

THE MOUNTED TRAINING STRATEGY: Baseline Training for the Armor Force

by Colonel John S. Harrel, CA ARNG

"We must develop a technique and method so simple and so brief that the citizen soldier of good common sense can readily grasp the idea."

General George C. Marshall'

As we enter the 21st century, the Army of the United States is confronting uncertain adversaries, limited training resources, multiple and extended overseas deployments, and the threat of downsizing. The most positive aspect of this new era is the improved relationship between the regular Army and the National Guard.

Current doctrine divides Army combat formations into three levels of readiness: active duty, Guard enhanced brigades, and divisional brigades. Each level is provided different levels of resources.

The Regular Army is provided funding to prepare it for immediate deployment. But active duty combat formations are currently stretched by the Army's many commitments, and would be insufficient to fully implement its role if it were called on to fight in two major regional conflicts, as the national security strategy requires. It would have to be reinforced by National Guard combat formations.

The enhanced Guard brigades (ESBs) are next in line for funding. They receive enough funding to train brigades and battalions for deployment after a period of *limited* post-mobilization training.

The lowest priority of resources go to the divisional Guard brigades, which are charged with training combat platoons in basic skills prior to mobilization. These divisional Guard formations would require *substantial* post-mobilization training prior to deployment.

Our challenge in this decade will be to weave these three "strings" into an integrated combat formation.

Back to Basics

Army doctrine dictates that peacetime training should focus on the require-

ments of a unit's wartime mission. Armor and infantry battalions have only one basic mission: to close with and destroy an enemy with fire, maneuver, and close combat. In simple terms, these battalions must be able to shoot, move, and communicate. All other missions utilize the skills that fall within this combat mission, whether peacekeeping, military support to local law enforcement, humanitarian relief, or high-intensity combat. Our training strategy should ensure that soldiers at all three levels of readiness have mastered the same core skills. Platoons and companies must be highly proficient in battle drills, movement techniques, and direct fire gunnery (shoot, move, communicate, and small unit leadership). Brigade and battalion staffs must be able to focus combat power at the decisive place and time (synchronize the battlefield operating systems). In order to ensure that the team has the depth to handle all contingencies, the entire team is trained in the basics. We need an Army-wide mounted training plan that focuses on the core skills. Overall training and validation requirements should be the same for all three "strings." It should be built upon the base of the lowest priority formation.

Establishing A Baseline

Training is currently driven by *Field Manuals (FM) 25-100, Training the Force* and *FM 25-101, Training the Force: Battle Focused Training*. These two excellent manuals explain the Army Training Management System (ATMS). The ATMS forms the foundation on which the Mission Training Plans (MTPs) build the mounted force's core battle tasks. It has long been a central tenet of the mounted force that small unit excellence is accomplished by mastering the MTP battle tasks. The ATMS, as currently published, is a good system to focus training of the mounted force,² but in an unconstrained training resource environment. It does not identify the baseline battle tasks that the *entire mounted force* needs to be able to perform to

standard. Prior to our recent extended peacekeeping operations, this may not have been a problem. Now the limited training time, due to peacekeeping and other distracters, has eroded the combat skills of our Abrams and Bradley crews, squads, sections, and platoons. Due to limited training resources across the mounted force, mastery of all of the battle tasks found in the MTPs is beyond the ability of any component of the mounted force, regular or Guard. Many mounted force units attempt to accomplish all the tasks and normally end up failing to achieve the Army standard on any of them. This frustration is evident in the entire mounted force, not just Guard combat units. To correct this training deficiency, it behooves the leadership of the mounted force (both NCOs and officers) to focus limited resources on the baseline battle tasks that we need to defeat America's enemies and survive.

This training technique is not new. Before and during WWII, General George C. Marshall believed that simplicity was the best counter to the complexity of battle. He insisted that units train to standard one simple task — the holding attack. This training strategy was implemented from platoon to division. As an officer progressed through the ranks, he was well versed in one basic combat operation; he simply mounted the attack on an ever-increasing scale.³

Like the holding attack of old, the modern battle task of "Offensive Operations" contains all of the critical core tasks.⁴ A review of the battalion and brigade training matrixes dictates that even performing a hasty defense is found within the "Offensive Battle Tasks."

Training to standard in basic gunnery and maneuver tasks are the keys to a successfully trained force. The task and standards must be achievable by all three "strings." *DA Pam 350-38, Standards in Weapons Training* developed realistic gunnery goals and standards for the entire mounted force, based

40th Infantry Division (CA ARNG)

Combat

(M2) Infantry Plt.

Perform AA Activities
Move Tactically
Breach Operations
Overwatch/Support by Fire
Assault
Consolidate and Reorg.

Armor Plt.

