

Army Garrison Operations for 2014 and Beyond

As the Army shifts from regular deployments to steady garrison operations, its success depends on managing effective maintenance programs, optimizing resources and allocations, and developing leadership fundamentals.

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Over the past decade, the Army has adapted to overcome the challenges of extended conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. These largely successful adaptations were vast and complex.

Modularity, doctrine updates, combat system developments, and the increased autonomy of junior leaders are only a small slice of the Army's evolution. The details of these changes and the success of the U.S. military since Sept. 11, 2001, are well documented.

However, meeting the demands of the Global War on Terrorism was not without an opportunity cost. Now that the mission in Iraq is complete and operations in Afghanistan are projected to culminate this year, the Army is returning to a posture dominated by garrison operations.

The overwhelming majority of our unit-level leaders were not on active duty before 9/11, yet they will lead our brigade combat teams to regain proficiencies in a garrison environment that they have never truly experienced.

The importance of garrison proficiencies during eras of peace cannot be overstated. Now is a critical time for developing the basics in training, leader development, and readiness.

The Army must revisit the core competencies of our military craft and refocus leaders on the fundamentals of managing human and capital

resources. Rejuvenating maintenance programs, optimizing resources and allocations, and developing leadership fundamentals are essential to the Army's success in garrison and our nation's future conflicts.

Pre-9/11 Maintenance

Before 9/11, unit maintenance programs were the heart of the operational Army and the essential battlefield tenants of shoot, move, and communicate. Training exercises started and ended with a strict maintenance focus.

Every maintenance function or process was treated as a training opportunity, and junior leaders in the late 1990s truly understood and prioritized the importance of equipment readiness.

Weekly command maintenance was always a top priority before 9/11. Most units marched in formation to organizational motor pools, and participation was mandatory. Even scheduled appointments during command maintenance were frowned upon; only in the most unique circumstances were they approved.

In the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment in 2000, section sergeants stood in front of the maintenance line and read each maintenance check from the technical manual. Soldiers scrambled around the vehicle, methodically executing each preventive maintenance check as noncommissioned officers barked out the checklist and supervised.

Each week consisted of a pre-planned maintenance focus and class. If the week's focus was battery boxes, for example, the motor sergeant would ensure command maintenance started with a detailed instruction session that specifically targeted battery installation, cleanliness standards, and key indicators of system problems.

After completing a command maintenance morning, platoon leaders met with the troop executive officer to prioritize part requisition requirements and plan labor allocations for the motor section.

Equipment services also faced the same vigorous methodology and were a battalion-level priority. Platoon leaders prepared a two-week service schedule that incorporated exact times and locations of services for every item in the platoon.

Approvals from the troop commander and squadron executive officer were required prior to execution, and the squadron commander routinely inspected platoon leaders during their service weeks.

Platoons were fenced from competing tasks and training events during their service schedule, and they ensured service packages and parts were ordered at least 30 days in advance. Services were treated as a critical training event.

Similar to competition during a field exercise, platoon leaders felt healthy pressure to compete against peers and lead their platoons

through an efficient, well-organized service.

Post-9/11 Maintenance

Since 9/11, Army maintenance processes have evolved significantly. Now the burden of ensuring combat readiness is largely tied to contractor performance and sustainment-level maintenance programs.

Reset, left-behind equipment, theater-provided equipment, new equipment fielding, and rapid fielding initiatives have been essential to enabling readiness. These programs, along with an increased reliance on contracted maintenance support, have helped to optimize Soldier manpower.

Commanders have rightfully enjoyed the ability to focus on training and combat operations while depending on military programs and processes to ensure effective maintenance programs and equipment readiness.

With minimal time between deployment rotations, leaders have simply not prioritized maintenance for equipment that remains unused at home station. Although logical and necessary because of deployment cycles, the robust post-9/11 echelons-above-brigade maintenance support resulted in lost learning and leading opportunities.

The aggressive and methodical leader involvement that was common before 9/11 is less common in today's Army. We now have a generation of company-grade officers who have little experience executing garrison maintenance programs and systems. Even more concerning is the lack of awareness at the field-grade-officer level. Many of today's junior majors did not experience the pre-9/11 Army.

