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Army Reserve premier exercise, CSTX, continues to evolve during McCoy training

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The Combat Support Training Exercise (CSTX) hosted by the 86th Training Division (TD) at Fort McCoy has undergone an evolution in recent years, but most of those changes have taken place in the past two years.

This year's two exercises in July and August were evidence of those changes.

These changes are designed to change an Army Reserve Soldier's training to resemble a peer-to-peer competitor battlefield instead of an insurgent battlefield. The previous model of training focused on an established area of operations or a forward-operating base as well as stability operations including nation building, infrastructure improvement, and defending themselves against small team of insurgents and improvised explosive devices. This focus has shifted in the past two years with the use of tactical assembly areas (TAA), allowing more staging and moving forward into kinetic operations.

"Instead, units have to come out here like its brand new property, brand new land, brand new battlefield space. They have to be tactically sound in their movement; they have to practice the fieldcraft of occupying an assembly area, defending themselves, (and) being able to establish communication with their higher headquarters and adjacent units and subordinate



Photo by Staff Sgt. Robert Larson/181st Multi-Functional Training Brigade

A Soldier deployed to Fort McCoy for Combat Support Training Exercise 86-19-04 participates in a training scenario Aug. 13 on the installation's South Post.

units; and then (they) ultimately be able to perform those collective tasks in which their specific units would be assigned," said Col. Richard Smested, deputy commander, 86th TD.

Each military occupational specialty begins its collective tasks as at any other CSTX, but with the idea that the threat is real.

"All (Soldiers operate) under the idea that at any given time they may have to defend themselves in an environment where they don't know exactly where the enemy is or how active — or as we say, kinetic. The battlefield may actually be in the next one to 24 hours," Smested said.

Austerity is another measure the 86th TD uses to shift the ideas of battlefield operations.

"I think you notice (austerity) because we force it. You give them locations that aren't so spacious, in a sense, and you make them get into the woods and the weeds a little bit," said Command Sgt. Maj. Doug Dieckman, senior enlisted adviser, 86th TD.

The 86th TD also uses austere operations to work with units to expand their planning skills.

"We as an Army are weak in our fieldcraft, and in order to bring our rotational training units into a position of being better at fieldcraft, we had to start with the planning process, enabling them in being more engaged in planning their movement to an austere environment and owning it," said Col. Tamara Ardent, chief of staff, 86th TD. "The change with CSTX is that we used to do a lot more of the planning and dictate this is where you're going in the field. Now, in the planning process, we give them an area of operations, and they analyze the terrain and identify where they best would be suited to set up their tactical posture in the field environment."

But, Dieckman also said forcing that change — while increasing the tactical advantage — is not all that needs to be done.

"People are understanding what austere means more and how (to) take advantage of where I'm at to provide some cover and concealment so I don't have to create it. So, taking advantage of their surroundings, I think that's better," said Dieckman. "The message about being austere and the where part of it, kind of what it looks like, I think is more clear, but now it's developing security, getting your communications established and going from there."

The 86th TD also works into the scenario a time for units to "jump TOC" (tactical operations center) or move their entire operation to another location on the battlefield. This is another opportunity for Soldiers to learn to move and conceal themselves better.

"Iteration two when we jumped people, ... the TAAs looked much better, much more concealed. They've got concertina wire set up (and) they're fortifying their area, so having them jump their TOC and occupy a new TAA is huge for learning, and it gives them an opportunity to make corrections on their deficiencies and educate their Soldiers on what it actually means," Dieckman said.

All of these changes work together with another transition — a linear battlefield.

"One of the things that's also a little different is we've returned to what we used to call more of a linear battlefield where we have a clear identification of where the forward



Photo by Master Sgt. Michel Sauret/U.S. Army Reserve Command

Lt. Gen. Charles D. Luckey, commanding general of U.S. Army Reserve Command, talks to troops in the field Aug. 14 during Combat Support Training Exercise 86-19-04 operations at Fort McCoy.

edge of the battlefield is. ... We have brigade combat teams that are notional in front of our units who are at this exercise, and this exercise is really occupying a core support area and understanding that we've got combat forces in front of us who are engaged in a more force-on-force type of battle," Smestad said. "Which is different than what we did in the past. That was more of an asymmetrical warfare where we could have enemy forces or insurgent forces anywhere on the battlefield, and there was no such thing as the front edge of the battle or a forward part of the battlespace. We're trying to get back to more of what we would have called the more traditional land warfare."

