



Soldiers from the 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, engage targets during the nighttime convoy live-fire exercise portion of Vanguard Proof at Pocek Range in Postonja, Slovenia, on March 23, 2017. The combined exercise between the 16th Sustainment Brigade and the Slovenian armed forces focused on enhancing NATO interoperability and developing individual technical skills. (Photo by Paolo Bovo)

Objective T: Preparing Units to Fight Tonight

The 16th Special Troops Battalion is using Objective T to stay combat ready.

■ By Lt. Col. Brian J. Ketz, Capt. Christopher L. Miles, Capt. Sean K. McLachlan, and 1st Lt. Evan T. Kowalski

The Army Operating Concept stresses the importance of units seamlessly integrating and sequencing activities. A unit's ability to perform multiple activities simultaneously in unified land operations is especially critical to the ever growing mission set in the European theater.

The 16th Special Troops Battal-

ion (STB), 16th Sustainment Brigade, headquartered in Baumholder, Germany, plays an important role in ensuring regionally aligned units are able to integrate and perform multiple activities seamlessly. The STB allows maneuver commanders to concentrate combat power toward the objective with speed and audacity by providing specialized

sustainment support across Europe and Africa for all of the warfighting functions.

The key to ensuring a unit is ready to perform these functions is the objective task assessment methodology found in Field Manual 7-0, Train to Win in a Complex World. Rather than having a commander subjectively determine a unit's readiness level,

Objective T provides a standardized and deliberate training assessment methodology with objective unit assessment procedures that are applied across the Army.

Using the Objective T assessment as a baseline for unit proficiency, the 16th STB created a complex and dynamic two-year unit training plan designed to achieve multiechelon collective training proficiency. The STB's plan culminated with two multifaceted and multinational battalion-level exercises called Vanguard Proof. The exercises demonstrated the battalion's ability to simultaneously integrate signal, finance, human resources, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), and airborne capabilities into a decisive action training scenario across international boundaries.

Planning for Objective T

In order to fully capitalize on the Objective T assessment and create a tangible training focus, the STB identified Objective T requirements and parameters, determined objectives using a mission-essential task list (METL) crosswalk, assessed operational and mission requirements, and built a plan in accordance with the Sustainable Readiness Model (SRM).

The first step in applying the Objective T model is to identify the following parameters:

- The unit being assessed (a squad, company, or battalion).
- The type of training environment (day, night, field, or classroom).
- The percentage of the organization present.
- Whether the evaluator will be external or internal to the organization.
- Performance measures and an overall task assessment (T equals trained, P equals needs practice, and U equals untrained).

The key to reaching the highest level of readiness is to ensure that the unit maximizes participation and incorporates a combat-like environ-

ment, realistic performance measures, and an external evaluator. These measures will ensure that the unit trains to a real-world scenario and has an unbiased evaluation.

The next step is to determine training objectives using the battalion's METL. Each organization in the Army is assigned its own METL, which includes corresponding key collective tasks. Determining the objectives allows commanders to deliberately plan and execute training to prepare for their unit's functional mission set.

The objective of the 16th STB training program is to develop leaders who are familiar with and embrace friction on the battlefield, can operate in a contested battlespace, and can integrate multiple capabilities simultaneously in a joint environment. More specifically, the STB possesses METL tasks such as conduct mission command, conduct area and base security opera-

tions, and perform tactical actions associated with force projection and deployment. A METL crosswalk highlighting key collective and individual tasks allows commanders to determine the specific areas that require more focus.

A unit also must assess its theater-specific requirements. Creating a long-range calendar can be a useful tool for commanders to visualize and ensure that requirements do not conflict with one another. In some cases, commanders can capitalize on external support missions as opportunities for Soldiers to train on METL tasks.

Nonetheless, operational requirements are at least as important as training objectives because higher echelons need the battalion to serve in its functional capacity.