On the surface, these leaders are well aware of readiness importance, but few have had to depend on detailed management of rigorous maintenance systems. Additionally, our dependence on echelons-above-brigade enablers has limited Soldiers' experiences and

reduced their ability to maintain their own combat systems.

Fiscal constraints will restrict the flow of monetary resources to our contractor-dependent maintenance framework. An increasing reliance on Soldier labor is inevitable, and commanders will need to rejuvenate their maintenance programs with a large population of officers and Soldiers that some consider to be maintenance neophytes.

Although returning to pre-9/11 maintenance fundamentals may seem like a step backward, disciplined and methodical maintenance processes are exactly what the Army needs, especially given future growth projections for unmanned vehicles and aircraft.

Resource Stewardship

Declining resources and monetary constraints present another legacy challenge for the Army: resource and fiscal stewardship. Before 9/11, units operated with limited budgets. Most monetary allocations were distributed monthly down to the company level.

Executive officers had to review and prioritize requisitions for repair parts and other supplies. Requisitions that were not associated with not-mission-capable items were often delayed to ensure funding was available for critical parts and supplies. Even small-scale training events were sometimes deferred until proper funds were available.

Platoon leaders were scolded for ordering non-mission-essential items. Placing a requisition for a vehicle drip pan would gain unwanted attention immediately. Supply rooms were detailed and regimented.

Most supply sergeants ensured all expendable supplies were signed out of the unit supply room and any component of end items and basic issue items were added to sub-hand receipts promptly at the time of issue.

Optimizing and managing resources was part of our culture, and regulatory procedures were enforced. The culture affected daily

requisitioning behavior and encouraged strict command supply discipline programs that were enforced and monitored.

Today we have a generation of company-grade and junior field-grade officers who have enjoyed mostly unlimited budgets. Some of these young leaders even regard the discussion of cost as obscene; if a Soldier needs an item for combat, then surely we should not tell him no.

The post-9/11 culture encouraged leaders and Soldiers to view monetary constraints as simply an administrative obstacle that could be easily breached with proper justification. The idea is that we simply should not say no to the needs of Soldiers in combat.

This is a tremendously supportive principle that has been cultivated by unwavering support for the U.S. Soldier. This altruistic mindset is ideal during combat; however, as with our extensive maintenance support system, it comes with a hidden cost.

Command teams are also indoctrinated into this consumption-driven culture. When an organization overspends, it is often rewarded with additional monetary allocations. Thus, it is natural and wise for commanders to ensure all funds are obligated early to increase the opportunity to receive additional resources.

In fact, if a unit fails to expend its annual allocation at least 30 days before the end of the fiscal year, its allocation will most likely be redirected to another unit or simply fenced for control by higher echelons.

Essentially, the fiscal structure rewards resource indulgence while hoping for supply and monetary discipline. There are no actual repercussions for over-indulgence, and this organizational behavior fosters a leadership climate that simply searches for ways to expend funds, regardless of need. Overall, this goal blindness feeds a resource consumption machine that is nearly impossible to control.

The post-9/11 era has made us ad-

dicted to a somewhat endless supply of resources. In 1999, Soldiers purchased their own elbow flashlights. Today, Soldiers are issued everything from multipurpose utility knives to eye protection. Although these items have obvious applications on the battlefield, it is unlikely this support will continue in coming years of fiscal austerity.

Pre-9/11 Leadership and Training

Before 9/11, leaders made every task a training opportunity. Leaders would even use simple red-cycle tasks to help reinforce Soldier discipline, precombat checks and inspections procedures, vehicle load plans, and other fundamental competencies.

In 2000, the regimental commander (RCO) for the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment executed precombat inspections (PCIs) for each troop before a major field exercise. These PCIs were brutally long and thorough. Troops stood on line according to published standard operating procedures called “dragoon standards,” and the troop commander would escort the RCO through the inspection.

There was no mercy; either the standard was met or the unit was not allowed to depart from the motor pool. The RCO personally checked everything from AA batteries to tie-down standards.

The execution of the PCI started with a simple salute and individual weapon inspection. If the weapon was clean, serviceable, and free of rust, the RCO moved on to the next check. However, any trace of dirt or deficiency on the weapon opened the door to a deeper look. If the deficiency was not recorded on the Department of Army Form 5988-E, Equipment Maintenance and Inspection Worksheet, then every individual weapon in the troop was inspected.

