HUMAN RESOURCES ADVANCED / SENIOR LEADERS COURSE 42A

FACILITATED ARTICLE #5

Challenges to Maintaining Readiness in a Deployed Environment – Man the Force and Personnel Readiness Management

January 2013

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Facilitating the Discussion

Facilitators can orchestrate discussions using the following questions to help choreograph group discussion/class participation. The sequence of the questions builds logically from a taxonomy point of view, i.e., a lower level of learning/thinking to a higher level of learning/thinking, by moving from comprehension of the material to a synthetic or evaluative discussion of the material. Facilitators should ask open-ended questions and allow the students to respond. Facilitators should also ask questions that cause students to interact. A facilitator’s goal should be ensuring that students do not participate in synthetic or evaluative discussion until confirming that the basic concepts and key points of the article are clarified and fully understood. Don’t forget to be patient after posing a question and use silence to your advantage. Lastly, remember it’s the facilitator’s job to include everyone in the discussion. Adapted from The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools, Richard Paul and Linda Elder, Foundation of Critical Thinking, 2001.

1. The main purpose of this article is _________________________________________.
   (State as clearly as possible the author’s purpose for writing the article.)

2. The Key question that the author is addressing is _____________________________.
   (Figure out the key question in the mind of the author when s/he wrote the article.)

3. The most important information in this article is _______________________________.
   (Figure out the facts, experiences, data the author is using to support his/her conclusions.)

4. The main inferences/conclusions in this article are _____________________________.
   (Identify the key conclusions the author comes to and presents in the article.)

5. The key concept(s) we need to understand in this articles is (are) _________________.
   By these concepts the author means _________________________________________.
   (Figure out the most important ideas you would have to understand in order to understand
   the author’s line of reasoning.)

6. The main assumptions(s) underlying the author’s thinking is (are) _________________.
   (Figure out what the author is taking for granted [that might be questioned].)

7. a) If we take this line of reasoning seriously, the implications are _________________.
   (What consequences are likely to follow if people take the author’s line of reasoning
   seriously?)

   b) If we fail to take this line of reasoning seriously, the implications are _________________.
   (What consequences are likely to follow if people ignore the author’s reasoning?)

8. The main point(s) of view presented in this article is (are) _________________________.
   (What is the author looking at, and how is s/he seeing it?)

9. Last and certainly not least, what’s the point of reading this article and how can it be applied
to our profession and for improving critical thinking?
Challenges to Maintaining Readiness in a Deployed Environment – “Man the Force and Personnel Readiness Management”

By MAJ Terry D. Brannan, Director, Human Resources Management Qualification Course (HRMQC), Adjutant General School

"Recently, there have been several public statements about the readiness of the U.S. Army. The Army has been at war for close to five years now and I am extremely proud of all of our Soldiers, civilians, and families. We have asked a lot of them, from repetitive combat tours, to transforming the Army, to expanding our training base, to resetting our combat equipment. Simply put, this is the finest Army this nation has ever put into combat. Our Soldiers’ collective efforts have been magnificent. I have testified to the facts about our readiness and I remain concerned about the serious demands we face."

-- General Peter J. Schoomaker, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, July 26, 2006

Without a doubt, the strains and stresses placed on the Soldiers and Families of today’s Army are at a very high level following almost seven years of continuous combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today’s challenges do not find easy comparison in any previous conflicts, whether in American history or elsewhere. The drafted Soldiers of the Great War, World War II, Korea and Vietnam knew that their obligations were complete once the war or their combat tour was over, never intending to serve a career with the Army. Today’s all volunteer force faces the difficult choice of 1) staying in the Army and continuing our relentless cycle of deployments, or 2) choosing to leave the Army in order to pursue other career goals, and get some much needed rest and time with Family.

An Army Public Affairs Release on September 13, 2006 reiterated the above quote by GEN Schoomaker from July 26, 2006, in direct reply to a September 13, 2006 report by US Representatives Murtha and Obey. The two Congressmen discussed the Army’s need to, “increase the number of Category IV recruits from 2 percent to 4 percent of the annual goal, and increase the percent of recruits who receive medical, moral, or criminal record waivers from 10 percent of the 2001 recruiting class, to 15 percent in 2005, and possibly as much as 18 percent in 2006.” 2 The Army PAO release containing the quote also countered that, “these specific recruits, qualified in every way except they score in the 15 to 30th percentile on our aptitude batteries, have and continue to make excellent Soldiers. Currently, less than 4% of our recruits are in this category, while in the 1980s approximately 10% of recruits were in category IV – and that is the Army that triumphed in Desert Storm. Furthermore, only about 25% of today’s American males are fully qualified to serve in their Army, yet more than 60% of our recruits score in the top 50th percentile.” 3 It is tempting to blame many of our readiness issues on these less-qualified recruits, however, S-1s still bear the responsibility to effectively manage unit personnel readiness.

