


# The Evolving Art of Training Management

By Col. David M. Hodne and Maj. Joe Byerly

Photos: U.S. Army/Sgt. William Howard



Col. David M. Hodne, then-commander of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, addresses soldiers before a rotation at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.

In the decade following Operation Desert Storm, the Army maintained a firm foundation in training but arguably lacked significant experience in direct combat. Episodic and infrequent direct engagements occurred in relatively short durations.

This changed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Since they found themselves turning to and from combat deployments at a rapid pace, soldiers and leaders possessed significant combat experience but were not always afforded the opportunity to train collectively beyond the platoon level. Qualifications to deploy hinged largely on mastering the “40 Warrior Tasks” and individual skills in a counterinsurgency environment. Ironically, over a decade later, some judge this cohort of young leaders as accustomed to fighting but not to training properly.

The transition from a training-centric force to a combat-centric force affected an entire generation of Army leaders. Those who were junior leaders in the early years of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq are now first sergeants, sergeants major and battalion commanders. Over the course of more than a decade at war, these leaders became comfortable operating within a “brigade combat team-centric” deployment system known as Army Force Generation, or ARFORGEN, to rotate and, in some cases, build units frequently to meet demands overseas.

In executing this process, leaders across the Army were forced to accept risks in the conduct and management of training. Training management transitioned from decentralized commander-led efforts to centralized mission-rehearsal exercises. As Gen. Robert W. Cone, former commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, pointed out in a January 2013 *Military Review* article, “Commanders lost ownership of their training—the warrior’s art during times of peace.” As a result of this centralized approach to training, many have argued in military education classrooms, social media and professional journal articles that the Army lost the art of training management.

We disagree with the notion that leaders are struggling with retaking ownership of training management, and contend that the Army hasn’t lost the art or understanding of managing training. Rather, contemporary leaders evolved this important process. This evolution in training management, which is reflected in current Army doctrine, is fueled by the hard-earned combat experience of leaders across the Army, new digital training tools, and an institutional resurgence in what today’s doctrine calls Mission Command.

We have also had the opportunity to observe this in practice in reorganizing the Army’s newest Stryker brigade—the 1st

Company commanders exit a CH-47 during a leader-development exercise.



Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division—within an accelerated timeline. This task required building two infantry battalions and an artillery battery; turning in equipment such as Bradley and Paladin tanks; receiving new Strykers and over 1,000 soldiers; and building a new culture that includes respecting the art of training. Over the course of 18 months, all members of the brigade participated a logical and decentralized progression in collective training from the squad through the brigade level at home station, and validated these efforts with a successful rotation at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.

### Training, Operations Linked

Our training doctrine, which is the guiding document for how we prepare as an Army, reflects an evolution in how the institution views training. The combat experience earned by the formation over the last 14 years has taught the Army the importance of developing leaders who are able to quickly transition from training to operations. Army Doctrine Reference Publica-

---

**Col. David M. Hodne** was recently commander of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo. He also commanded the 3rd Squadron, 4th U.S. Cavalry, in Iraq, and the 2nd Ranger Battalion in Afghanistan. He received a bachelor's degree from the U.S. Military Academy and a master's degree from American Military University.

**Maj. Joe Byerly** is an armor officer and the operations officer for the 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team. He also has commanded a cavalry troop and a headquarters company at Fort Stewart, Ga. He holds a bachelor's degree from North Georgia College and State University and a master's degree from the U.S. Naval War College. He frequently writes about leadership and leader development on his website, [www.FromTheGreenNotebook.com](http://www.FromTheGreenNotebook.com).

tion 7-0 *Training Units and Developing Leaders* points out that the Army once viewed the training management process as separate and distinct from the operations process.

Now, the two are inextricably linked. Commanders must apply the operations process to how they train their formations through planning, preparing, executing and assessing training as well as drive the process by understanding, visualizing, describing, directing and leading. The doctrine is clear, so it's up to commanders to implement.

Because units leveraged experiences from Iraq and Afghanistan, the transition from conducting operations to planning and managing training is not as significant for leaders at the battalion level and above, as some believe. They are able to operationalize their intent and vision for unit-level training and recapture the art of training management.

Additionally, leadership from the brigade level down to the squad understands the realities and requirements of combat; thus, they hold themselves accountable for individual and collective tasks and know how to set the right conditions for training. Many of today's young leaders know the cost of complacency. NCOs and company grade officers create tough and realistic training conditions and push themselves toward a higher level of readiness because many have seen the price paid by units who hand-waved their training and failed their soldiers on the streets of Iraq or in the mountains of Afghanistan.

