

Back to the Future: Unit Training Management

by GEN Paul E. Funk II

Training and Doctrine Command's (TRADOC) ultimate responsibility to the Army and the nation is to build readiness – for the force of today and the multi-domain operations (MDO) capable force of tomorrow. Central to this responsibility is not only providing trained Soldiers and leaders, but Soldiers and leaders who can continue to train our operational forces.

It is vital that these Soldiers and leaders understand and practice unit training management (UTM). While UTM is clearly defined in our doctrine (Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 7-0 and Field Manual 7-0), it has atrophied in our current generation of field-grade officers, company-grade officers and senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs), primarily due to lack of practical experience during their formative years. It is incumbent on us to place a renewed emphasis on the education of this critical army population – both formally and informally – to drive the tenets of UTM back into the force.

ARFORGEN effect

The year 2001 marked the beginning of the longest period of continuous warfare in our country's history. Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom stretched the force at unprecedented levels, requiring multiple deployments and a strict, centrally managed force-generation process that ensured units were trained and ready to deploy. Enacted in 2006, Army Force Generation, or ARFORGEN, was a phased readiness model designed to provide ready forces on a specific schedule to meet the required demand.

ARFORGEN met the requirements of the time, but a byproduct of this centralized process was the atrophying of UTM skills in a generation of commissioned and NCOs. ARFORGEN and the supporting manning timeline was so stringent that training schedules were effectively dictated top-down so that brigade combat teams could meet all the required gates for certification and deployment within the allotted time. Junior commanders were not required to analyze training shortfalls, nor were they required to have commanders' dialogue to determine priorities. They were handed a task list and resources, and told when and where they needed to be to knock down the next target on their particular path to deployment.



Figure 1. PFC Baker of 572nd Brigade Engineer Battalion, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, participates in a brigade warfighter exercise at Fort Drum, NY, in June 2017. The unit

participated in the brigade tactical exercise as part of its ARFORGEN-cycle training. *(Photo by SPC Avery Cunningham, 172nd Public Affairs Detachment)*

Let us now fast-forward to the present. The leaders who experienced this readiness assembly line are now operations officers, operations NCOs and battalion commanders. During nearly two decades of deployments, these leaders routinely dealt with the utmost complexity under arduous conditions. They are now faced with equally complicated problems – only the fight is much different.

The Army has readjusted its manning cycles to one that is more equitable across units. There is much greater competition for combat-training center rotations, so brigades can go multiple years without a Forces Command-directed culminating training event. Simultaneously, the fielded force is transforming into the Army of the future – one with MDO capabilities that requires training on all the tasks previously understood as mission critical as well as tasks to support new capabilities being developed daily.

Management of these myriad tasks and requirements necessitates an organized, deliberate approach – an operational approach. In this case, to move into the future, we must look back to the past – to UTM.

UTM within ALDM

The fundamentals of UTM have generally remained unchanged over time. While some of the verbiage is different – “Army Training and Evaluation Program” is no longer used, for example – other terms survived – such as “Training and Evaluation Outlines” – and yet others are new (“Combined Arms Training Strategies”). The existing problem, however, is that we as an Army are not well-versed in our own doctrine. The first step in going “back to the future” is to instill in the current generation of leaders the fundamentals of UTM.

TRADOC has identified this shortcoming and is attacking it head on in our professional military education (PME) programs. From the Basic Officer Leader Course to the Pre-Command Course for our commanders, our commissioned officers receive a total of 59 hours of formal instruction on UTM. Similarly, our warrant officers receive 25 hours of instruction across three PME courses, and our NCOs receive about 30 hours of instruction across their six PME courses. This is enough to teach the fundamentals of doctrine to the leaders and future leaders of our Army, but it is not enough to become experts in the science, much less the art, of training management.

The Army Leader-Development Model (ALDM) is predicated on three pillars of learning – education, training and experience – across three domains – institutional, operational and self-development. The formal instruction mentioned above is almost exclusively education and exists in the institutional domain – TRADOC’s purview. To reinstitute UTM as a core competency requires full-immersion in the other two pillars of learning across the remaining two domains.

First, leaders can gain the doctrinal knowledge of what is supposed to happen through institutional education and self-development, but true understanding will only be achieved through training, leader development and execution in the operational domain. To educate our leaders on UTM, we cannot just pay lip service to it, we have to live it. It must be enforced, practiced and part of how we do business every day. In an era of immediate feedback and constant change, this can be very difficult, but it is doable.

An essential component is the commanders’ dialogue. I have often heard young leaders state that they would be much more effective if they only knew the priorities of their boss. While deployed, we routinely interacted with leaders at echelon at a higher frequency so that every member of the team understood priorities, targets, messages, intelligence, logistics – virtually everything. In the training environment, the commanders’ dialogue is the doctrinal construct for leaders at every level to prioritize and nest the many tasks they are required to accomplish – both individual and collective – with their higher echelon leadership.