The changes to the battlefield continue to evolve, but there have also been other changes to operations. One of these was the inclusion of a senior trainer, which began two years ago.

The senior trainer is part of the training unit's chain of command and therefore has more authority and pull with the unit, Ardent said.

"The inclusion of the senior trainer ... has had significant benefit in that the senior trainer is really looking at the

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Airport seizure training adds to capabilities of Fort McCoy

STORY & PHOTO BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

When special operations Airmen with the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron of the Kentucky Air National Guard at Louisville conducted an airborne-insertion jump at Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport on July 16 during the Patriot North 2019 exercise, the action confirmed a training capability long planned for at the installation.

Three Airmen completed the jump in a scenario aimed at airport seizure that would lead to the establishment of an air hub to receive supplies by military airlift aircraft, such as the C-130 Hercules and C-17 Globemaster III.

As the training event unfolded, Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security Director Brad Stewart was nearby to watch.

"For Fort McCoy, the greatest outcome of this training was it

was the first time in Fort McCoy history that anyone remembers a unit conducting airport seizure operations at our very own Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport," Stewart said. "It's another first in Fort McCoy's history among many others that have happened in the last 10-15 years."

Nearly five years ago, Stewart said, he and other members of his directorate had talked with leaders of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division about paratroopers conducting similar airport-seizure training. While the training with the 82nd has not formulated yet, the Patriot North training scenario brought the capability to fruition, Stewart said.

"Having the flexibility to offer a real training environment to conduct this mission is extremely beneficial to any military force that wants to do that," Stewart said. "We can work in collaboration with the Wisconsin Air Guard at Volk Field to also do



Special operations Airmen with the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron of the Kentucky Air National Guard at Louisville conduct an airborne insertion jump at Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport on July 16 at Fort McCoy.

this. That means we could possibly provide two locations in this area where a unit can train on operations on how to seize an airport and to start bringing in supplies for either stockpiling or for supporting forces already in theater."

Any time the U.S. military deploys, Stewart said, those troops have to have a location via either a sea port or airport to receive more supplies

to support forces and to bring in follow-on forces.

Training scenarios featuring airfield seizure have been done at Fort McCoy's Young Air Assault Strip by special operations troops in the past, but seizing the airport area has not been done because a lot more goes into coordinating it.

"We have to issue a restricted FAA notice in order for the air space

to be open to allow the paratroopers or other personnel to jump in. This action is to ensure they will not collide with something in the air," Stewart said. "Airports by nature are usually very busy, so giving troops that training opportunity is rare. But, it can be done here. They can come here to train like they fight."

Lt. Col. Ashley Nickloes, deputy exercise director for Patriot North 2019, said the exercise planning team always enjoys the capabilities that Fort McCoy provides.

"A lot of people do not realize what Fort McCoy and Volk Field bring to the area and to the Guard," she said.

"(Fort McCoy) is a unique training area that allows us to have so many different training venues to train so many troops."

More airport seizure training opportunities are likely part of future training operations at the installation, Stewart said.

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defensive posture and doing the coaching and mentoring from that chain of command from the rotational training units so that has also had an impact on their proficiencies as they go through the exercise in respect to austerity," she said.

This inclusion allows the 86th TD to focus on the exercise as a whole and not individual Soldiers.

"The senior trainer has provided a solid avenue of mentoring and coaching that the platform really did not have the ability to do," said Arendt. "It allows us, the 86th to really focus on providing a quality exercise, a smooth running operation."

Another change integrated into the platform is an expanded supply chain. In 2018, CSTX had a satellite location at Camp Ripley, Minn., that units at Fort McCoy were tasked to supply. This year a fuel operation was included called Northern Strike.

"Even in the planning process, ... everyone has a more challenging experience to develop a plan to support that type of operation," Arendt said. "Not only for (those of) us planning the platform is it more difficult, but for all the units in the exercise that have to be integrated, it's more difficult because there's a distance that they're not used to, and there is the reality that things need to be pushed in order for people to have what they need on the other end. That makes it truly real."

Supplying a unit from a distance, like Camp Ripley, trains for real-world issues that units have to work to fix.

"It taught everyone to do their job better because we had live complaints and live problems," said Arendt. "It's not just a quick

fix because you can't just bop over to the next TAA on Fort McCoy and fix it. ... What I'm trying to say, in a nutshell, is it stressed the supply chain, and it stressed all of the units' understanding of the importance of all of their systems. It's really the only place I think in the United States Army where we can test an extended supply chain operation."

