



# CompanyCommand

*Building Combat-Ready Teams*



**To:** Company Commanders

**From:** Company Commanders

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## When This War Ends

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Will this war ever end? For many of us, it sure feels like the answer is “No!” For argument’s sake, consider that the war *is* ending and we are, once again, primarily a “garrison” Army. We are rediscovering things like training management, gunnery tables, accountability formations ... and our families.

**Here is a question for you: What is it about your experience leading in combat that you plan to bring with you into a post-combat Army?**

This may not be an easy question, but it is crucial. If you have led in combat, please take the time to think about this. The future effectiveness of our Army is at stake.

**Nathan Brookshire**

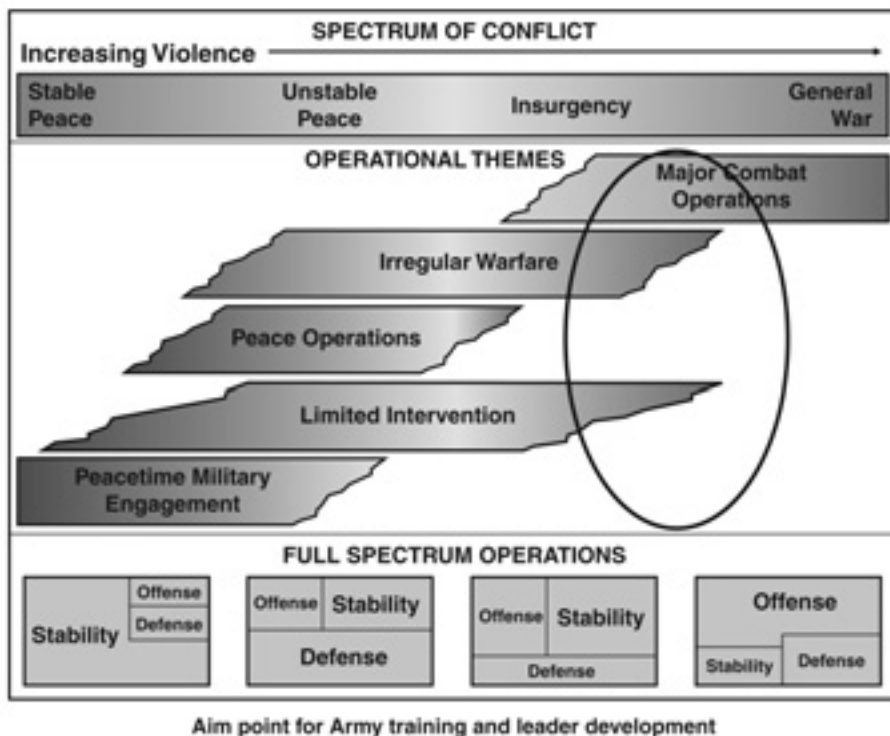
**HHD/716th MP BN**

There is a classic scene in the movie “Apocalypse Now” when LTC Bill Kilgore states, “Someday this war’s going to end.” The character says this in a tone of regret, signaling to the audience that he is doing what he was called to do and will miss being in combat. I do not believe we will re-

gret the end of this long war, but I do think that leading in the post-9/11 Army has given this generation of company-grade officers both the experience and the perspective needed to equip and train our force for future conflicts. We honor our brethren who made the ultimate sacrifice by training the “post-combat” Army for our next conflict. As his- tory has demonstrated, the wolf is never far from the door.



*CPT Nathan Brookshire (front, kneeling), shown here with the police training team he led in Baghdad, feels “duty-bound to share the lessons” he learned about training, Soldier and family readiness, and leader development.*



***“The challenges of today’s operational environments require a change in the Army mindset. The oval on the diagram—called the aim point—indicates that the focus of Army training and leader development must shift leftward from the right side of the spectrum of conflict—from training under conditions of general war to conditions midway between general war and insurgency. Doing this enables Army forces to sustain the proficiency in irregular warfare and limited intervention developed over the last seven years of conflict while sustaining their capability for major combat operations. The aim point concept is a major cultural change for Army leaders, Soldiers, and units.”***

—FM 7-0 Training for Full Spectrum Operations

Entering the Army as a private in 1990 and commissioning through OCS [Officer Candidate School] in 2004 has provided me with a unique perspective. I trained in the Army of the 1990s, witnessed drawdowns and experienced the chain-teaching videos of “No More Task Force Smiths.” After leading a platoon in Mosul and Tal Afar [in Iraq] in 2005 and commanding a police transition team in Baghdad in 2007–09, I feel duty-bound to share the lessons I learned.

