



Ready for the Storm: The Training Value of Intrinsic Action

by Captain James K. Dunivan

The liberation of Kuwait has now entered a final phase. I have complete confidence in the ability of the coalition forces, swiftly and decisively, to accomplish their mission.

— President George H. W. Bush¹

Ten years have come and gone since the United States began the ground war with Iraq — an unprecedented victory that demonstrated our nation's military power and unsurpassed ability to fight and win on the harshest of battlefields. In the aftermath of what many refer to as "The Hundred-Hour War," just as with any other military operation, we conducted extensive after-action reviews to analyze performance and capture the many lessons learned to provide a basis for which to sustain and improve the way we do business.

Many leaders and soldiers alike cited desert maneuver training at the National Training Center (NTC) as a key enabler of successful performance in the combat of Desert Storm. Since 1982, American soldiers had been learning valuable lessons at the NTC's isolated 1,600 square kilometer section of Mojave Desert that presents first-class training just short of actual combat. There, you can fight tanks and battle through chemical attacks in temperatures ranging from 0 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit and see first-hand how mistakes can "kill."² If, in fact, the National Training Center helped us hit a home run in Desert Storm, then the training experience we absorb through Intrinsic

Action rotations to Kuwait is setting us up for a grand slam if the need arises to execute a similar mission in the future.

The Army has been sending an Intrinsic Action Task Force to Kuwait since the end of Desert Storm. Intrinsic Action provides a continuous ground presence in Kuwait that deters aggressive outsiders such as Iraq. "It assures our allies we have the resolve, the commitment, and the demonstrated capability to reinforce here in Kuwait, if necessary. If deterrence should fail, then our purpose here is to defend."³ In addition to the important and imperative 'real-world' mission experienced by units fortunate enough to deploy for Intrinsic Action, they also receive some of the most demanding and realistic training opportunities available in the Army today.

Deployment to Kuwait for Intrinsic Action is great training in and of itself. The validation of those dust-covered unit movement books and the process of deciding what equipment to take, what stays behind, and how do we secure it, who signs for what stays behind, and how do we get everything and everyone there, is nothing less than an exercise in readiness. Fortunately, there are many players to assist in this process, including the 'permanent party' personnel in Kuwait, the current Intrinsic Action Task Force (there are several planning conference visits available to the task force leadership prior to deployment), and anyone you can find in the unit or at home station

who has been there and done that. In my company, several soldiers had already executed this mission twice before, and their insights were invaluable in planning for this deployment.

Deployment requires an enormous amount of energy to prepare soldiers, ranging from drawing DCUs and breaking in those desert boots to ensuring that every soldier goes through the complete Soldier Readiness Process for updated shots (including anthrax), wills, powers of attorney, dental records, and the like. There are training certification gates to be met — crew qualification, training for unexploded ordnance and depleted uranium awareness, and desert field craft. Full-up rehearsal of key events, such as manifest and equipment draw, pay big dividends in preparing the soldier for success and enabling the unit to achieve that one chance to make a good first impression once in Kuwait.

The first dose of reality that strikes when you hit the ground in Kuwait is the temperature, and leaders must ensure that everyone properly hydrates on the plane ride over. After that first blast wave of heat, the next realization is that you have literally hit the ground running. A quick bus ride from the airport to Camp Doha finds the unit in the middle of a draw yard. Here, activities include signing for tanks and all the associated vehicles and equipment needed to accomplish the mission, finding A-Bags, continuing to hydrate, and getting everything loaded and lined-up to move within the established time

limit. Several hours later, the entire unit is in the Kabal, Redcon-One and ready to continue the training experience of a lifetime.

Although subject to various unit intentions and plans, the training opportunities available throughout the four-month Intrinsic Action rotation build upon each other and can be broken down into a ladder of individual training, platoon- and company-level collective training, coalition training, and gunnery qualification culminating with one of the most extensive Combined Arms Live Fire Exercises one could ever hope to execute short of actual combat.

Our task force began the rotation with a focus on individual soldier training to establish the basics. During this phase, the noncommissioned officers took great pride and effort to use this valuable time to train their troops on the many and varied common skills tasks that they could be called upon to use at a moment's notice. Instruction and practice in land navigation in the desert, NBC, and first aid were just a few of the classes and hands-on training experiences instructed during this valuable sergeants' time training. In addition, my company spent a lot of time relearning the skills peculiar to the M1A1 tank since we were accustomed to going to the field on our home station M1A2s (interestingly enough, we had trained on M1A1s at the National Training Center just six months earlier). Finally, we had adequate time and resources to focus on small arms qualification, which not only brought our QTB statistics to nearly 100 percent across the board in this area but more importantly, gave the soldiers confidence in their personal weapons and ability to use them. All in all, this training was an intense but tremendous opportunity to learn and grow as a unit while getting acclimated to the heat, wind, and sands of the desert.

Once we reestablished and trained on soldier skills, the unit then had the chance to put it all together in platoon and company lane training. Platoon lanes was a golden opportunity to revisit our TACSOP and get reacquainted with mounted formations, maneuver, and battle drills. Complete focus was on the platoon leader — OPORDs, rehearsals, timeline, and execution of the plan were all evaluated and then executed again if necessary until the platoon leader and the members of the unit were comfortable with their performance. Just as we established the base-

line with individual training, the company/team was now ready to move on to more intense and continuous company-level operations.