ADP 7-0 describes the commanders’ dialogue as a “continuous dialogue with their higher and subordinate commanders about training priorities, techniques, resources and results.” The key is actually conducting the dialogue; being disciplined enough to place it on the training calendar as a scheduled event and sticking to it. We all need guidance to row in the same direction.

Second, leaders can continue to build a UTM environment by enforcing the Eight-Step Training Model. This is the framework over which all training is built and is a requirement for consistent training success. The Eight-Step Training Model is a blueprint – a fill-in-the-blanks model for leaders at every level to ensure completeness in planning, preparation, execution and assessment. It is based on the troop-leading procedures (TLPs), which we all learned as young officers or Soldiers and use for everything we do operationally. Perhaps for this reason, we assume that our subordinates know and understand the benefits of using this tool. Make it explicit; trust but verify; and teach your subordinates the importance and the benefits of this structured approach to training, just as you teach them utilization of the TLPs for operational missions.

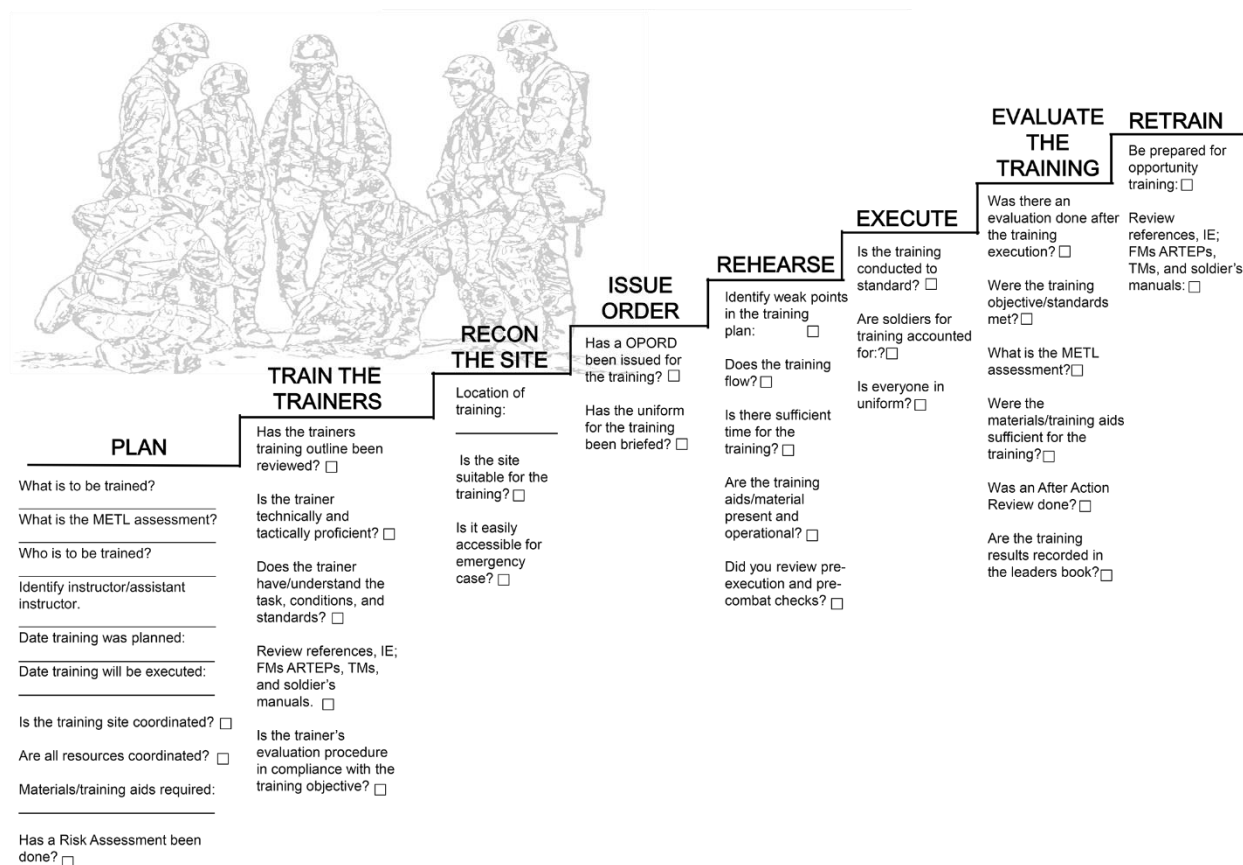


Figure 2. Eight-Step Training Model.

Third, do Army things in an Army way. The Combined-Arms Center maintains a network of tools under the umbrella of the Army Training Management System (ATMS) to assist us in carrying out our training obligations. The Army has standardized mission-essential task lists that simplify the process of identifying the tasks on which we will train. The key is disciplined use. While we love PowerPoint and Outlook, these programs are not integrated training solutions – ATMS and its supporting suite of applications are, and they can be easily accessed through the Army Training Network.