**Training.** The combat experience of our leaders will build a flexible and sustainable force, as long as we augment that experience with structured training. We have to ensure that our Soldiers and leaders get the institutional training they

have missed during deployments, while also making sure that family is prioritized. The use of distance learning, college partnerships and internships are key to rounding out the experience of our Soldiers.

**Family and Soldier Readiness.** Our leadership has made a covenant with our families. It is up to leaders at the lowest level—you and I—to make sure that the covenant is implemented and honored. Let us do what we say we are going to do; if we talk about how important family is to our readiness, then let our actions demonstrate that we mean it. I am not saying that we sacrifice crucial training time, but I do think that we have to be more cognizant of what we are asking of our Soldiers and the impact that it has on family time. The increased rates of suicide and high-risk behaviors are a threat to our force that we are all trying to get our arms around. Peer support, leader involvement and aggressive pursuit of resilience training are key factors in stopping this trend. We, as leaders, have to invest in these programs and our Soldiers; we can’t manage our way out of this very personal crisis in our ranks. We have to pursue these threats as we would any enemy. If we don’t, the impact on our force will be felt for generations.

**Leader Development.** Our generation has to be prepared to enter into relationships that truly fulfill the definition of *mentoring*. I coined the term “mentormentship” based on my experience of watching senior leaders tell subordinates, “I am going to be your mentor.” In my opinion, the relationship has to be mutually agreed upon because it makes an intense demand on time and resources, if done right.

We cannot arbitrarily force our agenda on future leaders. If, however, we take the time to know them, invest in them, and humble ourselves in the process by sharing not only the good but the bad of what we have learned, I think we can offer substantial value in the “post-combat Army.”

**Brandon Soltwisch**  
D & HHC/1-77 AR

First, maintain our ability to “tactically multitask.” What I mean is, we have to be able to rapidly and effectively “flip the switch”—fight a combined-arms breach, clear an urban objective, and then immediately conduct stability/security-

force assistance operations, either in that order, reverse order or otherwise. Future conflicts will require the mental and physical agility to do more, faster.

Second, keep the focus on small-unit leadership and leader development. I'm reading *This Kind of War: The Classic Korean War History* by T.R. Fehrenbach again right now, and the parallels in small-unit leadership from now to then are telling. I don't think that the need will ever go away for competent and confident leaders who are able to make appropriate decisions and lead Soldiers through adversity and uncertainty. We've come a long way in developing some really professional guys who can do that—company commanders down to team leaders. I'd hate to see that go away.

Third, maintain a professional, cooperative environment (that is, build teams). Hearing older guys talk about the zero-defect Army where people would "hook their buddy up" to ensure their own survival has got to stay away from our Army. We have to continue to foster inclusive behavior so that anyone can go anywhere



*MAJ Chanda Mofu believes that commanders must develop "a solid understanding" of Field Manual 7-0 Training for Full Spectrum Operations and "a vision of how our subordinates will execute it."*

***"[We must] maintain our combat edge at an appropriate tempo while re-establishing garrison systems for an ARFORGEN Model."***

—GEN George W. Casey Jr., Army Chief of Staff, Army Training and Leader Development Conference, July 2010

and immediately be put on a team and make a positive impact. That doesn't mean we do away with esprit de corps, pride or anything else. To me, it is the opposite; it means we show people how to be proud of their contributions and help them get better. There is absolutely no time for pettiness and chest-pounding—just time to get to work and make a difference.

