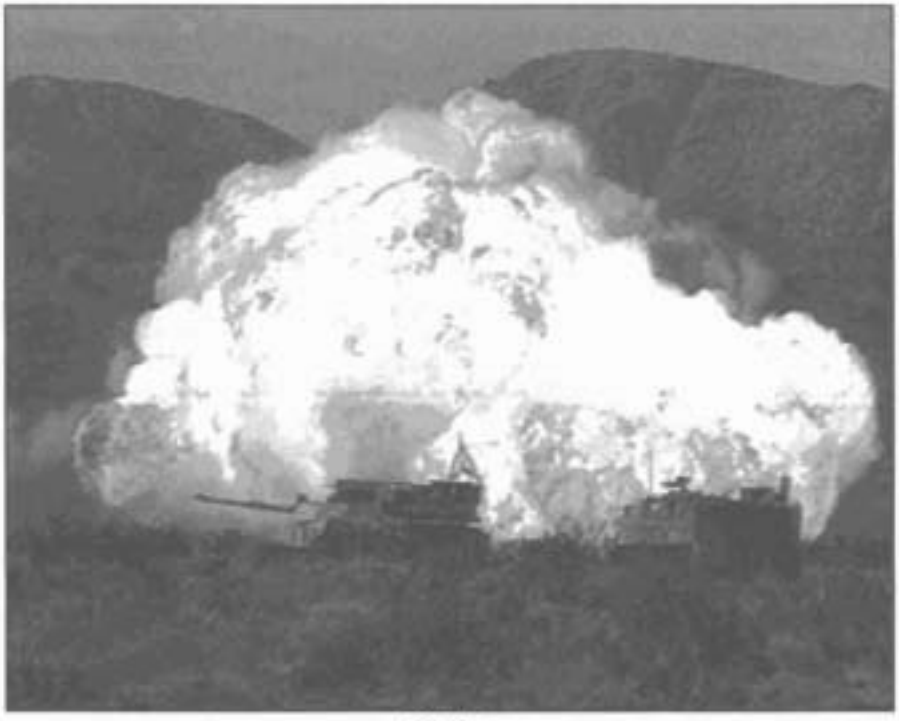
Sidewinder Team Situation Report

By Lieutenant Colonel Richard Graves

Units rotating through the National Training Center (NTC) may have noticed several changes in the way brigade combat teams (BCTs) and their engineer battalions execute training missions. While none of the changes are revolutionary, collectively they substantially improve the quality and realism of training. Some changes contradict current rules of engagement, and many are innovations developed by units at home station and "tried out" during their NTC rotation. We provide the following information to units during their Leader Training Program and present it here to assist leaders as they develop their home-station training.



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Training Scenario

The Opposing Force is still the toughest enemy in the world, bar none. We have not changed the traditional mix of five force-on-force fights and two live-fire missions, with their usual assortment of attacks, movements to contact, and defense in sectors. The observer/controller (OC) and the platoon and company after-action review process are still the heart and soul of the NTC. The Sidewinder Team continues to provide as many instrumented battalion after-action reviews as possible, with focused reviews based on unit requests or OC recommendations.

What has changed for some BCTs is the addition of one to three days of division-directed rehearsals (DDRs) at the beginning of a rotation. DDRs are OC-directed situational training exercises (lane training), with the first day being platoon-level events and the second and third days company team and task force combined-arms events, respectively. First-day DDRs conducted by the Sidewinder Team include tasks from the engineer qualification tables. If your BCT plans to execute DDRs in either format, we suggest you coordinate early with the Sidewinder Team to establish a lane composition that meets your training objectives.

Another change to recent rotations is the inclusion of one or more flex missions in the scenario. These missions are BCT flexibility "gut checks." With from zero to 12 hours notice before execution, the BCT's higher headquarters—the 52d Mechanized Infantry Division—passes a fragmentary order to expand or contract boundaries, change objective locations, or even change the entire mission.

In addition to the normal planning requirements, we suggest that units assemble checklists of planning, preparing, and executing considerations for all likely missions before the rotation.

Training Realism

As a secondary role, OCs provide realistic battlefield effects. We have made several changes to better replicate expected battlefield effects and help units meet their training objectives. For example, we reintroduced the mine effects simulator (MES) for both the Blue and Opposing Forces. When the magnetic field of the MES is disturbed, it sends a pulse that kills all MILES II-equipped personnel and vehicles within its 10-meter killing radius. Employment requires an extra step—shunting two contacts on the

MES—but the payback is a more robust minefield obstacle.

