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United States Army Combined Arms Training
(Strategy and Centers)

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Class 58

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26 November 2007

Abstract

The United States Army has continued to evolve its combat training to meet emerging world threats. Starting in the late 1980s, the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) started focusing its training philosophy towards a new umbrella concept that incorporated combined arms tactics. The new concept, as outlined in TRADOC Regulation 350-7, sets a new strategy and standard for individual and unit training plans. It identifies resources and helps units design local training events (TRADOC, 1999). After units train locally, they deploy to one of several Army training centers to hone their combat skills in an actual combined arms environment. The new training strategy and centers are central to the Army's goal in preparing units and individual Soldiers for combat.

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Combined Arms Strategy (CATS)

The term combined arms refers to a methodology of synchronizing the delivery and effects of diverse combat arms systems. The resulting synergy is very powerful and designed to defeat varying types of threats. Out of necessity and a slower training op-tempo during the post Cold War, the Army developed a new type of training strategy and resource program to help prepare conventional forces for combat missions – the Combined Arms Training Strategy (CAC, 2007a).

With the CATS, the Army has a method of providing standardized combined arms training material and methods to all Army units. Commanders can tap into a flexible online portal, whenever and wherever they need it. The program enables commanders to organize and synchronize individual and collective tasks to support the unit's METL and applicable war plans. The CATS keeps Army units on the same "training page", and ensures Leaders teach the same standards for the same tasks (CAC, 2007a).

Before the CATS, Army units instructed individual tasks referenced from the Soldier's Military Operational Skill and the Common Task Testing manuals. Training centered on the unit's upper-echelon mission essential task list and specific combat arms field manuals. Local training plans and scenarios were "static" in nature and did not incorporate the dynamics of multiple capabilities and weapons systems operating together in a cohesive battle (CAC, 2007a).

The Army's implementation of the CATS meant that units geographically separated could employ the same type of maneuver, command and control, and fire support techniques during their exercises. The CATS provides Army leaders with real-world scenarios modeled

after current threats. Using the CATS, unit Leaders can successfully incorporate scenarios across platoon, company, and battalion levels to ensure a multi-echelon and combined arms training effect.

The Combined Arms Center (CAC), located in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and instituted in 1882, is the Army's lead proponent for administering and executing the CATS. A subordinate command under the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, the CAC is recognized as the "Intellectual Center of the Army". The CAC also operates three distinct combat training areas that provide combat-like settings for units to fine tune their combined arms operations (CAC, 2007a).

Combat Training Centers (CTCs)

The Army developed the CTCs in order to create realistic wartime training environments for Battalion and Brigade-sized units. The Centers also provide units with lessons-learned from previous combat engagements and conduct in-depth after action reviews (AAR) following each phase of an exercise movement. The AARs help guide the units through a self-assessment and learning process to identify tactical weakness so they can improve unit tactics, techniques, and procedures. The Joint Multinational Readiness Center is located in Germany with the assigned responsibility of training Joint Forces. The three stateside centers operated by CAC include the National Training Center, the Joint Readiness Training Center, and the Battle Command Training Program (CAC, 2007b).

National Training Center (NTC). The NTC was established in 1980 and started training the first maneuver battalion in 1981. Located in the High Mojave Desert at Fort Irwin, California, NTC consists of 1,000 square miles of maneuverable terrain. The opening of NTC

began a long series of unit “rotations” comprised of mechanized infantry battalions, heavy armor battalions, and task forces from other FORSCOM divisions (Chapman, 1997).

After the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, top Army leadership decided to improve the Army’s combat ability and implemented a “train as we fight” training philosophy. The new leadership concept led to the opening of NTC. The new NTC enabled units and Soldiers to conduct armored warfare tailored against the Soviet Army. The new NTC training contributed to the success of the Army’s ability to engage and defeat the Soviet-style Iraqi armored forces during Desert Storm in 1990 (Bolger, 1997).

Over the years, the NTC situational training and opposing forces methods have changed to meet the emerging threat. Since 2002, the NTC has increased the number of urban cities and villages from 4 to 12. The new urban settings challenge the units to engage insurgents nestled within the local civilian populace. Keeping with the times, the NTC scenarios replicate the real-world combat situations in Iraq while continually updating warrior doctrine based on recent lessons-learned.

Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). The original JRTC opened at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas in 1987. In 1993 it was moved to Fort Polk, Louisiana. The JRTC was the second combat training center to open and focused its training audience to airborne and air-assault infantry, Rangers, and regular infantry as well as the associated combat, combat support, and combat service support unit elements (Bolger, 1997).

As NTC prepares maneuver units for combat based on established doctrine, JRTC takes a little different type of approach. The trainers at JRTC understand the complexities of guerilla tactics. Although JRTC does present a doctrinal element of conventional forces with heavy

armor, infantry, and airborne assets to the training units, the real challenge is suppressing a constant assault from unconventional forces.

After the guerilla warriors continually “beat the snot” out of the training units, the unit Leaders and Soldiers began to realize the message. New leaders learn the hard way that their units must break-out of the standard doctrinal combat-approach when dealing with unconventional forces. The JRTC opposing forces provide a unique experience to ensure Soldiers understand and learn that guerilla war tactics are not “fair”, and the “dirty” games they play will kill you just as fast as the traditional means (Bolger 1997).

Battle Command Training Program (BCTP). The BCTP is located at CAC headquarters in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The BCTP is not an actual training area. It consists of automation simulating actual battle situations modeled after potential wartime conflicts. It generates intelligence reports and transfers information across the network. The superior computer technology offers realistic simulation, and challenges Division Commanders and their staff to make combat decisions while dealing with real-life issues of fratricide, rules of engagement, potential civilian casualties and different types of legal concerns (TRADOC, 2002).

Started in 1982, the BCTP enables CAC to train Brigade through Corps-level commanders in their first years of commands. The commanders start participating 100 days before the actual Warfighter Exercise (WPX). The commanders select their staff prior to the WPX, and then ensure they are available at CAC for the duration of the simulation. The presence of the primary staff allows commanders to build a relationship with their subordinates during the actual execution of battle-command orders. The BCTP reflects the Army’s changing attitude, since the 1970s, to modernized training products and tools. The new technology

incorporated into sophisticated tools presents Leaders with a wide range of war situations as well as an excellent opportunity to learn the art of war (GlobalSecurity.org, 2007).

Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC). Located in Hohenfels, Germany, the Combat Maneuver Training Center changed its name to JMRC in 2005. The new name change reflects the evolving mission at the Army training center in Europe. The words joint and multinational identify the Army's transformation in training within its own services coupled with building command-relationships with its allied partners.

Within a small area of ten by twenty kilometers, JMRC continues to improve on the center's capability of transforming itself into a premier training facility. Training is designed around small to brigade-sized units. The JMRC enables Leaders to train in a full joint spectrum environment to include major combat, counter-insurgency, and security-stability operations (JMRC, 2007). The unique training contributes to the Army's success in the continuing fight on the global war on terror with its coalition force partners. In 2005, 95% of European countries provided support in Afghanistan, and 77% of countries supported U.S. counter-terrorism efforts in Iraq (Ratermann, 2006).

Conclusion

The CATS strategy and the combat training centers are critical in preparing units and Soldiers for combat. With a strategy that standardizes training materials and incorporates combined arms training in field environments, the Army has provided the necessary tools for Leaders to execute their training objectives. The combination of a sound strategy coupled with time spent in the maneuver training areas gives Soldiers the confidence and skills required for success on the battlefield.

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