

The Forgotten Sustainer

■ By Maj. Carson Jump

The unit ministry team (UMT) waited, ready to brief the concept of religious support at the meticulously crafted terrain model, which was set up for a combined arms and sustainment rehearsal. This was the one opportunity the UMT had to outline for the brigade and battalion command teams the details of the religious support plan for the following day's mission. Unfortunately, because leaders failed to see it as part of the sustainment warfighting function, the UMT was overlooked during the rehearsal and missed its opportunity to brief the command teams.

The UMT is made up of chaplains and religious affairs specialists and noncommissioned officers. It is an integral team of advisors to the command on religion, ethics, and morale in the formation. UMTs often struggle with balancing their role of providing religious support to Soldiers and being religious support advisors to their command teams. This struggle is a trend I observed as an observer-coach/trainer at 25 decisive action rotations at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center.

The role of UMT personnel calls for their distinction from traditional sustainers, but this distinction does not warrant exclusion from the sustainment warfighting function. This article intends to help UMT personnel realize this crucial identity and enable leaders to recognize religious support as an integral part of sustainment within the Army. It shows how UMT personnel are forgotten sustainers and encourages command teams to see the UMT as a sustainment multiplier.

Personnel Services

Army Doctrine Publication 4-0, Sustainment, outlines five principles of personnel services that guide

Soldier and family support: synchronization, timeliness, stewardship, accuracy, and consistency. The Chaplain Corps links the personnel services' principles with religious support activities as described in Army Techniques Publication 1-05.01, Religious Support and the Operations Process, paragraph 1-16. Field Manual 1-05, Religious Support, guides the UMT with specific guidelines for preparing and executing religious support.

The UMT must determine how these five principles integrate into the daily operations of the UMT. Applying these five principles solidifies the UMT's role as part of sustainment. Members of the UMT must balance their religious advisor roles as personnel staff officers and provide religious support across the unit.

Synchronization. Synchronization guides the UMT to look beyond itself and see how it functions in the overall operation of the unit. Synchronization in staff sections serves Soldiers and families. The calendar is a constantly moving target, and white space disappears as primary staff members add unit training tasks. UMTs often plan in a vacuum, which leads to dysfunctional synchronization.

It is common at a combat training center for UMTs to overlook or avoid participating in the unit's operations process. The UMT may plan spiritual fitness events in isolation. Then no one shows up because the UMT did not coordinate to ensure space was available on the training calendar. The operations process is not foreign to any of the unit sections; nevertheless, a mindset exists that UMTs operate differently.

The Army uses the operation order to communicate and synchronize. The religious support section falls under personnel services, which is

an appendix within the sustainment annex. The religious support section is the first step of synchronizing religious support. A well-planned and prepared religious support plan ensures execution of religious support directly affecting the morale and welfare of Soldiers and families within the operational process. The lack of synchronization confirms for the executive officer (XO), S-1, and S-4 that the UMT has forgotten its place within sustainment.

Timeliness. The principle of timeliness affects the implementation and execution of religious support. Commanders and staffs do not have the time to do the staff work for the UMT. They expect UMTs to produce relevant and analyzed information. UMTs must produce real-time products.

However, UMTs are not typically updating systems and functions with thorough assessments. The lack of assessment creates a gap in real-time situational awareness for the commander and staff. The battalion UMT must integrate within the unit and staff to gather relevant information and continue to push this information in two directions.

First, the battalion UMT pushes information to the battalion command teams to keep the commander informed. Second, the battalion UMT pushes information to the brigade UMT, creating a picture for the brigade and division.

As the UMT gathers and pushes this information to these two elements, it creates information flow, which indirectly affects the Soldiers and families. The forgotten sustainer must provide information horizontally and vertically. A lack of communication limits the UMT's ability to influence religious support across the operational environment.

