

Integrating Fire Support into Devil Brigade Training

by Colonel Fred D. Robinson, Jr., AR, and Major Daniel R. Roper

Home station training in the 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Riley, Kansas, is focused on one theme—preparing soldiers, crews and units for combat—warfighting. We train and operate as a combined arms team, which means fire support—Field Artillery—is integral.

The BCT's training mission is to conduct "tough, mission-essential task list (METL)-related, multi-echelon combined arms training, focusing on combat ready platoons, batteries and companies." This article explains how the Devil Brigade applies this training philosophy and integrates each of the fire support elements into home-station training.

Background. Fort Riley has 71,000 acres set aside for maneuver and live-fire training, the best mechanized force training area in the country. This large training area isn't restricted by climate or environmental conditions and can accommodate battalion task force train-

ing—force-on-force and combined arms live-fires. It has 28 modern ranges that can train every weapons type in a heavy division, including multiple-launch rocket system (MLRS) rockets and Hellfire and Stinger missiles.

To conduct integrated combined arms training, we first ensure units are grounded in the basics. We start with the Eight-Step Training Model from *FM 25-100 Training the Force* and *FM 25-101 Training the Force: Battle Focused Training*. (See Figure 1 on Page 6.) These are steps for planning, preparing for, executing and assessing every training event. Maximizing resources and taking advantage of every training opportunity is essential, but following these steps adds predictability, quality and synchronization to the training.

If commanders go through these steps at their training meetings and develop training schedules in conjunction with other commanders—in our case, three maneuver battalions, engineer battalion, forward support battalion (FSB) and Field Artillery battalion—the synchronization foundation is laid for the road to war.

Integrated Training Events. The various battalions plan their training events to synchronize with the other units, culminating in collective, combined arms training. For example, the artillery battalion takes the gunners' test when the maneuver battalions are taking their gunnery skills test. Listed in Figure 2 on Page 6 are the individual and collective training events conducted at least annually in the 1st BCT. Each row of events is conducted during the same time frame.

Situational Training Exercises. Company STXs are conducted semiannually to prepare company/teams for task force operations, rotations at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California, and combat. The company fire support teams (FISTs) participate in the STXs with their maneu-



ver companies. STX missions include the deliberate defense and deliberate attack. Other tasks include deliberate decontamination, occupy an assembly area, casualty evacuation (CASEVAC), pre-combat inspections (PCI) and troop-leading procedures (TLP).

The fire support system is exercised from the company to the brigade level. The FA battalion tactical operations center (TOC) and the BCT fire support element (FSE) are fully operational during training events with BCT and fire support rehearsals required. So, while the FISTs are training at their level as part of a company/team and a task force, the entire fire support system is working.

We conduct BCT and task force orders drills during these exercises to maximize the training opportunity. Top-down fire planning and bottom-up refinement are stressed. We exercise voice and digital fire missions sent through the task force to the brigade where fire markers are dispatched to simulate effects. Company rehearsals and formal after-action reviews (AARs) are conducted with the brigade and task force commanders, fire support coordinator (FSCOORD) and engineer battalion commander.

Concurrently, battery lanes are taking place, testing each of the firing battery's skills in moving, shooting and communicating. Battery lanes are evaluated

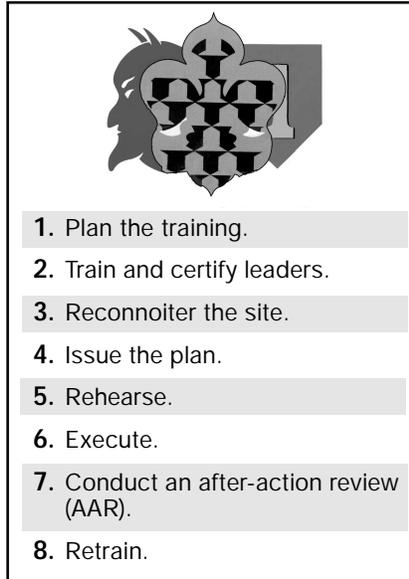


Figure 1: Eight-Step Training Model

under defense and then offense scenarios to assess all firing battery METL tasks. Rearm, refuel, resupply point (R³P) operations are exercised with an actual brigade support area (BSA) established to allow service battery to interact and train as part of the BSA.

