting till the hand-receipt holder returns from block leave. Conduct joint inventories as ISUs are opened.
- Conduct a 100 percent inventory of rear property before merging the books.
- Ensure that all hand receipts are updated and signed.

2. Maintenance

- Ensure that your mission-critical vehicles and equipment are front-loaded.
- Schedule all necessary calibrations and gauging.
- Request a Maintenance Assistance and Instruction Team visit to assist your armorer, mechanics and supply personnel.

3. Personnel

- Prior to redeployment, complete all OER/NCOERs and awards for those who will PCS, ETS or retire.
- Track manning by MTOE at least six months out to ensure accurate manning issues are displayed.
- Ensure there are ample amounts of time for Family time and reintegration. Set up retreats with the chaplain for single Soldiers and married couples.
- Don't forget fun. The optempo is high, but you need to ensure you do more than just work.
- Team-building is key during the training phase. Take the Soldiers to the field. I found it better to execute all the squad-level tasks in the field in one shot, rather than piecemeal them. In the long run, this gave the Soldiers more Family time and more time to fix their own personal issues, for example, finances, household goods, cars, etc.

4. Training

- Plan training during the reconstitution stage because you will most likely not be complete with reconstitution and will have to jump into retraining.
- Front-load all training. This will pay dividends later. With the deployment cycles, this prevents last-minute training make-ups.
- Coordinate for subject-matter experts to conduct training.

Jeremy Ussery

B/1-502 IN, 2/101 ABN (AA)

Three big lessons stand out.

There is no one thing to concentrate on in getting ready for the next deployment. There are some focus areas that have to be emphasized.

Instill discipline. People talk about it all the time, but very rarely is it emphasized and carried out to the letter. Some people will allow small lapses here and there, and I have to say there is no room for lapses. In my company, we had a very bad drug problem upon redeployment. I attribute this to Soldiers attempting to be chaptered out; Soldiers who did not care, based on experiences in the last deployment; and new Soldiers who were drug addicts before coming into the Army. My 1SG and I were a new team, and we set a new precedent. We tested, and we had a total of 11 positive urine analyses in three months. I did not separate all of the Soldiers for drug use. My 1SG and I assumed some risk with certain Soldiers, and to this date it has proven to be a good decision. We did punish them harshly to show that drug use was unacceptable in this unit. Not only did we

enforce discipline of behavior but of training as well. We had a published standard in our battalion, and we followed it to the letter of the law. Some would call this stupid or not being "flexible." The problem is, once you are flexible with one thing, what else are your subordinates willing to be flexible on? If my 1SG or I ever heard, "Well, that is not how we will do it in combat," we immediately engaged using a frontal attack and corrected it. People say that you will rise to the occasion; that is not true. You will rise to the level of your training. How guys train is how they will act in combat. This is my third deployment, and I have seen it every time.

Develop agile and adaptive leaders. Train all of your leaders to think on their feet. Create training at the company level that incorporates interpreters, sheik engagements and ambiguous scenarios where there is no cookie-cutter answer, and then see how all of your leaders react. You will find about 10 different answers to one problem. Some will be right and others will be wrong, but the AAR following the training will bring it all together and focus the retraining. If you are not taking the time to create difficult (on the mind) training, then you are wasting time when they could be with

their Families. Your lieutenants and PSGs will be making tough calls daily when deployed. Make them make tough calls in the rear as well, so they get used to it. Don't take power from platoon leaders and squad leaders in the rear and then expect them to thrive with the power granted in a combat zone. Give your subordinate leaders the opportunity to thrive or fail by giving them intent and seeing if they can operate within it. If they consistently show they cannot operate within the intent, then tell them to find a new job. Develop your platoon leaders to be decision makers based on all of the sensors they have around them. In most cases, your platoon leaders will have zero combat experience, and in some cases this is better because they are not tainted by the "last deployment." They take everything at face value and they operate based off the current situation, not one that was around 15 months ago. This is where the flexible and adaptable training comes in.

