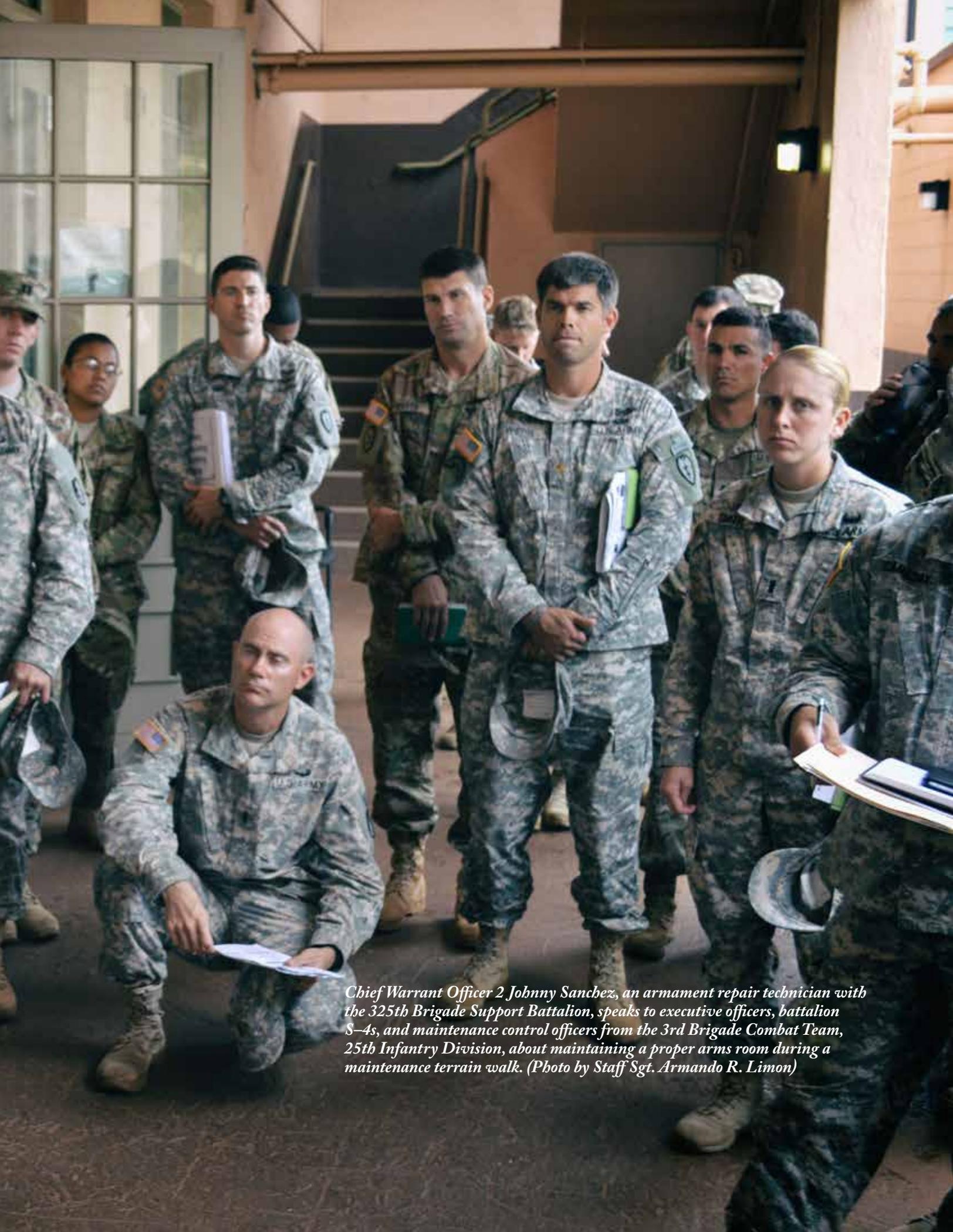




Building Leaders and Readiness Through the Maintenance Terrain Walk

■ By Chief Warrant Officer 4 Alexander W. Taylor



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Johnny Sanchez, an armament repair technician with the 325th Brigade Support Battalion, speaks to executive officers, battalion S-4s, and maintenance control officers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, about maintaining a proper arms room during a maintenance terrain walk. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Armando R. Limon)

FEATURES

The preparations units make to host maintenance terrain walks lead to lessons learned that improve overall unit readiness.

Since World War II, Army generals have been inspecting, evaluating, reviewing, and monitoring our Army's equipment and logistics support processes through maintenance terrain walks (MTWs). As a young automotive maintenance warrant officer, I had my first MTW in the fall of 2002 while I was the maintenance officer for a medium transportation company (palletized load system) task organized under a combat service support battalion.