Task Force Operations Training. This training encompasses the entire BCT in a movement-to-contact, forward passage-of-lines and the deliberate attack. Also during Task Force Operations, the company STX tasks previously trained are evaluated.

The direct support (DS) FA battalion provides fires for the task force, conducting a passage-of-lines, moving through breach lanes established by the company/teams and occupying a position area beyond the breach. The FA battalion must plan when to send batteries to specific locations on the battlefield to provide fire support for the critical points of the battle. Field Artillery movements, occupations and fire mission processing are the key tasks evaluated.

Close air support (CAS), mortars and combat observation lasing team (COLT) insertions also are trained in Task Force Operations. Again, task force and artillery battalions orders process, METL tasks and rehearsals are evaluated with formal AARs conducted for feedback and documentation for retraining.

Observer/Controller School. Quality O/Cs are required to maximize every training opportunity. We conduct an O/C School to assist in the integration and evaluation process. O/Cs learn about safety and common rules of engagement (ROE). With few exceptions, the ROE are based on those used at the NTC.

O/Cs evaluate every FIST, task force fire support officer (FSO), FSE, platoon, fire direction center (FDC) and battery (firing, service, and headquarters). The O/Cs come from the sister FA battalion on Fort Riley and an installation team out of the G3 shop.

Armor	Infantry	Artillery
Tank Gunnery Skills Test	Bradley Fighting Vehicle (BFV) Gunnery Skills Test	Gunners Test
Common Tasks Testing	Common Tasks Testing	Common Tasks Testing
Unit Conduct of Fire Trainer (UCOFT)	UCOFT	Guard Unit Armory Device, Full-Crew Interactive Simulation Trainer (GUARDFIST II)
Platoon Situational Training Exercise (STX)	Platoon STX	Platoon Evaluations
Company STX	Company STX	Battery Lanes
Task Force Operations Brigade Battle Simulation (BBS) National Training Center (NTC)		

Figure 2: 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT) Annual Training Events. Each row of events is conducted in the same time frame with all building toward the BCT's force operations training: movement-to-contact, forward passage-of-lines and the deliberate attack.

Maneuver Shooter Program. The 1st BCT truly integrates fire support throughout the brigade—including teaching maneuver commanders to call for fires. This program starts with eight hours of call-for-fire training for all maneuver company and battalion commanders, using the ground unit armory device full-crew interactive simulation trainer (GUARDFIST). The commanders depend on their FSOs for training and guidance.

After completing GUARDFIST training, the leaders deploy to the Field Artillery battalion gun line for live firing. Here, the commanders rotate through each howitzer and FDC crewmember position. After “humping projos” as the Number-One Man and training in other crew positions, the leaders move to the observation post (OP) to call for fire. Coached by his FSO, each commander then calls for immediate suppression, immediate smoke, and adjust fire and fire-for-effect (FFE) fire missions.

The Maneuver Shooter Program gives maneuver commanders first-hand experience in the fire support call-for-fire procedures and demonstrates the capabilities and complexities of Field Artillery. Commanders have a new appreciation for what happens when a fire supporter doesn’t adjust off a preplanned target and for the time it takes to lift and shift fires. They more clearly understand the time it takes to call for and clear fires and start thinking about how they, as maneuver commanders, can help minimize that time. The training even makes them start thinking about high-payoff targets (HPTs) and when the BCT commander is going to release the artillery (his guerilla) to destroy the enemy—firing on *his* HPTs.

