

Train as We Fight: Training for Multinational Interoperability

by LTC Paul B. Gunnison, MAJ Chris Manglicmot, CPT Jonathan Proctor and 1LT David M. Collins

The 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), 3rd Infantry Division, assumed the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) regionally-aligned-force (RAF) mission March 1, 2014. NORTHCOM RAF consisted of operating as the quick-reaction force/rapid-response force for homeland defense and natural-disaster response, and theater-security cooperation (TSC) with our Mexican and Canadian partners. This article describes TSC support provided for Canada's Exercise Maple Resolve 2014 by 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment.

Exercise Maple Resolve was a major Canadian training exercise that took place in late May 2014 at the Canadian Maneuver Training Center, Canadian Forces Base Wainwright in Alberta, Canada. The purpose of this article is to provide a perspective on training for interoperability through training centers and share lessons-learned from 3-1 Cavalry to man, train and equip a scout platoon to operate as the contemporary-operating-environment force (COEFOR).

Interoperability through training centers

*"Units should train in peacetime as they will fight in war." –Field Manual (FM) 25-101, **Battle-Focused Training**, September 1990*

The U.S. Army continues to operate under the principle of "train as you fight" spelled out in FM 25-101. Leaders use realistic training and incorporate training aids to give their Soldiers the closest experience of fighting in combat as possible. As the Army continues to transition from counterinsurgency-focused combat training center (CTC) rotations to the decisive-action training environment, units must continue to incorporate training with coalition partners.

The Army's CTC program is the paramount training event for units preparing for deployment and is most often the means for leaders to validate that a unit is fully trained. It is during a CTC rotation that Soldiers should receive the most realistic training possible, truly heeding to the "train as you fight" mantra. Currently, Army Regulation 350-50 defines the CTC program's mission as "providing realistic joint and combined-arms training, according to Army and Joint doctrine, approximating actual combat."

This mission statement is to be achieved through the following objectives:

- Focus on a mission-essential task list with training for combat operations as part of the joint team.
- Train for unified land operations and decisive-action missions, including offense, defense, stability and defense support of civil authorities.
- Stress realistic, sustained, multi-echelon and fully integrated collective combat training for brigade combat teams (BCTs), multifunctional support brigades, functional support brigades, division and corps headquarters, Army service-component commands and operational headquarters so these units can fulfill missions as joint-force land-component commands or joint task forces.
- Focus on performance-oriented training in a realistic tactical or operational environment assessed against established tasks, conditions and standards.
- Support achieving and sustaining leader development and unit-warfighting readiness using a combination of integrated live, virtual and constructive simulations.
- Facilitate commander's readiness assessments through live-fire, force-on-force and computer-simulated exercises that integrate all aspects of lethal and nonlethal effects, tailored to the operational environment from platoon to corps level and based on unit-warfighting focus and CTC capabilities.
- Include instrumented urban-operations training experience during the rotation.
- Incorporate reception, staging, onward movement and integration operations, regeneration and deployment training.
- Fully integrate decisive actions.

- Execute mission-rehearsal exercises for brigades and below and mission-readiness exercises for divisions and above, as required.

While the CTC program’s mission statement ensures that units train for actual combat as much as possible, the objectives should increase frequency to incorporate operations with other coalition partners. The program should include an additional objective for an interoperability training experience with a coalition force during the rotation. Interoperability is the measure of the degree to which various organizations or individuals are able to operate together to achieve a common goal. Interoperability is an excellent measure of performance to ensure units are prepared to fight as a part of a coalition force.

Similar to our own CTC rotations, Canada conducts Exercise Maple Resolve annually to validate its task forces’ readiness for deployment. As Canada’s largest annual exercise, Exercise Maple Resolve 2014 incorporated some 5,000 Soldiers from Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States (including active-duty, Reserve and National Guard units). The focus of this exercise ensures that the rotational unit is prepared to deploy in support of a coalition unit and accomplish the three mandates of the Canadian armed forces:

- Protect Canada and defend its sovereignty;
- Defend North America in cooperation with the United States; and
- Contribute to international peace and security through operations around the world, most often in partnership with allies from other countries.

Training for Maple Resolve

The variation between U.S. CTC and Canada’s combat maneuver training center (CMTC) objectives poses several challenges in interoperability. The differences between traditional U.S. training objectives and those seen in Exercise Maple Resolve 2014 brought into focus some disparity in U.S. forces’ communication abilities, planning processes and tactics.

The differing training objectives between the United States and Canada created several challenges such as degraded communication abilities, differing planning processes and differing tactics. Although the planning and deployment for Exercise Maple Resolve identified several lessons to increase interoperability, the opportunity for United States to train in Canada in Exercise Maple Resolve further strengthened the military-to-military partnership.

The 3-1 Cavalry planned and executed a high-operational-tempo training timeline to train a wheeled scout platoon. The training consisted of the doctrinal training for a scout platoon, with more training to increase interoperability. The training timeline (Figure 1) describes training for 1/C/3-1 Cavalry’s scout platoon at Fort Benning, GA.

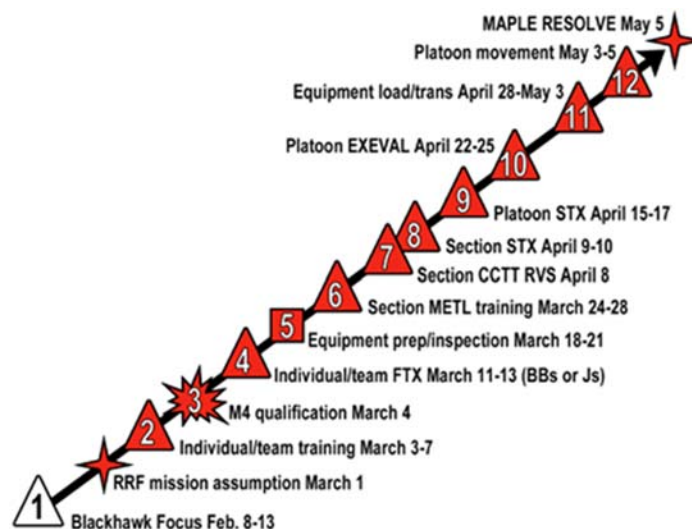


Figure 1. Training glidepath to Exercise Maple Resolve 2014.

