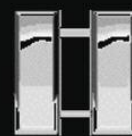




# CompanyCommand

## *Building Combat-Ready Teams*



**To:** Company Commanders  
**From:** Company Commanders

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## World-Class Training

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*Training is our lifeblood. Only when we've sweat and bled and pushed our teams beyond their limits in training will they be exceptional in combat.*

Have you ever experienced a world-class training event that you and your team planned and executed? Now is a crucial time for us to take stock of what we know about great training and reflect on the lessons of combat. In the process, we can envision what is required to plan and ex-

ecute the kind of training our units need to be exceptional in future combat. You are invited to join this conversation of company commanders describing their best training experiences and think about what it takes to conduct your own world-class training.

### Mark Moretti

As an infantry company commander, I participated in a great combined-arms "Gunsmoke" exercise at Fort Carson [Colo.]. The purpose of this multi-echelon training was to evaluate and certify squad leaders and above in the employment and integration of air assets, mortars, artillery and machine guns. Because we had a limited number of rounds for each weapon system, we built strict engagement criteria into the scenario and included a requirement to maintain a certain number of rounds for final protective fires. As the CO, I issued an OPORD to my PLs, who then occupied the defensive position. Platoon leadership had to develop engagement areas and employ their M240B machine-gun teams so they were integrated into the indirect-fire plan. I was responsible for coordinating and pushing assets to the PLs while "deconflicting" airspace for attack aviation and painting the picture for the battalion commander. Besides managing my organic rifle company assets (e.g., machine guns and 60 mm mortars) and aviation assets, I had to balance battalion 120 mm mortars, 105 mm artillery pieces in direct-fire mode, and 155 mm howitzers in direct support.

Once the enemy attack on our position began, every leader in my formation was stressed. My PLs communicated with me, and we decided which assets to use based on the enemy situation, engagement criteria, asset availability and round counts.

Everyone in my company came out of this exercise realizing how challenging it is to maintain situational awareness of something as simple as the number of rounds you have on hand while you are trying to fight the enemy. It really helped us tighten up our SOPs for communication and leader responsibilities during the fight.

### Jason Wayne

World-class training doesn't have to be all about live fire, shoot houses and air assaults. Even routine training events can be world-class. For instance, I cast a physical fitness vision for my company that challenged them to be able to move tactically for six to eight miles at 8,000 feet above sea level under full combat load with an 80-pound ruck, and then fight the enemy. To reinforce this vision, I developed regular commander-led PT events. My goals were to make the events feel different from normal PT and focus on team-building and assessment. For one event, I coordinated with my battalion and the local government in Vicenza, Italy, to conduct PT on a Friday morning at a public lake near the post. On the day of the event, the company formed up in full kit with their rucks to conduct four laps around the lake (about 10 miles). The first two laps were done with rucks, the third lap was done wearing full kit minus ruck, and the final lap was done in Army combat uniforms. It was a "race by fire team," and each team had to complete the mission together. Battalion and company leadership came down and embedded with the fire teams, which energized the guys to push themselves a little harder and try to smoke the "old men." Afterwards, we had music, food and drinks by the lake. I gave the troopers the rest of the day off so they could start their weekend early. I know it was world-class because Soldiers were talking about it for months afterwards.

### Fran Murphy

After serving in Iraq on a National Police Transition Team during "the Surge," I commanded a company in the MTT Training Brigade (1/1 ID). The biggest insight from my first tour with the Iraqi National Police was the tension between



U.S. Army/SGT Daniel K. Johnson

*Pilots with the 4-2 Attack Battalion, 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, fly an AH-64 Apache over Soldiers from the 1-27 Infantry Battalion, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, during Joint Exercise Gunsmoke conducted at Rodriguez Live Fire Complex, South Korea.*

combat advisors and landowning (coalition forces) units. The internal conflict between advisors and a U.S. Army brigade commander that led to the “A Camp Divided” article [*The Wall Street Journal*, June 2006] is an example of this struggle. As a company commander training future MTTs, I made it a priority to prepare advisors for these conflicts. As a result, my company leadership and I developed “Blue Force Leader Engagements” at which advisors-in-training would meet with their host nation counterparts and leaders from coalition units. These leader engagements featured tough scenarios and tense exchanges between experienced leaders wearing the same uniform. This was a good training event because it addressed a theater-specific need and took trainees out of their comfort zones in what was a low-resource training event. Battalion commanders across Fort Riley [Kan.] were eager to participate in this training, so it also spread awareness of the transition-team mission while promoting teamwork among different types of units. Blue Force Leader Engagements eventually became a permanent fixture in the MTT training POI.