The evolution in training management is further aided by the creation of digital training tools that are at the fingertips of company and battalion-level leaders. The combined arms training strategies and Digital Training Management System, along with websites such as the Army Training Network, were developed in the middle of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. These documents serve the same purpose of the mission training plans they have replaced. As always, it remains the responsibility of leaders to develop tailored

“crawl-walk-run” training methodologies; however, the new suite of digital tools makes this process easier.

Based on the collective tasks that commanders select from the Digital Training Management System, leaders can more precisely focus evaluations based on environment or the level of training and readiness of the formation. As the Army moves away from the AR-FORGEN model to the Sustainable Readiness Model, tactical-level leaders will not have to worry about building training plans on outdated materials, as was the case when mission training plans were used.

### Leverage Online Resources

Combined Arms Center-Training at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., is already working on updates to these digital tools. As commanders focus more of their efforts on home-station training, they need to understand that effective training management lies in leveraging these online resources.

All of this, of course, requires emphasis by brigade and battalion level commanders familiar with both the legacy training management tools and the rigors of combat. Senior leaders have two choices. They can either reinforce the refrain that young leaders do not know how to train, or they can proactively educate and, in some cases, simply introduce young leaders to the basic tools of training management. A culture of accountability in training will be built by integrating a multi-

*Strykers from the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.*



echelon training approach with a multiechelon leader development effort using leader professional development sessions, developing standard operating procedures and communicating clear intent.

For example, in addition to ensuring safe execution of training during the “range walk,” this event conducted as a tactical exercise without troops also affords an incredible opportunity to develop and educate leaders. Young leaders must accept that there is a difference between simply understanding all as-



*A sniper-observer team from the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team conducts live-fire training at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.*

pects of fire control and fire distribution (many young leaders have first-person experience in this), and developing a live-fire training event that allows for decisionmaking to achieve desired effects of their weapon systems. Young leaders arguably do not have experience in designing the training that tests the full range of capabilities; however, they certainly possess the context to understand why this is important. Coaching them through the “art” will achieve and maximize learning.

Finally, there has been resurgence in the philosophy of Mission Command that has shaped the way in which leaders at all levels train their formations. While Army Doctrine Publication 6-0 *Mission Command* is a relatively new member to the doctrine family, the idea has been around for a while. The 1941 edition of Field Manual 100-5 *Field Service Regulations, Operations*, states, “Every individual must be trained to exploit a situation with energy and boldness, and must be imbued with the idea that success will depend upon his initiative and action.”

Over five decades later, in a 1992 issue of *Military Review*, then-Lt. Col. James M. Dubik argued that for units to operate decentralized in battle, commanders need to develop the culture in garrison. (Dubik retired as a lieutenant general and is a contributing editor for *ARMY* magazine.) Some could argue that aspects of the larger Army culture in the late '90s reflected the opposite of the two examples cited. Training became more centralized, with the end state being effective training management and not a preparedness to operate decentralized in battle.

The tactical lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan taught leaders that developing and nurturing the philosophy of Mission Command in training was critical to success in combat. Even

though units are no longer on the constant rotation, this culture has transferred to home-station training. Dubik's 1992 vision for a decentralized command is no longer the exception to the rule.

### **Incorporate Mission Command**

Commanders, from the company through the brigade, understand that the principles of Mission Command must be incorporated into all aspects of training. Battalion and brigade commanders develop multiechelon training to build cohesive teams through mutual trust. Company commanders and first sergeants plan training in conjunction with their squad leaders to create shared understanding. Disciplined initiative and prudent risks must be valued over adherence to an Army training and evaluation program.

A new generation is already emerging in the ranks of our Army. The squad, platoon and even company host leaders and soldiers who do not have experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. This should not be a source of concern. In fact, this very condition requires combat-seasoned leaders to reflect on how they can effectively train their subordinates for the rigors of combat without relying on “how we did it overseas.” Ultimately, effective training meets published standards, tests the full range of our capabilities, challenges decisionmaking skills, builds cohesive teams, and instills confidence in soldiers and leaders. As it was following Operation Desert Storm, it remains the responsibility of all leaders to teach subordinates how to fight and how to train. Assume nothing. By teaching your subordinates how to train correctly, you have a direct effect on ensuring that tomorrow's Army stays as good as today's. ★

*Soldiers check vehicles at Fort Carson, Colo.*