Form and train a maneuver company intel cell. If you are going to find yourself owning an area of operations, you have to have a company TOC. I have two intelligence NCOs, my fire-support officer is my nonlethal effects officer, my fire-support NCO is my lead battle captain; and fire-support Soldiers run the TOC, Raven operations, battle tracking, etc. The intel NCOs need to be appointed as soon as possible, and they need to integrate with the BN S-2 shop. You will be surprised what a motivated 11B can learn about turning raw data into intelligence. My BN S-2 shop wants to take my intel NCO for his S-2 section. He did not get this way overnight. I appointed him in February 2006, and he has been to multiple intel conferences, collection courses (classified at the Secret level), etc. All of these opportunities are offered throughout the year, and unless someone is appointed as the intel NCO, then it's likely that someone who is not going to serve in that job will end up going and wasting the spot. If your company TOC cannot create intel estimates, manage informants, log tips, create nonlethal target-

ing packets, create and track civil affairs projects, track Iraqi security forces in the AO and conduct normal TOC operations such as battle tracking, reporting and information dissemination, then you need more people.

Those are three big ones that stand out in my mind. I am sure there are a million lessons that I learned in my first months here, but these stick out.

Wynn Nugent

1022 EN CO, LAARNG

Train hard to create space for Family time.

The thing that I try to stay focused on above all else is Families. The faster your deployment cycle, the more that Families should be your focus. Our Soldiers have an amazing ability to make the mission happen. Personnel strength is very critical to our organizations right now, and a key factor in whether a Soldier is retained is his or her spouse. There is an old saying that states, "When mama's not happy, nobody else is either" (or some version of that). We also want our Soldiers' minds focused on the task at hand when they put boots on the ground. As much as possible, you don't want their minds on something back home that they weren't able to take care of before they left. Also, look at having functions in the unit area that the Families can participate in. This can really assist with building a strong FRG.

The flip side of Reset is revamping your training plan. You should get input from your subordinate leaders as to how long tasks truly take. There are a lot of tasks that you can trim fat from. We all cushion our time hacks as much as possible to ensure we are not overly rushed and that we always meet them. I like to use PMCS as an example. A good daily/before PMCS, by the -10 manual, should take no more than 30-90 minutes (depending on the type of equipment), but we always cushion our timelines out to 1-2 hours. The more focus you put into your plan for all of your taskings (whether admin., training, etc.), the smoother and

faster they will be executed with the proper supervision. Explain to your Soldiers your intent and get their "buy-in." Your great plan will not succeed without their buy-in. I can't think of one Soldier who would not put forth the extra effort if he was going to see some benefit out of it at the end of the day. That said, you and your subordinate leaders must constantly supervise to ensure standards are not compromised in the rush to complete a task.



Capt. Wynn Nugent poses with two of his platoon sergeants and his first sergeant, Brent Barnett, who had just received the LAARNG First Sergeant of the Year award for 2007. From left to right are SFC Michael Thrash, Capt. Nugent, 1st Sgt. Barnett and SFC Jonathan Chapman.

Capt. Chris Judge, commander of Company C, 1-187 IN, prepares to conduct a reconnaissance for a company-level operation near Al Siniyah, Iraq.

One caveat: Before you focus on time off and Family events for your Soldiers, you need to have a good plan and take it to the “old man” to get his blessing. If you can show him that training does not suffer and that you are giving the troops a little more time at home with Families, your plan will likely win his support. If you think you will run into resistance with this from your battalion commander, enlist the help of the command sergeant major and let him grease the skids for you.

Chris Judge

C/1-187 IN, 3/101 ABN (AA)

Gather and apply lessons learned.

