



## FEATURE ARTICLE: TRAINING FOR AFGHANISTAN



During this long war, the Marine Corps has been deploying battalion after battalion into war zones, in whole or in part, since 2001. As each month passes we hear nothing but praises about these fine warriors and we are so very proud of them. This article addresses how these individual Marine warriors, their leaders, and their commanders prepare themselves and their commands for the current, counter insurgency (COIN) conflict. There are many terms used today that were not used in earlier conflicts. *Follow Me* and our mean little friend, Sgt Oorah, will attempt to introduce them along the way.

### Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Warfare

To begin with, today's Marines prepare for kinetic and non-kinetic warfare. Mostly, in former wars, we prepared for and were engaged in kinetic wars, i.e., wars with constantly moving action or fighting. Warriors of earlier wars would most likely, while minimizing civilian casualties, "shoot first, ask questions later" or "take no prisoners". In today's war Marines prepare equally for non-kinetic warfare involving training foreign nationals, civic action, psychological operations (PSYOPS), and governance. Today, our men and woman have to know when an unarmed indigenous person is a threat or is not a threat. They have to know when an indigenous person armed with an AK-47 is a threat, a potential threat or is not a threat. Their determination on when they pull the trigger often must be made instantaneously. The consequence of being wrong could have international implications within hours. These decisions must be made by every deployed Marine interacting with the indigenous population. Their collective goal is to help the nation they are assisting to stand tall, defend themselves, and build into being a stronger ally free of terrorists.

Major Todd Sanders, who returned from Iraq in July 2009 and is now with G-3 Training at the 2d Marine Division headquarters, told *Follow Me* that there are three interrelated aspects of train-

ing used in preparing for deployment. They are: core competencies; deployment or theater-specific requirements; and the individual commander's design to training.

### T&R Manual

Sanders explained, "Core competencies are those offensive, defensive and expeditionary aspects of warfighting that, when possessed, the Marine knows that he is part of the 911 force—ready for battle." All deploying organizations use the Training and Education Command's (TECOM's) *Training and Readiness Manual*, simply referred to as "T&R". Subdivided into levels, the manual identifies capability requirements and standards for the individual Marine and all the way up to the Marine division. For example, at the "1,000 Level" there are skills required for the individual Marine, such as how to shoot a rifle and how to throw a grenade.

Deployment or theater-specific requirements include language training for all Marines, cultural awareness, and threat training. In Afghanistan, as the Taliban's explosive device threat evolves, our Marine Corps Engineering Centers (MCEC) at Courthouse Bay

and Camp Pendleton daily review unit "Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures" (TTPs) emanating from Afghanistan and adjust training immediately. *Follow Me* notes that the training packages used by the MEUs that conduct riverine and amphibious operations and deploy to the Mediterranean to work with Eastern European or African military units are obviously different than the ones used by units deploying to Afghanistan.

The third aspect of training addresses the individual commander's approach to gain the warfighting capabilities he believes he will need to have in the war zone. How are these three aspects of training pulled together?

### PTP

For infantry battalions, TECOM spells out the requirements in a Predeployment Training Plan (PTP). Other battalions have different war-training guides. The plan spans six to eight months from start to completion. The first 25% of that plan deals with individual training (rifle range, etc.) through squad tactics. Marines of the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines returned from Iraq in April 2009, and began individual training in June. *continued...*



A squad from 2/9 rushes into "Beckastan" at Camp Lejuene.

In July 2009 they began “buddy pair” or “pairs” training whereby two Marines learn to communicate orally and non-verbally under live-fire conditions. This is followed by squad-level training that incorporates immediate action drills, e.g., taking instant actions when ambushed.

According to Major Sanders, “Toward the end of that first 25% portion of the PTP, the Marines begin moving from the ‘scientific’ aspect of warfighting to the ‘art’ of warfighting wherein cultural training is introduced.”



Actor: Village Elder

During the second quarter of the PTP the focus shifts to making tactical decisions, platoon tactics and solidifying standard operating procedures (SOPs). The third quarter of the PTP focuses on theater-specific requirements and cultural awareness takes a more pronounced role. For example, a squad leader will be applying kinetic vs. non-kinetic logic to the problems he faces.

The final 25% of the PTP’s train-

ing is at the battalion level. Much of this takes place at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, 29 Palms under the evaluation umbrella of “Enhanced Mojave Viper” (EMV). This evaluation not only measures the battalion’s ability to conduct combat operations with combined arms and supporting attachments, but measures the cultural awareness, and individual Marine’s readiness for combat. (For example, did he shave that day? Did he brush his teeth?) EMV will determine if the battalion is trained, partially trained or not trained. Major Sanders told *Follow Me* that all battalion commanders leave enough time in their post-EMV, predeployment schedule to correct deficiencies. Finally, the Division, then the MEF, will certify that the organization is ready to deploy. Then, the battalion deploys.

*Follow Me* spent time with 2/9 in early April as the battalion had begun evaluating their platoon and company T&R requirements. We caught up with them at Lejeune’s “Mobile MOUT Facility, which they called “Beckastan”. Echo Company was “helo-trucked” into a landing zone near the facility the day prior, attacked into Beckastan to clear the town of insurgents and establish a relationship with the “Afghan” populace and support the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. They immediately set up a company-level operations center (CLOC) and a company-level intel center (CLIC), and then began COIN operations.



Actors: Afghan National Army soldiers.

### Actors

*Follow Me* was fascinated with the “actor” concept. All Marines undergoing training believe that actors add to realism. Those at Camp Lejeune were all US citizens or holders of 3-year Green cards and were employees of Defense Training System (DTS). They come mostly from Atlanta and Jacksonville, FL. They all speak good-to-very-good English, play various roles (the actors above are playing the part of Afghan National Army soldiers and were taking a break from joint patrolling with the Marines.) Below is an actor in a blue distash who was armed with an M-1 and was “killed” by a joint patrol.



Actor: Bad Guy

### LEPs

Equally interesting is the fact that most battalions have two law enforcement professionals (LEPs) attached to them. The LEPs join the battalion for a year (plus) at the start of the PTP cycle and deploy with the battalion. 2/9’s LEPs are former Charleston, South Carolina police investigator, Doyle Gibbs, and former Kentucky State Trooper, A.J. Waddle. With their vast experience, they know and teach the Marines about making drugs, smuggling, setting booby traps, etc. Below Doyle Gibbs explains that when a patrol enters this house, it



LEP Gibbs at opium making table.