

The Importance of Mission Oriented Training in the Army Reserve

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Abstract

Seven lessons learned are describe in this paper that when implemented will assist our NCO's in developing mission oriented training. By implementing these suggestions NCO's will be better able to select key tasks and plan and implement training that supports the unit's Mission Essential Task List, exercises the unit's assigned equipment, and provide a positive learning experience for our Soldiers. A NCO's commitment to providing quality training is an important leadership skill, and leadership (or the lack thereof) has been shown to be one of the major factors in a Soldiers decision to leave the Army after completing their service obligation.

The Importance of Mission Oriented Training in the Army Reserve

Webster's dictionary defines experience as something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through or as the active participation in events or activities leading to the accumulation of knowledge or skill (Soukhanov, 1988). In this paper I will describe portions of my military career in the U.S. Army Reserve with emphasis on my time as an instructor. Based on these experiences I have identified seven lessons learned that, when implemented, will assist future NCO's in developing quality mission oriented training that will help retain qualified Soldiers in the Army Reserve.

Background Story

I joined the U.S. Army Reserve in April of 1983 during the second half of the Cold War. During that time period the nuclear arms race was well into its third decade, the U.S. had been out of Vietnam for nine years, enlisted Vietnam veterans remaining in the active Army were Staff Sergeant or higher, and the U.S. Army was recovering from a decade of neglect under President Carter. The U.S. military had just introduced the A-10 attack aircraft (1975), M1 tank (1980), and AH-64 Apache helicopter (1982). In West Germany the U.S. Army was prepared to fight to the death in the Fulda Gap and was still conducting annual Return Forces to Germany (REFORGER) training operations. On the home front Post-It Notes were three years old, the IBM Personal Computer was two years old, and the first cell phones were being introduced in urban areas. The CD was invented that same year but would not be used for music till a decade later.

In general the young men of my cohort saw the Army Reserve as a way to pay for college after graduating from high school and as a physical and mental challenge (i.e., basic training);

but without the perceived deprivation and pain associated with active duty. On graduation from Basic and passing our military occupational specialty (MOS) school we expected to return home to drill one weekend a month and perform our fourteen day annual training in the summer while having ample time to study, participate in college life, and work a part time job. If we were called up it would be for a major national emergency, most likely one involving nuclear or chemical weapons with two possible outcomes: (1) don't serve your country and die in bed in America or (2) die overseas but have a chance to shoot the bastard that nuked the homeland. Thus most of us had an all or nothing mindset which was epitomized by the work hard, play hard mantra of the period.

In the 1990's with the ending of the President Reagan (1981-1989) and Bush Sr. (1989-1993) era we saw the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and introduction of the idea of the peace dividend. This resulted in significant cuts to military spending under President Clinton (1993-2001) and the cancelation of several Cold War era weapons systems as well as the introduction of Service Life Extension Programs (SLEP) across the military. These programs extended the life of many major weapons systems, such as the Nimitz class aircraft carrier, B-52 bomber, and UH-1 helicopter (only retired from active Army service on January 27, 2011) and locked the Army into many of the combat proven weapons systems we are familiar with today (M16, M203, SAW, M9, etc.).

Between 2001 and present the Army took the initiative to begin transitioning to a digitized force and restructured the Army from a division based force to the modular brigade. This was done to more closely align Army expeditionary units with available military airlift capabilities and allow for the deployment of right-sized modular rapid reaction forces. These

changes were guided by the Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2) program (Robb, 2007).

This restructuring was interrupted by the attacks of 9/11, the Iraq War (2003-2010), and major combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Rather than delaying the introduction of the Force XXI technology the Army took this as an opportunity to accelerate the deployment and integration of digital technology throughout the force. As a result, many Reserve units now have state of the art digital systems such as Blue Force Tracker, Global Positioning Systems, and UAV's on their units Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE).

During this same period the Army changed its emphasis from planning and training for force-on-force combat to conducting security missions and small scale squad and platoon size engagements with an increased emphasis on force protection and casualty avoidance. This has resulted in the expenditure of large sums of money on equipment that will have little use outside of current war zones. For example, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles are not designed for use in rough terrain or off road and their height often cause them to snag low hanging power lines. The reason for purchasing these vehicles was valid, since any time we can save lives it's a good thing; however, the unplanned purchases of MRAP's pulled money away from several previously scheduled tactical vehicle programs. Most noticeably being the HUMVEE replacement, known as the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle program, which has been delayed till 2012 (Feickert, 2011). As a result, the large increases in military spending the Army experienced during the war years of 2001 to 2011 has not resulted in the replacement of many of the Army's older systems.