My two previous assignments in the Army provided me the unique opportunity to observe unit personnel readiness from two ends of the Soldier pipeline. From July 2005 to August 2007, I served as the Operations Officer of the San Antonio Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS). From that MEPS, we shipped over 4,600 Army recruits to basic training each year. From September 2007 to Dec 2009, I served as the Brigade Adjunt/S-1 of the 10th Sustainment Brigade (SB) (with an assigned strength of over 2,500 Soldiers at Fort Drum, NY and over 4,400 Soldiers deployed in Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom 09-11.)

In the MEPS, we had the mission to ship qualified applicants off to basic training. As the Brigade S-1, I had the responsibility to get qualified Soldiers assigned to the brigade and maintain their readiness and availability for the brigade commander. The Soldiers assigned to the 10th SB during my S-1 time are the recruits discussed by Representatives Murtha and Obey and General Schoomaker. I will focus my observations, thoughts and opinions on the responsibilities of the unit S-1 and company commander to get a unit ready for deployment and the challenges of maintaining that readiness in today’s deployed environment.

A competent and diligent S-1 at the brigade and battalion level working to support dedicated and caring NCOs and officers at the company level, can take most assigned Soldiers and mold them into dedicated and ready Soldiers who live by the Army values. As defined by FM 1-0, Human Resources Support, the management of personnel readiness “involves analyzing personnel strength data to determine current combat capabilities,

projecting future requirements, and assessing conditions of individual readiness.”

4. As paragraph 3-9 points out, units must perform Personnel Readiness Management (PRM) on a constant basis. A unit cannot quickly overcome a large number of non-deployable Soldiers as “unforecasted losses such as those that result from administrative or legal actions or which result from medical issues can have a significant impact on unit readiness.”

5. As listed in paragraphs 3-17 and 3-18, brigade and battalion S-1s share these most important PRM responsibilities:

✓ Develop unit-level PRM policies and SOPs.
✓ Input timely and accurate Soldier personnel data, strength, and duty status transactions in eMILPO / RLAS / SIDPERS.
✓ Monitor and advise the commander on the personnel readiness status (current and projected) of subordinate units to include: key leaders, critical combat squads, crews and teams.
✓ Predict personnel requirements, based on current strength levels, projected gains, estimated losses, and the projected number of Soldiers and Army civilians returning to duty from Medical Treatment Facilities.
✓ Monitor losses (e.g., combat, non-combat, legal actions, medical, MOS Medical Retention Boards (MMRBs), Medical Evaluation Boards (MEBs), etc).
✓ Monitor and maintain visibility of non-available or non-deployable Soldiers, to include Rear Detachments.
✓ Manage Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) to validate individual readiness and ensure visibility through updates to appropriate systems and databases.
✓ Prepare the personnel portion of the USR to ensure unit personnel readiness is accurately reflected, identifies critical shortages, and establishes manning expectations.
✓ Ensure PRM is included in all OPORDs and OPLANs.

The best way to maintain readiness while deployed is to have a successful pre-deployment readiness system. This begins with an SOP detailing what steps the S-1 must complete prior to deployment. Paragraphs 3-33 to 3-43 of FM 1-0 detail the many pre-deployment readiness responsibilities of the S-1. Working with the Company Commander and First Sergeant, the S-1 will have a successful pre-deployment by focusing on the Soldier Readiness Program (SRP), individual Soldier readiness, legal preparedness, medical readiness and the Unit Status Report (USR). The key pre-deployment readiness steps are:

✓ Verify the non-available status of all Soldiers and update required databases as required.
✓ Initiate reassignment actions for Soldiers who will remain non-available for the duration of the

Once the S-1 has developed the PRM execution plan and SOP and coordinated with the company leadership, it is the duty and obligation of a Soldier’s company-level leadership to get their Soldiers ready. If all readiness efforts fail, the company leadership needs to inform the Army and the Soldier that the Army does not need them and they are not able to serve their country. The most common and useful tools available for this are: the bar to reenlistment, a flag, a chapter from the Army, the Evaluation Reporting System and counseling form.

There is a reason the Army focuses on the Unit Status Report (USR) at the company level. This is the level of leadership and organization with the most

5. Ibid., para. 3-9.
impact on an individual Soldier's readiness and willingness to deploy from their comforts of home and fulfill the daily mission of combat. It is at this level of applied leadership and discipline, with its team leader, squad leader, platoon leader and company commander, that the Soldier is trained, provided for, and made ready for combat. If genuine, hands-on, involved leadership and discipline are lacking at the company and Soldier level, you will not find unit or individual readiness. In that organization, you will find many problems and a unit that is just limping along, trying to make it.

Serving as a brigade S-1 is a challenging and rewarding experience for any type of brigade, but is most challenging in a Sustainment Brigade. A Sustainment Brigade is the most modular of all the brigades in today's Army, as the task organization of the brigade constantly comes and goes at company-level and below, even while deployed. Because of this reason, creating and maintaining readiness in Sustainment units is even more crucial at the company level. The Sustainment Brigade S-1 has no direct impact or oversight on the personnel readiness of most assigned units during a deployment, once the unit arrives in theater. Regardless of the type of brigade, the S-1 will best maintain combat readiness by focusing on the pre-deployment phase.