Company lanes was actually broken down into two parts in which the unit executed two movements to contact, a defense, and a deliberate attack for training and then went force-on-force with the same mission cycle (different terrain and timeline) as part of an EXEVAL. The highlight of the rotation was the company EXEVAL, some of the most demanding and realistic training I could ever hope to experience and comparable to the company's earlier rotation to the NTC. The company was the complete focus of the training, allowing the task force and brigade commanders, along with the MPRI observer-controller team, ample involvement and opportunity to develop lethal, tactically proficient company/team units fully confident and capable of their war-time mission. Upon completion of company EXEVALS, the next stage of fulfilling our mission in Kuwait was to train alongside our coalition allies.

Coalition training is a unique opportunity available during Intrinsic Action — the experience of training alongside a Kuwaiti tank company in their own backyard environment for an entire month. Our experience was even more unique because they were equipped with the M-84 MBT, which greatly resembles a T-72 with a crosswind sensor and some other modifications. Using the assistance of a linguist to interpret, the officers and NCOs gave first rate instruction to our Kuwaiti allies on topics such as first aid, land navigation, movement formations, and engagement area development, and kept them actively involved and hands-on through the entire process. The fun part came next when we conducted mounted maneuver training together. It is definitely high adventure conducting an in-stride breach with two Kuwaiti tank platoons attached to the company as you attack a dug-in tank platoon. Once again, using the linguist to echo all FM instructions on the company net in Arabic, every mission was successfully accomplished and truly served as a testament to the cooperation and friendship of two countries dedicated to a common goal. In addition to the excellent training, the Kuwaiti hospitality of sharing tea, meals, and an occasional soccer game were educational and rewarding to all.

Upon completion of coalition training, morale began to surge higher every day for two reasons: there was light at the

end of the tunnel as the rotation neared mission completion, and we finally got to put live tank rounds down range. With no conduct of fire trainer facilities at our disposal, our gunnery refresher training (tank crews qualify prior to deployment) consisted of TCGST and a field expedient tank crew proficiency course set up by a motivated platoon sergeant. Soon, the company moved out to Udairi Range to fire combat qualification tables. This was after the two tank company master gunners in the task force took their detail out to the range and dug target pits and emplaced targets with lifters on the range for us to proof and fire the tables.⁴ Although many of the senior NCOs referred to the range as "ghetto gunnery," it was a valuable training event for everyone involved and greatly reinforced confidence in both our ability to engage and destroy targets as well as the tanks we had drawn from the pre-positioned fleet.

The last training event in the desert before returning to Camp Doha was the task force Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise. This exercise was a spectacular display of firepower unlike any live fire event in which most members of the unit had ever participated. Whether it was the dismounted infantry assaulting and clearing the trench lines, the engineers detonating live mines with explosives, the tank company teams charging through the breach lane to secure the objective with main gun rounds servicing every target, the awesome lethality of the field artillery putting steel on target, or our brothers in the Air Force bringing in the close air support — all was wonderfully orchestrated to provide the most realistic live fire training possible short of combat. It was a great exercise in battle command that demanded extensive risk assessment and mitigation to avoid executing watered-down and unrealistic training.

Finally, the day arrived when everyone had to pack-up and say goodbye in order to spend the last couple of weeks of the Intrinsic Action rotation in Camp Doha. Most of the time spent during this period of the deployment involves turning in the tanks and equipment that have been extensively used over the past four months in the desert. Once again, the unit experienced some wonderful training in tank maintenance. This was indeed the best tank service program I had ever witnessed, and offered some explanation as to the supe-

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rior operational readiness rate we had enjoyed throughout the rotation.⁵ The entire turn-in process at Camp Doha is a model for what a recovery and maintenance standard operating procedure should entail.

Intrinsic Action is an operational deployment and the units there have a 'real-world' mission with many associated tasks on which to focus. At the same time, the desert sands of Kuwait offer an enormous training opportunity that is unlike any other event in the Army today. Just as the National Training Center has increased our ability to perform our wartime mission, Intrinsic Action builds upon that experience and offers a unique challenge in exercising our ability to deploy; conduct reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI); train as we fight; and return to home station a confident, trained, and ready outfit. If there was to be a repeat performance of what President Bush called the "final phase," our task force had truly done the best rehearsal possible to ensure another successful ending.

Notes

¹Bob Levin, "The 'Final Phase,'" *Maclean's*, March 4, 1991, p. 24.

²J.R. Wilson, "Training to Fight in the Desert," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, February 23, 1991, p. 257.

³Linda D. Kozaryn quoting MG Charles Campbell, "Kuwaiti Desert Test Soldiers' Mettle," *American Forces Press Service Defense Link News*, November 1998, pp. 1-2.

⁴The two tank master gunners in TF 1-9 CAV during this rotation were SFC Timothy Clausen and SSG Joseph Weldon. They not only built a tank range from scratch, but also safely and efficiently executed all range operations for the two tank companies. The platoon sergeant who built the TCPC course was SFC Keith Bishop.

⁵The tanks we drew were in remarkable mechanical condition. However, this in no way detracts from the enormous amount of energy put into the company maintenance program by the executive officer (1LT Jim Neusch) and the team chief (SFC Michael Berthiamue) all the way down to tank crew level.

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