#### **Chanda Mofu** B/1-6 IN

For the first time in years, we have leaders taking command of companies that do not have a deployment to train for. As this situation becomes more commonplace, I see these challenges:

- Commanders will have to lead effective training management.
- Commanders will have to spend more time evaluating what training is important given limited time.
- Leaders will have to relearn commanding and controlling their units.

- Commanders will have to be personally involved in training management.

None of this is hard, but it does take focus and a change in alignment between how we have trained for combat in the current war and how we are to train for full spectrum operations. It will take a *solid* understanding of FM [Field Manual] 7-0 [Training for Full Spectrum Operations] and a vision of how our subordinates will execute it. The fundamentals of full spectrum operations are applicable in COIN [counterinsurgency], so our doctrine still stands. I'm four years out of command, but if I were a current or future commander I would look at these four challenges and focus my energy in that direction.

#### **Matthew Ellett**

##### **Company B (MI), 4th BSTB, 101st ABN DIV (AASLT)**

In terms of training, I intend to take the effort that's been put into mission/operation planning and put it instead into training management. Too much of our ability to train ourselves has been lost in FORSCOM training regimens that require no thought. I intend to do some METL evaluation and restructuring. How many of my METL tasks are unrealistic for both HIC and LIC? I'll push METL development down to the team level and design training to meet standards that demonstrate METL proficiency (ARTEPs, anyone?). I'll train for the unexpected. As a MICO commander, I will have to train for just about anything, not knowing if my eventual deployment will require Prophet or LLVI; source ops, detainee interrogation or EPW interrogation; ASCOPE and COIN analysis or IPB of an enemy FARP. Here's one element of



CPT Matthew Ellett (right), shown here with 1SG Brandon Perry (left) and SPC Eric York, says, "It has taken us too long and cost too many lives to figure out that we can and will burn out and break down if we don't have the opportunities to recover and recharge."



training that none of us wants to bring back, but that we all know still exists: CBRN, and implementing it into crew drills, etc. We have to become much more self-sufficient in training. Money is going to be tight, so how do we resource our own training? Knowing your Soldiers will help immensely in this, as we find the ones with creative training ideas.

In addition to training, we need to focus. Focus on the junior leaders, empowering junior NCOs and the Soldiers who take charge. Let them have the opportunity to fail safely and learn their lessons. Focus on families. Use Soldiers' time wisely and allow as much family time as feasible. It has taken us too long and cost too many lives to figure out that we can and will burn out and break down if we don't have the opportunities to recover and recharge.

Here in Afghanistan, it is generally easy to keep Soldiers focused. At home, though, it's difficult, especially when the task you give requires maximum effort, sweat and focus.

### Glossary

**ARTEP**—Army Training and Evaluation Program.  
**ASCOPE**—Area, Structures, Capabilities, Organization, People and Events; a framework for analyzing a COIN environment.  
**CBRN**—Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear.  
**EPW**—Enemy prisoner of war.  
**FARP**—Forward area refueling point.  
**FORSCOM**—Forces Command.  
**HIC**—High-intensity conflict.  
**IPB**—Intelligence preparation of the battlefield.  
**LIC**—Low-intensity conflict.  
**LLVI**—Low-level voice intercept.  
**METL**—Mission essential task list.  
**MICO**—Military intelligence company.  
**PROPHET**—A Signals intelligence capability.

How will we keep that combat edge when the threat only has blank rounds (if we can afford even that)? How do we keep Soldiers from becoming "civilianized" so that, when we are called on again to put rounds downrange, we will not have to relearn the early lessons of so many wars?

I agree that we will likely return to our HIC roots, and I like the metaphor of chess and the octagon. It makes the priorities brutally clear. We cannot and must not lose our ability to defeat any enemy on the battlefield in conventional war. *This Kind of War* was brought up, and if you haven't read it, I would recommend you do. So many lessons we can't afford to relearn.

