Bold Shift:
An Engineer Partnership

By Major Allen C. Estes

Today's Army requires that fully integrated force packages containing high-priority Reserve Component (RC) units be trained and ready to go to war at any time. Bold Shift is the Army's initiative to create a single standard for RC and Active Component (AC) forces. General Edwin H. Burba, the former commander of Forces Command (FORSCOM), has stated that the intent of the program is to "design those policies, procedures, and execution techniques that will ensure high levels of training and readiness."

In the past, the training and affiliation between AC and RC units was based on cold war-era war plans for specific geographical areas. Today, the Army is getting smaller and will be stationed to a greater degree in the continental United States (CONUS). With the requirement to project power quickly in reaction to a variety of contingencies, the training relationship between AC and RC units had to change.

Rather than wait until 1993 for a polished and refined program, FORSCOM chose to implement a

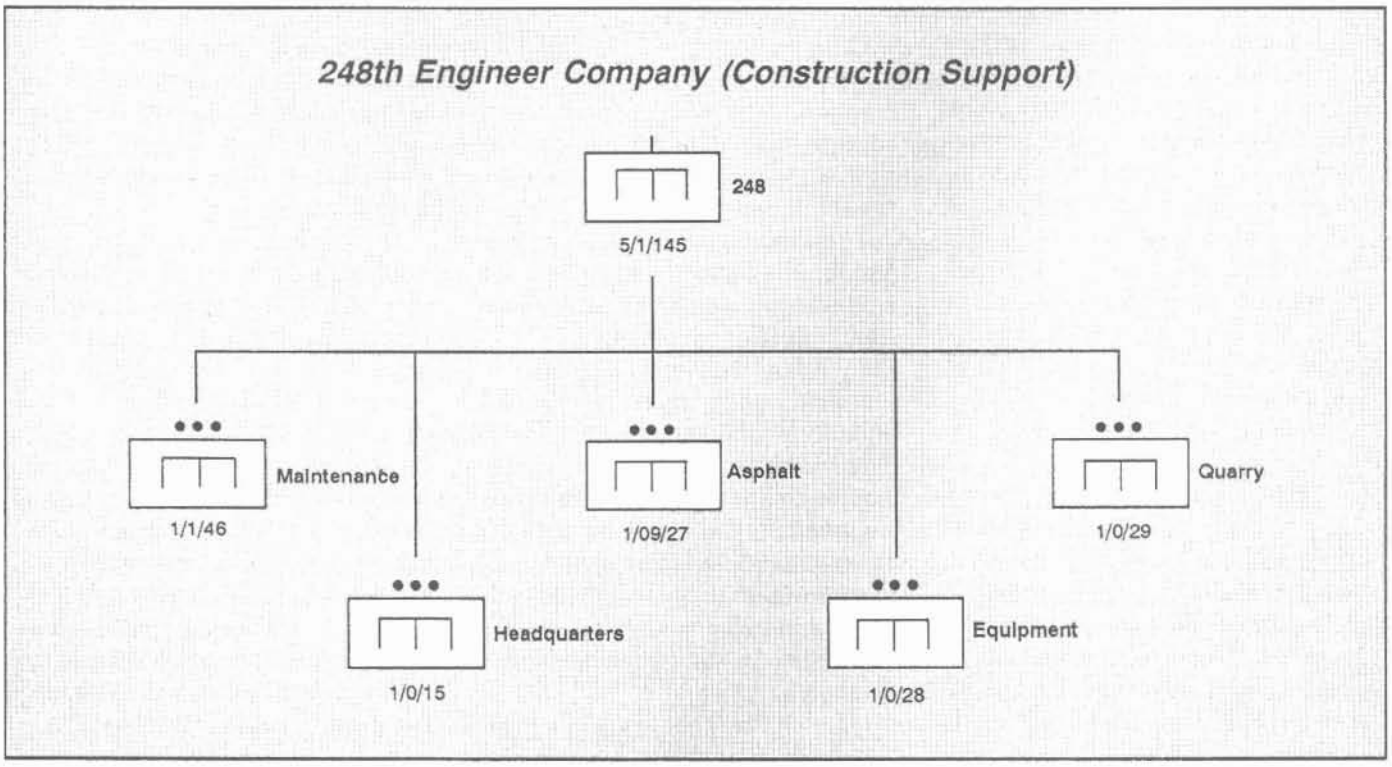


Figure 1

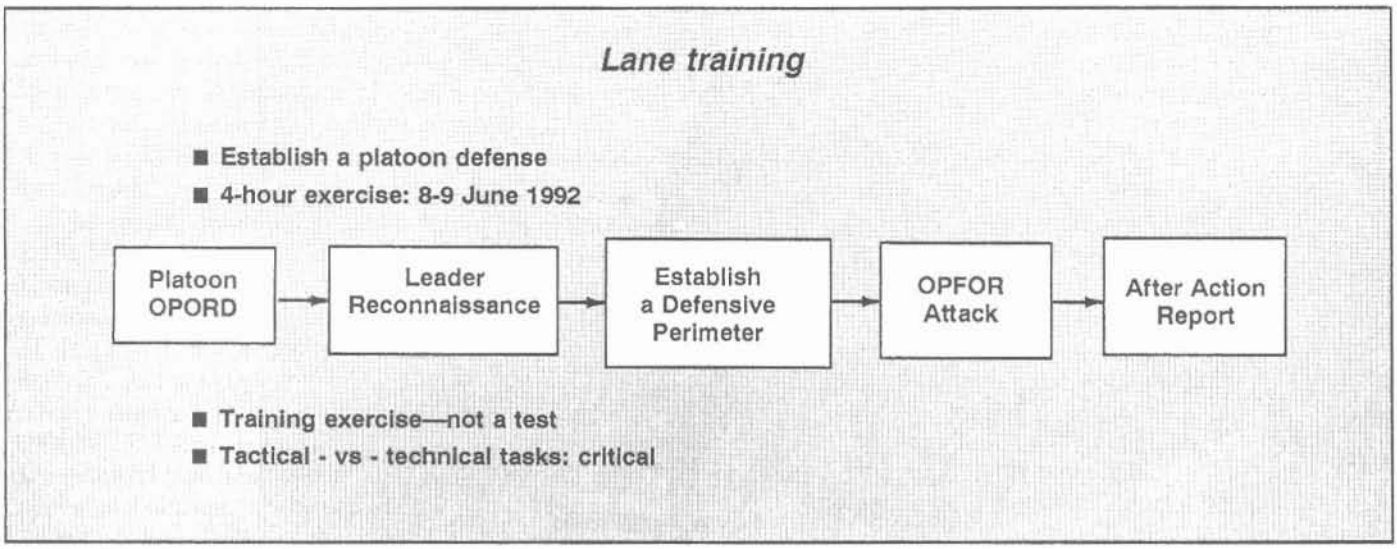


Figure 2

pilot program in 1992 and build the lessons learned into an improved effort for 1993. The guidance provided to participating units was deliberately vague, and partner units were left to implement the details themselves.

Bold Shift in Action

The 43rd Engineer Battalion (Combat), an AC combat heavy battalion stationed at Fort Benning, was linked with the 248th Engineer Company (Construction Support), an Army National Guard unit that trains at Stone Ranch, Connecticut. The idea was to link the RC unit with a similar AC unit. Since no construction support companies exist in the AC, a combat heavy battalion was the closest available match.

