



SUMMER TRAINING AT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

By Captain Ryan J. Morgan

The Department of Military Instruction mission at the United States Military Academy states that it will “*train, educate, and inspire cadets in the essence of Warfighting and the Profession of Arms...in order to develop competent future Army officers.*” Until recently, that mission was accomplished by using a Cold War model for training, but that has now changed.

Cadet Field Training

Cadets enter the academy as civilians, but in two years they leave as small-unit leaders. In their second year, they attend cadet field training (CFT), which follows the crawl-walk-run method and consists of two 4-week details. These details are led by two separate chains of command.

Pre-2006 Training

The first detail—crawl-walk—focuses on individual training. Some of the training covered includes land navigation,

basic and advanced rifle marksmanship, patrolling, combatives, and first aid.

The second detail—run—focuses on collective and leader training. Up until the summer of 2006, the second detail—known as Operation Highland Warrior—included training on offense, defense, raid, reconnaissance, and ambush. These were separate events that took on a Ranger School focus of operating in the woods and away from built-up areas. The training was useful, but not as relevant as it needed to be since the Global War on Terrorism began. The academy realized this and made a radical change.

2006 Training

The change was not a slow, multiple-year process; in about two months, the new plan was instituted and the planning and resourcing started. The new training for CFT still follows the crawl-walk-run model; however, the run detail now looks more like a sprint. All of the training during the first detail now directly supports the second detail. Camp Buckner was



A cadet speaks with a villager during training.

transformed into a forward operating base (FOB) with access control points at the gates. Cadets implement a complete weapons immersion program, and training is a continuous operation where all committees interact with each other. A committee consists of West Point staff and supporting Soldiers that plan and resource the different blocks of training and evaluate cadets as they execute their training. The new committees for Operation Highland Warrior are access control point defense, search and attack, convoy reaction, cordon and search, squad live-fire ambush, and quick-reaction-force operations. Arabic linguists were hired by the academy to provide not only a language barrier but also the ability to interact with the Muslim religion and culture.

Access Control Point Defense. Access control points are an opportunity for cadets to be exposed to the difficulties of defending a fixed site and making difficult tactical, ethical, and cultural decisions at a high-visibility location—the front gate of an American compound. Cadets are trained and evaluated in the actual setup and execution of an access control point by

conducting vehicle and personnel searches. However, they are further challenged when the enemy tries to infiltrate the access control point using a variety of methods. Each of the situations requires the cadets, in all positions, to make tough decision on the spot.

Search and Attack. Search and attack, which is traditional patrolling training, teaches the future lieutenants the principles of combat patrol—critical to current operations in many theaters of operation. This mission centers on FOB security by conducting combat patrols in the surrounding hills looking for enemy mortars and caches.

Convoy Reaction. Soldiers conduct convoy operations on a daily basis in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and this led to the development of a convoy reaction mission. This mission focuses on executing a convoy, conducting react-to-contact drills, training cadets on route clearance and resupply missions, and reacting to improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Cordon and Search. Cordon and search, the only company-size mission, consists of an extensive planning period; an air assault; the establishment of a patrol base; and then the cordon and search, which can escalate into an urban attack. This mission provides cadets the opportunity to conduct deliberate troop-leading procedures and mission rehearsals. When the cadets are entering

the village, they must establish contact with the village leader. The cadet company commander, through an interpreter, discusses the operation with the sheik; tries to gain his trust and cooperation; and executes a safe, controlled search of the village.

The enemy also infiltrates the village, and the cadets must then search and clear the buildings with the enemy in them. After the battle, the cadet commander must return to the sheik and repair the relationship damaged by the enemy attack. This was an eye-opening experience for all cadets, from having to talk through an interpreter and deal with the obvious—and not so obvious—cultural differences, to conducting building and room clearance in a company operation.

Quick-Reaction-Force Operations. Quick-reaction forces interact with other missions and conduct their own separate missions, including mortar team searches, downed aircrew rescues, and medical evacuation support. They conduct troop-leading procedures based on priorities given by the regimental commander. This mission allows cadets to conduct planning



The company commander meets with the village sheik.

along multiple timelines and to coordinate with multiple units to support the mission.

Continuous Operations

One difference that stood out during the summer training of 2006 from previous summers was that operations were continuous. The regimental commander and staff managed all aspects of the cadet's summer. They organized training, events, and activities for downtime (what little there was). The staff conducted planning for all missions and training events and coordinated with eight company commanders daily during battle update briefs. The result was a summer training program that was run by cadets for cadets from the first day to the last.

Objectives

The objective is not to make the cadets experts in all of the tasks, but to place them in situations outside of their comfort zone and force them to make difficult decisions. The overall purpose of CFT is to train, instruct, test, and validate cadets on specific Basic Officer Leader Course I (BOLC I) tasks, military program required tasks, and the Chief of Staff of the Army's warrior tasks and drills—focused by the Global War on Terrorism within the contemporary operating environment.

The CFT, especially the second detail, exposes cadets to what they can expect to see when they graduate. They are pushed a little harder, hold more responsibility as cadet leaders, and learn techniques and procedures they take directly to the Army as platoon leaders.



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