



Quartermaster second lieutenants unload a mock casualty from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter as part of the Basic Officer Leader Department field training exercise. (Photo by Julianne Cochran)

A Decisive Action Training Environment for Lieutenants

Bringing quartermaster, transportation, and ordnance lieutenants together in one exercise is resulting in a rich training opportunity for Basic Officer Leader Course students at the Army Logistics University.

■ By Rory P. O'Brien and Maj. Michael H. Liscano



The Army has executed counterinsurgency operations for 12 years in Operation Enduring Freedom and for almost 9 years during Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. During this time, our sustainment operations have primarily been based on providing support from a fixed position such as a forward operating base or combat outpost.

Although we have become adept at supporting operations within this environment, we have lost proficiency in conducting logistics operations in high-intensity conflict. In this type of conflict, logisticians support

the offensive and defensive operations of large mechanized maneuver formations using lines of communication that may span more than 50 kilometers from the brigade support area (BSA) to the customer and require the BSA to move repeatedly.

To teach junior logistics officers how to support in this decisive action environment, the tactics team of the Basic Officer Leader Department (BOLD) at the Army Logistics University at Fort Lee, Va., created a field training exercise (FTX) that incorporates the decisive action training environment (DATE). The training also adapts the outcomes-based training and education model used at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, Calif.

The DATE involves a hybrid threat and the complexities our nation faces while fighting potential adversaries in the 21st century. It combines intricacies of threats woven into one dynamic environment. U.S. forces conduct combined arms maneuver with near-peer conventional forces and wide-area security in an environment that includes guerrillas, insurgents, criminals, and humanitarian crises.

The FTX's road to war, enemy situation, and cultural considerations all correspond to the NTC operational environment (OE). In addition to using the DATE, the scenario incorporates the NTC operations group's decisive action scenario design and applicable doctrine.

The BOLD FTX

The BOLD FTX started as a limited pilot program in January 2013. It stemmed from a concept to immerse young quartermaster, transportation, and ordnance officers in a contemporary, dynamic, and fluid operating environment that fosters creative and adaptive leadership. As of October 2013, all junior logistics officers are required to participate in the BOLD FTX.

The exercise's structure, content, and evaluation process are designed to meet the desired outcomes of each branch's Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC) with respect to tactical and technical

training. The result is an FTX focusing on the officer's ability to communicate effectively, work as part of a team, and lead in an austere and rapidly changing tactical environment.

In order to build creative and adaptive leaders, the exercise embraces the concept of mission command. All students are trained in or introduced to FTX tasks before executing them. Information pertaining to the overall situation and OE is either briefed or readily available. Mission sets given to the students contain the essential elements of information and little more.

Tactics Training

All students learn the skills required for the BOLD FTX in the second and third weeks of BOLC during the tactics block of instruction. During tactics, students receive reference materials, read-ahead sheets, and access to short videos familiarizing them with concepts and equipment (for example, how to use a sand table and the gunner restraint system). By combining this training with the mentorship of their training, advising, and counseling officer during preparation, the students arrive at the FTX fully prepared to execute the mission.

The DATE

Students execute a series of logistics-focused missions in a fluid environment during the BOLD FTX. Cadre tailor the mission sets to the classes participating. For example, more quartermaster missions take place during quartermaster-heavy BOLC classes, while more transportation missions are done for transportation-heavy classes.

The students receive their missions through various methods, such as mission orders, video messages, simulated news broadcasts, radio communication, and commander's guidance. By changing the method of delivery for the mission, students build awareness of the complexity of the modern battlefield and the manner in which the mission may reach a unit.

Regardless of delivery method, the



Bucky Roughton, a tactics instructor, goes over a mission route with 2nd Lt. Thomas Ivey during the tactical operations center cycle of the Basic Officer Leader Department field training exercise. (Photo by Julianne Cochran)

information contained in the mission is limited to the task, purpose, location, and time of execution. The sparse amount of information forces students to think creatively in order to fill in the blanks without assistance from higher headquarters.

Students from various combinations of logistics branch classes are organized into three platoons under a forward support company (FSC) supporting an infantry battalion. During the FTX, each platoon is in one of the three rotational cycles: the tactical operations center (TOC) cycle, the planning cycle, or the mission cycle.