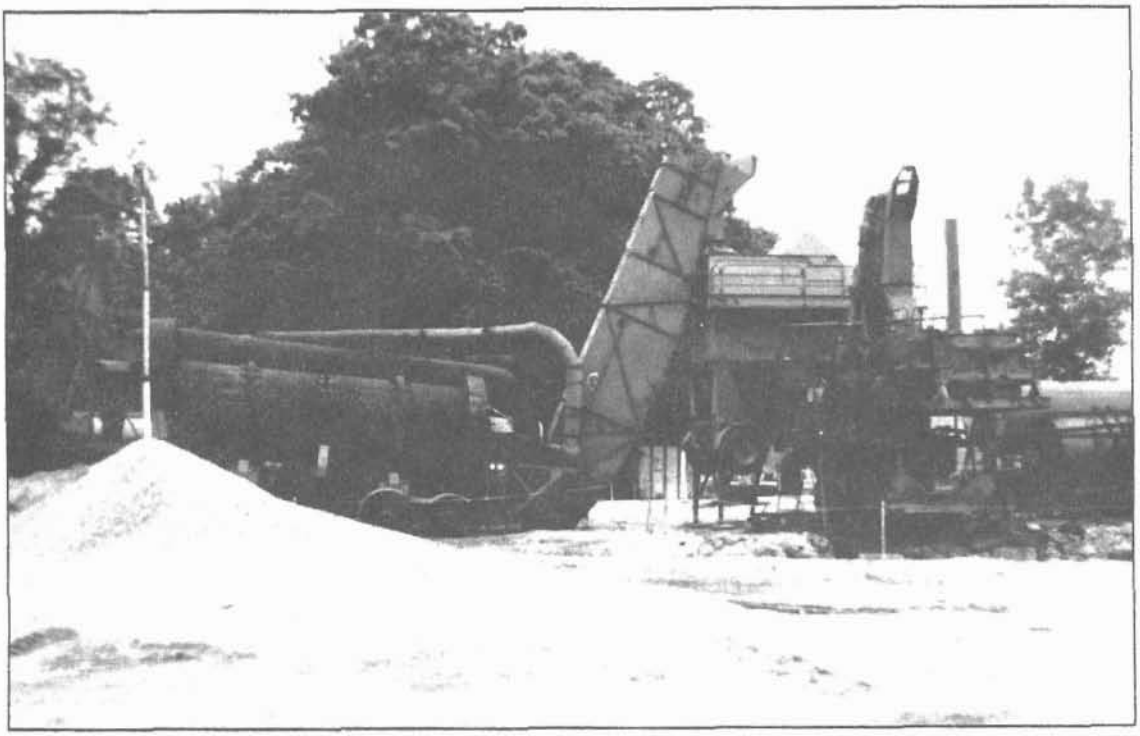
Construction support companies are authorized 151 soldiers, who are divided into maintenance, asphalt, quarry, headquarters, and equipment platoons (Figure 1). Because the 43rd (a typical combat heavy battalion) lacked rock-crushing or asphalt capabilities, it was able to provide only limited technical assistance. This partnership was probably the best available since a combat heavy battalion would probably be augmented with a construction support company during war.

The first step in implementing Bold Shift was a series of monthly visits, starting in January 1992, when personnel from the 43rd visited the 248th during their inactive duty for training (IDT) weekends. They provided support ranging from initial assessments and evaluations to preparations for the rigorous two-week active duty for training (AT) in June. Their most valuable technical assistance was in NBC operations and material quality testing.

Visits later in the year focused on preparations for the lane training exercise, which is an area of emphasis for Bold Shift. Lane training works superbly for a combat arms unit, where large numbers of similar platoons can be efficiently trained on the same critical, mission-essential task by using a heavily-resourced, well-planned lane. It is more difficult to develop lane training for construction support companies and other units that have platoons with diverse missions and no technical tasks in common. The 43rd chose to establish a defensive position as the lane training exercise because the tactical tasks were common to all platoons, which were coached and evaluated separately.