COLT Training. The Devil Brigade is very proud of its COLTs and the way they are employed. The physical demands we put on the COLTs require increased physical training. In addition to our rigorous daily physical training (PT), COLTs participate in a weekly 15-kilometer road march with full packs and routinely go through the obstacle course.

During each task force exercise, the COLTs are air inserted at night deep in the brigade zone, walk two to four kilometers to an OP, establish communications with COLT platoon headquarters and begin killing enemy vehicles with Copperhead, dual-purpose improved conventional munitions (DPICM) and close air support (CAS). The 1st BCT COLTs are killers—not reconnaissance

assets—with the long arm of the artillery as their primary weapon system.

We also incorporate COLTs into the 1st BCT Scout STX. This is an annual event that trains and evaluates each COLT during PCIs and in procedures for air and ground insertions, OP security, target location and calls-for-fire.

We are fortunate at Fort Riley to be only 30 miles away from the Air Force’s Smoky Hill Training Area and have a very close relationship with the 10th Air Support Operations Squadron that owns our air liaison officers (ALOs). We pair our COLTs with Air Force enlisted terminal attack controllers (ETACs), and they train together in integrating CAS and Field Artillery—a tremendous training advantage.

Smokey Hill allows the COLTs a chance to communicate and direct aircraft onto a target. The aircraft drop dummy bombs that generate small puffs of smoke upon impact. The Smoky Hill COLT and CAS shoot takes place quarterly.

BCT-Air Operations Training. In addition to our COLT training, we take advantage of every opportunity to train with the Air Force in tactical exercises at Fort Riley. The ALO and his ETACs train with the BCT in all task force and brigade exercises.

The ETACs train with the task force fire supporters and COLTs during force-on-force operations, nominating CAS targets for immediate requests. The ALO and his tactical air control party (TACP) in the 1st BCT TOC work closely with the 1st BCT staff to process preplanned and immediate missions and participate in all orders processes and rehearsals. Although the actual aircraft are not always available, the communication channels and CAS employment techniques are exercised. Our ETACs and ALO wear the Devil Brigade patch, and we consider them part of the team.

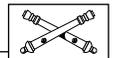
Mortar Training. Fire Support is not complete without mortars. The three mortar platoons are integrated into company STX and task force operations training. Before collective training, the mortars take the mortar gunner’s exam (both mounted and dismounted) and the fire direction exam and conduct many mortar live-fire exercises, all culminating with the mortar platoon external evaluations. The 1st BCT FSOs are involved in mortar training, in fact the mortar platoons participate in the FA battalions weekly gunnery sustainment training.

Combat Service Support Training. CSS is a critical but often neglected component of the warfighting equation. During wartime, most of the FA battalion service battery is located in the BSA and falls under the FSB commander. During both our company STX and task force operations exercises, we place the BSA in the field and exercise the support system.

Service battery’s key training events include delivering logistical packages daily to the FA battalion and playing a key role in the defense of the BSA against enemy attacks. Service battery even refines its skills with our FSB in Janus simulations, an interactive computer simulation model. Integrating FA battalion CSS and BSA assets allows the BCT to practice supporting artillerymen and their weapon systems.

Conclusion. Fire support is critical to the Devil Brigade’s ability to conduct its warfighting mission. And to make sure fires are effective and in synch with maneuver during the battle, we integrate fire support into every possible training event, training not only Redlegs in FA and fire support tasks, but their maneuver commanders as well.

The vast training area and resources at Fort Riley allow us to integrate fire support into home station training along with the other battlefield operating systems (BOS), making us a “devil” of a brigade to face in war.



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Major Daniel R. Roper until recently was the 1st (Devil) Brigade Fire Support Officer in the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized), Fort Riley, Kansas. Currently, he is the S3 for the 1st Brigade’s direct support battalion, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery. His previous assignments include commanding B Battery and serving as Battalion Fire Direction Officer, both in the 4th Battalion, 5th Field Artillery, 1st Infantry Division, and Task Force Fire Support Officer in the same division, all at Fort Riley.