



# Back to the Fundamentals: An Interview With Lt. Gen. Joseph Anderson

■ By Arpi Dilanian and Matthew Howard

*Lt. Gen. Joseph Anderson, the Army's deputy chief of staff, G-3/5/7, shares his insights on the Army's new training strategy. (Photo by Sam Curtis)*



The Army is changing the way it trains by preparing forces to win decisive action fights against enemies that can be in space, at sea, on land, or in the air. In this interview, Lt. Gen. Joseph Anderson, the Army's deputy chief of staff, G-3/5/7, shares his insights on how sustainers can prepare for the Army's new training environment and mindset.

*One of the greatest challenges facing unit commanders is how to balance training against other competing demands. What is your recommendation to strike the right balance?*

It's bigger than a recommendation; it's an actual action. We are revising Army Regulation 350-1 [Army Training and Leader Development]. That is the document that tells you what you have to do and how often you have to do it. It is very prescriptive and in many cases excessive. We received more than 2,000 comments on how to revise it when we staffed the document. The regulation includes every training requirement from resiliency to sexual harassment, assault, and suicide prevention. All are very important.

If you are in a Reserve unit and you follow this regulation, it would take you all year, every year, and all you would do is train to meet your [Army Regulation] 350-

1 requirements. So we moved all of the requirements for the Reserve from an annual to a biennial schedule. Through reduction, reevaluation, and frequency adjustments, we've started taking some steps to buy them more time to get other things done.

For example, rules of engagement training was a classroom training environment requirement despite being incorporated into training every time a unit goes out into the field for an exercise. So why wouldn't that count [more than reading] a series of slides for 40 minutes?

If we are trying to inculcate a new training culture, why can't you talk about resiliency while you are on a road march or while you're on a range? We should be putting this learning into an environment where Soldiers are going to absorb it better.

#### *Is that risky to do?*

Everything is about risk. What we pay commanders to do is to evaluate risk in terms of risk to mission, what's going to cause you to have mission failure, and risk to force—what's going to cause you to adversely impact your Soldiers. You have to have that dialogue throughout the training management process when you do your training meetings and your quarterly

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training briefings, or annual training briefings for the National Guard and Reserve.

Commanders cannot just instinctively get a checklist, look at the tasks that come out in the orders, and start going “check, check, check,” in order to check all of the boxes. The real question for them to ask is why is that task really necessary? Is it applicable based on the environment I’m going to or my assigned mission?

We want commanders to take the ball and run and say, “I have all these published documents with things that I have to do; the question is what’s more important? How do I prioritize what’s going to enhance my mission performance and our readiness versus what’s going to detract from it?”

What I just said sounds simple, but it really isn’t. That’s the mission command environment we need to operate in.

*What do you see as the greatest training challenge the Army faces today?*

There are two. Number one is the time we have to recover from what these last 16 years of war have done to us. It is not a matter of whether we have the facilities or the resources. We do. It is a matter of having the time to put everybody back to the training levels required to win on the battlefield. That is our first challenge.

Number two is manning. As the Army shrank, it caused units to be manned at 95 percent. When you take out those who are not available, which averages 10 to 12 percent of a unit, and add the people who are transitioning out of the Army or the unit, on leave, or in schools, we are down to 80 percent of a unit formation that can actually go out and train. That number is too low to accomplish effective training.

*The Army is transitioning from Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) to the Sustainable Readiness*

**Model. Will it improve how we train and increase readiness?**

It will make us stay more in the band of excellence versus falling off of cliffs. ARFORGEN was always a rotating door; you took a unit, put it together, trained it, packed it up, and deployed it, but when it came back you destroyed it.

Sustainable Readiness categorizes units according to what type of mission they are getting ready to undertake, but it also allows us to keep units more intact. With Sustainable Readiness, we don’t have a six-month reset window when units come home. It doesn’t exist.

ARFORGEN used to mean that units would come home and nothing happened for six months. People went to schools, went on leave, repaired equipment, and the unit was totally out of action. With Sustainable Readiness we will keep units at higher levels of readiness for sustained periods of time.

*Can you describe the Army’s plan for Objective Training (Objective T)?*

It will be implemented in the first quarter of 2018. What Objective T will do is give everyone an objective set of standards, so people are not using their own derived standards. We are making the criteria very specific for how you assess units; we will have standardized criteria versus subjective criteria.

