

# Battalion TOC Certification

In the III Armored Corps Artillery, we deem success at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California, as our ability to defeat the world-class opposing force (OPFOR), while obtaining the most training value possible out of a rotation.

After reviewing NTC lessons learned by battalions of the III Corps Arty, we found one important area that needed strengthening. We needed a certification program for key leaders in battalion tactical operations centers (TOCs) and special training for S2s.

**TOC Certification.** The program prepares a battalion TOC to perform its wartime mission, whether at the NTC, in an Army external evaluation (AEE) or combat. The program's five phases—leader, ride-along, off-site and home-station training plus verification of key leaders by the Commanding General of the Corps Artillery—is an excellent way to ensure a TOC is ready to excel as a team.

*Phase I Leader Training* includes an extensive battalion S2 certification program and a detailed study of the after-action reviews (AARs) from the unit's previous and most recent deployments to the NTC.

Newly assigned battalion S2s usually aren't experienced at applying the information they receive to an intelligence format that's useful in the planning process. To address this challenge, III Corps Arty has run a six-month training and certification program for battalion S2s for the last 18 months. Ten battalion NTC rotations have been completed with certified battalion S2s. At the NTC, these S2s wargame better, develop more focused priority intelligence requirements (PIRs) and make critical decisions sooner and at a more timely point in the battle.

The foundation of S2 certification is a 30-day reading program followed by a one-week course held quarterly covering the tactical and administrative missions of the S2, ranging from the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) to battle damage assessment (BDA). The training culminates with a challenging field exercise, such as an AEE, to test the S2, including an interview by the corps artillery G2 on security and tactical issues and sources of intelligence information. The S2 certification training plan, checklists, and classroom slides are available for download on the III Corps Artillery G2 Home Page at <http://155.219.65.3/g2.htm>

*Phase II Ride-Along Training* is at the NTC with arrangements made for the battalion commander, S3 and S2 to spend one or two days "in the box" with NTC fire support observer/controllers (O/Cs) to see the orders process and a force-on-force battle. This ride-along is great experience when combined with the *Phase III Off-Site Training*—the standard NTC Leader Training Program and ramp-up field training and command post training exercises. At the NTC, the TOC staff members meet their maneuver counterparts, reconnoiter the area and work through the orders process.

*Phase IV Home-Station Training* has the TOC preparing



and presenting a road-to-war briefing. With the FA brigade commander present, the battalion commander briefs the Corps Artillery Commander on how he intends to approach his next NTC rotation—manning, training assessment, training plan, timeline and significant issues.

The next step in Home-Station Training is an inter-battalion officer professional development (OPD) class. The S3 of a battalion that recently completed an NTC rotation presents this OPD to the TOC of the unit preparing for one. The OPD addresses TOC setup and layout and tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) for the counterfire battle drill. Also covered are the orders process; reception, staging and onward movement integration (RSOI) draw/turn-in/reporting procedures; NTC-specific division artillery and FA brigade tactical standing operating procedure (SOP) requirements; and the link to the NTC Tactical Analysis Facility (TAF), the Star Wars Building, including communications, manning and equipment. Other key Home-Station-Training events are participation in a Janus command post exercise and in both communications and tactical Firefinder radar exercises.

In *Phase V Verification*, the TOC briefs the Corps Artillery and FA brigade commanders on its operations order and FA support plan (FASP) before deploying to the NTC. During this briefing, the two senior commanders question the battalion staff members extensively—sharing, mentoring and coaching them into a cohesive, organized team that's ready for the NTC experience.

**Conclusion.** The TOC Certification Program maximizes the battalions' training value for NTC rotations. Certified "TOC teams" make the most of their time while waiting for their commanders to make timely decisions—go beyond the basics to perform at a more sophisticated level for critique by NTC O/Cs. These TOC teams display unity and a greater confidence in their ability to succeed at any mission.



LTC James L. Davis, FA  
Assistant Chief of Staff, G3  
MAJ Kirk M. Nielsen, FA  
G3 Training Officer  
III Armored Corps Artillery  
Fort Sill, OK