TOC Cycle

During the TOC cycle, a platoon executes mission command and controls operations from the FSC com-

mand post (CP). When available, a captain from the Combined Logistics Captains Career Course plays the FSC commander and facilitates mission command by giving directions, advice, and orders to platoons. Cadre select student leaders based on student needs and the goal of giving each student several leader assessments.

Roles in the TOC cycle include the company executive officer, company intelligence support team, future operations section, current operations section, supply (classes I [subsistence], V [ammunition], and VIII [medical materiel]), and radio telephone operator. The CP conducts battle tracking, battle update briefs, current and future operations planning, intelligence analysis, mission

debriefings, and coordination with adjacent unit CPs of other organizations that are conducting FTXs in the same training areas.

CP personnel also develop battalion logistics estimates, conduct logistics status updates, plan force protection, and control support operations. Students have access to a variety of analog and digital communications and command system platforms to exercise mission command and battle tracking operations.

Throughout the TOC cycle, students learn the importance of clear, concise communication. Their only link with the battlefield and the platoon executing the mission is a tactical radio and handset. Students must ensure they capture the details of the mission as they occur and relay them to the commander or higher headquarters when necessary.

The outcomes-based training and education concept plays an important role during the TOC cycle. The actions of the platoon in the mission cycle largely affect the civilian populace, enemy forces, and the OE, and the TOC receives changes to the OE through a series of injects. The injects contain intelligence updates from higher headquarters and videos with simulated or scripted role players that show enemy forces and local nationals on the battlefield. The changes force the students to react to the fluid OE and disseminate the new intelligence to the other platoons.

Many times students learn during a rotation debriefing that the TOC's vision of how the mission was conducted and the actual events that occurred vastly differed—illustrating the ambiguity of the OE and the importance of effective communication. At the conclusion of each cycle, the TOC develops and provides a briefing to the commander. This briefing allows the evaluators to assess the TOC leaders' overall ability to track, manage, and relay information about the operation.

Students who are not in a leadership role during the TOC cycle participate as opposing forces (OP-

FOR) and local nationals along with the cadre. Students equip, dress, and execute roles as enemy conventional forces, insurgents, guerrillas, criminals, or local nationals. By allowing the students to switch roles and play as OPFOR or role players, students see the enemy's or local national's point of view when engaging with U.S. forces. Students learn a great deal as they watch their peers move tactically in the OE and identify weaknesses that they try to exploit. Once students complete a cycle as OPFOR, they have a newfound appreciation for the enemy and fully understand the adage "think like the enemy."

Planning Cycle

A platoon in the planning cycle conducts troop leading procedures for an upcoming mission from higher headquarters. Student leaders conduct the full cycle of troop leading procedures, including precombat checks and inspections, rehearsals, and operation order (OPORD) production.

The OPORD includes a terrain model for a tactical mission to prepare for operations on a realistic operational timeline. Students have access to digital and analog products, operation maps, terrain model kits, rehearsal areas, and other planning tools to give them a brief view of an operational planning environment.

The planning cycle is an extremely valuable experience because it shows all the students within the platoon that an OPORD is not produced by one officer sitting at a desk but instead through a collaborative effort of the staff. The platoon leaders end the rotation by providing an OPORD briefing and supervising mission rehearsals, but every student is involved in the overall planning of the mission. Students prepare sand tables, sign for platoon equipment, practice crew drills, and develop individual pieces of the overall order.

The quality of the final product and the students' ability to translate

the order into an executable plan are tested when they move to the mission cycle. Every mission the platoon plans during the planning cycle is executed in the mission cycle with a different chain of command. Students are not informed of the upcoming chain of command until immediately before the next cycle begins, so students are incentivized to stay informed.

Empowering subordinates to carry out a task or a portion of an operation is encouraged during the planning cycle. Student leaders quickly learn that a complex mission must be broken down and that having subordinate leaders take initiative is essential to mission success.

While the exercise is a peer-based officer FTX, students also fill the roles of noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and lower enlisted personnel. Guided by an experienced NCO cadre, the students learn what their future subordinate leaders are responsible for and how an overbearing or ineffective leader can affect overall mission success.

