

MAJ John R. Randt

RETURN FIRE

GOING A STEP FURTHER WITH THE NATIONAL TRAINING CENTER

In a long dusty file, National Guard veterans of the National Training Center (NTC) are returning home. Fire teams, key trainers and even entire battalion task forces with Fort Irwin experience are scattered around our states at hometown armories.

But as equipment is shelved and troops stand down, I'm concerned that the training is in stand down too.

Frankly, I am still rather amazed that it took the U.S. Army so long to create a site where the dynamics of a realistic task force operation could be fully fielded, tested and evaluated. The uninitiated probably think this occurs at most large Army posts.

Unfortunately, it does not. Only in recent years has the former National Guard post become *der Kessel* (literally a cauldron) of doctrine and combat arms training.

Although we have the facility, the lessons learned are not being officially disseminated. Worse yet, training continues without official benefit of NTC experience and doctrine.

- What are the lessons, procedures and tactics the rest of us should know and apply during monthly drills and active duty training period?

- Are NTC veterans applying the lessons learned at their active duty stations? Or, indeed, are these most valuable lessons lost in the rigid geometry of unit training schedules? Are they lost because evaluators do not know the lessons/procedures to test?

The Army must do better.

The institution has created a maze and welter of official publications of all kinds. But none chronicle the lessons of NTC for training or OCONUS missions, for that matter.

There is no place a trainer or soldier can go to study the lessons and learn the game by NTC rules—at least offi-

cially. I imagine many evaluators would not even recognize the doctrine if exhibited by NTC veterans.

Within my own mechanized infantry command, North Carolina's 30th Infantry Brigade (Mech), we vigorously

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follow the procedures of the latest ARTEP (Army Readiness, Training and Evaluation Program) and field circulars (such as TC 71-3, TC 71-6, etc.). However, the Fort Irwin experience is lacking in dry, official texts.

We are in the game—and it ultimately is a game of survival and victory. But, what are the lessons? In combat, we may have to relearn the lessons.

It is a shame. We should be using the Fort Irwin standards as well as the appropriate texts in all our training. Officially, the lessons learned are unpublished and unchronicled.

Unofficially, some lessons of the NTC are permeating into Army thought. I am referring to the articles in magazines such as *Infantry* and *Armor*, which depict unit experiences and in some cases reflect ideas from members of the facility's opposing forces (OPFOR). However, these articles reflect authors' ideas and impressions—not the Army's.

There is a random nature to the information that does come from NTC. Veterans write that a totally functioning and coordinated task force command is vital to win the game. Winning, of course, is victory—

and survival. Emphasis is out on reconnaissance, artillery and engineers. Heavy stress is put on leaders and individual troop members. Overall teamwork runs parallel with the individual soldier and survival skills. We read there is value in the Command & General Staff (C&GS) School doctrine of tailoring a task force to the mission, enemy, terrain, troops and time (METT-T).

Would it not be a good idea to publish this type of information in an official publication? Every detachment size and larger unit should have a copy available for planning, coordinating and after action reviews.

For example, as it is now, our tankers conduct ARTEP training at posts throughout the country. However, magazine articles on the Fort Irwin exercises tell us lessons that may not be emphasized or even known in our regular training. Tankers, for instance, learn they are most vulnerable in withdrawing to alternate positions. They should not locate near obvious terrain features where they can be fixed by observers and taken out. Tankers' survivability and mission dramatically increases if assaults are carefully considered and executed on weak flanks or rear areas rather than decimating frontal assaults with futile casualty lists.

These ideas are far from inclusive. There are long lists of guidance the other combat arms and support elements need just as badly. The field needs this new doctrine as a supplement to training guidance. And, unfortunately, for my own command, the 30th Infantry Brigade, our annual training for 1986 is already over. Our training needs to be augmented with NTC lessons. So does that of the Total Force.

National Guard

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FEATURES

C-141 Conversion in Mississippi

Members of the 172d Military Airlift Group, Mississippi Air National Guard, convert from the C-130H to the C-141B "Starlifter." The changeover meant a tremendous amount of retraining for the crew members.

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TRAINING: Company Level

Strong, effective company-level training is the only means the individual soldier has to learn to fight to win. The bottom line is that company level training is the lynchpin to combat readiness. Company A, 3-102d Armor, New Jersey Army National Guard strives for topnotch training.

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TRAINING: Brigade Level

CAPSTONE has effected training changes for the National Guard the way no one ever would have suspected even five years ago. Members of the 228th Signal Brigade, South Carolina Army National Guard, know all too well what those changes have entailed.

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TRAINING: Division Level

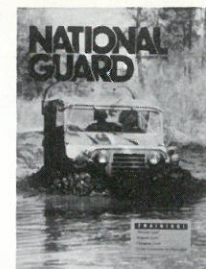
Time was when a Division trained as a squad, platoon or company. Not anymore. The 40th Infantry Division (Mech), California Army National Guard, trains as a unit—all at once. That's quite a feat for a heavy division. Multiechelon training is conducted by all units at all levels at all times.

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"Red Hawks" Train With Eagle Eyes

Flying in the F-4 Phantom jets, members of the 142d Fighter Interceptor Group, Oregon Air National Guard, the "Red Hawks" are considered a strong unit because of its aggressive training, attitude, skill and a fantastic *esprit de corps*.

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COVER:

Members of the famed 2d Battalion, 222d Field Artillery, Utah Army National Guard, 1985 winners of the prestigious Walter T. Kerwin Award, plow a jeep through the marshy waters of Camp Blanding, Florida, during its annual training there. Photo, LTC Reece Stein. Design, Johnson Design Group.

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