#### **Lou Nemec**

As we prepared for our upcoming NTC rotation and subsequent deployment in the summer of 2007, my sister company commander and I put our heads—and limited resources—together to simultaneously execute our company commander’s training time. He had some experience as a route-clearance company commander while deployed, and I had a lot of experience planning and executing training at Fort Lewis [Wash.] while doing a two-year AC/RC tour. We pooled our resources and tapped range control, tenant units and the training support center at Fort Lewis for every possible resource. We then planned some METL tasks and formed an “insurgent” section from our most experienced NCOs to serve as the OPFOR. The training ended up providing a realistic three days of route-clearance operations mixed with some defensive obstacle construction and integration. His knowledge of current TTPs and route-clearance operations in Iraq, combined with my knowledge of available training assets on post and how to get them, ensured

that the whole was better than the sum of the parts.

#### **Jon Silk**

The training exercise started when my tank company was alerted by battalion (previously coordinated). As the alert sequence proceeded, the company uploaded equipment and

#### **CompanyCommand Glossary**

**AAR-** After-Action Review  
**AC/RC-** Active Component/Reserve Component  
**ATN-** Army Training Network  
**CATS-** Combined Arms Training Strategies  
**CDR-** Commander  
**CLS-** Combat Lifesaver Skills  
**CO-** Commanding Officer  
**FRAGO-** Fragmentary Order  
**FSC-** Forward Support Company  
**IED-** Improvised Explosive Device  
**LFX-** Live Fire Exercise  
**METL-** Mission-Essential Task List  
**MISO-** Military Information Support Operations  
**MTT-** Mobile Training Team  
**NTC-** National Training Center  
**O/C-** Observer/Controller  
**OPFOR-** Opposing Forces  
**OPORD-** Operations Order  
**PL-** Platoon Leader  
**POI-** Program of Instruction  
**PSG-** Platoon Sergeant  
**REDCON 1-** Readiness Condition One (the highest readiness condition)  
**SATCOM-** Satellite Communications  
**SL-** Squad Leader  
**SOP-** Standard Operating Procedure  
**T/M-** Teacher/Mentor  
**TTP-** Tactics, Techniques and Procedures



*Soldiers treat simulated casualties from a simulated IED blast during an exercise at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.*

prepared to move to an assembly area. The company came to REDCON 1 and initiated movement. This was a memorable moment because in all previous alerts, the sequence was terminated before coming to REDCON 1. When I gave the order for the lead platoon to move, the PL came back over the net to confirm that I wanted his platoon to move. I could hear the nervousness in his voice after I confirmed my previous transmission and he acknowledged. I monitored him and the other PLs on their platoon nets as they issued guidance to their respective platoons.

During movement, a FRAGO was issued and the company moved to the close combat tactical trainer (CCTT) facility. Once the company rolled in the gate, the tanks were parked. The company moved into the CCTT, transitioned from live to virtual training and occupied the simulators, in which the vehicles were set in a company assembly area.

Another FRAGO was issued and the company headed north (in simulation) and occupied a company defense against an attacking "North Korean" unit. During the fight, we incorporated live training into the simulation. For example, when a tank was hit by enemy fire and a crewmember was wounded, company medics maneuvered virtually in the simulation to the location of the wounded crewmember. Once they arrived at the location in simulation, they dismounted their CCTT simulator and physically moved to the area in the simulator where the wounded crewmember was located. From there, the medics physically treated and evacuated the casualty.

