

**Information Paper – The Commission on the National Guard and Reserves
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Background: The U.S. Army's National Training Center (NTC), located in Fort Irwin, California, is the premier training venue for units preparing to deploy in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Both Active and Reserve Components utilize the NTC as part of their overall training strategy. Since its inception in 1982, the NTC has trained 265 brigade-sized units; in every rotation, Soldiers from the Reserve Component have performed vital functions, from augmenting the Opposing Force (OPFOR) and Observer/Controller (O/C) teams to performing direct and general support maintenance, and improving infrastructure. In just the past three years, for example, the NTC has trained over 51,000 Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Soldiers from across the National Guard and Army Reserve.

The NTC training area encompasses over 1,200 square miles of unforgiving desert and mountain terrain, the largest instrumented maneuver training center in the world. The NTC has the capacity to train multiple brigade-sized units in both Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES)-supported force-on-force training and realistic live-fire exercises that employ the full spectrum of weapons, from individual small arms to artillery, rockets, and Air Force close air support. Within the training area are twelve towns, six cave complexes, and five Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). The training is enhanced by the constant presence of 1,600 role players. These role players are a major feature of the training environment in which the Army Brigade Combat

Team (BCT) must operate – portraying friendly, enemy and neutral parties – in an effort to replicate with the greatest possible fidelity the area where the BCT will eventually deploy. Of these role players, 250 are Iraqi-American, contracted role players who not only speak Arabic but also bring cultural relevance to every scenario. All essential roles (sheiks, mayors, police chiefs, insurgent cell leaders, Iraqi military officers, imams, etc.) are portrayed by Iraqi-Americans. Their presence on the battlefield affords the training unit an incomparable level of realism and comprises the core around which the other 1350 role players, taken from the NTC's 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, work to replicate the conditions of the theater. The Iraqi-American presence in the NTC battlespace creates numerous training opportunities as unit leaders are forced to deal with cultural friction while also accomplishing their assigned unit missions.

To assist the Commission in their assessment, the National Training Center has prepared detailed responses to the six fundamental areas requested, as follows:

1. How does Reserve Component (RC) training at the NTC compare to active duty unit training?

There is no difference in the quality of training between AC and RC units at NTC, but there are differences in the time periods for planning and conduct of the training exercises. US Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) schedules all rotational training activities at the NTC, for both AC and RC units. Normal BCT rotations (that are not mission rehearsal exercises for deploying units) occur about every two years for AC and

every six years for RC BCTs. Mission rehearsal exercises for deploying units occur within four to six months of deployment, regardless of component.

For non-deploying units undergoing a normal NTC rotation, planning begins early. For active units, the unit Senior Trainer (Division Commander) provides NTC planners with rotational guidance at least 180 days prior to the rotation. His specific guidance for the brigade is used to build the training scenario in order to fully meet his intent and the unit's training objectives. This system is similar for RC units (as governed by FORSCOM/ARNG/USAR Regulation 350-2), with two exceptions: the 1st Army Commanding General is considered to be the unit Senior Trainer (although there is input provided by the National Guard Bureau (NGB), US Army Reserve Command (USARC), and state authorities), and these organizations typically provide training objectives and planning guidance to NTC planners at least 720 days in advance. This extended planning window enables the BCT to conduct several iterations of annual training in preparation, using the 39 training days per year. The NTC rotation itself is conducted within the time-frame of a 21-day extended active duty training (AT) cycle. Because of the shortened training day availability (21 versus 35 days for an AC unit), RC rotations normally have 10 training days (vice 14 with an AC unit). It's important to note that the NTC has not executed a non-deploying RC rotation since 2003.

For deploying RC BCTs, there is normally only 6-12 months notice and preparation time prior to deployment. During this time we see BCTs conducting the following training:

a. Pre-Mobilization Training: Pre-mobilization training is the initial level of training and focuses on tactical operations at the company level and below. This level of training develops small-unit proficiency and allows for more refined development of tasks at the company through brigade levels. Basic Rifle Marksmanship (BRM) and individual weapons qualification is generally conducted during pre-mobilization, and it is often in this phase that RC units traditionally conduct the initial combat crew qualification tables (I-VIII) of M1 Tank and M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle gunnery. In addition, brigades may focus pre-mobilization training time to exercise staff processes at the battalion and brigade levels. These processes can include (but are not limited to) military planning, orders production, intelligence gathering and analysis, fire support planning, counter-IED planning, logistics and support operations, information operations, air asset integration, religious support, and legal operations. This training is normal peacetime training conducted by all RC units.

