



This paper outlines the combat readiness gained by Task Force Tomahawk while on its second and longest stop during the Pacific Pathways 17-1 series of exercise deployments. Over the course of two months, from 28 February to 2 May 2017, TF 1-23IN participated in three separate exercises in the Republic of Korea: a unilateral train-up, combined exercise FOAL EAGLE, and a CJLOTS. Training and living on the Peninsula allowed the Task Force to reach its anticipated FY 17 readiness peak for a multitude of reasons. In short, deploying to Korea for weeks of training allowed an already proficient force to train every echelon in a unilateral and combined environment while enjoying the full range of support from a mature theater that possesses the same comprehensive training and readiness support apparatus as its home station. What's more, the unit remained focused throughout its training glide path because it was surrounded by reminders of the strategic relevance of the US Army on the Korean Peninsula, and it was able to conduct its training free of typical home station diversions. These two factors, alone, make the xx-1 Pathways mission-set the premier readiness-building series and expose how the IMCOM-Pacific and 8th Army home field advantage enable Korea to be the most advantageous ground forces training environment in the PACOM AOR.

OBJ-T Combat Readiness Certification

This paper defines *certification* as the process of exercising a unit at one or more of its METL or Supporting Collective Tasks (SCTs) with the intent to conclusively assess the unit's readiness on a scale from Trained to Untrained, per Army doctrinal T&EOs and Objective Task Evaluation Criteria (OBJ-T). In Korea, our Task Force certified our Stryker Platoons' combined arms attack SCT, our squads' react to contact SCT, and our FSC's Convoy METL task. One of the key resources that made these certifications possible was the training venues. In fact, the Rodriguez Live Fire Complex hosted one of the most magnificent Platoon Live Fires I have seen in a conventional or SOF training event.

The Task Force conducted Platoon Attack Combined Arms Live Fire Exercises (CALFX) as EX FOAL EAGLE's banner event. While the CALFX was a Table XII at its core, the combined forces and combined arms nature of the training scored high across the OBJ-T construct. For example, the CALFX was externally evaluated day and night under live conditions, incorporated a dynamic and complex scenario with a hybrid threat, involved over 85% of leaders, and met greater than 90% of leader/critical performance measures. In spite of all this, less than 79% of the typical platoon's authorized personnel were present for training, and in some cases manning dipped below 65%.

Perhaps this can be said better. Stryker rifle platoons conducted a forward passage of lines with a ROK-Army unit, attacked an enemy using the stand-off of Apache gunships, and integrated 155mm artillery, 120/81/60mm mortars, and heavy and medium machine guns. Then, they closed with the enemy using fire and maneuver, explosively breaching his protective obstacle and then assaulting his strongpoint. This assault required platoons to destroy two enemy bunkers with live frag grenades, breach two buildings with explosives, mechanically breach two additional vehicle lanes, and establish a hasty defense – all while echeloning indirect and Army aviation fires. In total, each platoon killed over 20 enemy on the objective and another 35 enemy or associated vehicles off the objective. The event was exercised across a wide range fan, allowing the platoon to shift fires in front of an assaulting squad two to four times. The best platoons synchronized this symphony of destruction in approximately one hour. It was awesome, so awesome they all earned a P-.

In all seriousness, our primary challenge in reaching OBJ-T actually was the number of personnel present for training. We never doubted the ability of our Soldiers and Leaders to achieve a high training standard. At least, this was the case for the first half of the CALFX. Four Stryker Platoons completed day and night certification before civil-military tensions with the surrounding community reduced training to blank fire only. The remaining five platoons completed the entire event with notional indirect fires and under blank fire conditions, which still allowed intensive learning but disallowed the training -T we had previously anticipated. As a possible silver lining, the exposure to civ-mil interactions offered a newfound appreciation for how ROK and U.S. military leaders advocate for freedom of maneuver for tactical units to train hard in the theater. Another benefit, albeit a bitter one, occurred when we were downgraded to blank fire exercises: this process subjected the force to mental and emotional inertia that leaders had to break. One could liken this to the stress that units experience after a CIVCAS or similar incident in Afghanistan, when leaders have to step up to sustain the focus of a team that feels like the wind has been let out of its sails. **In summary, with four of nine Stryker Platoons fully certified, the Task Force fell short of its intended goals due to manning and civil-military sensitivities. We accomplished great training nonetheless. RFLC is an outstanding live fire complex run by Army Master Gunners that safely get units to “yes.” They also employ a workforce that can build complex objectives in less than 48 hours, at minimal cost.** I have only seen such willing range support and liberal range fans & impact areas at the National Training Center. More anon regarding the combined nature of this LFX.