**Sara Harmon**

**USA MEDDAC, Fort Leonard Wood**

One huge thing that we haven't learned but will soon have to in a post-war Army is: We will have to live within a budget. We will have to figure out how to do great things on limited resources. Innovation will be essential to success. Keep in mind that, over the last nine years, money has been poured into the military. That will not last, and we are going to have to find creative, smart, cost-conscious ways to meet our garrison and wartime missions. While there is no replacement for great, hands-on training, we will have to consider what the budget will allow us to do. Look at all the great technology we have used in the last decade and think about how you can integrate that into your training to keep skills up. We will have to retain our flexibility and ability to think outside of the box to get the mission done.

On the people side, we are also going to have to bring a healthy dose of compassion into the post-war Army. The mental and physical issues that we will face as we come out of an era of war will be huge. We are going to have to help our Soldiers learn healthy outlets for the energy/stress/adrenaline that war will no longer provide. We are also going to have to figure out how to help families live to-

gether long-term, instead of our Soldiers being transients who move in and out. Our Soldiers and families will have significant issues as we come out of this, and it has to be a focus. Be prepared and know what resources are available to help with the big issues such as money, kids, alcohol, spouses and discipline.

**John Hollein**

**HHD/61st MMB**

I kicked this around and kept coming back to the same idea, which relates to training, leadership, equipment and many other aspects of combat operations: Our #1 task to stay successful will be to continue to identify and exploit talent within our organizations.

We all have different skill sets, both as Soldiers and as people. Over the course of a year-long deployment of combat operations, those talents become apparent. When we're in garrison, however, those talents become obscured and buried under slavish devotion to a very rigid and inflexible way of doing business. We don't get to practice COIN in a meaningful way in garrison—you're never going to know who works well with people, who has knowledge in things that aren't part of your METL, who can do things like play instruments or coach soccer. Those skill sets can be invaluable, regardless of rank or duty position. We hear a lot about a Soldier who his peers trust on a deployment—some even to the point of being talked out of suicide or other destructive behavior. Did we, as leaders, even know this guy had a skill set that is doing more for the mission than 1,000 unused battle drills? What are we doing to support him and make sure he has the tools to exploit his talent? It's a lot more difficult to "see" these things in garrison. It takes a lot more involvement to discover them. As we are more likely to do when deployed, in garrison we have to block out the rank, the badges, and the tabs and actually see who is doing what for the organization. How do we move toward this?

First and most important, let's take care not to view our Soldiers as requirements. We can get so hung up on things like mandatory training, MEDPROS [medical protection system], and APFT [Army physical fitness test] scores that we fail to see Soldiers as people. I am not saying to let standards slide, but it would be great if we put as much fervor and empowerment into suicide prevention as we do into achieving a 260 APFT average. I refuse to believe that we can assemble a team of NCOs with the skill set required to successfully run special-population PT [physical training], yet we stare blankly at the wall when asked what to do about suicides. The solutions are in our formations; we just have to find and empower them.

Second, everything is an opportunity. I wrote a policy letter stating that nobody above the rank of E-5 would lead

PT. Some of the junior Soldiers then would practice all week to lead PT; some would blow it off and catch hell. In this way, something simple that we did every day allowed me to see where my junior Soldiers were at in terms of maturity and dedication to the mission. The only caveat was that it royally upset some of my NCOs who lived to get up there and smoke people. But guess what—I don't need E-7s who can do more push-ups than everybody else; I need to know which Soldiers I can trust when I tell them to do something. My point is that we have to find things that are low-risk but high-payoff and let our subordinates run with them and develop.

***"While our commanders and subordinate leaders are phenomenal warriors, they are unaccustomed to taking care of Soldiers in a garrison environment ... The Army's professional development priorities and operational tempo have eroded the technical skills, communication skills and experiential knowledge needed to lead/ manage effectively in the garrison environment."***

*—Army Health Promotion, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention*

We want to acknowledge and thank Chanda Mofu, who first raised the question addressed in this conversation. If you have in mind things that we as commanders should be thinking and talking about, join the conversation at <http://CC.army.mil>. Membership in the CompanyCommand forum is limited to currently commissioned officers who care passionately about company-level leadership and our profession of arms.