#### **John LaMont**

I led a unit that included two MISO teams, each consisting of a media production team, a SATCOM team and a radio broadcast team. During a deployment, these teams are ge-

ographically separated. However, successful theaterwide information engagement relies heavily on their ability to work together. My NCO in charge and I decided to conduct a three-day field training exercise to test the teams' ability to develop, distribute and broadcast a MISO message under the same conditions they would face during a deployment. Each team occupied two separate locations in the Fort Bragg, N.C., training area. Each had to develop a MISO message based on a tactical scenario and then distribute that message over SATCOM to the other team. Success meant each team could concurrently broadcast the locally developed radio reel—and the reel they received from the other team—over AM radio. What made this training great was the fact that we integrated these teams and

allowed them to build shared understanding of how their local MISO efforts fit into the larger operational picture. This forced every individual to understand the roles and responsibilities of the other teams so they could tailor their efforts to achieve the overall mission end state.

#### **Jim Nemec**

When I was a platoon leader, my battery commander had us rehearse battle drills so many times that when situations arose in combat, we reacted accordingly. When I took command, I integrated my combat experience into my approach to training. I know the confusion that sets in after an IED goes off, and I know the frustration in dealing with civilians on the battlefield. I also know that practice makes perfect and the more reps, the better. We used every available

#### **Training Units and Developing Leaders (ADRP 7-0)**

- Commanders and other leaders are responsible for training.
- Noncommissioned officers train individuals, crews and small teams.
- Train to standard.
- Train as you will fight.
- Train while operating.
- Train fundamentals first.
- Train to develop adaptability.
- Understand the operational environment.
- Train to sustain.
- Train to maintain.
- Conduct multi-echelon and concurrent training.

## Ideas for Making Training World Class

**Be Inspired** (Sam Linn). I think it is impossible to separate attitude from the traditional training checklist (resources, tasks to be trained, instruction, situation development, etc.). Creating a sense of purpose and excitement can move the needle on involvement in and retention of the training.

**Make It Real** (Jason Wayne). Great training is when Soldiers forget they are out at the range and begin to believe they are conducting a real combat operation. This means the sights, sounds and experiences have to be replicated as much as possible. It is on the planner to build options into a scenario and minimize exposure to support personnel. I spend a lot of time with my platoon leaders talking about how a scenario “feels.”

**Empower Subordinates** (Jason Davis). What sticks out most in my mind is the necessity to empower your Soldiers—not only during combat, but particularly during training. I have observed many LFXs, and the best ones involve leaders cross-talking, solving problems and executing to meet the CDR’s intent, without the CDR’s permission/approval. Leaders at all levels powering down to their subordinates, forcing the tactical decisions to be made at the lowest level possible, always produce great results.

**Focus** (Ryan Kranc). Most of the frustration in planning training I see is a result of leaders trying to do too much. Focus on your METL and the supporting collective and individual tasks. Get on the Army Training Network [<https://atn.army.mil>] and use CATS to drill down on your unit’s critical collective tasks. Focus yourself by quarter, by month and by week. See where you want to be six months from now and determine how you want to get there.

**Get All Your Leaders Involved** (Sam Linn). We had a long-term planning conference with my NCOs to map out 12 months of training. Looking back, the fact that we went to such a low level in that meeting (usually this would be PSG/PL and above) ended up getting a high level of buy-in from the squad leaders, who were integral to the attitude of the Soldiers being trained.

**Train Different Tasks and Levels of Leaders Simultaneously** (Mark Moretti). In order to make the most of your limited training time and replicate the challenges of combat, create training in which you and your leaders are all involved and many different things are happening at once. In combat, it’s not just one leader that gets put under pressure, and you aren’t just focusing on one skill. The entire team is in the mix, managing a complex situation and drawing on numerous skills simultaneously. The more you can do that in training, the better you will be in combat.

**Get Away from the Flagpole** (Josh Christy). Training at home station can result in overfamiliarity and complacency. To develop, leaders need to be challenged. Getting away from the flagpole forces leaders to exercise their planning muscles and engages the attention of Soldiers as they find themselves in unfamiliar terrain and conditions. My battalion did a training deployment from Fort Drum [N.Y.] to Camp Atterbury [Ind.]. This required significant air and ground planning and engaged leaders at every level. It exercised the unit’s movement officer skills in the same way they would be tested for our upcoming operational deployment. Training in an unfamiliar area prepared the unit for the challenges of assuming responsibility downrange from an unfamiliar footprint.

movement as a training opportunity. I would often use the headquarters platoon as the OPFOR and would run the platoons through scenarios during road marches or en route to the training area, hitting them when they least expected it.