It has been 13 years since that MTW, and I have not been a part of another one since. What happened to this key leader development opportunity? Did the ongoing war on terrorism stymie the MTW for so long that its benefits as a leader development tool have been forgotten?

To remain a relevant and premier combat force, our leaders must ensure our Army has the best equipment readily available for the fight. The chief of staff of the Army has made readiness his top priority. I submit that the MTW should again become a key evaluation and developmental tool. Brigade combat teams Army-wide should incorporate MTWs into their training calendars to improve the readiness of their equipment and their leaders.

What Is an MTW?

Some leaders in our combat formations would define an MTW as an evaluation of the commander's ability to conduct maintenance and sustainment operations over an extended period of time. This is not exactly the purpose of an MTW. Although the commander is responsible for maintenance, maintenance is every leader's responsibility.

The MTW is a tool to help build the knowledge base of our leaders in maintenance and sustainment operations. No matter how well a unit is trained to execute its tactical mission, it cannot expect to fight and win on the battlefield without maintaining its equipment.

Maintenance and training exist together; both are critical to mis-

sion success and Soldier survivability. The leader development process begins once this vision and command emphasis is established. The MTW itself is merely a visit by the division's senior logistician that concludes months of training and readiness.

Where Is the Gap?

The commander has overall responsibility for anything that occurs in an organization. So why hasn't this process been taught in the numerous schools that officers, warrant officers, and noncommissioned officers attend throughout their careers? Because, despite its longtime use, the MTW is not found in doctrine.

There is a movement in the sustainment community to include it in doctrine. Several divisions throughout the Army have written the MTW into their standard operating procedures in order to define its purpose, determine a governing authority, and assign responsibility for each step of the process.

MTW Planning

The planning for an MTW begins at the senior operational level. Normally the officer in charge of the planning is the deputy commanding general for support or sustainment (DCG-S) on a division staff. Through the operations process, the DCG-S alerts the division G-4 to identify and alert the organization that will be required to host the MTW. The G-4 then puts together a criteria sheet for the DCG-S to establish the left and right limits of the MTW.

The division G-4 must also provide the MTW host with a template outlining direct guidance from the commander, the leader development opportunities that will occur through in-progress reviews (IPRs), and the maintenance program enhancements or developments expected.

MTW Preparation

The organization hosting the MTW will receive an operation order along with any annexes that will help



Brig. Gen. Patrick Matlock, the 25th Infantry Division deputy commanding general for support, speaks to 3rd Brigade Combat Team executive officers, S-4s, and maintenance control officers participating in a maintenance terrain walk for leader development on Oct. 15, 2015. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Armando R. Limon)

identify the focus areas of the MTW. The MTW host will use this information to create a checklist or agenda that will guide the unit through the process and identify what the DCG-S will be looking at.

The agenda outlines the places and points of interest on which the MTW will focus. These points of interest include facilities, personnel management, equipment readiness, environmental compliance of maintenance facilities and arms rooms, and training that supports the organization's maintenance program.

The unit's operations officer will plan backward from the date of the MTW through the date that the order was received. The bulk of MTW leader development will be experienced through lessons learned from planning for the MTW and evaluating the organization's operating procedures while preparing for the DCG-S's visit.

IPRs

Preparation progress will be assessed through a series of IPRs. The IPRs are learning and training events for all involved. The events provide a platform to update the hosting unit's

senior officer on MTW preparations, identify concerns, and develop a plan to address these concerns.

Several IPRs should be executed before the MTW. The IPR outcomes are learning events that all of the organization's leaders will experience while preparing for the MTW.

Resources

MTW concepts, standard operating procedures, and other related information provided by logistics officers from across the force are available online at <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/files/43878943>. These products will assist the hosting organization in successfully executing an MTW.

In addition, Department of the Army Pamphlet 750-1, Table 10-1, contains a complete list of checks that should be conducted routinely to ensure the command maintenance discipline program is managed properly. This list is the only published document an organization must follow in order to comply with Army regulations on maintenance. However, this guidance does not replace the evaluation programs that commanders conduct through command

maintenance evaluation teams or inspector general visits.

A sense of pride will develop from completing an MTW. Soldiers will be identified and rewarded for the outstanding work that they have been doing to contribute to unit readiness. Leaders will glean valuable information and knowledge from preparation and the issues that are discovered.

Moreover, MTWs ensure that the Army maintains a ready and capable force that is prepared to deploy on short notice anywhere it is needed. This is your warning order: Be prepared to conduct an MTW in the near future!

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