

From the Commandant's desk

Readiness: We Must Be "Ready Now"

The FORSCOM CG, GEN Robert B. Abrams, echoes the CSA's imperative – the number one priority for the Army is "Readiness." It is no longer good enough to focus solely on a unit's next assigned mission. As an operational force we must be "Ready Now" across a growing complex global environment, and we must be prepared to fight and win large scale ground combat operations against peer or near-peer adversaries. It is for this reason that "Enabling Readiness in the Operational Force" remains our Line of Effort #1 and our top priority.

Over the years, many have assumed that readiness relates primarily – or even solely to training. There are actually four measured areas of readiness which form the cornerstones of the Sustainable Readiness Model (SRM): Personnel, Supply, Maintenance and Training. Building and sustaining readiness, whether at home station or deployed, must focus on all four pillars.

I would like to address aspects of two pillars that we as the Field Artillery branch proponent directly affect: Personnel and Training. From a FORSCOM perspective, we help the operational force by enabling ARNG Duty MOS Qualification (DMOS-Q) and facilitating Professional Military Education (PME) attendance.

Every Soldier – Active and ARNG, in every unit counts and they must be able to perform their mission at home or abroad, in peace and in war. Ultimately, the Field Artillery branch is about our people. No matter how technical our operations become, or how wide our global missions expand, our people will continue to be our most treasured resource and the bedrock of our ability to deliver accurate and lethal fires.

As leaders, we must take the time to invest in this resource. Commanders are responsible for scheduling Soldiers' PME attendance and ensuring they are DMOS-Q. HRC and State HQs facilitate PME attendance for your Soldiers, but commanders ensure

attendance and ensure attending Soldiers, regardless of rank, are physically and mentally prepared for the rigors of each course. At the United States Army Field Artillery School (USAFAS), we are doing everything we can to bolster PME and other learning opportunities for enlisted Soldiers, officers and warrant officers. For example, we are rolling out a new performance-oriented program of instruction (POI) for all CMF-13 Advanced Leaders Courses (ALCs) and Senior Leaders Courses (SLCs).

In ALC, we will focus our efforts on developing muscle memory in those skills required of NCOs to be effective as Section Chiefs. Likewise, in SLC, we will work on the skills required for NCOs to be effective Platoon/Gunnery Sergeants, Task Force Fire Support NCOs, and Battalion Fire Direction NCOs. These reforms and our planned growth of the Master Gunner Course POI, will result in a much-needed recalibration of our NCO Professional Development System (NCOPDS).

Likewise, the FA Basic Officers Leaders Course (BOLC-B) received a significant upgrade to its POI. To facilitate the teaching of Joint Fires Observer (JFO) skills to our lieutenants, we developed and implemented JFO Interactive Multimedia Instruction (IMI). The JFO IMI is a software program students access on Blackboard providing students with virtual equipment 'hands on training.' Though it does not provide the form, fit, and function of field training, it does provide students the reps and sets on the technical aspects required in developing highly effective JFOs.

The program provides lieutenants the ability to gain familiarity with the equipment they will use in the operational force. The JFO IMI instructs these students on how to operate a Defense Advanced GPS Receiver (DAGR); it also incorporates the Lightweight Laser Designator Rangefinder (LLDR), the Advanced

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System Improvement Program (ASIP) radio, and the Multiband Inter/Intra Team Radio (MBITR). We are also working on adding the Joint Effective Targeting System (JETS) and the Harris 117G radio to the mix.

Additionally, the Fire Support Department increased the amount of digital training provided to our lieutenants. Students now receive hands-on training with the Pocket Forward Entry Device (PFED) and then have opportunities to incorporate the PFED into their live-fire training.

The Warrant Officer Advanced Course (WOAC) is also updating its POI, with increased rigor and instruction on Advanced Target Development and digital systems integration skills. This will provide students a better understanding of intelligence collection processes, the Joint Targeting Cycle and weaponeering. This past year, we gained approval to begin pilot courses for A+ Certification under the Army University Credentialing Program in an effort to align FA WOAC with other branch schools; the credentialing opportunity is something that our technicians have been asking for and we're glad to deliver recommendations made by the operational force.

We're also designing a Warrant Officer Intermediate Level Phase 3 course that will provide senior CW3 and junior CW4s with the additional technical depth they need to better operate at the division/JTF level and higher; we expect to begin instruction in FY21.

In conjunction to PME and professional development opportunities, it remains imperative for senior Field Artillery leaders to take on the role of mentoring subordinates in the art and science of the integration and synchronization of Fires and Maneuver for large scale ground combat operations – a lost art throughout sixteen years of COIN warfare.

Recent Combat Training Center (CTC) rotations have shown our BCTs are still struggling with delivering timely and accurate fires primarily due to challenges with mission command, planning, and clearance of fires. BCTs and FABs must return to the fundamentals of Field Artillery gunnery, clearance of fires procedures and rigorous fire support standards, which lay the foundation for renewed core competencies and, more importantly, confidence in our ability to meet our

tactical obligations. Commanders must place additional emphasis on digital fires from sensor to shooter in improving timely and accurate fires.

From our observations over the past year, I believe that we must continue to focus leader energy on aiding our Maneuver commanders to optimize planning and synchronization of warfighting functions to make fires more permissive. As I talk with Maneuver and Fires leaders, it is evident that we must get better at the early and iterative process of FSCOORDs and FSOs helping their Maneuver commanders and staffs create more permissive battlefield designs that enable timely Joint fires. This is imperative to effectively integrate and synchronize Fires and Maneuver.

We must be more sophisticated in our fire support approach. We must help design battlefield architectures that enable Maneuver commanders to bring all elements of combat power to bear simultaneously at the time and place of their choosing on the battlefield. Home station provides plenty of opportunity to plan, design, and rehearse these skills, without the time crucible imposed by a combat training center (CTC) environment. Table-top exercises, ROC drills, and Tactical Exercises Without Troops (TEWT) are excellent venues for home station staff training, with multiple warfighting functions integrated. AFTADS version 6.8.1.1, and the future version 7.0, provide unparalleled clearance tools. The art of successfully designing permissive battlefields should resolve 90% of the conflicts we see across the CTCs.

The more rigorous training we conduct at home station, the greater we optimize our valuable time at our CTCs and ultimately the better prepared we are to fight and win large scale ground combat operations against peer or near-peer adversary's in a growing complex global environment. Fires commanders ensuring their Soldiers are DMOS-Q, PME-qualified, and rigorously trained is the sure-fire path to being "Ready Now."

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