We usually moved on foot, so I would have the headquarters platoon plant an IED along the route or have some sort of “civilian on the battlefield” scenario that the platoon leader and platoon sergeant would have to work through.

We almost always had CLS training involved as well. The training wasn’t pretty—especially if the Soldiers weren’t expecting it—but it was minimally resourced and maximized the type of think-on-your-feet leadership needed when we deployed to Afghanistan in March 2011. Since I usually moved with the platoons, I would watch and serve as an O/C or T/M. We would always conduct an AAR immediately following the scenario, and I assessed the quality of the training based on the involvement of the Soldiers during the AAR. One of my NCOs referred to this as “Hip-Pocket Training on Steroids,” and I guess he was right.

## Josh Gaspard

The day we returned from block leave after redeploying from Iraq, I led my squad leaders and platoon leaders on a five-mile run. There was a tough hill at the end of the route, and we ran up it three times as fast as we could. After the third sprint, I had one of my best squad leaders simulate calling in a fire mission on a nearby building. Out of breath, he couldn’t do it. We knew we were going to Afghanistan next; with that in mind, this PT experience was sobering, but it exemplified the work we needed to do.

That same week, I scheduled five SL/PL discussions that lasted about two hours each. The morning after that eye-opening PT session, I stood in front of the room with a dry-erase board and went around to every squad leader and asked, “In 12 months when we deploy to Afghanistan, what do you want your squad to be really good at?” I captured their thoughts on the board—things like physical fitness, call for fire, medical, marksmanship, air assault operations, cultural understanding and maintenance. We then began to group the tasks into larger topic bins. I asked, “What tasks do we need to train for these groups?” The squad leaders’



U.S. Army/MAJ Jason Wayne

*A squad from A/1-503D Infantry (Airborne) conducts a blank fire rehearsal during a training deployment to Monte Carpegna, Italy.*

responses varied widely. Without letting the platoon leaders answer, I asked where we could find the answers so we could all be on the same sheet of music. No real response. From under the table, I pulled out a stack of manuals. I said the books and answers are out there. I stressed that when we said someone was trained on task X, we all needed to know exactly what that meant.

I then gave out homework assignments. I picked squad leaders and gave them a topic and said, "By tomorrow, you will come and tell the group where to find the evaluation criteria, associated tasks (collective, leader, skill level) and anything additional you want to say about the particular task."

Fast forward to the next day, and you couldn't find a place to sit in our company conference room. There were squad leaders and team leaders—even high-speed Soldiers picked by their squad leaders—digging through manuals. We began the discussion on the homework and continued this all week.

During the last of our five SL/PL discussions, I again stood in front of the dry-erase board and said, "OK, let's create our 'Road to War' map." We developed a prioritized list of the collective tasks we wanted to train for and the essential leader and individual skills training that had to come first. Everyone had a say. By the end of that week, we knew what we wanted to become and we were committed to doing whatever it took to get there.

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This article is intended to be a catalyst for you to start thinking about your own training experiences and ignite your passion to plan and execute training that is "worthy of a story to be told." Are you paying the price in training that is required to be exceptional in combat? Are you burning the midnight oil and giving your Soldiers the best opportunities to succeed and survive in combat?

Envision yourself sitting with your team after a phenomenal training event that pushed everyone beyond what they thought was possible. You are all mentally and physically

exhausted, yet you smile as a feeling of professional satisfaction wells up in your chest. You nod to your 1SG and he says, "Sir, we did it!"

Thanks to the 18 commanders who have contributed so far to this world-class training conversation in the CC forum. If you are a currently commissioned officer, please jump online and contribute your thoughts and stories at <http://CC.army.mil>. Together, we are becoming more effective leaders and we are building more effective units!

*Company commanders: Please join us in the new-and-improved version of our online professional forum to continue the conversation: <http://CC.army.mil>.*



**Connecting in conversation...  
...becoming more effective.**



*Art by Jody Harmon*

***Have you joined your forum?***