



*Soldiers from A Company, 115th Brigade Support Battalion, prepare to sling load a water blivet using a CH-47 Chinook helicopter. (Photo by Staff Sgt. John Couffer)*

# Training a Brigade Support Battalion at Home Station

■ By Lt. Col. J. Bradley Swift

The brigade combat team's (BCT's) current mission set involves operating in a complex environment with simultaneous requirements ranging from stability to decisive action operations. Supporting these operations in expeditionary conditions requires a well-trained brigade support battalion (BSB). In order for a BSB to

be truly ready, it must be trained on brigade-level sustainment systems.

## Training Resources and Structure

In addition to the relevant training doctrine outlined in Army doctrine publications (ADPs) and Army doctrine reference publications (ADRP's), a home-station training strategy and a combined

arms training strategy (CATS) are useful tools.

Most installations use a three-phase training management framework that typically involves quarterly cycles: a support cycle, a crew and low-level collective cycle, and a collective cycle. This construct allows for predictability and structure in training management. (See figure 1.)

There are about 48 common collective tasks resident across the distribution, field maintenance, and medical companies and 63 unique tasks spread across the same units. Over half of CATS collective tasks are the same for the three BSB companies. This generally holds true for the six forward support companies (FSCs) and their CATS task templates.

Given the traditional three-phase training cycle framework, most armored brigade combat teams (ABCTs) conduct live gunnery in the collective training cycle. An ABCT usually needs at least seven weeks to qualify all major combat system crews, especially given the addition of the third combined arms battalion under the latest BCT reorganization.

A typical 12-week collective training cycle includes a gunnery density period of about seven weeks followed by a recovery week and then culminates with a brigade exercise that lasts seven to 10 days followed by another recovery week.

### FSC Support to Collective Training

The six FSCs in an ABCT are assigned to the BSB and attached to their supported maneuver units. The FSC maintenance platoons are often further task-organized into company repair teams for the maneuver companies.

The FSCs are very capable organizations. At home station, they can service most of their maneuver battalions' field maintenance and distribution requirements. FSCs provide the following:

- Bulk water support with M149 trailers.
- Rations drawn from the troop issue support activity under a battalion account and stored in their own multitemperature refrigeration container system.
- Bulk fuel draw and issue.
- Bulk ammunition draw and issue.
- Organic distribution of virtually every other class of supply.