We have gotten very loose over the years since 9/11. We allowed commanders to upgrade their assessments. Most people chose to upgrade because it made units look better. When we look back, they could have done a better job of meeting objective criteria in order to enhance unit readiness.

*With the chief of staff’s focus on winning a decisive action fight, how does Army training need to shift?*

We have moved to full-spectrum training rotations at the training centers at Fort Polk [Louisiana], Fort

Irwin [California], and [Hohenfels] Germany. We are training combined arms maneuver, which means we are doing things like offensive and defensive operations and wide-area security missions at the same time. This is how you fight in the broader context of incorporating the entire battlespace.

***What advice would you give to commanders on improving training in their units?***

They need to understand the training management process. Right now we have some brigade commanders and many battalion commanders and below who never had to plan training using the eight-step training model.

They grew up in a system where everything was scripted. When they went to Afghanistan and Iraq, everything was laid out for them. They just followed the plan, and all they did every year was go through the AFORGEN cycle. One unit did it one year then another unit did it the following year and on and on. That is how we lived.

So our leaders did not know how to run a training meeting, how to write a training schedule, or how to plan a combined arms live-fire exercise because we did not do those kinds of things. We need to focus on them now based on our emerging threats.

***If there is one area in which we need to do more training, what is it?***

It is combined arms maneuver. When you're dealing with a near-peer adversary who may be able to outshoot you and outsee you, you have to start figuring out how you can compensate for that.

For 16 years we have been occupying forward operating bases. Soldiers were able to land, get off a plane, walk to a building, go to a bed, turn on lights, and have heat.

We now need to train for an expeditionary fight. That means you have to be able to take care of yourself when what you have on your back is

all you have. We must shift to running brigade support areas, the big hunks of ground where sustainers fix tanks, conduct fueling operations, produce food, and all of these kinds of things. More importantly, we have to be able to displace our brigade support areas and command posts very frequently due to the threat.

How do you operate in an environment where there is a conventional, full-spectrum, and multidomain fight? The threat comes from the sea, the air, and on land. When you squeeze the radio handset and you can't talk, not because the battery is dead but because you are being jammed or the satellites are knocked out, how do you operate in a degraded, satellite-denied environment?

How do you get things to places when you have contested lines of communication, when the enemy can make sure you cannot fly in, you cannot drive in, you cannot ship in, and you cannot rail in? They control it all. So instead of that C-17 coming in with all of its cargo, it cannot get there—not without getting shot down. We haven't trained for that in a long time, but we are training for that now.

***How are we incorporating technologies, such as simulators and apps, to increase training effectiveness?***

I said we have the resources to meet our requirements, and we do, but we do not have the time to go out in the field and fumble during training, nor should we waste resources when it comes to ammunition, flying hours, and fuel. Simulators are enabling us to make sure Soldiers qualify before they go fly it, drive it, and shoot it in a gunnery live-fire setting.

As for apps, our young Soldiers today have grown up with apps and are very comfortable using them. We are finding we have the same problem that many people have with their personal phones. With so many apps, how do you know what they all are? How do you master them? So we need to reduce the number of

apps to the things that really help us win the fight.

***What one tip would you give to a new company commander to best plan, manage, and conduct unit training?***

The best tip is to follow the eight-step training model. Just like the military decisionmaking process lays out how you plan for an operation, the training model tells us how to get from square one to the after action review for a training event. If you follow those eight steps, they will get you from start to finish. It has worked well for years.

People get emotional when you use the word "basics" or the term "back to basics." I don't use the word "basics" anymore. I've gone back to the word "fundamentals." There are certain fundamentals that are still very applicable and valid today, and if you follow them, they will get you very far, very effectively. But when you skip steps, that's when problems occur.

The chief of staff wants us to improve our readiness. When we show up for a mission, people expect us to be able to accomplish our jobs. They expect a brigade to look like a brigade and employ its capabilities without having problems because one unit does something different than another. That gets back to our fundamentals.

So if you are a tank battalion, you've got to be able to fire gunnery tables and you've got to be able to kill the enemy by outshooting and outmaneuvering them. That's what our nation expects us to do.

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Arpi Dilanian is a strategic analyst in the Army G-4's Logistics Initiatives Group. She holds a bachelor's degree from American University and a master's degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Matthew Howard is a strategic analyst in the Army G-4's Logistics Initiatives Group. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Georgetown University.