

Restoring Warrior Skills: Reintegrating Traditional Sergeant's Time Training

By Sergeant First Class Dustin A. Thomas

The contents of this article do not represent the official views of, nor are they endorsed by, the U.S. Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

In recent years, the U.S. Army has experienced a significant decline in using fundamental warrior skills, such as “shoot, move, and communicate.” These skills are crucial for military readiness and effectiveness but have been compromised by an increasing emphasis on socio-political agendas and metrics. Although these initiatives aim to modernize and streamline Army operations, they take away valuable time and energy from noncommissioned officers (NCOs), hindering their ability to educate Soldiers on essential combat skills. As a result, there is an escalating disconnect between bureaucratic requirements and the operational readiness needed for combat.

The Army must implement consistent, weekly Sergeant's Time Training to address this issue across all installations. This specific training for Soldiers should include a certification process conducted twice a year to validate Soldiers' skills. This approach would rejuvenate NCOs as field-trained Soldiers and reaffirm the primary goal of preparing Soldiers for combat.

According to Field Manual (FM) 7-0, *Training*, “realistic and rigorous training trains units and personnel to enter, fight, and succeed in the field of battle.”¹ This article discusses the factors contributing to the decline of warrior skills, identifies shortcomings in current training methods, and proposes solutions to make mandatory Sergeant's Time Training a reality.

Declining Core Warrior Skills

Priorities and Training Gaps

The increasing administrative focus within the Army has shifted time and resources away from hands-on combat training, eroding foundational Soldier skills. Maintaining metrics, conducting excessive meetings, and managing socio-political initiatives often precede rigorous field exercises. Lack of this training has resulted in a gap in training continuity, with NCOs and senior NCOs burdened by non-mission-essential obligations. FM 7-0 emphasizes that “commanders, supported by their NCOs, must prioritize training that directly contributes to combat readiness.”² However, without institutional backing for dedicated training time, these priorities often become overshadowed.

Inconsistencies

Although some units independently implement Sergeant's Time Training, the lack of Army-wide regulation and enforcement leads to inconsistency in its execution.

Certain commanders emphasize such training, while others deprioritize it in favor of administrative tasks or operational requirements. This disparity results in uneven skill levels across units, leaving gaps in critical competencies like weapons handling, small-unit tactics, and communication drills. According to FM 7-22, *Holistic Health and Fitness*, consistent, structured practice is vital for Soldiers to build “muscle memory and mental resilience needed for combat effectiveness.”³

Solutions

Standardizing Training Days

To restore warrior skills, the Army must establish a weekly training day. It should be mandated across all installations and units and dedicated solely to foundational tasks. Known as Sergeant's Time Training, this session would enable NCOs to focus exclusively on essential combat skills such as land navigation, weapons qualification, tactical maneuvers, and radio communication. This standardization would ensure that Soldiers across the force maintain a uniform level of proficiency, regardless of their duty station or unit.

Validating and Certifying Training

The Army should implement a biannual validation process to evaluate Soldiers' competencies in critical areas. As outlined in Army Regulation (AR) 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*, such evaluations are necessary to track individual progress and ensure training effectiveness.⁴ These validations could be overseen by commanders or their designees, with results logged into the Digital Training Management System (DTMS) to provide accountability and facilitate long-term tracking. By integrating this process into existing systems, the Army would foster a culture of continuous improvement while maintaining a clear record of the readiness of each Soldier.

Empowering NCOs

Mandatory Sergeant's Time Training would also reinforce the traditional role of NCOs as the primary trainers of the Army. The NCO Creed states, “My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind—accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers.”⁵ This program would empower NCOs to fulfill these responsibilities by providing dedicated time to mentor and train their Soldiers, fostering trust and cohesion within their teams.

Proposed Benefits

Enhancing Soldier Readiness

Implementing structured and consistent Sergeant's Time Training would directly contribute to the fighting readiness of the Army by addressing existing gaps in warrior skills. The need for realistic, repetitive training is outlined in the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet (Pam) 525-8-2, *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for 2030–2040*, which emphasizes that these methods are essential to train Soldiers for the volatility of modern warfare.⁶ By focusing on core skills, the Army ensures that every Soldier can lead in high-pressure environments.

Accounting for and Reinforcing Army Traditions

Integrating training validation into DTMS provides a clear and consistent method for monitoring movement across the force. This integration holds Soldiers accountable for their performance and enables leaders to quickly identify and address shortcomings. It also facilitates ongoing training and skill development, even as Soldiers transition between groups or installations. Furthermore, reinstating mandatory Sergeant's Time Training aligns with the Army's longstanding tradition of discipline, professionalism, and excellence in warfighting. By prioritizing combat training, the Army remains true to its foundational mission: protecting the Nation through bravery and vigilance. The integration of training validation into DTMS provides a clean and consistent way to monitor movement across the force.

Conclusion

The erosion of basic warrior skills in the Army is a pressing issue that leaders must immediately address. Administrative priorities and socio-political efforts have shifted the focus away from essential "shoot, move, and communicate" skills critical for mission success. Although some units attempt to compensate for this deficit through ad hoc training programs, the absence of Army-wide standardization has led to significant disparities in readiness and capability.

Implementing weekly Sergeant's Time Training is an affordable and effective way to address these shortcomings. By mandating this training and introducing an annually monitored validation cycle documented in DTMS, the Army can reestablish a commitment to combat readiness and equip NCOs with the necessary tools to effectively train their Soldiers. This approach enhances Soldier skills and accountability and reinforces the Army's longstanding dedication to discipline, professionalism, and winning wars.

As the Army evolves to meet the challenges of the modern age, it must focus on what it does best—training Soldiers to fight and win the Nation's wars. Emphasizing uniform training in warrior competencies is not only an Army imperative; it also demonstrates a commitment to maintaining high standards and being well-prepared for the future. ✂

Endnotes:

¹FM 7-0, *Training*, p. 1-1, 14 June 2021.

²Ibid, p. 1-2.

³FM 7-22, *Holistic Health and Fitness*, p. 4-3, 1 October 2020.

⁴AR 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*, 10 December 2017.

⁵"NCO Creed," U.S. Army, <<https://www.army.mil/values/nco.html>>, accessed on 13 May 2025.

⁶TRADOC Pam 525-8-2, *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for 2030–2040*, p. 2-3, 12 February 2024.

Sergeant First Class Thomas is a platoon sergeant for the 65th Military Police Company (Airborne), Fort Bragg, North Carolina. At the time this article was written, he was a student attending the Military Police Senior Leader Course at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.