The 43rd prepared and executed the same four-hour exercise for each platoon; this provided the soldiers with some combat-focused training (Figure 2). While the collective task was to establish a defensive position, the exercise tested individual and leadership tasks as well. These tasks ranged from clearing booby traps and establishing communications to preparing range cards and camouflaging fighting positions. Each platoon leader was required to start with a verbal operations order to his platoon. Leaders then conducted a reconnaissance of the assigned area and set up a defensive perimeter. After reacting to a chemical attack and conducting demasking procedures, the exercise culminated with an attack by an opposing force (OPFOR) and reconsolidation. The final critical event was an after-action review in which the leaders, OPFOR, listening post/observation post (LP/OP), soldiers, and evaluators provided immediate feedback on what occurred and what could be done better.

The 248th had a busy AT. It incorporated lane training conducted by the 43rd, an ARTEP



The 248th Construction Support Company produces asphalt, a critical wartime task.

evaluated by the 76th Maneuver Training Command (MTC), and an operational readiness exercise (ORE) conducted by a FORSCOM team. The ORE rigidly tested the 248th's ability to perform their mission. Evaluators from the 43rd assisted with the ARTEP, augmented the ORE team, and completed the training assessment model (TAM). The TAM is a new evaluation packet that replaces the 1-R evaluation traditionally given to RC units.

Lessons Learned

The first year of Bold Shift is over, leaving behind some comments and lessons learned for the future:

- Apparently, nobody fully understands the program. Units have interpreted the sparse guidance differently and have developed their own ideas about what Bold Shift should accomplish. More definitive guidance is needed after the experiences from the pilot tests have been compiled and evaluated. Nevertheless, the decision to implement a partially complete program in FY 92 rather than waiting an extra year was sound. The valuable work that was accomplished and the lessons learned on the ground could not have occurred in a planner's office.
- Lane training is not necessarily efficient for construction support companies with different platoon compositions. Lane training worked well during tactical tasks this year, but establishment of a platoon defense was not a critical task. On the battlefield, the 248th will be needed to produce asphalt, crush rock, and pave roads. The limited time available for unit training should be used for these essential wartime tasks, which do not lend themselves easily to lane training.
- The requirements for Bold Shift (lane training, ARTEP, ORE, TAM) were so numerous that unit leaders in the 248th Engineer Company had no time to conduct their own training during the two-week annual training.
- The 43rd Engineer Battalion sent different leaders on each monthly visit because of operational requirements and personnel turnover. This allowed more officers exposure to the Bold Shift program but resulted in a lack of continuity between visits and hampered planning effectiveness.
- The Bold Shift partnership between AC and RC units is helpful. However, people, equipment, money, and time would help much more than assistance visits.

Moving Forward

With the first year of Bold shift experience recorded and evaluated, 1993 brought several changes to the program. One important

change is that a large number of AC officers and noncommissioned officers are now being assigned to Readiness Commands to work full time with RC units. Another important change is that many Bold Shift units have been replaced or realigned.

The initial selection of units to participate in Bold Shift was done quickly and was based on wartime mission, unit status, equitable regional distribution, and political considerations. The selection of units in 1993 focused on developing a pool of AC and RC units that could rapidly deploy in response to any number of potential regional contingencies. FORSCOM identified these units based on input from individual state Adjutants General and major army commands. They designated these units as "Contingency Force Pool One" units. The CONUS-based corps (I, III, XVIII) then aligned the AC and RC units in Directed Training Associations (DTAs) based on the RC unit's priority for deployment, the complexity of tasks to be trained, and the criticality of the unit.

The corps tried to match RC units with similar AC units. As a result, the 43rd is currently aligned in a DTA with three Army National Guard units: the 133rd Engineer Battalion (Portland, Maine), the 653rd Engineer Utilities Team (Camp Blanding, Florida), and the 679th Engineer Utilities Team (Columbia, South Carolina). The 43rd has visited its new Bold Shift partners during IDT periods and is actively establishing a training relationship.

As Bold Shift undergoes further refinements, units can expect more changes. Nevertheless, the Army remains committed to integrating AC and RC unit training and emphasizing the Total Army concept.

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