If we enforce the use of Army systems, we will reap the results of the synergy that comes from their built-in integration. Imagine how great it would be for the long-range calendar to be integrated with the daily training schedule; for identified training tasks to be automatically linked to the training schedule, where proficiency can be updated upon completion of training; this is the reality of the ATMS – but we must enforce its use.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, exercise temporal discipline. One of the most violated principles of UTM that I have observed over the years – and have violated myself on occasion – is that of the time horizon. Every echelon has a time horizon to which it is supposed to adhere. Higher echelons have longer horizons than shorter, but discipline is the key to success.

At the brigade and battalion level, timely training guidance is absolutely essential. Equally as important, however, is respecting the subordinate unit's time. From a true UTM perspective, the company is the level at which we most often focus, where the training lock-in time is six weeks out (for Regular Army units). Quite often, however, we become paralyzed when an event out of our control – at a higher echelon – interrupts our training schedule. For that reason, company training meetings are the center of gravity for UTM. We cannot allow interruptions to have a negative effect, and we resolve these at company training meetings.

Remember that training schedules are priorities of work tied to a timeline – key to this is the word **priorities**. If priorities are understood up and down the chain of command, it will be easier to adapt and overcome the externalities that interrupt our planned training. Take advantage of the time you have to accomplish your priorities. Think in terms of multi-echelon training – nest your unit's training inside of higher-echelon training events that “invade” your whitespace. This is the **art** to training management, and something we all must master because time is our greatest limiting factor. Therefore it is incumbent that we as leaders maintain our respective time horizons, publish our training guidance to communicate our priorities, hold training briefs to ensure understanding of our priorities and approve, lock in and, when necessary, adjust training events at company training meetings to achieve our priorities.

Great units master basics

Effective training is decisive to maintaining readiness in our Army. Like combat operations, planning, preparing, executing and assessing training is complex and should follow the operations process – in this case the process of UTM. Unfortunately, the demands of the Global War on Terrorism dictated a readiness model that effectively stripped us of our proficiency in UTM. We are charged with providing the Army and the nation a trained and ready force and with maintaining the capability of that force through training. We must understand training – the art of analyzing and thinking about it as well as the science of managing it – to achieve this imperative.

I often say that great units master the basics, and training management is no different. Remember that training is a journey, not a destination. By embracing the fundamentals of our doctrine through education in our institutions and refining them through training and building experience in the operational force, we will regain this important proficiency. Through the disciplined execution of UTM, we will gain and maintain readiness in the fielded force and set the conditions for our transformation to the MDO capable force of the future.



Figure 3. An M1A2 Abrams tank from Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX, conducts a situational-training exercise Nov. 13, 2017. Refining the fundamentals of Army doctrine through training – like Company B is doing here in preparation for

its upcoming gunnery qualification tables – and building experience in the operational force will enable the Army to regain proficiency. (Photo by SGT Patrick Eakin, 2nd ABCT Public Affairs)

Leave the jersey in a better place than you found it!

GEN Paul E. Funk II commands TRADOC, based at Fort Eustis, VA. As TRADOC commander, GEN Funk is responsible for 32 Army schools organized under eight centers of excellence that recruit, train and educate more than 500,000 Soldiers and service members annually. Commissioned as an Armor officer, GEN Funk has commanded at every level, company through corps, including Company A, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade, 3rd Armored Division, Kirchgoens, Germany; Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 67th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Armored Division, Kirchgoens; 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, TX; 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood; 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, KS; and III Armored Corps, Fort Hood. GEN Funk's combat and operational experience includes six deployments in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Inherent Resolve. Operational assignments include observer-controller with the Live-Fire Team (Dragons), National Training Center, Fort Irwin, CA; squadron operations officer, 1st Squadron, 3rd Armored-Cavalry Regiment (ACR), Fort Carson, CO; regimental operations officer, 3rd ACR, Fort Carson; division operations officer, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood; chief of staff, III Corps, Fort Hood; deputy commanding general, Combined-Arms Center for Training, Fort Leavenworth, KS; deputy commanding general (maneuver), 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley; and assistant deputy chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, U.S. Army, Washington, DC. Joint assignments include chief, Joint Exercise Section J-37, North American Aerospace Defense Command, U.S. Space Command, Peterson AFB, CO; deputy commanding general (maneuver), Combined Joint Task Force-1, Afghanistan; commander, Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command-Iraq, Baghdad, Iraq; and commander, Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve, Baghdad. GEN Funk holds a bachelor's of arts degree in speech communications from Montana State University and a master's of science degree in administration from Central Michigan University. He is a graduate of the Armor Basic Officer Leader's and Advanced Courses, the Command and General Staff College and completed his Senior Service College as a fellow at the Institute of Advanced Technology, University of Texas at Austin.

Acronym Quick-Scan

ABCT – armored brigade combat team

ACR – armored cavalry regiment

ADP – Army doctrinal publication

ALDM – Army Leadership-Development Model

ARFORGEN – Army Forces Generation

ATMS – Army Training Management System

MDO – multi-domain operations

NCO – noncommissioned officer

PME – professional military education

TLP – troop-leading procedure

TRADOC – (U.S. Army) Training and Doctrine Command

UTM – unit training management