The chart below shows the reasons (by category, as a percentage of the whole) for permanent loss of a Soldier from the 10th SB, during a nine-month period of our deployment. Note that battle losses make up only 1% of the total causes, although our brigade spent the entire twelve-month tour providing support to the MND-Baghdad area of operations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Issues</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misconduct / Legal</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Progression</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Leave</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escort</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIA / Battle Loss</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three of the top four reasons (Pregnancy, Family Issues, Misconduct / Legal), for a total of 60% of the brigade’s losses from the battlefield, can be directly avoided through leadership and discipline at the Soldier and company level. 87% of these permanent losses were in the rank of Staff Sergeant or below.

The Army is not a social welfare system or a government jobs program. Only those who meet the eligibility requirements of Army Regulation 601-210 are qualified to enlist. Additionally, it is the Department of the Army's policy “that only those Soldiers who have maintained a record of acceptable performance will be offered the privilege of reenlisting within the Active Army or transferring or enlisting into the RC. Other Soldiers will be separated under appropriate administrative procedures or barred from reenlistment.” Army leaders at all levels bear the responsibility “to provide purpose, direction, and motivation to Soldiers.” While recognizing that people

come to the Army with their values and character already formed, the Army charges leaders with the responsibility of holding their subordinates to the highest standards and thereby spreading the standards and Army values “throughout the team, unit, or organization and ultimately throughout the Army.”

One of those standards relates to individual readiness as stated in the Soldier’s Creed, “I will maintain my arms, my equipment, and myself.”

When a Soldier does not meet the Army standards, “commanders must make maximum use of counseling and rehabilitation before determining that a Soldier has no potential for further useful service and, therefore, should be separated.”

In regards to maintaining individual readiness, the Army allocates a great deal of resources to assist each Soldier on this aspect of PRM. When the Soldier’s conduct, performance and lack of readiness do not meet the standard, the leader needs to notify the Soldier of their deficiencies. After all of these efforts have failed, counseling in preparation for an administrative discharge is required and sends a final warning to the Soldier: improve your performance and readiness or face discharge.

Sometimes leadership is not fixing the troubles of a problem Soldier, but telling them their time with the Army is done. A leader knows their Soldiers and mentors them to avoid unplanned pregnancies, misconduct and bad situations at home. It is imperative and crucial that NCOs lead, manage, and track the daily lives of their Soldiers.

The FY 2008-2010 Active Component Manning Guidance has a minimum assigned percentage of 95% at Latest Arrival Date (LAD) and 85% deployed strength for sustainment units and other deployed battalions, companies or detachments. This does not leave room for losing Soldiers while deployed to avoidable reasons. Through caring leadership and discipline, a leader can grow each Soldier in to someone the Army can proudly call its own. “Leaders who consistently enforce standards are simultaneously instilling discipline that will pay-off in critical situations. Disciplined people take the right action, even if they do not feel like it.”

The discipline we need to enforce in our Army is the discipline that knows, understands and embraces Army standards. It does not allow others to bring in a lower standard inconsistent with these values and morals. PRM exist to create and maintain individual and unit readiness, but PRM requires discipline from leaders and Soldiers for effective execution.

Beginning with enforcing all of the standards, all of the time, goes a long way in creating and maintaining readiness. The Soldier who greets NCOs and salutes all officers is the Soldier who will keep their affairs in order. This Soldier will have the discipline to avoid getting pregnant or contributing to a pregnancy during a deployment. They will have the discipline to keep their home and Family affairs in order, live up to the Army Values and stay out of trouble. Discipline is the moral courage of the leader to enforce these standards at all times. The Army does not have extra Soldiers in a company to afford the luxury that 60% of losses from a deployed unit will come from pregnancies, Family issues, misconduct or legal issues. It is challenging enough to recruit, train and maintain quality Soldiers to fight our wars without constantly having to replace those who could not stay ready due to poor leadership and lack of discipline. The effort a leader gives to a young, motivated Soldier will be significantly less than the effort required to deal with a Soldier who has not maintained the Army standards and its values.

So how did these recruits do during our deployment? In agreement with GEN Schoomaker’s comments, the collective efforts of the more than 8,600 Soldiers assigned to the 10th SB over the 12-month deployment were magnificent. As the Brigade Commander remarked at the transfer of authority ceremony, “the Muleskinner Soldiers have issued tons of food; supplied hundreds of thousands of cases of bottled water; pumped millions of gallons of fuel; managed and issued tons of ammunition; fixed a lot of equipment; moved a lot of stuff and drove over 3.5 million miles.”

The vast majority of our Soldiers and leaders are doing the right thing, each and every day. Every Soldier is important and must realize they have responsibilities to get ready and stay ready for combat. Our proud Army deserves this effort.

10th Sustainment Brigade S1 Section deployed to Iraq, December 2008

10. AR 635-200, para. 1-16.
12. Ibid., para. 7-52.