

Running Head: Doing what is right, not what is required!

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Abstract

← Training for war (combat training) versus “other” training, has been and still is an ethical dilemma that has occupied me since I have joined the U.S. Army in 1984. With limited training resources and most important limited training time, how do we as NCOs and leaders prioritize what is more important? Is it the critical combat focused skills on the battlefield that allow our Soldiers to survive and defeat the enemy, or is it the hours of briefings and lectures consumed in a classroom listening to Equal Opportunity (EO), Prevention Of Sexual Harassment (POSH), and SAEDA, to name a few? I have had this other training pushed down my throat throughout my military career with absolutely no measurable impact on me personally or my duties as a Soldier. To sum it all up, it has and still is for me the biggest waste of precious training resources and time.

### My Issue

How do I prioritize the extremely limited training time with the multitude of requirements handed down to me by higher? I had the pleasure of working with an extremely intelligent captain in the past (my detachment commander) who had this same dilemma. We both were extremely frustrated with the external training demands placed on our Special Forces detachment, and one day we laid out a detailed training schedule covering the entire year. The results were eye-opening and shocking; in the end we had 14 scattered training days dedicated to “our” training, and the rest consumed by external demands. Our continued pleas to the chain of command to drop some of the external training requirements fell on deaf ears. All this important training was REQUIRED by the Army. Obviously what is not required by the “Army” is to be **proficient** in warrior tasks. As long as my range time gets cancelled and I get directed into a movie theater or gym to hear about another Soldier dying in a motorcycle accident half way around the world, the Army is sending me the message that my training is not important.

### Discussion

Now we are a country at war. All the Soldiers that I have had the pleasure of training have always mentioned the fact that I trained and focused on the important combat skills (shoot, move, communicate, and the “golden hour” of medicine). They also mentioned that the main reason they joined Special Forces was to get away from the “bullshit” and train realistically. These statements reinforce my belief that I am doing the right thing. I have not had to deal with most of the social issues that seem to be so “important” that they warrant employing specialized counselors and budgets, but I have dealt with combat, wounded, and dead. It is probably easier to understand my contempt for this type of training and why I would choose to place rounds in a

target on the range. Yes, I have intentionally ignored the “important training” to allow my Soldiers to focus on skills that give them a better chance at surviving combat.

How is it possible that our active duty units require three to six months to train-up to go to war? Shouldn't we (Army, Units, and Soldiers) be ready at a moments notice to deploy anywhere in the world? I believe that is the directive from the top to have a “quick and agile modular force”. I have been involved in four no notice deployments throughout my career (Somalia and three NEO's to Africa). No notice means just that and we deployed within hours of notification with full battle gear for any place in our area of operations. You better have all gear packed and pre-positioned ready to go! In order to get to this point, much planning and training has to take place. The right training!

How did I as a leader accomplish this? I learned that I had to take my unit away from the training distracters at base to other facilities. I learned to push the training limit, but never sacrificed safety. As a leader it is our responsibility to look out for the well-being of the Soldiers entrusted to us. That also means giving them the right skills in order to accomplish any mission they receive and return back unharmed. EO training and other Army required classes like spending hours taking on-line computer security and anti-terrorism programs, do not fall in the category of surviving as a Soldier on the battlefield. I believe the Army with all its “good intentions” and “knee-jerk reactions” has placed too many non-combat focused training requirements on its Soldiers.

The Army has entered into a new era of continuous operational commitments and is engaged in a wide variety of missions, ranging from peace keeping and stability operations to combat (full spectrum operations). The operational environment and requirements have changed much since 9/11, and the Army needs to change the way it trains and what it trains. Before we

went into Afghanistan and Iraq, I would say that the majority of units in the Army had not thrown a live grenade, conducted live-fire convoy operations, fired more than 40 rounds a year to qualify on their weapon, or conducted live-fire CQB/A-MOUT operations.

### **My Solution**

My solution to the rising requirements placed on leaders and Soldiers is a bottom-up approach to list training priorities. Leaders at the lowest level truly are more in touch and focused on the Soldiers and their training requirements than TRADOC. Every leader has the perspective from “their” level. More training time has to be allotted to the leader at the lower levels (squad and platoon). That is how we fight and that is how we must train. In other words the training calendar is **required** to reflect their training too.

### **Final Thought**

Every installation and all the way down to unit level are required to have EO certified/trained Soldiers, but have we required a Soldier to be CQB/A-MOUT certified/trained? I am amazed that the Army has not committed to resolve the issue of not having a TRADOC certified course for CQB/A-MOUT. It has been over 13 years since we have conducted these types of operations (Task Force Ranger, Somalia 1993) and the Army still has no course. Let’s give junior leaders the guidance and time they need to push the training calendar up, not force our requirements down to them.