Career Synopsis

During my U.S. Army Reserve career I have had the honor of being assigned to the Engineer Regiment as a Combat Engineer (12B) and Carpenter/Mason (12W); with promotions these MOS's converted to 12X, senior construction supervisor, and 12Z, senior combat engineer sergeant. My career started in 1983 with the 397th Engineer Battalion (Combat) (Corp) where I serving as a combat engineer, demolitions sergeant, and team leader. After graduation from college with my Bachelors degree in 1988 I moved to Ohio to pursue my Masters degree and transferred to the 478th Engineer Battalion (Combat) where I served till 1996 in team leader, squad leader, and platoon sergeant positions. In 1997 I moved to the State of Washington to work for the State and transferred to the 2/414th, 104th Division (Institutional Training) in Renton, Washington. I was promoted to Sergeant First Class in 1999 and transferred to the 1041st Training Detachment (Engineer), 3rd Brigade, 104th Division (IT) in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, were I served as a Instructor and later as a course manager for the Combat Section. In 2007 I accepted a position as First Sergeant of the new HHC, 104th Division (Leader Training). In 2008 I moved to my current assigned as the Engineer Operations Sergeant in the S-3, 301st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. In 2009 I was temporarily cross-leveled to the 38th Regional Support Group in Cross Lanes, West Virginia in an aborted trip to Iraq as part of a FOB Mayor Cell.

Training and the Mission of the NCO

The non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps provides the first line leaders to our Soldiers. A NCO is responsible for training their Soldiers so they are prepared to execute the assigned mission. In 1991 I had my first opportunity to serve as an instructor for a large number of Soldiers. As the Army began its buildup for Desert Storm combat arms and combat service

support units from throughout the Army Reserve received pre-mobilization warnings and were tasked to become 100% MOS-qualified in preparation for mobilization and deployment to Saudi Arabia. In the case of the 478th Engineer Battalion, we were to be part of the follow on force whose mission would be to relieve engineer units who had experienced high combat losses during the invasion. In response to this mission the 478th moved its Annual Training to Fort Knox, Kentucky and worked with the 5045th U.S. Army Reserve Forces School to accredit a 12B10 Combat Engineer Course that would bring the Battalion up to 100% MOS-Q. The Battalion selected eight individuals as instructors and sent us to the Instructor Training Course (RC-ITC) to receive our “H”, now 8, qualification identifier. We were then immediately tasked to organized, teach, and managed two concurrent MOS-Q classes with a total of 70 students.

This was my first opportunity to be directly involved in planning and conducting proponent approved training. In addition to traditional instructor duties, which only two of us had done before, the stand-up nature of the course required that we identify, request, and obtain all equipment required for the course through the Battalion; prepare all training areas; and developing the hands-on testing and training lanes used for the course. This introduction to the organized world of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) was both a shock, as well as a revelation. It made the NCO’s who had been picked as instructors keenly aware of the many training resources that were available. The use of the TRADOC Program of Instruction (POI) for the course allowed us to focus on our interaction with our students and the creation and execution of realistic training rather than on the development of training materials.

This experience made me a better Squad Leader and trainer since it indoctrinated me on the importance of the old proverb that failing to plan is the same as planning to fail. Serving as an instructor at this early stage in my career gave me a better understanding of how early

planning and creative thinking can make the difference between ah-hoc, so-so training and a quality learning experience for our Soldiers. It taught me that the training schedule of a unit should be based on the unit's mission and that the units TOE would include a majority of the equipment needed for realistic unit training. What does this mean? the equipment required for most MOS sustainment and unit mission training should be readily available in-house in your unit, can be requested from higher headquarters, or can be obtained through your local or regional Training and Audiovisual Support Center (TASC).

As I matured as a Squad Leader and the 478th Engineer Battalion converted to a mechanized configuration with the M113A3 the Army increased its emphasis and use of the Army Readiness Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP). One of the primary learning tools introduced by ARTEP was the crawl-walk-run phase concept for crew, team, and squad battle drills. This concept was especially well suited to the Army Reserve as it allowed the same or similar training lanes to be used over multiple months. This enabled us to implement train-to-retain concepts into our battle drills since we would conduct three different battle drills during a given battle assembly, and then review these drills the following month. For example, in month 1 we would introduce battle drill 1 at the crawl phase and review any required skill level 1 tasks, conduct battle drill 2 at a walk, and conduct battle drill 3 at a run. In month 2 we would introduce battle drill 4 at a crawl, conduct battle drill 1 at a walk, and conduct battle drill 2 at a run. Following this formula an engineer squad could train 18 or more battle drills per year.