b. Post-Mobilization Training: Post-mobilization training evolves naturally from that training begun prior to mobilization; units normally conduct this training at the unit mobilization station. Commanders adopt an incremental approach that includes the same facets found in the pre-mobilization training, in order to fully validate the effectiveness of this training. Post-mobilization training also involves greater attention to battalion and brigade-level staff processes, with far more scrutiny placed on the systems employed to accomplish these critical functions. Additionally, post-mobilization training incorporates a greater emphasis on live-fire operations. It is generally during

the post-mobilization phase that a brigade will conduct extensive small-arms qualifications, execute advanced platoon and company-level gunnery training (Table XII), and culminate in a CALFEX (Combined Arms Live-Fire Exercise). A CALFEX includes weapons systems of virtually every caliber and often also integrates artillery, rotary-wing aircraft, and fixed-wing aircraft.

c. Final Deployment Training: Reserve Component units conduct their final deployment training and their Mission Rehearsal Exercises (MRE) at NTC. The general design of an MRE is identical for all Army brigades. The only differences between unit MREs are those driven by the different missions and theaters or those input by the Senior Trainer based on his analysis of unit strengths and weaknesses. NTC Rotations are divided into three primary areas: Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration (RSOI), Situational Training Exercise (STX), and the MRE.

RSOI occurs during the first five days of a unit's arrival to NTC. During RSOI, the focus is on building combat power and preparing for combat operations, steps a unit accomplishes by drawing equipment from the pre-positioned fleet at the NTC and by downloading, transporting, and maintaining equipment that the unit deployed itself. RSOI has evolved in recent years to include additional mandatory training for all Soldiers on topics such as rules of Engagement (ROE), leader to civilian counterpart negotiations, and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) defeat. RSOI is analogous to a unit arriving in Kuwait prior to deploying into Iraq; units must build combat power quickly and efficiently. In conjunction with this effort, Soldiers must also complete required

certification training specific to that theater, and this is the challenge NTC replicates in RSOI training.

As a general rule, a unit completes RSOI in five days and deploys to the NTC training area for 14 days. These two weeks are known as the rotation's Training Days; the Senior Trainer's guidance and theater training requirements guide the concept of operations for this period. If the Senior Trainer has assessed his organization as needing a greater focus on individual and squad-level tasks, training will begin with Situational Training Exercise (STX) lanes. If the unit is assessed as entering at a higher level of collective proficiency, it will immediately begin its training days with an MRE. Again, this training is virtually identical between active and reserve units; any differences in the concept or scenario are dictated by the Senior Trainer only, based on his evaluation or differences between the units' missions.

Essentially, STX lanes break down a collective tactical operation to the basic Soldier skills and team activities necessary for success. During STX lanes, units at platoon level and below undergo several iterative repetitions of each lane to ensure mastery of the training event. Between each of the iterations, the unit O/C observes them as they conduct additional iterative cycles of the training and provides a thorough After-Action Review (AAR) that identifies strengths and weaknesses for the unit. The NTC operates twelve STX lanes during this training, focusing on events such as convoy operations, IED reconnaissance, medical trauma, raids, and searches.

Upon conclusion of STX lanes, the unit transitions into a Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRE), during which the entire spectrum of combat (offense, defense, stability, and support) is trained. Throughout the duration of the MRE, units face kinetic threats such as IEDs, artillery and rocket attacks, direct assaults, snipers, Soldier/contractor kidnapping events, sectarian violence, and uprisings within the towns. Simultaneously, units must execute non-kinetic activities as well, such as negotiations between local officials and unit leaders, infrastructure improvement projects, Iraqi court proceedings, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, religious pilgrimages, and elections.

2. How does pre-deployment training differ between RC and active duty units?

Pre-deployment training differs for AC and RC units because of the relative training level of the unit. Prior to mobilization, an RC unit is limited in its ability to train to tactical proficiency by the number of its annual training days. AC units have much more training time and are generally at a higher level of individual and unit proficiency when notified for deployment.

The National Training Center makes no distinction between active and reserve units when designing the training scenario or executing training events – the Army standard is the standard, and training requirements are driven by theater and FORSCOM directives. NTC training is designed to bring all units into compliance with those standards and training requirements. The training to accomplish this is driven by the Senior Trainer's objective assessment of their unit and the NTC's expertise in how

to design and conduct effective training. The NTC works tirelessly to improve and focus its training based on the evolution of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Because constant changes occur in theater (on both the enemy and friendly sides) and these changes are reflected in the training conducted at NTC, a unit that underwent an NTC rotation as recently as last year might be challenged to fully posture itself for success in combat tomorrow. Likewise, a brigade that trains at the NTC next month will likely receive different threat and training set than its preceding brigade. The last National Guard brigade to cycle through the NTC was in May 2005 (48th Separate Infantry Brigade), and that BCT was faced with a scenario and insurgency that reflected conditions in theater during that period. The fundamental tenets of training will not change; the specific details, however, evolve on monthly basis in order to reflect the theater of war. With this in mind, the next scheduled National Guard NTC Rotation (40th BCT, California Army National Guard, May-June 2007), if scheduled as a deploying brigade, will receive many unique events, threats, and training activities that are different from what is trained today.

