



PEACEKEEPING FROM AN HHC PERSPECTIVE

By Captain Ralan Hill and Captain Kevin Stoll

The stability operations and support operations environment is a unique one that challenges engineer line companies and their supporting elements. Over the last decade, the American military has had increased involvement in nation-building and peacekeeping efforts, specifically in Bosnia and Kosovo. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the focus is on stability operations because of the continuing threats to soldiers who guard the perimeter, patrol outside the gates, and conduct sentry duties. The support soldiers most commonly found in a headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) face much different challenges. HHC commanders in stability operations and support operations environments have much greater flexibility than their maneuver or combat brethren when it comes to training, operations, and scheduling, and they should make the most of that opportunity. At issue are the female soldiers not found in line companies, the engineer reconnaissance team (ERT)

normally assigned to the intelligence section, partnership possibilities with allied units, and mission-essential task list training conducted while deployed.

An HHC commander's flexibility extends beyond normal 9-to-5 working hours and varies by section and military occupational specialty (MOS). For cultural reasons, female soldiers will be in much higher demand. They will be tasked to conduct personal searches of women in the local civilian populace, both at entrances to base camps and during cordon-and-search operations outside the wire. Ironically, these female soldiers, who are not allowed in combat arms branches, will likely be exposed to greater risks and see more of the host nation than their male counterparts with whom they share an MOS. In a combat engineer battalion, the HHC is the only company with women and consequently will bear the entire burden of these taskings. The lesson learned is that when drawing up the deployment roster, it is absolutely necessary to take as many females as possible—especially from the

lower enlisted ranks—since their unique qualifications will be in high demand. The mission rehearsal exercise, if conducted, must prepare the female soldiers for these tasks and the company must be prepared to backfill their normal duties through the cross-training of comparable male soldiers.

For the remaining male soldiers, the working environment will be almost like that in garrison. The battalion and company operations components will run continuous operations in shifts, but most other sections—such as maintenance, communications, and personnel—will work a more-or-less regular duty day unless their particular expertise is required outside the wire. The line companies work 24-hour operations with platoons or squads on 6-, 8-, or 12-hour shifts. While these line companies can be entirely consumed by shift work and patrols, an HHC can conduct Sergeant's Time Training and plan section-level, and even limited company-level, training. This additional training is productive for several reasons: First, the company

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improves proficiency in deficient mission-essential tasks. Second, the extra downtime normally associated with peacekeeping deployments is put to a productive end.

Mandatory schooling requirements also fit into the training scheme. While it may not be the case in Afghanistan or Iraq, in Kosovo it was much easier to find slots for required schools such as the Safety Officer Course, HAZ-11 and HAZ-12 Hazardous Cargo Certification, Logistics and Maintenance Supervisor Courses, and Small Arms Maintenance School. Being in a garrison-style environment while the line companies run 24-hour operations, HHCs derive a training benefit from being deployed that line companies do not experience. When deploying to such an environment, going in with a concrete and comprehensive training plan should allow the company to redeploy with a trained (T) rating in most mission-essential tasks.

The same reasoning applies to physical training (PT), which is easy to conduct six days a week as a company and individually by most soldiers in their off time. They do so to remain in shape and also because it helps alleviate boredom. Soldiers may spend too much time lifting weights in the gym and not enough time running or doing other cardiovascular activity, especially when the weather is cold and wet. But with appropriate supervision and planning, most soldiers' scores will increase an average of 20 or 30 points. This will match the fitness goals that should be set upon arrival in the country. Working these individual goals into a broader company goal will help keep soldiers focused and the company in shape. With the additional time, there is no reason not to schedule weight-training instruction, body fat composition assessment, nutrition counseling, and dietary supplement classes into the PT program. Incorporating these topics will ensure that soldiers learn from their chain of command (rather than from reading magazines), which should help prevent injuries and illnesses.