After a short stint with a Drill Sergeant unit in 1997-1999 (3/414th Infantry Regiment), where I had an opportunity to memorize the Army's basic training curriculum, I was promoted and transferred to the 1041st Training Detachment (Engineer) out of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Our unit's mission was teaching the Common Engineer Training (CET) courses for Region G,

which at the time included Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. CET was a prerequisite for Soldiers who were reclassifying into one of the Engineer MOS's. This reintroduction to TRADOC and to the Engineers was instrumental in my career progression and retention in the Army Reserves. Serving as an instructor allowed me to refresh my training with the newest approved courseware available from the Engineer School while providing flexibility to my schedule. This was made possible by the fact that instructors are required to arrive one day prior to class to setup and prepare for the Students arrival. As a result, most instructors would consume twelve drill assemblies for a four day course –which were conducted over two separate weekends. This flexibility allowed instructors to better fit their reserve service into their professional careers and personal lives (e.g., if an instructor taught two courses per year they would use twenty-four battle drill assemblies over just four weekends). This combined with the fact that courses were often taught in interesting locations, such as Phoenix, Arizona or Salt Lake City, Utah, provided an incentive for Soldiers with families and civilian careers to remain in the Army Reserve past the point where personal commitments had forced others in their cohort to leave the service.

In July 2004, to help fight the Global War on Terror, the U.S. Army began activating more than 5,600 Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Soldiers. The 1041st Training Detachment was mobilized from August 2004 to August 2005 in support of Operation Noble Eagle to instruct refresher courses for these Soldiers. Our unit mobilized out of Fort Riley and was stationed in Camp Grafton near Devils Lake, North Dakota. Camp Grafton is a major training center of the Army National Guard and the second largest Engineer training center in the United States. The Detachment was attached to 1st Battalion (EN), 164th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), which conducted 18 different TRADOC approved engineer related MOS-Q and NCOES courses.

The Detachment was initially called to duty to train IRR Soldiers recalled to service for Operation Iraqi Freedom. However, of the 5,600 IRR Soldiers called by the Army less than 1,000 were eventually mobilized. These Soldiers were sent to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri or were sent through previously scheduled Reserve Component MOS-Q courses for their refresher training. To support this increased student load many previously scheduled classes were converted from a single classroom configuration to two classrooms (e.g., the 12B10 MOS-Q course is authorized 35 students per classroom, thus an additional classroom doubled the course capacity). This was done to support both the IRR soldiers as well as a large influx of Soldiers from units who been reorganized and converted from other MOS's under the Army's new modular concept.

During this deployment the 1041st helped train over 1,300 soldiers. In addition, Soldiers from the 1041st served as course managers and primary instructors for engineer BNCOC and ANCOC courses for the RTI. In my case I had the opportunity to teach almost every 12B/12C student attending 21CMF40 ANCOC in the National Guard or Army Reserve in 2005 –only three other reserve component classes were held that year in other locations. Instructing this course gave me the opportunity to see firsthand the affect that the Global War on Terror was having on our NCO's. During 12B/12C ANCOC a 24 hour FTX is conducted which involves mission planning, convoy operations, and rapid reaction drills to enemy contact. During the night phase of the event our OPFOR would conduct an ambush on the convoy after it had stopped to a deploy minefield control measures. During this ambush a “nuclear blast simulator” would be initiated along with smoke, artillery simulators, and flares. On several occasions I had to counsel NCOs who experienced posttraumatic stress symptoms during these training events. This brought home to me the fact that for many years to come the Army will need to plan for and

make available counseling resources to its TRADOC institutions to deal with the physiological impact the War on Terror has had on its Soldiers.

After our unit was demobilized we returned to our mission of training Engineer MOS-Q courses. A key change that occurred in 2007-2008 was that the Army Reserve changed from a Regional based training model where a single multifunctional training division served a Region to a brigade based concept. Under the new concept training brigades were setup for each Regiment (Engineer, Quartermaster, etc.) and each brigade was then tasked with providing training for the entire Nation. The downside of this reorganization was that it damaged the existing partnerships between the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve in that it resulted in a competition between the components for Students. It also increased the overall cost for operating a course since a greater percentage of the student population and instructor base now had to fly to the training sites.