Stewardship. Together with time-

liness, the principle of stewardship reaches beyond finances to an often overlooked asset, the Soldier's time. No one can restore someone's time. Wasted and improperly used time equals bad stewardship. Planned and synchronized religious support maintains the value of time. Command teams and individual Soldiers do not have time for meaningless events, services, or ceremonies.

UMTs offer more than prayer and definitely more than planning a recreational or welfare trip, which are not doctrinal tenets. Time is of the essence, and filling the calendar with extras does not promote an image of stewardship. Creative and thoughtful UMTs evaluate products for the operations process. An event or service that does not bring meaningful value to the unit degrades a Soldier's experience of religious support. Constantly assessing the value and relevance of events ensures that UMTs follow the principle of stewardship of time and resources.

Accuracy. The fourth principle of personnel service is accuracy. Although an S-1 deals with casualty paperwork, the UMT supports fallen Soldiers' families. Honoring fallen Soldiers through next-of-kin notification is a humbling duty of the UMT. Although no chaplain hopes to do a notification, he or she will execute the duty with utmost respect for the fallen Soldier.

The delicate and intricate work of the UMT in this process hinges on accuracy. Information is not always easy to gather or communicate, even when using the most developed communication systems. The UMT must push commands and Soldiers to keep records up to date.

Consistency. The final personnel services principle is consistency. The UMT consistently provides religious support across the unit. The Chaplain Corps exists for two reasons: to ensure Soldiers have the free exercise of religion and to ensure the government does not establish a religion.

The Chaplain Corps' guiding regulation, Army Regulation 165-1,

Army Chaplain Corps Activities, says, "The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution prohibits enactment of any law 'respecting an establishment of religion' or 'prohibiting the free exercise thereof.' Congress recognizes the necessity of the Chaplain Corps in striking a balance between the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses."

The UMT performs or provides religious support; it does not discriminate, regardless of religion or the lack thereof. The Chaplain Corps is dedicated to serving Soldiers and families by upholding the First Amendment of the Constitution. The execution of religious support within the unit requires consistent application of rights and fairness to all Soldiers across the formation.

Guiding Principles

Army doctrine outlining religious support falls in line with sustainment under personnel services. These guiding principles highlight the role of UMT personnel as sustainers. The chaplain's identity rests in his or her religious calling; their ordination guides their role within the Army and their endorsers direct their steps. The religious affairs specialist is the backbone of the UMT; he or she is first a Soldier and then a provider of religious support.

This vital team upholds the First Amendment, guaranteeing Soldiers and families the freedom to practice religion and guarding against the establishment of religion within the context of a military setting. The UMT is critical for each military formation. Without it, religious support would be greatly diminished. The UMT accomplishes its role using the operation order and operations process.

The way ahead involves the command teams, XOs, Chaplain Corps, and the individual UMTs. First, the command teams must stress the role of their UMTs as their religious advisors. Advising the command includes providing internal and external perspectives of religious support. The

internal advisement focuses on the morale and welfare of the Soldiers within the command's authority. External advisement focuses on the surroundings of the unit, including but not limited to the operational environment, the adjacent multinational units, and the external impact on Soldiers and families.

Second, XOs have the responsibility to remind UMTs of the requirement to balance their role as religious advisors with executing religious support as part of personnel services. Too often XOs do not hold their UMTs to the same standards as other staff sections, making excuses for their lack of experience and limiting challenges that would encourage them to grow.

Third, the Chaplain Corps cannot overlook the religious support responsibility of sustaining Soldiers and families. This starts at the schoolhouse and continues at the combat training centers, where trainers teach and collaborate with UMTs and encourage their role. Within this area, supervisory UMTs must be intentional in home-station and monthly training.

The responsibility of the battalion and brigade UMTs rests on the immediate supervisory UMTs. They must hold subordinate UMTs accountable in understanding their roles as sustainers and advisors. The last and most vital aspect of the forgotten sustainer is using the operation order and operations process as an integral function of the command.

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