**World-Class Training**

*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 execute 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
May 20 13

I

AR M Y

61

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

Company Command 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
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, 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 geographically 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Units and Developing Leaders (ADRP 7-0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Commanders and other leaders are responsible for training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Noncommissioned officers train individuals, crews and small teams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Train to standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Train as you will fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Train while operating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Train fundamentals first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Train to develop adaptability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand the operational environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Train to sustain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Train to maintain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conduct multi-echelon and concurrent training.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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’
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.

* * *

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.**

**CC.army.mil**

*Art by Judy Harmon*

---

**Have you joined your forum?**