During my service during Operation Nobel Eagle in 2005 and the years following I had the opportunity to reviewing and edit the U.S. Army Engineers Schools Total Army School System (TATS) update to both the 21CMF40 ANCOC courseware and the 12B10 MOS-Q Program of Instruction. In the 2005 update to 21CMF40 courseware (now 12B/12C ANCOC) the use of computer simulation applications and visualization was first introduced as well as the inclusion of a staff ride (U.S. Army Engineer School, 2005). The multi-day JANUS war-game simulation was designed at the brigade to division level while the staff ride, as described in the POI, was of a civil war battlefield. However, most reserve component school houses do not have access to such a site –for example the closest battlefield to Devils Lake was 142 miles away.

Partly based on my recommendation a waiver to the POI was obtained that allowed the schoolhouses to replace the staff ride and the default terrain used in JANUS with a local geography. In our case the 164th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) developed a Battalion size tank-heavy battle scenario that covered their local live fire training area. For the staff ride portion of the courses the students were taken to the training area and allowed to walk the battle ground, and then return to the classroom and develop their own defensive plan for the terrain based on a list of available engineer resources and a friendly and threat order of battle. This information was then entered into the JANUS system and the students were able to see how effective or ineffective their defensive plans were.

To implement contemporary operational environment (COE) concepts into this simulation a waiver was also obtained to allow us to then transition the scenario used in JANUS from a force-on-force combat scenario to an offensive scenario where the enemy withdrew but then actively sought to deny, delay, and disrupt entry of U.S. forces into their region. Lastly, the scenario transitioned to stability operations. The students were required to provide engineer support for military and civilian repair projects while contending with asymmetric threats. The addition of the JANUS training and the use of local terrain in it was a major step forward in training our senior NCO's. This was the first time in Engineer ANCOC that Soldiers physically visited the battle ground, design the defense, and then were allowed to see the impact of their decisions in a virtual representation of the battlefield using a war gaming system.

In 2006 representatives from each of the other Engineer Training Brigades were asked to review what would become the 2007 TATS 12B10 MOS-Q courseware (U.S. Army Engineer School, 2007). This new POI was a major step forward in that it included several new advancements in engineering technology while depreciating older skills that were no longer

deemed important in the COE. In the January 2007 we taught class 001 of the new TATS courseware in conjunction with 1st BN (EN), 3rd Brigade (CS), 95th Division in Fort Leonard Wood, MO. This validation of the course was a precursor to it being accepted for implementation in the reserve component.

Late in 2007 I left my instructor hard hat behind. I accepted a position as First Sergeant of HHC, 104th Division (Leader Training) in Vancouver, Washington. In 2008 I moved to the 301st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade where I'm assigned as an Operations NCO in the S-3, Area Operations Section. This return to a "line unit" was intentional as I saw it as a chance to refresh my operational skills and as an opportunity to train our next generation of Soldiers.

Lessons Learned

The U.S. Army has tremendous expectations of its leaders and throughout its history has actively working to identify, document, and teach leadership skills to its officers and NCO's (e.g., Department of the Army, 1985; Department of the Army, 2002; Department of the Army, 2006). Tools we have developed to help instill leadership skills into our Soldiers include the "be, know, do" concepts and later the introduction of the Army Values (Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage). When considering this extensive library of knowledge it is difficult to identify something new to bring to the table. However, from my experience I have identified seven key points that many NCO's overlook when planning and conducting training.

1. Key responsibilities of an NCO include the planning and conducting of mission oriented training for their unit or section. To do this you need to understand your units Mission Essential Task List and know the units TOE.

2. Squad leaders and above should be involved in the development of the unit's yearly training plan.
3. NCO's must identify and request training aids, classrooms, and training areas early.
4. Use available training matrixes, contained in chapter 2 in most ARTEP manuals (e.g., Department of the Army, 2003) and soldier training manuals, to identify key individual and collective tasks that must be taught prior to conducting integrated crew, team, squad, or section training.
5. Use the walk-crawl-run concept when conducting integrated training and battle drills.
6. Exposing your Soldiers to the same concept in different training scenarios will help you implement train-to-retain concepts in your unit.
7. Use your unit's organic equipment and digital C2 systems during training.

By implementing these suggestions NCO's will be able to better select the high value tasks to train on, plan and implement training that will be mission oriented (supports the unit's METL) and exercises the unit's assigned equipment (we just completed our monthly Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services!) all while providing positive learning experiences to our Soldiers. A NCO's commitment to providing quality training to their Soldiers is an important leadership skill, and leadership (or the lack thereof) has been found to be one of the major factors in a Soldiers decision to leave the Army after completing their current service obligation (Tan, 2011).

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