Some combat engineer battalions have an ERT composed of three to five soldiers, a noncommissioned officer, and some basic equipment. (See *Engineer* July 2002, page 47.) This element provides an even more critical and functional role in a stability operations and support operations environment. The teams conduct all the standard reconnaissance functions, especially route and bridge reconnaissance, which are often a critical aspect of the mission. Classifying and reclassifying bridges in the area will very likely become their primary mission. All the new infrastructure development that accompanies American military involvement in nation building makes this task ever-present. Invariably, each rotation wants to reconfirm the work of its predecessors and identify recently constructed or upgraded structures. The ERT represents the most effective and efficient tool for accomplishing this. Because the frequency of their trips allows them to recognize changes when they occur, ERT soldiers provide critical intelligence on the surrounding atmosphere and the feelings of the local inhabitants.

Soldiers in the ERT should become experts with the Javelin antitank missile, the Precision Lightweight Global Positioning System Receiver (PLGR), the

Single-Channel Ground-to-Air Radio System (SINCGARS), and all components of the engineer reconnaissance kit. Their training should include not only reconnaissance missions (bridge, road, airfield, and obstacle) but also infantry drills such as call-for-fire techniques and land navigation. The explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) company that is often attached to engineers during stability operations and support operations rotations offers an ideal opportunity to train the ERT. Sending the ERT as a second security force with responding EOD teams is a unique opportunity that benefits all involved and builds the engineer task force into a collective team. These soldiers will probably go outside the wire more often than any other team or slice element in the battalion.

This is in sharp contrast to most of the other soldiers in an HHC, who may be outside the wire only twice: for arrival and departure. The supporting elements of an engineer battalion will find themselves isolated on the base camp, and this can be a significant problem if not properly monitored. However, living and working in a host nation within a multinational task force can present myriad solutions to the problem. These solutions surface primarily in local humanitarian work and joint training with



Soldiers receive salutes from children at an elementary school in Kosovo.

other similarly deployed nations. Local humanitarian work comes in all levels of commitment and involvement that range from one-day trips to a locally sponsored school to projects that require months of cooperative planning with local professional organizations. Even in the rare instance when these missions do not produce immediate and tangible results, they are still “feel-good” missions that are a boost to soldiers’ morale and welfare.


Even with very little preparation, it is great to get off post, and doing so helps put a face on the American presence. Such a face is an immeasurable benefit to the overall message the military tries to send. In the fall of 2002, one of the most successful humanitarian work projects was the construction of a fence around an elementary school in Kosovo. After coordinating the project through the appropriate Kosovo force and local authorities, 16 soldiers, local relief workers, and students constructed a 100-meter-long, 1-meter-high chain-link fence around the school grounds. Actual construction time, in sporadic rain, was several hours, and the project culminated in good will, motivated soldiers, and a safer playground.

Partnership training with deployed soldiers from other allied nations—such

as Britain, Russia, Greece, or Norway—is another unique opportunity to take advantage of during stability operations and support operations. Unlike the humanitarian efforts that lack military training objectives, allied partnerships are useful as joint-operations planning and interoperability training events. We cross-trained with the Royal British Engineers based in Pristina and conducted various training events with a Russian sister unit from within the American-led multinational brigade. These events facilitated interaction between engineers of different nations and enforced the need for continued information and technology sharing.

In addition to the inherent benefits of additional engineer training, these events provide a valuable morale, welfare, and recreational benefit. Sharing stories, customs, and soldiering skills allows personnel from different nations to interact and derive the social benefits of a multinational event. Keeping these training events informal and allowing plenty of time for the soldiers to interact with one another paid huge dividends.

With all these possibilities, the HHC role in a stability operations and support operations environment is ripe with uncommon opportunities for training and

operations. The stresses are different from those in a garrison environment but still parallel that environment far more closely than in the line companies. By avoiding the line company mission-dictated shift schedule, it is possible to find exciting and innovative means of training soldiers, developing leaders, and evading boredom—all while accomplishing the mission at hand. 

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Soldier’s Creed

I am an American Soldier.

I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained, and proficient in my Warrior tasks and drills.

I always maintain my arms, my equipment, and myself.

I am an expert, and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.
