



THE STANDSGRAM



MBO SUSTAINMENT TRAINING

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Last May, Army Aviation conducted a Safety Stand Down that required units to conduct critical training prior to resuming operations. This was in direct response to a series of fatal accidents resulting from human factors. An overarching theme of unit feedback following the HQDA Safety Stand Down was issues with the mission approval process, outlined in AR 95-1, to identify and mitigate risk. A trend that the DES Assault Branch continues to see across the force is a failure to conduct annual sustainment training for our Mission Briefing Officers.

Aviation is unique within the Army in how it conducts mission approval in that it requires a Mission Briefing Officer to review the risk assessment prior to the chain of command approving and accepting risk. AR 95-1 para 2-14a.(2) states “commanders will select briefing officers based on their experience, maturity, judgement, and ability to effectively mitigate risk to the aircrew.” The purpose of this vital position is to identify, assess, and mitigate risk for a specific mission. The intent of this regulation is to have a subject matter expert review a specific mission, identify risk, and implement control measures that “mitigate risk to its lowest level.”

AR 95-1 does not outline training requirements to qualify an individual for this complex role. It only states that briefing officers be designated in writing. The regulation states commanders in the grade of O-5 and above will develop and publish policies and procedures for the units under their command. These policies and procedures have traditionally been covered in the unit’s Standardization SOP. The Aviation Branch Operations SOP dated December 2022 covers MBO training in detail in paragraphs 2-109 through 2-112. The ABOS also outlines the documentation of this training in DA Form 7122. The DES Assault Branch has found over the course of several assessments that most units are complying with initial training requirements, but many are deficient in conducting and documenting the required annual sustainment training of Mission Briefing Officers.

This gap in recurrent training for MBOs manifests itself in poor risk mitigation techniques applied to aviation operations. DES regularly inspects the 30-day file of historical RCOPs maintained in flight operations as a part of a unit assessment. A common trend found during this inspection is mission briefing officers restating mandatory requirements rather than implementing mission-specific control measures. Examples include statements such as “instructor pilot on flight,” “conduct thorough crew brief,” and/or “update weather prior to flight.” Control measures are limitations and restrictions put in place to mitigate identified risk. They are an art more than a science, and require detailed analysis unique to each mission to be effective.

Flight experience across all components of Army Aviation is currently decreasing. This affects not only the proficiency of our flight crews, but the experience of our Mission Briefing Officers and mission approval authorities as well. To train for large scale combat operations, Army Aviation will need to conduct complex training that contains inherent risk. It is critical that leadership at all echelons remain engaged in the mission approval process. Leaders must develop and implement in depth training for our MBO’s and mission approval authorities. It is vital this program contains annual sustainment training to ensure continued development of a critical position that affects the safety of every flight.

Standards, No Compromise!