The Northern Strike mission not only provided real-world delivery of fuel to Michigan but also allowed the Soldiers to experience a mission beyond the confines of Fort McCoy, giving them more robust and realistic training. It also provided training to establish trailer transfer points and still be provided engagements from opposing forces.

"If you think about the distance, that was a true training mission for our transportation units," Arendt said. "They were literally in civilian traffic hauling a commodity, and it was a distance. Again, the transportation company here going 5 miles on Fort McCoy is different than going 100 miles, 200 miles through tolls. It's good training."

For the August CSTX, the 86th TD developed a proof of principle for a 21-day noncontiguous exercise. The boots-on-ground time was cut to 15 days, but commanders were given an additional six days to complete training they felt they needed.

"It is going to be much more compressed, so the efficiency and the effectiveness of our training time really needs to be ramped up and used to the benefit of the Soldier, even more so," Smestad said.

Main reasons for this change are to reduce strain on employers and to provide Soldiers more concentrated training.

"Twenty-one days is a long time, and it's a stress on Reserve Soldiers at large. It's a 21-



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

Service members at Fort McCoy for training in the 86th Training Division's Combat Support Training Exercise 86-19-04 drive military vehicles in a convoy Aug. 20 on South Post at the installation.

day exercise when really their employers are committed to 14 days. Obviously our Reserve Soldiers step to the plate many places, but the strain on us alone on providing a 21-day exercise means we're here early and stay late. It's just a strain," Arendt said. "Secondly, I think if done right, ... the condensed exercise (will) be able to create a more intense scenario."

Units will lose two days on arrival and departure times for the exercise as well as two days on the field training exercise. This means they will have less time to prepare to enter the field and less time to pack upon leaving the field.

The removal of those six days will really ramp up the units' timelines and, Arendt said, create more proficiency where the Army needs to improve.

"One would like to think the 15-day exercise

would give a more intense environment for units to actually come in, move to the field, ... establish their operations, move their operations and then move again to redeploy that they're going to learn more about what I think is a key lost art: Mobility for the core support area," Arendt said.

"We need to be a mobile force. If we were ever to face a near-peer competitor, it will be a moving battlefield, and the core support area needs to train for intensity and movement," she said.

"Units have to get more proficient at establishing their operations quickly, getting their job done, tearing it down quickly and moving. That's what I hope we see in a 15 day (exercise), an increased intensity that actually gets us closer to what we need to be training for."

Multiservice medical personnel build skills during training

STORY & PHOTOS BY AIMEE MALONE

Public Affairs Staff

Multiservice medical personnel got hands-on training at multiple exercises that took place in August at Fort McCoy with assistance from the installation's Medical Simulation Training Center (MSTC) and Regional Training Site (RTS)-Medical.

Global Medic is an inter-service training event that provides opportunities for military medical personnel to improve their proficiencies in realistic training environments while combining forces with other service branches and national armies, according to the Army Reserve. It ran in conjunction with Patriot Warrior and Combat Support Training Exercise 86-19-04 at Fort McCoy, bringing in service members from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and international partners.

The MSTC provides state-of-the-art medical training for both medical and nonmedical personnel, ensuring highly educated, innovative, and adaptive Soldiers.

RTS-Medical is one of three regional training sites available to units in the Army Reserve. The staff members specialize in teaching units how to set up and run all aspects of a combat support hospital (CSH). Soldiers are expected to be able to get a combat support hospital (CSH) running on their own, moving the equipment to the site and building the hospital from bare ground.

RTS-Medical also provides medical training dummies that can simulate patient responses and live-weight dummies that allow service members to recreate the experience of evacuating and treating injured personnel in the field. RTS-Medical staff members train service members in moulage, the art of applying mock injuries for the purpose of training emergency response teams and other medical and military personnel, to add to the realism of the exercise.

RTS-Medical staff members have studied at the same makeup schools as Hollywood artists, said Col. Cynthia Hopkins, site director for RTS-Medical, in a 2018 article.

"Their injuries look extremely realistic," she said.

Cpl. Katie Spencer with the 865th CSH, based in New York, spent most of her time at a CSH set up at Integrated Tactical Training Base (ITTB) Liberty, learning how to treat patients and manage medical procedures. Operating in an ITTB allows units to simulate the unpredictable nature of a deployed environment. She said Global Medic was a great experience and helped her learn a lot.