Mission Cycle

After completing the TOC and planning cycles, the platoon draws its equipment from the supply section and moves to its vehicles to execute a logistics-orientated mission cycle.

The mission platoon has 10 up-armored M1151 Humvees, each equipped with a radio and armed with either an M240B or M249 machine gun. The platoon executes various missions, such as loading and transporting supplies to and from a logistics release point, aerial delivery, and air medevac with UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters (provided by the Virginia Army National Guard).

While moving tactically within the OE, the unit conducts lethal and nonlethal operations and interacts with the hybrid OPFOR and national populace. During every mission, the staff seeks to take advantage of every opportunity to execute actual tasks and equipment moves instead of simulating these events. Having students understand the manpower and man-hours needed to accomplish



Lieutenants prepare to hit the road during the mission cycle of the Basic Officer Leader Department field training exercise. (Photo by Julianne Cochran)

a task helps them build empathy for their future Soldiers and provides the experience needed to accomplish similar missions in the future.

The BOLD FTX is fluid. If students disrespect the village elder while delivering humanitarian aid to a local village, future missions into the village yield less intelligence and more hostility from the villager role players and opposing forces. By changing the demeanor of role play-

ers or increasing attacks on a particular route, students quickly learn that the actions they take during the course of the exercise help shape the OE and influence the outcome of future missions.

No secured forward operating base is available to operate from during the FTX. The lieutenants must secure an abandoned building in the tactical assembly area and set up and operate a company CP from there.

The CP and the mission platoon are constantly threatened by indirect fire and enemy infantry attacking the logistics lines of communications. Overall, the more the students understand the situation and prepare to execute the mission, the more positive the outcomes are.

Cultural Awareness and Ethics

In addition to branch-specific missions, the BOLD FTX allows the students to practice other lessons learned during BOLC, including ethical decision making and cultural awareness skills.

When conducting a patrol, students may be faced with an ethical dilemma. In one scenario, during movement through a local village, the platoon may witness a woman and her child in danger from other local villagers. The patrol leader must decide whether to intervene or to continue the prescribed mission.

The cultural awareness aspect of the exercise is constant throughout all four days. The instruction the students receive during pre-exercise training is based on the DATE scenario. This provides a generic culture for the students to use as a baseline for cultural awareness.