“Helluva breach Soldier, give yourself a P-minus!”

The Task Force completed two additional certifying events. First, all companies conducted unilateral squad or section live fire exercises at the Story Live Fire Complex. This allowed the squads to continue investing in the fundamentals of live fire maneuver in more complex and demanding scenarios than those conducted in Thailand. All squads achieved greater proficiency, especially the attached machine gunners. Ultimately, the majority of these squads achieved a T, while only a few achieved a P, with manning being the determining

factor. It is our unit's belief that **the frequency of live fire maneuver training made possible by the Pacific Pathways exercises creates unprecedented muscle memory and therefore greater Soldiers and leaders.** We will assess this theory during our fifth and final live fire exercise in the Philippines. Second, our Forward Support Company (FSC) qualified seven crews through Table VIII gunnery and completed Convoy Live Fire Exercises for three two-vehicle convoys. Though a simple series of tables, Fort Lee and the Army Logistics University has created a system that puts FSCs on a respectable path toward greater competence and confidence in their ability to self-secure. This was the first time Soldiers in our FSC participated in such an event since the company activated two years ago. Their morale and pride reflected the gains they made. We intend to incorporate more small arms training, medical evacuation, and downed vehicle recovery in future convoy LFXs and STXs.

OBJ-T Additive Gains in Combat Readiness

This paper defines *additive gains* as any training output that does not constitute certification, but nonetheless accomplishes measurable training proficiency that is necessary to progress to certification of specified METL tasks or SCTs in the future. In Korea, we made our greatest additive gains in our AASLT missions, high-repetition STXs (combined and unilateral), and weapons qualification.

Air Assaults: All companies built upon the air assault foundation they laid in Thailand by conducting Combined Company Air Assault Operations. The company CPs integrated with their aviation task force counterparts for 48 hours of planning and rehearsals. During this time the US aviation task force leaders walked the ground maneuver units (US and ROK) through Air Mission Coordination Meetings (AMCM) and Air Mission Briefs (AMB). During this time, the US aviation task force leaders led the ground maneuver units (US and ROK) through Air Mission Coordination Meetings (AMCM) and Air Mission Briefs (AMB). All communities – assault, heavy lift, attack, medical evacuation, infantry, fire support, and field artillery – were represented, along with weather and intelligence analysts, and benefited from coaching and tutelage from the Aviation and Infantry Battalion Commanders. The exercise culminated with a combined air and ground/mounted assault against two enemy objectives. The air assault infiltrated during daylight and exfiltrated during night with air medical evacuations in between. **The net result was the formation of a skills base in AASLT capabilities for the infantry companies and battalion staff requisite to complete future time-sensitive AASLT missions in the Philippines as part of EX BALIKATAN. This additive gain in proficiency was only possible because of the enduring relationship between TF GHOST's 3-25 Aviation and 1-23 Infantry, made possible by the Pacific Pathways exercise construct.**

Iterative STXs: Prior to EX FOAL EAGLE kicking off, we conducted a unilateral squad and below training density within medium mortar range of the NKPA at the Story Live Fire Complex / Warrior Base. This was an excellent investment in the fundamentals and one that the NCO Corps seized with aplomb. Among our best investments were company-led squad battle drill STXs in the surrounding hills. **The rigor of these short missions in tough terrain taught us the value of designing training events that allow maximum repetition of squad blocking and tackling as opposed to long duration missions that only allow a single battle drill repetition.** These iterative lanes became ideal leadership and tactics laboratories that proved their worth during squad live fire exercises and the multi-echelon events of EX FOAL EAGLE.

Upon arriving at Rodriguez Live Fire Complex, each company conducted a four-day series of STXs with their Korean counterparts in the MOUT/CACTF site. These involved small unit subject matter expertise exchanges (SMEE) that covered street fighting, room clearing, operating a check point, cordon & search ops using the call-out technique, urban defense, and hoist evacuations, to name a few. This was a rare opportunity to invest in area security tactics as well as offensive and defensive tactics. Normally, limited training days force units to prioritize combined arms maneuver tasks over area security tasks. However, we cast a wider net of training events because our extended time in Korea allowed for 5 weeks of dedicated training, which amounts to half of our total training weeks in Pacific Pathways. More importantly, **all companies rehearsed three Counter-WMD cordon & search operations with ROK partners and the 23rd Chemical Battalion – in MOPP4, of course.** We appreciated renewed interest in CBRN skills while, simultaneous to our training, Kim Jong Un had his half-brother killed by VX agent and the Syrian regime attacked Khan Sheikhun with Sarin gas. This begged the question whether Pathways units should complete the same “Annex G” CBRN tables as rotational units arriving on the peninsula. FORCSOM did not require this of us, and we would have been hard pressed to find the time, but...