Building a Battalion SRM Plan

The final step of preparation is to create an SRM plan. Incorporating



An 86th Air Wing C-130 Hercules aircraft drops three pieces of heavy equipment belonging to the 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, on Pocek Drop Zone in Postonja, Slovenia, on March 21, 2017, during the heavy drop operation portion of Vanguard Proof. (Photo by Paolo Bovo)

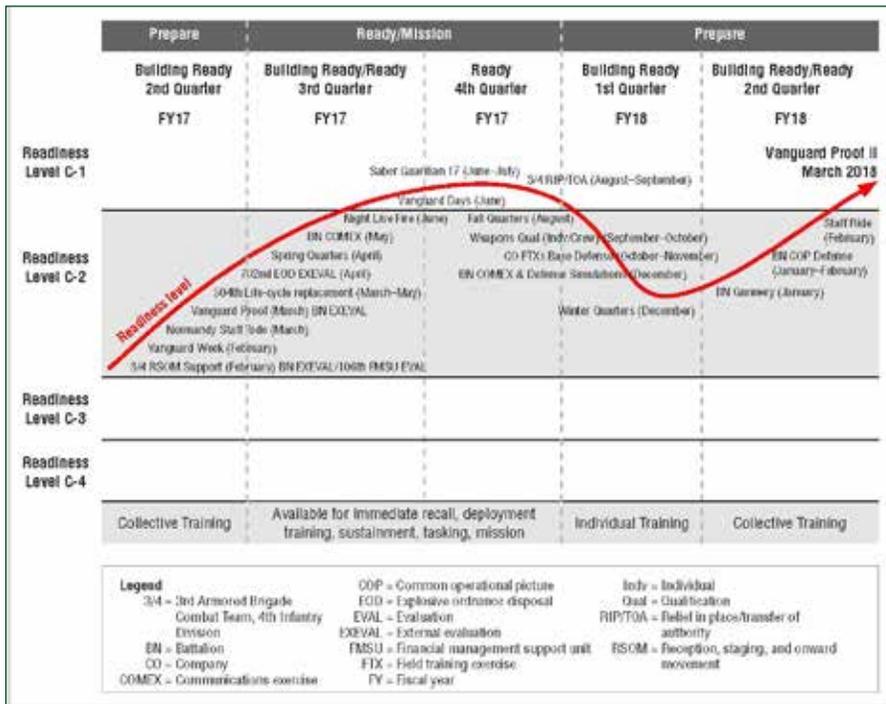


Figure 1. This Sustainable Readiness Model cycle assisted 16th Special Troops Battalion planners in highlighting key events and the battalion's projected readiness level as they planned and executed the Objective T assessment process.

both operational requirements and training objectives in this tool is critical. Also, it is most beneficial to integrate those elements at the lowest possible levels.

Figure 1 illustrates a template for a battalion SRM cycle. The 16th STB developed this cycle to assist leaders in highlighting key events and the battalion's projected readiness level. The cycle proved to be effective for staff planning and executing the Objective T assessment process.

The Objective T Assessment

The battalion's training program enabled it to develop Vanguard Proof, a set of two multifaceted and multinational battalion-level field training exercises that tested the unit's ability to exercise mission command on a large scale.

The first exercise took place in Postojna, Slovenia, in March 2017. This event consisted of a tactical convoy across four international borders, a convoy live-fire exercise, improvised explosive device lanes, and aerial resupply operations. Most

importantly, this event allowed the battalion to determine a baseline assessment for the next phase of its training focus.

The STB's final culminating event, Vanguard Proof II, is scheduled for March 2018. This event will focus on area base defense and other functional capabilities. Using the steps outlined above, the STB planned the event to optimize Objective T results.

The battalion identified Objective T requirements and parameters, determined objectives using a METL crosswalk, assessed operational and mission requirements, and captured the plan on a battalion SRM cycle. This focus will ensure that the STB fully capitalizes on the opportunity to maximize training readiness.

The 16th STB's Objective T certification program not only develops skilled sustainment professionals but also develops agile and adaptable leaders ready to respond to the friction of war. Through a series of staff exercises, professional leader

development, and field training exercises, the battalion certified its junior leaders and Soldiers to execute combat support operations through all phases of unified land operations. The STB also developed an experienced staff ready to provide critical mission command for subordinate and adjacent units.

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