Perform AA Activities
Move Tactically
Attack by Fire
PLT Fire and Movement
Assault
Consolidate and Reorg.

Scout Plt.

Perform AA Activities
Move Tactically
Route Recon
Actions on Contact
Consolidate and Reorg.

Combat Support

Motor Plt.

Occupy AA
Occupy Firing Position
Move Tactically
Fire Hip Shoot
Fire Adjust Fire
Fire Direct Lay

Communication Plt.

Occupy AA
Establish Communications
Establish Remote Communications
React to Jamming

Combat Service Support

Maintenance Plt.

Precombat Checks
Plan and Conduct Convoy
Quartering Party
Tow Disabled Vehicle
Consolidation and Reorg.

Support Plt.

Precombat Checks
Plan and Conduct Convoy
Defend Against Ground Ambush
Secure and Defend Unit Position

Medical Plt.

Establish Aid Station
Casualty Evacuation
Triage Patients

Table 1

three strings of the mounted force would train their platoons on the same core battle tasks. Each string would train at company, battalion, and brigade levels, based on resources. Guard divisional combat brigades would focus on platoon field training and train company/team, task force, and brigade battle tasks in simulation. The live training for battalion and brigade operations would become post-mobilization training tasks. Enhanced Guard and Regular Army combat brigades would conduct virtual and live training on the company, battalion, and brigade level.

The results of such training would be a three-string force that could quickly mobilize and deploy into a combat theater with the depth to sustain extended deployments or replace casualties. Regular brigades could be quickly deployed, followed by Guard enhanced brigades. Guard divisional battalions and brigades arriving at mobilization stations could provide certified combat platoons to their "Teamed" regular brigades and divisions to round them out and bring them up to full strength before or after deployment. The performance of the 8th Marine Reserve Tank Battalion and other Marine Reserve combat units during the Gulf War validates this strategy. If the Marines can integrate their armor force in such short order and be successful in battle, so can the Army.⁷

Fort Knox

Platoon Tasks

Assault
Attack By Fire
Overwatch/Support By Fire
Breach Operations
Platoon Defense

Company Tasks

Attack By Fire
Assault
Support By Fire
Breach an Obstacle
Defend Battle Position

Battalion Tasks

Meeting Engagement
Assault
Attack/CATK By Fire
Defend

Brigade Tasks

Hasty Attack
Deliberate Attack
Area Defense

Table 2

upon resource levels. However, the Army has not provided a similar document for maneuver training.

Establishing a baseline training strategy is the responsibility of the Army's mounted force leaders. The Directorate of Training and Doctrine Development at Fort Knox has recently produced a draft training strategy. The battle tasks identified in the directorate's draft, entitled "Combined Arms Mounted Training Strategy," are remarkably similar to those previously identified in the "Standardized Platoon Training and Validation Program"⁵ published in September 1999 by the 40th Infantry Division

(Mech) (CA ARNG). The 40th ID (M) is a divisional unit. Its Baseline Training Strategy is focused at platoon level for all of its combat, combat support, and combat service support platoons. The Fort Knox plan links the armor and mechanized infantry platoon battle tasks to the tasks at company, battalion, and brigade level. (See Table 2) The 40th ID (M) plan currently links platoon function within a battalion task force. (See Table 1)

The advantage of implementing a mounted training strategy,⁶ based upon the entire heavy combined arms team is realistic battle-focused training. All

The need for a baseline combined arms mounted training strategy has been evident for the past 10 years. The development of one strategy with three different resource levels is the key to making this program successful. A training program of this type will develop "killer" platoons and companies throughout the mounted force. This will ensure that the Army of the United States has ready access to its entire heavy combined arms team force for its national strategy.

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Mounted Training Strategy

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Notes

¹Daniel Bolger, *The Battle for Hunger Hill*, Presidio Press, Novato, Calif., 1997, 87.

²The Mounted Force is the heavy combined arms team.

³Charles F. Hawkins, John R. Brinkerhoff, and Stanley A. Horowitz, *Conference on Forces Integration: Seeking Better Reserve Component Capability and Credibility*, Institute for Defense Analysis, May 1996, II-2.

⁴*Mission Training Plan 71-2, The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Task Force*, September 1988, 3-10, 3-11 and 3-12.

⁵MG Peter Gravett, CG, 40th ID (M) (CA ARNG) implemented a platoon baseline training and validation program across his division at the beginning of TY-00 for all of his combat, combat support, and combat service support platoons.

⁶COL Mark A. Graham's article, "Thinking Out of the Box: Baseline Training for the ARNG," *Field Artillery*, September-October 1999, looks at implementation of baseline training for ARNG Field Artillery units.

⁷John S. Harrel, LTC, CA ARNG, *A United Army For the 21st Century*, USAWC Fellowship Paper, 1997.

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