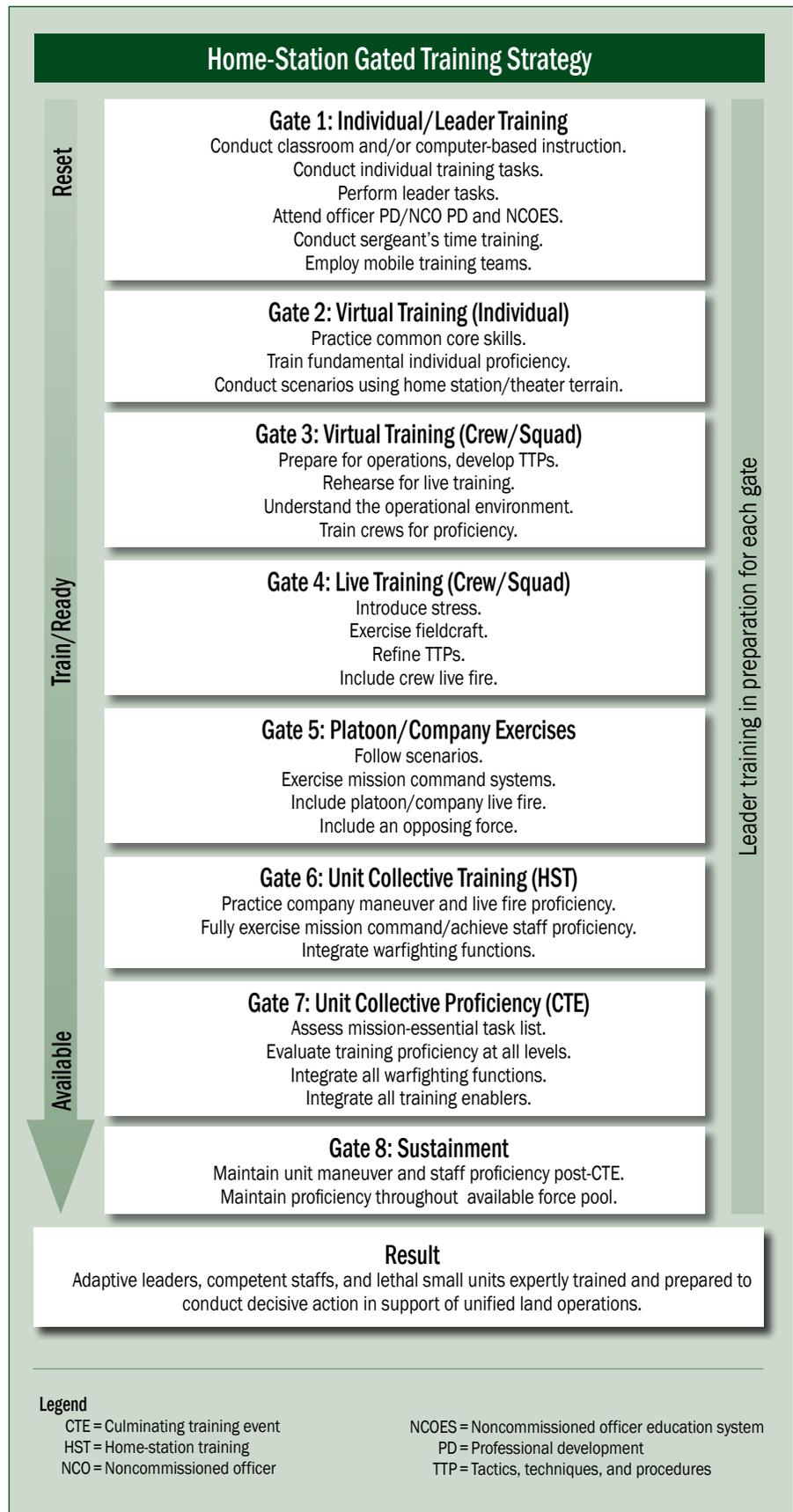


Figure 1. An example of a home-station gated training strategy.



*Medics from C Company, 115th Brigade Support Battalion, decontaminate a simulated casualty using their patient decontamination set. (Photo by Staff Sgt. John Couffer)*

In short, the FSCs do not require much assistance from the BSB to conduct a typical gunnery cycle. The reality is that the FSCs can support the entire gunnery density with very little help from the BSB. Depending on the construct of the brigade exercise and the maneuver distances, FSCs can even support most of a brigade exercise under a supply point distribution system without much assistance from the BSB.

This creates a false sense of independence in the maneuver battalions and a wholesale disbelief that there would be a need for a controlled supply rate for any commodity administered by the BSB commander, support operations officer, brigade S-4, or brigade executive officer.

### **Training Brigade-Level Systems**

ABCTs that do not train on sustainment systems at the brigade level will be forced to develop their skills hastily either during a combat training center rotation or in a con-

tingency operation. One good way to train on these systems at home station is to establish a phase line just outside the cantonment area that the FSCs cannot cross for the duration of the gunnery cycle.

This means that the BSB will have to establish brigade accounts for bulk fuel, rations, and ammunition while expressly forbidding an FSC to enter the cantonment area while its battalion is in the gunnery window. Establishing brigade accounts for these commodities will be a substantial undertaking but will force the development and execution of systems that naturally drive unit logistics status reporting, logistics synchronization, prioritization, and forecasting. Two examples are rations and ammunition.

**Rations.** The BSB could establish a brigade troop issue support activity account, draw rations, and break unit rations down for the duration of the gunnery cycle. A unit could still select a menu cycle based on its training schedule and place its con-

tainerized kitchen at a location of its choosing.

**Ammunition.** Even a brigade draw of training ammunition is possible by simply transferring the aggregate unit ammunition forecasts from the Total Ammunition Management Information System to the BSB account. This would require a broader approach to closing out ammunition documents and guarding ammunition at the ammunition supply point, but it would provide ample opportunities for centralized military occupational specialty 89B (ammunition specialist) training that is supervised by the brigade ammunition warrant officer.

BCT reorganization largely preserves the organic maintenance and distribution capability of the ABCT found in the FSCs and the BSB. If left to their own devices, FSCs could support their maneuver units through most home station training without assistance from the BSB.

ABCTs that have neither practiced nor recognized the second and third order effects of forced sustainment prioritization are destined to develop those systems on the fly. Establishing a sustainment phase line outside the cantonment area will force the establishment of those systems before they become critical.

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