



A 510th Human Resources Company noncommissioned officer gives an inbound briefing to Soldiers from the 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary) acting as role players for the training exercise Resolute Silver Scimitar.

Human Resources Training: Where Do We Go From Here?

In the absence of Silver Scimitar, a special troops battalion developed its own exercise to train its human resources platoons for an upcoming deployment.

■ By Lt. Col. Noah C. Cloud and Shawn C. Neely

For many years, human resources (HR) Soldiers relied on a two-week HR training exercise called Silver Scimitar to learn and improve the skills of their trade. But the annual exercise at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, was not funded, and the Forces Command has transferred deployment training responsibilities back to

sustainment brigades.

In March 2014, the 7th Sustainment Brigade transformed into the 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary) (TBX). By modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE), the new unit has no human resources operations branch, which normally provides HR expertise for sustainment brigades.

To overcome its lack of HR expertise and prepare for the deployment of two HR platoons and a theater gateway personnel accountability team (TG PAT), the special troops battalion (STB) of the 7th TBX conducted an exercise called Resolute Silver Scimitar, modeled after Silver Scimitar. In conducting Resolute Silver Scimitar, the unit

developed a possible method for future sustainment brigade-level HR training.

Planning the Exercise

The STB commander was no stranger to deploying HR units. Having attended two Silver Scim-

erational issues to incorporate into the MSEL and provide the most effective training possible. A realistic gateway mock-up and SMEs fresh from operations downrange lent a powerful dynamic to the exercise, but equally important was ensuring the physical layout of the gateway

the expertise necessary to mitigate the artificiality of notional roles is nearly impossible without recent operational experience.

These notional roles are significant to training realism because the TG PAT can manage on average more than 300 personnel from different organizations while deployed, including the HR platoons within the gateway.

Because the gateway director is a director and not a commander, the HR company commander reports to the STB commander, and the gateway director reports directly to the sustainment brigade commander. It is important to note that Paragraph 3-39 of Army Techniques Publication 1-0.2, Theater-Level Human Resources Support, completely misconstrues the operational relationships of the HR platoons, the HR company, and the TG PAT in a deployed environment.

The TG PAT is a headquarters element that is expected to assume operational control of whatever it finds when it arrives in theater. The new TG PAT MTOE reduces the director's grade from a lieutenant colonel to a captain. This creates problems when it comes to addressing operational issues with senior leaders and handling challenging field-grade passengers. The captain will have to call the brigade commander to deal with them, and that simply is not realistic.

The director must possess the technical expertise and sufficient rank to open a new theater gateway anywhere in the world and not just be able to fall in on a well-established operation.

Information Technology

One of the STB commander's biggest concerns was the lack of gateway information technology and Single Mobility System integration with higher headquarters. The battalion had to use email to replicate changes to flight schedules and gave out hard copy flight matrices.

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itar exercises to assess HR training, he knew he needed to build a realistic mock-up of the theater gateway in Kuwait and bring in outside support and resources to ensure success. His vision was to create a theater gateway replica to test all the processes, functions, and systems being used downrange.

In Kuwait, most large flights arrive after midnight and rotator flights come and go over the weekend. Few senior leaders get an accurate feel for the operational and leadership challenges involved with processing hundreds of tired and disgruntled traveling personnel. So for the exercise, having the right subject matter experts (SMEs) on site with relevant master scenario event lists (MSELs) to create realistic training was critical.

To gain the requisite SMEs, the STB reached out to the 138th TG PAT in the Indiana National Guard and brought in the director and his current operations integration cell noncommissioned officer-in-charge. Having just redeployed, their experience was significant as they reviewed the MSELs for relevance and provided pertinent operational feedback, guidance, and lessons learned throughout the exercise.

The 138th TG PAT director reached back to the current theater gateway director for real-time op-

accurately replicated operations.

A shortfall identified at Silver Scimitar at Fort Devens was the lack of separation between the inbound and outbound sections and the director. So, the inbound and outbound sections were built within a motor pool bay separate from the current operations integration cell and the gateway leaders' offices to create operational distance as a forcing mechanism for effective communication.

This separation also ensured the HR platoon leaders resolved MSEL injects on their own then executed appropriate reporting procedures to engage the TG PAT leaders, who helped identify and address communication issues during the exercise.

The distance between the PAT at Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait, and the rest of the gateway necessitated bus transportation that simulated the extensive distances traveled in Kuwait by personnel arriving and departing theater through the aerial port of debarkation and Ali Al Salem.

Making the Exercise Count

Because of the significant number of units and organizations that influence the theater gateway mission, many roles were notional and controlled by the SMEs. Providing

The lack of access to the Single Mobility System was a training constraint, and although information technology was an initial concern, actual systems training was completed prior to the culminating training event to make up for limited Internet access.

The Tactical Personnel System was still used to scan role players into and out of the notional theater during the exercise, and the use of separate role players from the 7th TBX proved to be an excellent addition.

Realistic Scenarios

At Silver Scimitar, the night and day shifts would rotate to play passengers in the scenario. But for Resolute Silver Scimitar, the TBX tasked more than 150 Soldiers to be passengers and execute the MSEL injects. This freed the HR company and the TG PAT to execute true 24-hour operations with day and night shifts and perform the requisite shift change briefs at 0700 and 1900.

MSELs were prepared for both shifts, and role players were carefully controlled by the HR company commander, who escorted them to each applicable training lane. This allowed for realism, exemplified by a staged fist fight between passengers that looked so realistic that the gateway personnel could not tell if it was real or part of the exercise.