"I learned how to do two types of intubation," she said. "We learned how to unload and treat (patients) from a Blackhawk. We learned how to do FAST (focused assessment with sonography in trauma) exams and ultrasounds."

The hands-on experience really helped her feel confident about the skills she's learning, Spencer said. She said she feels much more confident about using her medical skills in a real-world scenario.

"So I've learned about intubations in classrooms ... but we never actually got to try it," she said. "This is great because you touch it and you see it on the screen."

"You also have people here to help you," Spencer said. "I was scared to do it at first."

Having both instructors and more experienced personnel on hand to first show her the proper process and then correct her methods if needed helped a lot, she said.

Overall, Spencer said, Global Medic was a great training experience.

"Every day, I was excited about learning something else," she said.

Global Medic participants also interacted with personnel and training scenarios in CSTX 86-19-04 and Patriot Warrior, including aeromedical evacuations. Patriot Warrior allows Airmen the opportunity to train with both joint and international military partners in airlift, aeromedical evacuation, and mobility support, according to the Air Force. CSTX provides Soldiers with an austere, realistic, tactical environment to achieve, improve, and sustain critical premobilization readiness.



Navy medical personnel apply moulage to medical dummies during operations Aug. 16 for Global Medic 2019 at a Regional Training Site-Medical facility at Fort McCoy.



Army medical personnel apply care to a simulated patient Aug. 20 during a Global Medic 2019 training scenario at a training combat support hospital on Integrated Tactical Training Base Liberty on North Post at Fort McCoy.

Patriot Warrior: More than an exercise

BY STAFF SGT. CHRISTOPHER MORRIS

4th Combat Camera Squadron

More than 600 Air Force Reserve Airmen from 42 installations descended upon three different military installations during Patriot Warrior 2019.

Fort McCoy served as the primary exercise site, while Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Ga., and Minneapolis-Saint Paul Air Reserve Station, Minn., acted as support locations.

The exercise is the Air Force Reserve Command's (AFRC) premier exercise, according to AFRC. It affords Reserve Airmen the opportunity to train with both joint and international military partners in airlift, aeromedical evacuation, and mobility support.

Incorporating more than 67 career fields, the exercise builds the strategic depth and accelerates the readiness of the Air Force Reserve command by testing individual Air Force Reserve units in numerous real-world scenarios. Starting from a bare-bones location, service members stood up a fully operational base, equipped with mobile hospitals that accept simulated patients flown in on military aircraft. Over the course of 19 days, Airmen worked alongside Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and international service members to accomplish command and control operations, air drops, explosives training, patient care, and logistics operations.

"Patriot Warrior is a great exercise because it gives us realistic scenarios that we might actually face," said Staff Sgt. Ashlee Rodriguez, radio frequency transmission systems craftsman with the Air Force Reserve's 433rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas.

Patriot Warrior simulates wartime activities in austere environments, which present unique challenges for participants.

"You definitely have to be resourceful," said Rodriguez. "Things don't always go as planned, so we often find ourselves having to think outside the box and use resources in unconventional ways to accomplish the mission."

Patriot Warrior also demonstrates the lethality of the Air Force Reserve command while providing top-notch training to Reserve Airmen.

"This exercise definitely helps us put our skills to use," said Maj. Kubwimana "Moses" Mhayamaguru, a flight surgeon in the Air Force Reserve's 943rd Aerospace Medical Squadron at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

"What I looked forward to is the interactions with the aeromedical-evacuation teams and actually getting patients from the teams and getting them on the aircraft, with the pieces of the puzzle in place, just like a deployed location."

Patriot Warrior was held Aug. 6-24.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Chris Hibben/4th Combat Camera Squadron

Two Army HH-60 Blackhawks come in for a landing behind a C-17 Globemaster III during Patriot Warrior operations Aug. 17 at Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport at Fort McCoy.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher Dyer/4th Combat Camera Squadron

Air Force Reserve Airmen and British Royal Air Force members participate in a litter carry obstacle course Aug. 20 at Fort McCoy during exercise Patriot Warrior.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Chris Hibben/4th Combat Camera Squadron

Airmen and Soldiers load simulated patients onto a C-17 Globemaster III during Patriot Warrior operations Aug. 17 at Sparta-Fort McCoy Airport.