Finally, we made respectable gains in the ultimate “additive” training element: the individual and crew weapons qualification. We adhered to the infantry standard that units should be shooting so often that they are qualifying their Soldiers forward as opposed to at the last minute when a Soldier’s qualification is about to expire. In many cases, we qualified alternate gunners to build a bench for future personnel moves. The table below demonstrates the depth of qualification – keep in mind, >95% of our Task Force was already qualified

Weapons Qualification	
M4 Rifle	93
M249 SAW	26
M240 MG	31
M320 Grenadier	63
Javelin	30
Stryker RWS (Crew)	37
Urban Expl. Breach	45

on their weapons system before deploying (the ~5% were mostly staff...but not anymore). Additionally, our M777 Platoon fired over 100 rounds of various DODICs, while our mortar platoon and sections fired 152 rounds of various calibers and DODICs. In fact, gunners have fired so many rounds in a short period of time that they are now refining body and foot position to reduce their crew drills by fractions of a second – like an athlete studying tape. **Pacific Pathways makes it easier to maintain qualification initiative because it aligns already qualified squads with 4 months of protected land, ammo, and time.** The stop in Korea is the only one that provides Army standard qualification ranges.

Subjective Combat Readiness Gains

This paper defines *subjective readiness gains* as those that cannot necessarily be measured using the OBJ-T or USR constructs, but clearly contribute to combat readiness. In some cases, the relevance of such subjective contributions to readiness eclipses those that can be objectively measured. In Korea, our greatest subjective gains were the intangible effects of training in the USFK strategic context, leader development, and investment in the medical and administrative underpinnings of readiness made possible by the Army’s infrastructure in Korea.

Units living in Area I are surrounded by reminders of the strategic relevance of the U.S. Army to the Republic of Korea and East Asia. This provides immense focus, which in turn improves the quality of training. Our Battalion is almost entirely manned with millennials who love to know “why.” Until now, feeding this appreciable curiosity was a challenge, given that our unit has not deployed for over 4 years and is not on a patch chart. Enter the DMZ, where units are surrounded by prepared battle positions, the constant movement

of ROKA materiel, and propaganda broadcasts from both sides of the border. Our unit trained where six of our own were killed in a DMZ ambush in 1966. We found the school that our Tomahawk predecessors helped build in 1968. We connected to our own legacy on a staff ride to Chipyeong-ni, where our Regiment turned around the Korean War with the same artillery unit that is attached to us today. The 19th ESC and 194th CSSB hosted a true inter-theater movement that included a tactical convoy across Pen that was supported and controlled by the theater, followed by a Combined Joint Logistics Over the Shore exercise (CJLOTS) that transitioned the unit to its next mission. **The sometimes vague bridge between strategy and tactics became crystal clear to the leaders and Soldiers in our formation, giving them valuable perspective on the significance of our profession and, therefore, the importance of training like pros.** The unit took this to heart, so much so that we gladly donned CBRN protective masks for all training (pro-mask is a dirty word back home). We didn't even fill the pro-mask carriers with chow and snivel gear like the Army of the 90s did.



The bridge between strategy and tactics was a causeway built by the Army's navy.

The leader development crucible did not stop in Thailand, it just transitioned from a sprint to a marathon. Our Lieutenant and NCO UMOs moved this battalion around like it was old hat, not that it was easy. **We accomplished training in Korea that we would normally spread out over 6 months in CONUS. This forced the staff to find creative ways to master the transitions between major events, or not.** All three of our maneuver Captains became FUOPs planners while lieutenants stepped up to run CUOPs. The AG S1 became a UMO, as did our MI AS2. The S4 ran our Platoon CALFX, so the FSC XO became the S4. The XOs led the constant movement and transition, while the S3 and Commanders remained nose down in training. Thanks to the number of missions, all of our Rifle Company XOs led missions as Company Commanders, and most of our staff had opportunities to O/C under field grade oversight. Training culminated with a massive CJLOTS operation that required our staff officers and XOs to command nodes in six separate locations in every corner of the peninsula – Pocheon, Dongducheon, Seoul, Daegu, Pohang, and Busan. The Battalion still found time to run three LPDs. It was *almost* too much, but leaders got us through (leaders with smart phones).

