

NEWS FROM THE CTC

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Preparing the Brigade Engineer Battalion for the Joint Readiness Training Center



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Executive Summary

This article is intended for all units conducting home station training to prepare themselves for a combat training center (CTC) rotation. As the BEB prepares to deploy to the JRTC, a few points must be emphasized to ensure the organization as a whole is properly prepared to operate in the Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE). The author discusses a recurring trend at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) during each JRTC Leader Training Program (LTP). Task Force 5 briefs the brigade engineer battalion (BEB), focusing on battle command and staff planning, coordination, integration, synchronization, and execution of BEB-specific combat operations in the DATE. Since LTP usually occurs one to three months prior to a unit's JRTC rotation, it is usually too late to affect common training shortfalls and trend observations.

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During each Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) Leader Training Program (LTP), Task Force 5 briefs the brigade engineer battalion (BEB), focusing on battle command and staff planning, coordination, integration, synchronization, and execution of BEB-specific combat operations in the Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE). Since LTP usually occurs one to three months prior to a unit's JRTC rotation, it is usually too late to affect common training shortfalls and trend observations.

As the BEB prepares to deploy to the JRTC, a few points must be emphasized to ensure the organization as a whole is properly prepared to operate in the DATE:

Operationalize Reception, Staging, Onward movement, and Integration (RSOI).

- Ensure that the BEB's process is nested within the brigade combat team (BCT) concept of the operation.
- Define and develop reporting requirements and standards.
- Integrate external units and enablers, ensuring that their capabilities are understood and subject matter expertise is incorporated into the BEB's planning process.
- Define, establish, and maintain a common operational picture (COP), allowing the BEB commander to understand, visualize, and describe the building of combat power over time and to identify friction points during the RSOI process.
- Assign ownership of key portions of RSOI (e.g., mission command systems validation, MILES equipment installation and weapons zeroing, etc.).
- Establish a battle rhythm that enables shared understanding and facilitates the BEB commander to make adjustment decisions and provide further guidance.
- It is often mentioned at the JRTC that units cannot win the rotation during RSOI; however, they can definitely lose it if not properly executed.

Delineate the BEB fight.

- Establish a shared understanding of duties and responsibilities across the organization between the brigade and battalion staffs, liaison officers (LNOs), company headquarters and task force engineers.
- This topic is especially important as many BEB enablers directly support the BCT staff or maneuver task forces and are dependent on established command or support relationships.

Focus on transitions from RSOI to force entry operations to follow-on missions.

- The BEB must maintain mission command, battle rhythm events, and planning horizons during these critical transition periods.
- To enable collaborative and parallel planning, determine where the brigade will conduct its planning horizons, either in the tactical command post (TAC) or main command post (CP), and nest your staff accordingly when allocating assets with the BEB TAC.

- Often we observe unorganized entry operations and little to no detailed planning being conducted during transitions because the BEB TAC or Main CP were not properly manned or equipped to execute mission command and effectively conduct planning for follow-on missions.

When not attacking, defend!

- Due to its many functional and non-functional roles, this expression is especially true for the BEB; hence, the BEB should approach its JRTC force-on-force rotation as a 14-day tactical defense.
- From the initial occupation of its tactical assembly area (TAA), continued improvements on its defensive posture, including construction of protective obstacles and survivability positions, and emplacement of fighting positions and tactical obstacles, the BEB has a vested interest in accomplishing these tasks in an aggressive and competent manner. Some critical implied training tasks:

Crew-served weapons qualification to enable 24-hour combat operations.

- Anti-armor weapon and munition certifications/qualifications for Javelin, AT-4, and M4A1 SLAM. Ensure the Javelin CLU and batteries are operational.
- Munition certifications on M18A1 Claymore and M7 Spider. Ensure the Spider MCU and its associated batteries are operational.
- Night-time operations (i.e., use of NVGs and infrared lights) and associated certification annotated on Soldiers' operator license. Furthermore, use of the Lighting Kit, Motion Detector (LKMD) in infrared mode could enhance the unit's TAA defense during periods of darkness.
- Licensing on special equipment such as chainsaws would increase the BEB's counter-mobility capability.

I strongly encourage units to begin their interaction with Task Force 5 well before their scheduled LTP. Also, I want to emphasize the learning opportunities available to help units understand the employment of the BEB as well as echelon-above-brigade (EAB) engineer elements during CTC rotations:

Send key leaders and/or staff to the JRTC as Guest Observer, Coach, Trainers (OCTs)
Request a short Ride-Along with the Task Force 5 Team to gain first-hand experience during an actual rotation. Browse the numerous CALL publications that address common JRTC trends.

Task Force 5 is postured to assist your organization and improve Soldier readiness. Please contact us at (337) 353-8287 or (337) 208-3441 to coordinate a visit or request additional information.