

Future Company Leaders Learn Through Observation

The National Training Center has a guest observer-coach/trainer program that provides future company commanders and first sergeants with an opportunity to learn their upcoming roles and responsibilities.

■ By Capt. Michael McCrory

Leading a company as a commander or first sergeant is one of the most rewarding positions of a Soldier's military career. After spending years observing their senior leaders and coaching and training their subordinates, company commanders and first sergeants

take the reins prepared to help their battalions and brigades succeed.

Battalion and brigade commanders and command sergeants major are responsible for putting their best talent in company command teams. One way for them to prepare potential company leaders is to send

them to the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, to be guest observer coach/trainers (OC/Ts). The guest OC/T program is a way for brigades and battalions to use their funding to teach company commanders and first sergeants about the challenges of employing



Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Stigall coaches rotational training unit Soldiers on claymore mine placement and detonation at the National Training Center. (Photo by Capt. Michael McCrory)

formations on the battlefield.

Guest OC/Ts witness commands similar to theirs executing operations under extreme pressure. They also assist the permanently assigned OC/Ts who coach 10 brigade combat teams and echelon-above-brigade units each year.

Spending approximately 25 days at NTC, guest OC/Ts witness the performance of the military decisionmaking process, convoy operations, troop leading procedures, priorities of work, perimeter defense, area security, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense operations.

Logistics guest OC/Ts observe how companies support the battalion and the brigade, which ties back to lessons they learned in the classroom at the Army Logistics University. The opportunity is a truly rewarding experience for anyone looking to take charge of a sustainment company in a brigade combat team or a combat sustainment support battalion.

Some brigades send Soldiers in the ranks of staff sergeant, sergeant first class, and first lieutenant through the guest OC/T program to provide them with a better understanding of how to perform their duties in an austere environment. Soldiers who demonstrate future leadership potential should be selected. Although it can be taxing to release Soldiers during home-station operations, the long-term benefits pay immeasurable dividends to the organization and the sustainment community.

Once at NTC, Soldiers will spend a week at the guest OC/T academy learning about the terrain and survival skills. After passing a two-hour exam, Soldiers report to the Goldminer team (brigade support battalion trainers) or Wagoneer team (combat sustainment support battalion trainers) for their rotational briefing and to learn about their expected duties. The guest OC/T will observe reception, staging, onward movement, and integration, force-



Maj. Timothy Page discusses chemical agent detection and mission-oriented protective posture while under a simulated chemical attack with a rotational training unit at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. (Photo courtesy of Spc. Mark Ansay)

on-force, and live-fire operations.

The program ensures that each operation at NTC has an OC/T to capture the events as they take place. Not only does this make the rotational training unit better, but the observations and insights help the guest OC/T learn. The Soldiers who become part of a company command team after completing the guest OC/T program are better prepared than their peers in the formation without OC/T experience.

Guest OC/Ts work with the Goldminer and Wagoneer teams, which include former commanders, field-grade officers who have completed key developmental assignments, prior first sergeants, platoon sergeants, and subject matter experts from the supply support activity, maintenance, and ammunition fields. Most of those personnel have witnessed numerous NTC rotations and can anticipate the success or failure of an

operation well before the rotational training unit can. They are trained to give immediate feedback that assists the units in seeing themselves.

Guest OC/Ts who work with the Goldminer and Wagoneer teams depart NTC with a better understanding of doctrine and tested solutions to decisive action and other operations. Brigade and battalion commanders should contact Dave Acker with the Goldminer team to schedule future company commanders and first sergeants for the guest OC/T program. He can be reached at david.w.acker2.civ@mail.mil or (760) 380-0998.

Capt. Michael McCrory is an OC/T for the Goldminer team at NTC. He holds a master's degree from the Naval Postgraduate School in supply chain management and a bachelor's degree in finance from Valdosta State University.