The 3-1 Cavalry's training approach:

- **Maximize training through force-on-force.** The 3-1 Cavalry leveraged section vs. section scenarios to create a force-on-force exercise achieving realistic training at the section level while training both sections simultaneously. This allowed the scouts to have an opposing enemy force working against them at all times, which increased the importance of mastering their fieldcraft as well as developing internal standard operating procedures (SOP) within their sections. Although efficient, this required external support for training support and validation to allow the entire platoon to be dedicated to the training event. Therefore, the platoon vs. platoon training not only supported the deploying unit but also was an opportunity to train sister platoons. For units selected to train in support of TSC missions, force-on-force training provides opportunities to train multiple units, especially under a constrained timeline.
- **Training in Canada.** The time planned for 1/C/3-1 Cavalry to deploy early to Canada allowed the platoon a training opportunity and familiarization with Canada's CMTC terrain. Also, the platoon integrated to the Canadian element they augmented into and presented an opportunity to conduct formal training to learn their SOPs and how they maneuvered.
- **Mounted/dismounted.** The 1/C/3-1 Cavalry deployed to primarily support as a mounted scout platoon, but the advantages of focusing both mounted/dismounted capabilities paid dividends in providing a larger capability set for the Canadians. During Exercise Maple Resolve, the platoon required enough parts for each vehicle to be on hand and easily accessible, so maintenance crews had to be on standby for mechanical issues and to ensure all vehicles stayed running and well maintained. Moreover, during the rotation, 1/C/3-1 Cavalry increased dismounted operations to further support their Canadian counterparts. The platoon conducted 26 missions and accrued a battle-damage assessment of 37 vehicles, seven helicopters and 289 dismounts – the highest throughout the exercise. Most of the damage the platoon was able to inflict was through limited mounted operations, with extensive dismounted tasks to establish observation posts (OPs) unobserved by the enemy. With the help of the Canadian fire-support cell, the platoon accurately delivered fires onto targets of opportunity, which aided in the prevention of enemy maneuver to the flanks, drawing them into key engagement areas. The platoon's ability to understand and leverage the Canadians' combat power was critical to their achievement.
- **Training aids.** U.S. training centers maintain their rank as among the best training centers in the world because they use training aids such as the Multiple Integrated Laser-Engagement System (MILES). To maintain training aids' advantages, the platoon required the installation of the Canadians' Weapons-Effects Simulation (WES) system, similar to the U.S.-equivalent MILES. However, interoperability to install the WES system to 1/C/3-1 Cavalry weapon systems created challenges. As a result, the Canadians creatively adapted the WES system to limit the amount of firepower the platoon was able to engage enemy forces with due to the weapon's smaller caliber. Therefore, future deploying U.S. forces at the Canadian CMTC must allot planning time to deconflict training-aid compatibility.
- **Vehicle identification.** The Soldiers of 1/C/3-1 Cavalry required more vehicle-identification training. Upon arrival, the platoon leadership requested from their Canadian counterparts training on vehicle identification. The Canadians trained them on identifying enemy from friendly vehicles and understanding their weaknesses to destroy threats. For units attending the training held at Canada's CMTC, a vehicle study guide should be published and easily assessable for nation participation. These units should be tested on their knowledge, similar to the U.S. version of the gunnery-skills test, before they attend training.
- **Communication.** The lack of interoperability among coalition forces created setbacks in the exercise's initial phases. Communication devices were not compatible, causing difficulties in reporting, limiting the amount of information obtained from the battlefield that could be passed to higher. Dismounted Harris AN/PRC-150 radios had to be used to establish a line of communications. Although the AN/PRC-150 allowed for an established communication line, it could not be encrypted, which left the platoon's transmissions open to interception by electronic-warfare elements roaming the battlefield. The platoon countered this through the use of the terrain index-reference system and grid index-reference system, which allowed the platoon to operate in an unsecure net without compromising operational security. During their train-up, the platoon incorporated these methods during their section and platoon situational-training exercise lanes.

Conclusion

The objective of Exercise Maple Resolve 2014 compared to a U.S. CTC rotation is that the unit is prepared to deploy as a coalition force, not as a stand-alone unit. TSC missions such as 3-1 Cavalry's participation in Maple Resolve provide an opportunity to increase interoperability with Canada due to the divergence between U.S. and Canadian training-center objectives. In preparation for future TSC missions, deploying units should train to provide a range of capabilities from dismounted/mounted, in degraded conditions and, if possible, under a replicated environment similar to their partnered unit/roleplayers. The 3-1 Cavalry's support of Exercise Maple Resolve 2014 identified several lessons-learned to assist in future TSC mission planning and preparation to support our Canadian military partners.

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Acronym Quick-Scan

ABCT – armored brigade combat team

ACR – armored Cavalry regiment

BCT – brigade combat team

CMTC – combat maneuver training center

COEFOR – contemporary-operating-environment force

CTC – combat training center

FM – field manual

MILES – Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System

NORTHCOM – (U.S.) Northern Command

OP – observation post

RAF – regionally aligned forces
SOP – standard operating procedure
TSC – theater-security cooperation
WES – Weapons-Effects Simulation (system)