The realism was accentuated by prior coordination with the post military police, who reacted to the notional 911 call and hauled the combatants off in handcuffs. The gateway leaders were subsequently evaluated on their response.

To further evaluate the gateway leaders, one of the overarching MSEL injects required the TG PAT to provide a capabilities brief to the brigade commander explaining how it would support an accelerated withdrawal from Afghanistan. The brief included an in-progress review that helped the current operations integration cell learn how to pro-

duce and modify products in a condensed timeline.

The 7th TBX commander observed and evaluated the TG PAT's progress, and the director had the opportunity to practice briefing her higher command. From the battalion commander's perspective, the exercise created the realism necessary to ensure deployment readiness while allowing him to assess areas where the TG PAT could improve during its road to war.

The Future Without Silver Scimitar

The concern moving forward for the adjutant general (AG) community is that the 7th TBX's exercise was based on the Fort Devens Silver Scimitar, which integrated SMEs who just came out of theater. Now that Silver Scimitar has come to an end so too has the means to distribute cumulative AG knowledge for the greater good of the entire corps.

One idea is to integrate standard requirements code (SRC) 12 units into combat training center rotations, but this cannot replace the power of Silver Scimitar. Without SMEs fresh from theater to help train the next generation of AG warriors, the experiential "brain drain" as veterans move back into the S-1 and G-1 lanes will have a devastating impact.

The recommended near-term solution is to continue reaching across the AG community and across service components to make use of the experience available while it still exists.

Force Structure Problems

The new HR company MTOE now includes one postal platoon for every HR company. One postal platoon cannot handle all the postal missions in any given theater of operations, which means HR platoons will continue to deploy separately from their parent companies to support the sustainment mission.

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command opportunities for experienced HR leaders, and trains modular units to support the sustainment community.

Too often we see HR company Soldiers stripped of their Electronic Military Personnel Office access, consequently unable to train to maintain military occupational specialty proficiency, and all the while we hear, "What does an HR company do in garrison? It has no mission."

This is equivalent to asking what an infantry or armor unit does in garrison. HR Soldiers, just like infantry, train in garrison. But in order to do so, the HR structure above the company level must be viable and have enough HR expertise to address and support the appropriate systems access and training needs. At this stage in the personnel services delivery redesign, it is clear that personnel service battalions will not return.

Another option to consider is consolidating all of our SRC 12 and SRC 63 units under three HR battalions (not personnel service battalions) with suggested locations at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Hood, Texas; and Fort Carson, Colorado. These battalions would focus on universal AG sustainment functions with an emphasis on the deployable modularity required to support the sustainment community.

The structure of these battalions is beyond the scope of this article, but an HR battalion would reenergize the AG Corps and provide units capable of meeting the Army's future sustainment needs while developing young AG leaders to perform at the level required in command billets.

AG Training Problems

One of the major issues AG has as a branch, and the underlying cause for its struggle to train units effectively, stems from its S-1 and G-1 mentality, which causes it not to be command-focused like the rest of the Army. Pluck an AG Soldier from the familiar comfort of his of-

fice and place him in a line company, and his learning curve is steep.

Experience shows a staggering difference in leadership requirements for NCOs and officers at the platoon and company levels when compared to an S-1 or G-1 shop. S-1 shops are not required to run a comprehensive maintenance program, maintain a property book, or understand the nuances of supply discipline, and they are not required to manage more Soldiers than what amounts to a regular squad.

The list of comparisons can go on, but the crux of our current dilemma is that AG Soldiers are not required to build unit-level training plans to support a mission essential task list (METL), and platoon leaders do not understand how to train to support the company METL. If our AG leaders do not fully understand how to train their formations, what can a sustainment brigade do?

This highlights the need for AG leaders not only to read Field Manual 1-0, Human Resources, but also to learn to properly plan, execute, and evaluate HR training in accordance with Army Doctrine Publication 7-0, Training Units and

Developing Leaders.

In that vein, where is our mission training plan for an HR company, and what does an HR platoon or company training and evaluation program look like? Who within the battalion or brigade evaluates them? Is it the human resources operations branches? Perhaps, but have they been properly prepared to train HR leaders? Not likely, given the way they are currently filled and used in garrison.

If we think about what we are asking our Soldiers and the sustainment community to do—certifying units for combat—it is a daunting task not required of any other branch in the Army. The danger is that HR becomes irrelevant in the sustainment community where higher commanders are willing to assume risk. Much like a catcher in baseball, it is not until the ball gets dropped that the position is truly recognized for its importance.

In a protracted war, we overcame our shortcomings by rotating deploying units through Silver Scimitar and through effective, mission-specific training during each unit's relief in place. With

Silver Scimitar no longer occurring, what happens after we withdraw from conflict and have no more reliefs in place?

The 7th STB at Fort Eustis, Virginia, had the benefit of having an experienced group of seasoned veterans who had rotated through Silver Scimitar at Fort Devens before setting up their own culminating training event. Even in this case, outside SMEs were required for success, and this should raise a great concern for the massive training gap in HR operations left in the wake of Silver Scimitar's demise.

There are many creative solutions to the current HR situation, and Resolute Silver Scimitar is just one example of how an STB trained its theater gateway and HR platoons for an upcoming deployment.

It also points out training and leadership development issues that will require significant shifts within the AG Corps. We recognize changes will not happen overnight, but perhaps this article will act as a catalyst to generate the discussions needed within the greater AG community.



A 510th Human Resources Company Soldier briefs inbound personnel at the 7th Special Troops Battalion's Resolute Silver Scimitar exercise at Fort Eustis, Virginia, in February 2014.

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