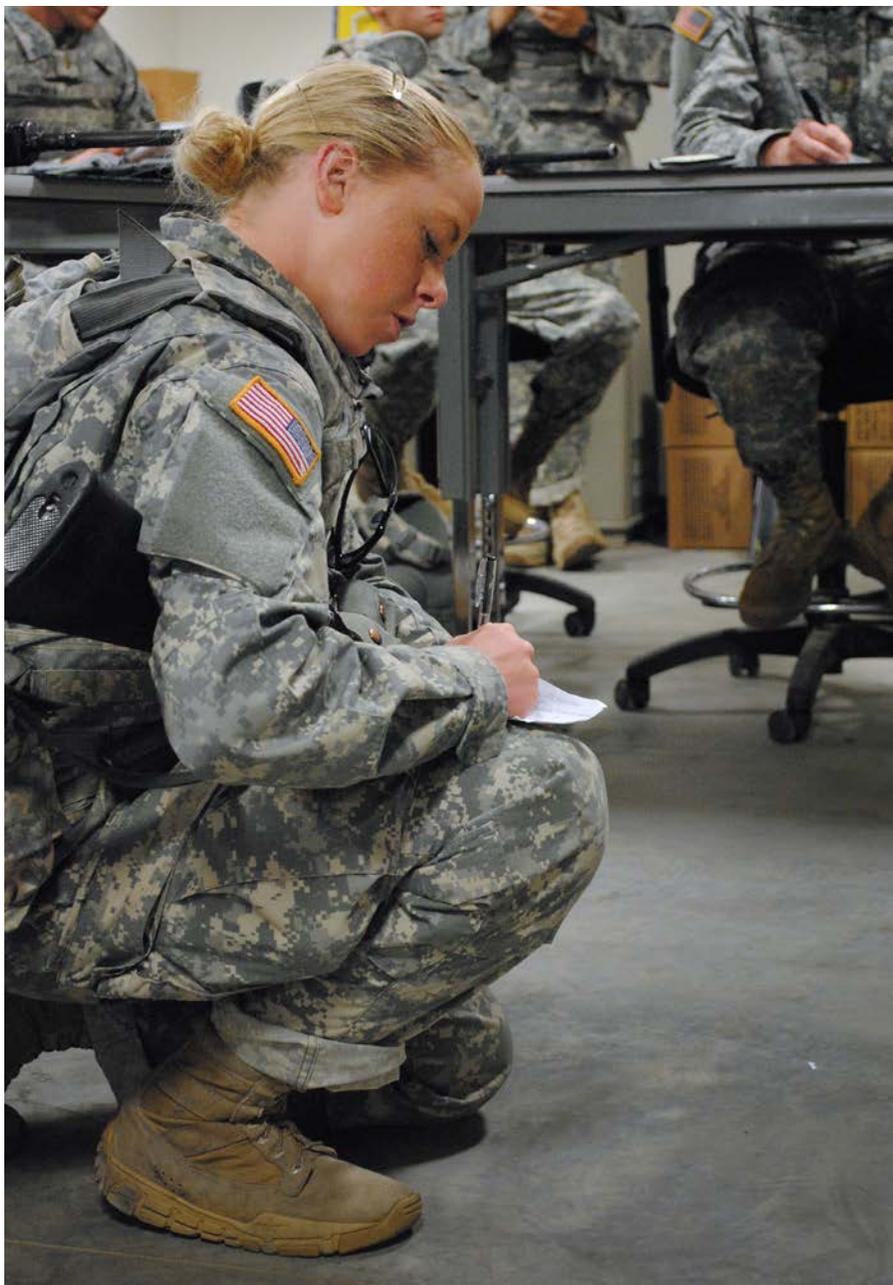
Evaluation

Evaluating students during the exercise is a continuous process. The students are evaluated against a grading rubric tailored to the position the student occupies during each stage of the exercise.

At the conclusion of each leadership cycle, the cadre provides one-on-one feedback regarding student performance, emphasizing the elements of leadership, communication, and teamwork related to the mission.

Since the exercise is a peer-to-peer event, the failures and setbacks a student experiences during a mission are not amplified through embarrassment in front of future Soldiers.

Providing the students with multiple opportunities to lead and fail throughout the exercise and multi-



During the planning cycle, a lieutenant takes notes on an upcoming mission. (Photo by Julianne Cochran)



Lieutenants draw weapons and other equipment in preparation for the mission cycle of the Basic Officer Leader Department field training exercise. (Photo by Julianne Cochran)

ple feedback sessions aids them in actively developing their leadership abilities within the course of a single FTX.

Although each student's performance is evaluated and graded based on the rubric, the real value of the evaluation is the face-to-face counseling with experienced, honest cadre. The cadre observes the student throughout the rotation and then gives feedback on the student's performance. The lessons learned from experience during the mission, coupled with the cadre's observations, prepare the students to learn from their mistakes and capitalize on their successes when they lead later during the FTX.

The branch-functional training exercises that the Quartermaster, Ordnance, and Transportation BOLCs execute later in their courses use the BOLD FTX as a foundation. The skills exercised in the FTX and the knowledge of the scenario provide a solid base for the three branches to increasingly challenge their students

with complex problems that require critical thinking.

The BOLD FTX also prepares junior officers to train at the premier training centers in today's operational force by using scenarios nested within the overall scenario and base order for the NTC. By experiencing a subordinate unit of training within the NTC scenario, the students experience some of the products and situations they may face in a future training rotation while gleaning the institutional knowledge and background needed to operate confidently in an operational force.

Through collaboration with the three branches, the BOLD FTX continues to grow, build adaptive leaders, foster teamwork, and produce leaders who communicate effectively. The BOLD FTX mission sets are built on the latest doctrine and threat environment in the Army. By maintaining its roots as tactical leader outcome-based training, the exercise can maintain pace with the needs of the operational force and future battlefield requirements.

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