The most fundamental part of Reset is making sure you establish the conditions to prepare your company for the next deployment. As an Army, we are great at lessons observed and piss-poor at lessons learned. Upon redeployment we are so obsessed with administrative tasks, property tasks and PCSing that we forget what we should have learned from the previous year. My first step was to gather all of my leaders—staff sergeant and above—and sit them down around a table. I found it most effective to break them up into working groups and assign them different areas to brainstorm. By now, just about all of your NCOs will have completed two or three full OIF/OEF tours. How do you improve upon the training conducted before the last deployment? What are the “big rocks” you see as most important to focus on? What did everyone learn last time during the first few weeks of TOA [transition of authority]? PT is critically important to making sure you are ready to fight. What



type of battle-focused PT program will you need? How do you get team leaders and new privates to understand their roles? As important as property, awards, FRG and safety briefs are, they will not bring your Soldiers back home from combat.

Equipment from Capt. Gary Casey's 842nd Signal Company is loaded for redeployment. The truck-mounted shelters are AN/TRC-170(V3) tropo communications systems, and the trailer-mounted generators are 10KW PU798. When his company redeployed, the TRC-170s were rerouted in transit from theater to Reset at Tobyhanna Army Depot, Pa. The PU798s were shipped to Camp Shelby, Miss., then to Letterkenny Army Depot, Pa., for Reset.



Gary Casey

842nd SC, Army Reserve

Plan redeployment as soon as you deploy.

With all the chaos of deploying, at least try to get the contact information for the regional Reset manager. As soon as you get settled in theater, start planning your redeployment.

As a signal company, our points of contact were primarily CECOM-LARs [Communications-Electronics Command-Logistics Assistance Representatives]. We had the names, numbers and e-mail addresses for the program managers [PMs] and their representatives. Start talking to them early, and get on their distribution list to receive updates on which pieces of equipment will go into Reset. New items are consistently added. Also, find out how



Capt. Jason Anderson hands the guidon for the first time to his first sergeant, Robert Harris, at his incoming change of command ceremony at Camp Stryker, Iraq. Also shown are the outgoing commander, Capt. Rob Trent, and the commander of the 2nd Brigade Support Troops Battalion, Lt. Col. Jeff Harrison.

they want the equipment sent to equipment Reset—shelters removed from trucks, controlled cryptographic information [CCI] removed from communications equipment, etc. Then have all your Reset equipment shipped from theater directly to the Reset site(s). And make sure you have all the shipping label and tracking information because something will likely get lost or shipped to the wrong location during redeployment.

When we redeployed in November 2006, we identified the systems going to Reset but noted that the PM wanted the shelters and trailers separated from the trucks and generators. The configuration they wanted would not work since we were turning in the equipment. We didn't want the responsibility of having to take the equipment apart and then, after Reset, having to put it back together to ship it to depot or another unit. The depot accepted the trucks and shelters; however, we had to send two Soldiers to the depot to remove CCI from the communications shelters.

The more time you spend working the issues in theater means less time you will spend working Reset issues when you get home. This also gives your Soldiers more time to spend with their Families.

Jason Anderson

HHC/2 BSTB, 2/10 MTN

Set up your successor for success.

I waited a little to weigh in on this discussion as I am still going through Reset, and the company will continue to Reset after I've handed off the guidon. There are some very good ideas here. Nora's breakdown includes a lot of what I am doing, and Chris is right on about training. He definitely proved that this last tour. My first focus this Reset was allowing Soldiers as much time with their Families as possible. We just completed an extended 15-month tour. They earned their Family time and block leave. Now that block leave is ended, I had planned to adjust my priorities to in-

ventories and change of command, but I am finding that administrative personnel issues are requiring a lot more time than I anticipated. It's frustrating, for example, that it's 2008 and none of my Soldiers—not even the ones arriving from AIT—have any information in DTMS. Anyway, I am working hard to set the conditions so that the incoming commander will be able to focus on team building, training and discipline.

All of these areas are important, and one may take precedence at one time or another, but the question a commander has to ask him- or herself is: What is going to allow me to accomplish my next mission? Remember, mission first, people always.

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