The NTC has long been behind the times with respect to demolition effects simulators (DES). The rules of engagement allow DES on an exceptional basis. However, the NTC Standards in Training Commission (STRAC) Table 10-3 allocation for live-fire Class V materials does not provide enough detonation cord for breaching operations, much less DES construction. The Fort Irwin Training Support Center (TSC) does not stock the necessary cardboard tubes, clay, chalk, etc., so training units are not inclined to use DES.

Engineer battalions have successfully overcome these obstacles and learned that constructing and employing DES substantially improves force-on-force realism. The units used Class V materials allocated for live fire, but with a little planning, they can transfer sufficient Class V materials from their home-station to the NTC for this purpose. For a long-term fix, the Sidewinder Team is working with the TSC to procure the construction materials. The team is also working to change the STRAC allocation to provide more Class V materials for breaching and DES and to include modernized demolition initiators (MDIs). Until the STRAC allocation is changed, units can either transfer MDI from the home station to the NTC or conduct conventional initiating systems training at home station to prepare for their rotation.

Another success story involves improvements in scatterable mine employment. The NTC no longer categorically denies unit requests for additional situational obstacle capabilities and longer-duration self-destruct times. Each request is considered on its own merit and unit training objectives. The 52d Mechanized Division engineer reviews the mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time available (METT-T) conditions before reallocating scarce Class V resources within the division, asking X Corps for additional resources, or granting longer self-destruct times.

Training Innovations

Most battalions bring to the NTC a unique organization, piece of equipment, or tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) developed at home station and expect to see how the concept fights. In the past year we have tested several variations of the consolidated blade and Volcano platoon concepts. Centralizing command and control, maintenance, and mission execution need not reduce flexibility or support to maneuver commanders, but this can't be determined solely by reading a manual. The best techniques usually are developed while units execute engineer missions.

Engineer reconnaissance is another task we have tried to improve this year. Engineer-specific intelligence often is poorly collected and disseminated or may not exist. One solution is to attach individuals or teams of sappers to a BCT or to task force scouts. Another option is for independent engineer reconnaissance teams to work for the engineer battalion S2. Most reconnaissance methods achieve some measure of success, and all of them provide training for the commander, staff, and sappers that is attainable only at the NTC.

Some units attach explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams or EOD companies to engineer battalions. This is a nondoctrinal solution to the EOD command and control problem (little doctrine exists). Historical precedence for this practice was set in Bosnia by the 1st Armored Division Engineer Brigade. In previous years at the NTC, EOD teams were attached to the forward support battalion in the brigade support area (BSA), with most of their "business" in the BSA. With that configuration, the EOD combat multiplier was seen and felt only on a small portion of the battlefield, and the rest of the BCT received little unexploded ordnance (UXO) procedures training.

With the engineer battalion focused on mobility, and with engineer command and control nodes spread across the entire battlespace from the BSA to the breach site, engineers are the best candidates for integrating EOD teams. Attaching the teams to the engineer battalion achieves a number of important training objectives:

- The BCT develops procedures to identify, report, and track UXO.
- The engineer battalion exercises command and control of attached units.
- The EOD company and team perform missions safely in a tactical environment.

Creating a UXO-rich training environment that more closely replicates wartime hazards and effects on mobility further enhances UXO training.

Conclusion

These innovations, and many we have not heard of yet, have a place at the NTC. Units are not penalized for attacking age-old problems, but solutions may be difficult in this era of ever-dwindling resources. FORSCOM/TRADOC Regulation 350-50-1, *Training at the National Training Center*, is fairly definitive about what units can do. However, requests for exceptions can be sent to the NTC by letter 180 days before the rotation. The Sidewinder Team will help as much as possible with obtaining exceptions and may even be able to provide some TTP ideas. Contact the team by e-mail or though the Sidewinder home page at http://www.irwin.army.mil/sidewinder. The site provides slides used for Leadership Training Program classes on obstacle integration and deliberate breach planning and other items.

Lieutenant Colonel Graves is the Deputy Senior Engineer Battalion Trainer at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California. He previously served as chief of the Doctrine Development Division, U.S. Army Engineer School.