To ensure proper vehicle rollover preparation, the RCO would tug on the night-vision devices and other equipment stowed in the vehicle to

ensure proper equipment tie-down. If the equipment was properly secured in the vehicle according to the published standards, he would simply move to the next check. If not, equipment that was not secured was inspected for serviceability, component shortfalls, and batteries.

These PCIs consumed an entire day in garrison. The rigorous process was met with much criticism; “micromanagement” was often used to describe the RCO’s PCI requirements. However, the inspection was in direct compliance with the Army’s “two levels down” training concept, and the entire regiment executed it accordingly.

The leader-guided inspection was a powerful forcing function and showed junior leaders the importance of readiness and standards. The result was a hands-on leadership training event—led directly by the RCO—before the troop even started the field exercise.

The leadership culture was also somewhat unforgiving before 9/11. Training was executed daily, either through formal training or informal actions. Junior leaders openly disparaged their peers and subordinates for failures and poor standards. Officers and noncommissioned officers helped each other through outspoken critiques and healthy harassment.

Some view this type of direct scorn as cruel, but it established balance among the leaders. If a leader strayed too far from the standard, he would eventually comply with the norms or be pushed out of the competition.

Post-9/11 Leadership and Training

Today our leaders are combat hardened and operationally focused. They can easily decipher what is important and adapt quickly to the operational environment to successfully execute the mission. Our junior leaders have an overwhelming breadth of experience and have operated with an unprecedented amount of autonomy at the platoon

and squad levels.

Post-9/11 leaders are also well-versed in interoperability. The joint operational environments in Afghanistan and Iraq have increased Soldiers’ proficiency at integrating sister-service and interagency capabilities.

Furthermore, the Army’s conventional forces have fully integrated their efforts with special operations forces and have benefited from special operations technologies, information systems, and intelligence-gathering tools. This level of tactical proficiency is an advantage we must harness to train the next generation of warfighters.

However, operational requirements over the past 12 years created a noticeable gap in our leaders’ ability to prioritize training requirements. They have had little opportunity to master the ability to plan and execute training properly.

Compounding the problem was the outsourcing of some mandatory training requirements to civilian contractors. Contracted training programs had short-term success at the detriment of long-term leader development. It subjugated some unit training, which was the commander’s responsibility, to external agencies.

The Army’s recently published Army Doctrine Publication 7-0 and Army Doctrine Reference Publication 7-0, Training Units and Developing Leaders, are a good first step in addressing this issue.

Regaining Garrison Efficiency

Garrison operations are largely viewed as archaic, and leadership in this environment is generally foreign to many officers and noncommissioned officers. However, units can establish leader training programs that change the existing culture to capitalize on garrison productivity.

Establishing training plans to improve maintenance programs and awareness, reducing excess equipment, managing requisitions, and developing creative training plans

are the keys to garrison success.

The Army has an opportunity to reinforce Soldier discipline, raise standards, and revive core competencies during garrison operations. Despite projected funding constraints, leaders can optimize training opportunities through creative execution of nontactical requirements.

Leaders can develop core competencies within their units by treating the following requirements as major training events:

- Command maintenance.
- Equipment services.
- Recovery operations.
- Precombat checks and inspections.
- Training without troops exercises.
- Supply economy initiatives.
- Supply accountability and command inventory events.

- Command supply discipline program requirements and inspections.
- Materiel and unit readiness reporting and analysis.
- Exchange pricing processes, shop stock lists reviews, and reconciliation procedures.
- Leadership development and counseling programs.

Units can also prepare extensive training plans to prepare for Army-wide command programs and competitions, such as the Chief of Staff of the Army Supply Excellence Awards, Chief of Staff of the Army Maintenance Excellence Awards, and Philip A. Connelly Awards Program.

Our future battles are won now, through preparation and sustainment during garrison operations. Today's leaders must attack maintenance and

resource management aggressively to ensure an efficient readiness posture while minimizing resource consumption.

We have a generation of leaders who delivered tangible security benefits in a combat environment. Now the challenge is to develop an Army culture that recognizes the intangible benefits of enforcing the basics and optimizing our processes in readiness, resource management, and training.

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