



Observations of an active duty exchange officer serving with the Indiana National Guard.

By Andrew Shattuck

The Army National Guard is a capable and professional military force steeped in centuries of history that stands ready to defend our national security wherever called upon to do so. I spent the last year working as an exchange officer with 1-151 Infantry Battalion (BN), Indiana Army National Guard, as part of the associated unit pilot program (AUPP). The AUPP created multiple hybrid organizations, partnering reserve, national guard, and active component units at the battalion (BN), brigade (BDE), and division (DIV) level. These units worked together over three years to test multi-component training readiness strategies.

Within the AUPP, I served as a company commander for C/1-151 IN, assistant S3 plans/training, and briefly as the senior full-time unit staff officer for 1-151 IN. Based on my experience, active-duty units that anticipate training with National Guard formations can reduce friction and increase readiness achievements by following the guidelines below:

1) Start planning two years out.

National Guard formations use an extended planning horizon, doctrinally five years, to prepare for and attend combat training centers (CTC). Personnel tempo is rigorously enforced, as it directly and substantially influences retention rates, currently the number one operational priority for the Indiana National Guard. Training schedules, at least calendar dates, are locked and published annually, usually two to three months before the end of the fiscal year (FY). Changes to scheduled training inside nine months require general officer approval and six months require State Adjutant General (2-star) approval. Active component units can manage this by clearly identifying the “road to war” with their Guard partners, reverse planning from the post-culminating training event (CTE) recovery and “patch over” ceremony back to the earliest partnered training event. The Guard unit needs this plan at least six months before the first partnered fiscal year to schedule state land and resources at their annual resource conference. The active unit maintains and refines the product in the S3 plans for inclusion at quarterly resource conferences. When conflicts inevitably arise, the active component should take responsibility and adjust personnel and resources to address them. For example, while planning to include 1-151 Infantry at the 25 Infantry Division pre-CTC BDE exercise evaluation (aka Lightning Forge) planners deliberately shifted the event from spring to summer 2018. This change allowed Guard college students to complete their spring semester uninterrupted.



2) Goalposts are movable

Excluding units on a patch (deployment) chart, allow some flexibility with desired end state and readiness goals. The 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) Commander (COL Kevin Williams at the time), set BN live-fire exercise (LFX) as the CTE for 1-151 Infantry, the first-ever in JRTC history. Both units worked tirelessly to meet LFX gates, but COL Williams made clear at company LFX that nothing was set in stone until the BN achieved the current standard. Even JRTC's Live Fire Division Chief made the arduous trip to Oahu to

ensure our unit met contemporary standards for a BN LFX. Guard formations will need to put in extended training hours to reach the Army's highest live-fire qualification standards. The tightly limited timeline Guard formations operate on allows maximum opportunity for resource shortfalls. However, the active component partner has more flexibility, so they can help reduce these obstacles by allocating additional resources and personnel as necessary. Active and Guard exchange liaisons frequently communicate to minimize friction, allowing Guard Soldiers maximum opportunity to accomplish planned training objectives on drill weekends.

3) Conduct a thorough Mission Command Validation Exercise (MC VALEX)

Even with the luxury of conducting multiple field training exercises, command post exercises, communications exercises, and MC VALEXs, active component units regularly struggle to establish and maintain the full host of digital mission command systems available today. These problems are exponentially multiplied for Guard formations. 2 IBCT took the prescient effort to invite the 1-151 IN command, staff, and command post to Schofield Barracks so they could set-up alongside the BDE main command post during a major command post exercise. BDE signaleers worked closely with the BN S6 and S3 to detect and identify a wide range of communications deficiencies resulting from delayed force integration fieldings. The 2 IBCT CDR (COL Tony Lugo at the time) went above and beyond to make his staff and resources available to 1-151 IN. This enabled 1-151 IN to establish and maintain digital and voice communications with adjacent battalions and the brigade headquarters under combat conditions at both Lightning Forge and JRTC.

4) Exchange Liaison Officers & Non-Commissioned Officers

I'd be remiss not to highlight the critical importance of the position I filled, and those of my fellow leaders who stepped well outside their comfort zone to reduce friction at decisive points throughout this program. The active component should send liaisons with operations and training experience at multiple echelons to help Guard formations navigate installation

and organizational systems. 25ID ensured the 1-151 IN command team participated in every brigade to division quarterly training brief, most in person. These opportunities enabled many of the ideas highlighted in this article, providing the brigade and division commanders a venue to allocate resources and mitigate shortcomings. The Guard unit should send liaisons to serve in active duty operations, plans, and training management positions as well, where they can best advocate for the strengths and limitations of their parent unit. All liaisons must participate, to the greatest extent possible, in parent unit planning sessions and battle rhythm events to maintain a common operating picture at both headquarters.

The AUPP demonstrated that for minimal cost, Guard formations can achieve training and readiness levels necessary to augment active component formations at CTCs and in combat. Most Soldiers in 25ID would have been hard-pressed to spot the Citizen-Soldiers fighting alongside them. Active units who prioritize these considerations will enjoy a more productive training cycle with their Guard augmentation.



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