NCO Leader development flourished in the field and in the camp. The best way to describe our existence for the first two phases of training is “sequestered,” especially at Warrior Base. In this environment, NCOs ruled. The lack of distractions created a vacuum that NCOs filled with rehearsals, concurrent training, inspections, PMI, and PRT. Our unit has seen this NCO leadership before, but it has previously been sporadic because of the many distractions that exist in the home-station operating environment. Our NCOs' performance not only benefited the formation, it provided compelling evidence that the chain of command has to do more to provide similar protection at home station to propagate junior NCO leader development and Soldier proficiency.

Finally, **between the 8th Army and 2nd Combined Division staffs and their infrastructure, our Battalion enjoyed unprecedented sustainment, medical assistance, and administrative support.** Evidence of this support transcends warfighting functions. In our final week in Korea, our Battalion's medical deployability remained at 92.35%, and our Stryker OR rate as the USNS Fisher embarked was 98%. I normally wouldn't mention a Stryker OR of 98% because anyone that knows Stryker units knows that 98% sounds dubious. However, in the days leading up to R-RSOI and CJLOTS, our Stryker OR rate undulated in the mid-80s because several FMC parts had been frustrated at customs for well over a week. Thanks to the help of our Maintenance Control Team, the 7ID G4 SNS Tech, and the BLST Chief, the parts flow was unclogged with barely enough time to repair seven different Strykers at the port. Our mechanics worked around the clock for three days in Pohang and Busan, and they even replaced a FUPP on a M1131 Stryker FSV just in time to make it FMC and load it on the vessel. What's more is that the relationships and systems provided by the SSA at Youngsan enabled us to turn in 75 lines of recoverables, valued at more than \$1,370,000.00, which significantly offset the cost in parts and was key in improving the operational readiness of the fleet.

We normally see such high administrative, medical, and OR rates after intensive recovery periods between training cycles. We certainly didn't expect to see them in the middle of the busiest training cycle of the past two years. Such readiness can be attributed to (1) the ease of access to the Army's institutional readiness systems in Korea, be it the clinic at Camp Casey or the SSA in Yongson, (2) a clear demarcation between training weeks/days and non-training weeks/days, (3) previous Pacific Pathways exercises teaching the theater and the unit how to manage parts flow in Korea, and of course (4) dedicated professionals making all of this work, especially our 7th ID G4 SNS Tech and Battalion Maintenance Tech that pulled together the full potential of the Peninsula's warrant officer network. **It is worth noting, this was all possible because training in Korea is not an "expeditionary" environment because we were constantly docked with the Army Installation Command's infrastructure and installations.** Our expeditionary operations in Thailand and the Philippines allowed us to dock with the Korean garrisons guilt free. Not only did this allow us to invest in non-training forms of readiness, but basing out of camps also prevented burn-out among our troops. This is a perfect example of why the Korea stop in Pacific Pathways xx-1 is aptly placed in the middle of the deployment, and it was fortuitous that our stop here lasted two months. Therefore, we recommend that USARPAC sustain this for future xx-1 deployments.

Two Final Notes for Consideration

Our Task Force's experience in the Pacific thus far has taught us two interesting takeaways that are worth considering for future exercises and deployments. These points cover the topics of smart phones and unilateral vs. combined training / interoperability.

Smart phones are the most expeditionary form of communication we have used. The Army should invest in them, otherwise leaders will pay out of pocket for them out of necessity. In Thailand and Korea, our expeditionary communications hardware arrived and were FOC days or weeks after the unit was fully invested in training. Thus, GSM was our only form of communication. Radios can be carried on commercial and contracted flights, but their batteries cannot (interestingly, Air Force flights do not have the same limitations). Batteries must be shipped in our containers, so they arrived later than optimal. The expedience and reliability of cell phones contrasts with the challenges of the WIN-T system. On one occasion, we attempted to complete a previously coordinated call for fire from our CONUS Artillery Battalion to the howitzers in Korea using our

WIN-T/SNE. Our BN S6, Brigade Tech, two 25 series Soldiers and three FSRs spent 48 hours trying to bring the system up, yet in the end they still were unable to complete the training. Many of our WIN-T systems perform better than the SNE, but the technical expertise required to make the systems talk belie the expeditionary purpose for which they were developed.