A good example of this is the evolution of counter-IED training at NTC. With the establishment of the Army element of the Joint IED Defeat Center of Excellence and the fielding of large numbers of IED and counter-IED trainers, the IED defeat training received by a current brigade is 300-400% more comprehensive than that received by units deploying a year ago.

3. How much of the training at the NTC is unique to Iraq/ Afghanistan?

All training for deploying brigades is relevant to their specified theater of deployment. Because the National Training Center has constantly been training units that were preparing to deploy to Iraq, the majority of published scenarios and the training environment at NTC are centered on this area of operations. Nevertheless, the NTC is prepared to conduct training for units en route to Afghanistan as well. The presence of 250 Iraqi-Americans in the training area enables the NTC to achieve a greater level of realism than most units can accomplish during their local training events, and while there are obviously cultural differences between the two countries, these would be taken into account were training required for a unit deploying to Afghanistan.

The design of each MRE is unique to the unit it prepares, and depends heavily upon their anticipated deployment location and time period. Units that trained at the NTC two years ago concluded their rotation with the capstone event of local elections and election security, because those events were what were anticipated in Iraq at that time. Other units received extensive training on providing security for religious pilgrimages or dealt with Sunni / Shia tensions within their battle space—again, because they anticipated facing such events in theater once they arrived. The notional area of operations is also designed to best approximate the projected deployment region, with some scenarios based along the Syrian border, and others adjacent to Iran.

Furthermore, as updated trends emerge from within Iraq, they are rapidly validated and executed during training. This is perhaps most evident with regards to IEDs. The insurgents in Iraq are constantly morphing their IED design, emplacement, and detonation techniques. These changes are captured, copied, and incorporated into rotational training. Leaders at all levels of the NTC hierarchy remain in close contact with leaders of deployed units in order to remain aware of current events. Again, most of the training at the NTC is geared for units deploying to Iraq; nonetheless, the NTC is prepared to conduct Afghanistan-centric rotations, and will do so in the upcoming fiscal year.

4. What is the minimum time that must be spent in pre-deployment training?

This concern is entirely dependent on several factors, none of which fall under the purview of the NTC. Every unit, regardless of component, varies with regards to available training time, resources, and personnel, as well as level of proficiency in METL tasks, collective training assessment, and unit mission. In light of these factors, the NTC relies upon the Senior Trainer's intent and training requirements when designing the training scenario. The Senior Trainer is charged by the Commanding General of Forces Command with validating the unit's overall readiness to be deployed to a theater for combat operations.

5. What changes or events in recent years have improved or worsened the training strategy?

From the perspective of the National Training Center, the evolution of combat operations as a function of the Global War on Terrorism has created unique challenges for the military. However, none of these challenges have either “improved or worsened” the overall training strategy; instead, these events have necessitated a natural evolution in the dynamic training model employed at the NTC, and perhaps our greatest challenge is the dexterity and adaptability required to remain current in replicating the contemporary operating environment. As an example, an NTC Rotation in 1999 would involve a total focus on high-intensity combat between armored formations, reminiscent of the now-antiquated Cold War model. Today, the training revolves around a framework of asymmetric warfare against an enemy that is nebulous, difficult to distinguish, and highly lethal. The global stimuli at work now are essentially the same that forced a transition from the tenet of Active Defense to Air-Land Battle in 1982, or from the tenet of Air-Land Battle to the theory of Network-centric Warfare in the early 1990s. Again – the key to the success of the NTC is the inherent ability to adapt. Overarching doctrinal rules are generally identical each rotation – variations in training are reflected in best practices and lessons learned, captured from the units in combat, and replicated in training.

One trend that we have seen is the difficulty the units have in conducting home station training prior to their NTC rotation. Short dwell time between deployments,

equipment reset after combat, personnel turbulence and individual unit reorganization into the modular brigade structure have combined to reduce the amount and quality of training time a unit has at home station. Typically, we see brigades that are less ready to maximize the NTC training advantages than they should be – the use of STX lanes to sharpen platoon and company proficiency in the initial part of the rotation is one indicator of home station training shortfalls. These pressures are identical between AC and RC brigades, as RC brigades are typically on AC-like deployment timelines after mobilization for overseas deployment.

6. Is there a better way for operational reserves to be prepared for mobilization?

This question cannot be properly answered by NTC leadership, and is best deferred to the National Guard Bureau, State Adjutant General, or 1st Army leadership.