Interservice Engineer Training: *A Progress Report*

By Captain Stephen A. Danner

In the spirit of doing things smarter with less, consolidation of joint service training makes a lot of sense. In the past year, our sister services have pooled their resources with the Army to conduct the majority of military construction engineer training at Fort Leonard Wood. B Company, 577th Engineer Battalion, provides this training for students in the Engineer Equipment Operators Course and the Technical Engineering Specialist Course. In addition, the company is responsible for Army-unique training of electricians, quarry specialists, and asphalt and concrete operators. The goal of this joint service initiative is to provide well-trained and well-qualified soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines to the total force.

After six months of operation, it is time for a progress report. The following is a summary of successful aspects of joint engineer training at Fort Leonard Wood and a few areas of concern.

Successes. Despite some expected growing pains associated with integrating and accommodating the needs of all four services, joint service construction engineer training is a success. Positive and productive results are visible to both trainers and students. Uniformity of training and interoperability among services are accepted as real advantages. Most skill requirements now are the same for all services except for some service-unique equipment. Interservice training encourages everyone to maintain high levels of professionalism, particularly in consolidated tasks involving multiple services.

Another benefit is the experience that personnel from each service bring to Fort Leonard Wood. These experience factors are important ingredients in revising course training materials. To ensure we make the right changes, we have formed Course Advisory Groups, with representation from the four services. These groups make policy decisions based on the requirements of all services. Within the constraints of the service-imposed command and control procedures, they improve teamwork and help ensure that the services communicate effectively.

Concerns. Our objective in joint service training is to establish a unified "purple" chain of command so that, within reason, all students are trained to the same standards. There are some concerns. Living conditions, policies for repeating courses, and supplemental training policies often differ from service to service. For example, Army students live under Initial Entry Training standards, while other services' students live in permanent party barracks and are afforded many more privileges. Differences in these policies sometimes affect graduation rates and cause morale problems. Additionally, students and instructors at Fort Leonard Wood remain under the command and control of the individual service, with duty at the joint courses during their training periods. A command relationship of operational control should exist between the four services to alleviate communication problems.

Another area of concern is the instructor rating system. As Ms. Connie Welch, Technical Director, Department of Training and Doctrine, stated in the December 1994 issue of *Engineer*, we lack a uniform performance rating process for joint training instructors. For example, Army and Navy instructors may be rated by any service, Marine instructors must be rated by the first officer or civilian (GS-11 or higher) in his chain of command, and Air Force instructors can be rated only by Air Force supervisors. As joint service training matures, we must adopt a single rating system.

Equipment maintenance is another challenge. With the transfer of common service equipment, the density of construction engineer equipment increased from 305 to more than 500 major end items under Army control. The only item of construction engineer equipment common among all services is the Caterpillar D7G Dozer. The large density of equipment means that maintenance is critical to accomplishing our training mission. All of the Course Advisory Groups stress the importance of regular preventive maintenance and recommend that the program of instruction requirements address the maintenance tasks for each type of equipment. At all levels, service-unique equipment is especially difficult to maintain. The technical manuals for those items often are missing and are difficult to obtain. Because the Army mechanics are less familiar with service-unique equipment, the organizational readiness rates for that equipment are lower than the rates for common equipment.

On the other hand, use of different engineer equipment has some

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