Our primary source of BLOS communications is the JCR. Yet we did not have JCRs in many of the geographically separated nodes because most JCRs are in Strykers, and those Strykers were in some stage of deployment or redeployment when our communications demands were highest. The most rapid form of flattening the organization and creating common understanding BLOS was an application called “Line,” which is downloadable on smart phones. We defaulted to this application, though surely other similar applications exist. We recommend any Pacific Pathways HQ fund somewhere in the ballpark of 20 smart phones per Battalion Task Force, each with the freedom to upload applications that are relevant in the various countries where they will be operating. These phones will be instrumental during unit movement and beyond. The Army should study the security implications of doing this, but not at the cost of further delaying fielding for units in need. For example, “Line” comes with asymmetric encryption, but even with this, several mobility leaders wondered if the Army had a downloadable app for this exact purpose (no one has found one yet). Again, leaders are spending a lot of money to place their personal phones on the local networks for professional reasons, and this capability has been a key determinant of success between transitions.

Our unit continued to appreciate the value of operating and training as a combined team. Korea also reminded us of the value of unilateral training. Our ROK counterparts were a fantastic organization that clearly benefits from being assigned to the 2nd Combined Division. This was their third EX FOAL EAGLE. All of our MOUT STXs and AASLT Missions, and one third of our Platoon LFX iterations were combined. **This taught us that interoperability is not a multi-million dollar piece of hardware. Interoperability for us was (1) keeping plans simple, (2) streamlining command and control architecture, (3) assigning language capable LNOs with radios to the right leaders, and (4) using simple “old-school” signal solutions, such as signal flags.** The US-ROK voice communications repeaters worked on day one.

We treasure these lessons just as we do the friendships we made with the ROK 137th Infantry Battalion (MECH). But to be clear, our unit’s collective experiences convince us that the US Army trains more frequently and harder than any other Army, especially when it comes to maneuver live fires. **Training like we do has made us excellent risk managers, which in turn allows to us to push the margins of training risk. In the**



Interoperability costs \$4.19 for a green signal flag. NSN 8345-00-227-1406.

combined training context, such rigor does not mean we have to train under conditions that exclude our partners or in ways that we consider pedestrian. During EX FOAL EAGLE our CALFX was win-win because our combined actions were sequential, rather than adjacent/simultaneous operations. More specifically, the ROK conducted their attack, then we conducted an FPOL through their lines to begin our attack. We also made significant gains by training unilaterally at the Story Live

Fire Complex. Our leaders were free to push to the prudent edge of safety during our nearly three weeks there. Beyond being a great investment in combat proficiency, it better prepared us to train with the ROKA and ensured that 100% of our time in Korea was not spent trying to balance the proficiency deficit with our partners to our own detriment. It is worth noting that we only had this extra time to train unilaterally because our deployment to Korea totaled over two months. This was thanks to this year's EX BALIKATAN '17 being moved to the right. We recommend that USARPAC sustain a more enduring timeframe in Korea – two months is just right.

In conclusion, this report was intended to tell the story of TF TOMAHAWK's readiness adventure in Korea while advocating that field training in Korea be sustained or even expanded to as many Pathways units as possible. The 8th Army and IMCOM-Pacific host some of the best training venues where battalion-sized units can experience the equivalent of a combat training retreat as long as they get the same prioritization, protection, and time that they provided us.



“So help me God....splash over!” Two newly promoted Company FSOs swear the Oath of Office over the fires net as a CALFX culminates.



Sequestration is a good thing. The best way to describe our existence for the first two phases of training is “sequestered.” In this environment, NCOs ruled. The lack of distractions created a vacuum that NCOs filled with rehearsals, concurrent training, inspections, PMI, and PRT. This not only benefited the formation, it provided compelling evidence that the chain of command has to do more to provide similar protection at home station to propagate junior NCO leader development and Soldier proficiency.



Physical and cultural terrain matter.

You can sense the steepness of the hill from the U.S. PL’s gaze and his counterpart’s gesture, but it was worse. Stryker terrain abounds in Korea and reinforced the centrality of the Rifle Squad to the way we fight. This U.S. PL had to move to his bilingual counterpart because his KATUSA didn’t speak “tactics.” Our Army places limited value on language skills, yet will compel this PL to complete a postgraduate degree on his own time, even if it’s of limited utility.