

The ABC(t)s of Training in Poland

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with

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The United States Army's units develop and execute training and training scenarios within the infrastructure of their home station in the U.S., an environment that enables training within the confines of published doctrine and policies. One of the primary doctrine sources is the U.S. Army's Training Circular (TC) which covers specific training evolutions for specific components, facilities and/or events. As rotational deployments to both Europe and Asia have increased in recent years, units find themselves conducting training in foreign countries, using ranges and land in locations that fundamentally lack the range infrastructure found on U.S. Army installations. While some of these locations reside within developed nations, their range size, location and infrastructure vary as do their policies and rules governing its use. Adhering to the published TCs as they are written, within the familiarities of stateside installations, adds a degree of difficulty in accurately forecasting resources, reserving facilities and ultimately achieving collective training objectives forecasted at the beginning of a rotation. Looking back, the Pacesetters of 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team recount improvements during the planning phases, use of opportunities and many of the nuances they navigated during their 2024 rotation to Poland. While much of their experience is related to their location, common themes emerge that may assist other units conducting rotations across the globe.

Background and Build-up

In January 2024, the Iron Brigade completed not only its pre-deployment site survey (PDSS) to Poland but also its final—yet still tentative—nine-month training calendar for the upcoming rotation in support of Operation European Assure, Deter and Reinforce (OEADR). As a part of this collective product, the Pacesetters established their live fire training gates in a progression that saw the beginning of the rotation devoted to individual and crew-served weapons. This was followed by Artillery Table (AT) V and AT VI and progressed through the summer into platoon live fires (AT XII) and battery live fires (AT XV) culminating in AT XVIII just prior to October 1st, 2024. From those in the Iron Brigade who also completed the 2022 rotation to Poland and the observations from the PDSS, the Toruń national forest that serves as a training area, although not nearly as large as Fort Carson, provided the necessary space and resources to complete AT XV. However, AT XVIII was an aspirational goal especially given one of the batteries would be located off site and under the operational control of the American battalion headquarters of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Battle Group Poland.

The Reality of Time

Nine months on a rotational deployment appears to be an ample amount of time to conduct a large amount of individual and collective training. However, it is important to incorporate all known land and range restrictions, enhancements and blackout periods to truly gain visibility of available range days under the host nation's policy. For the Pacesetters, the first month was dedicated to equipment download, inspection and configuration to complete the required "Fit to Fight" tasks similar to the integration portion of reception, staging and onward integration conducted during a Combat Training Center rotation. The last 60 days were devoted to redeployment activities. For a total of two months, the training areas were closed to conduct range maintenance, and host nation range closures for holidays equaled roughly 15 days. Quickly, the nine months we templated to train condensed to approximately four months. Adding in over 50 different competing host nation units utilizing the same land and other NATO exercises, the Pacesetters original training glide path drastically altered. Understanding how the host nation manages its training and ranges areas, specific blackout periods and how these aspects vary by season was not something the Pacesetters

gained during the depth of winter during the January 2024 PDSS. Grasping these details before departing for a rotational deployment will drastically enable staff to better understand the operating environment and manage training expectations and end states.

Individual Opportunities

Commanders at the company, troop and battery level have a unique opportunity to maximize individual training. The infrastructure in Poland enabled individual and crew-served weapon qualifications; Expert Infantry, Soldier, Medic Badge (E3B) preparation training; and drivers training. With a little creativity, there is a preponderance of time and resources that can be maximized to facilitate training events that enable Soldiers to excel at their individual skills. Having company, troop and battery level commanders that have a tentative plan to train on individual skills and qualifications prior to arrival enables them to further build out a rigorous individual training plan.

TC 3-09.8: The Artillery Training Bible

While operating in Poland, adhering to the TC became difficult respective to collective training. The TC briefly references encountering deviations:

“Deviations from certification and qualification requirements based on Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops & Time Available (METT-T) and TC 3-09.8 drive conversations between Commanders to identify risk and reduction measures.”

The inherent risk and challenge are that different commanders see risk and reduction measures differently. Additionally, in the chapters covering qualification, for example chapter 11, “Battery Collective Field Artillery Tables (AT XIII-XV)”, broad expectations are outlined such as complex, demanding, etc. ideas that feed how training will be executed, which also can be seen differently from commander to commander. Examples of curtailing some missions due to munitions, ranges

and resourcing between dry certifications and live qualifications covers unique missions like Family of Scatterable Mines (FASCAM) and Excalibur that remain in TC 3-09.8 strictly for the training value provided primarily to the fire direction centers and the gunline.

However, once in Poland, the Pacesetters encountered further restrictions that required deviation from TC 3-09.8 in order to complete live fire gates within the confines of the training area and with available munitions on hand. One improvement to TC 3-09.8 is the incorporation of additional metrics for units in austere environments with prescribed minimum missions, injects and stressors that can reasonably be achieved outside of contiguous U.S. facilities. By providing these recommended minimums, TC 3-09.8 better informs commander-to-commander dialogue that directly aids in the planning, resourcing and assessing of training objectives. These measures ensure that live fire qualifications meet the recommended training minimums for any locations around the globe.

AT XII and AT XV in Poland

Stress on the host nation’s infrastructure became apparent once the Pacesetters began collective training. While specific issues are directly related to live fire training in Poland, understanding that the “devil is in the details” is simply the first step to understanding the initial plan will change and, in some cases, change often. Flexible plans that account for changes are a best practice as is the willingness to reframe the overall desired training end state. Next, understanding your rotational deployment before departure will allow for identification of friction within the operational environment. For the Pacesetters, the first deviation from TC 3-09.8 occurred during AT XII due to the size of the national forest that served as the training area. The imagery below (Figure 1-1) shows the authorized firing points within the Toruń training area. Firing point 10 was approximately 300 meters wide, and firing points 20 and 25 were less than 250 meters. TC 3-09.8’s definition of a complex and demanding qualification within these constraints became increasingly difficult to obtain; because of this, the first round of commander-to-commander dialogue began.



Figure 1-1. Imagery of the authorized Firing Points within the Toruń Training Area. The image is oriented North.

As the Pacesetters transitioned from platoon to battery level training, the issue of the size of available training land became an even bigger planning factor to navigate.

The Polish provided range support's availability became an issue that was carefully monitored within the overall qualification lanes. Range cold and hot times, movement windows tied to these times, general times allocated to occupy within the training areas and civilian traffic throughout the training areas dictated when and how qualifications were executed. A qualification that traditionally lasts longer than a 24-hour period was drastically reduced to meet range availability times. These variations that contradict expectations in the TC 3-09.8 generated additional commander-to-commander dialogue.

Lastly, host nation's restrictions for munitions employment affects the nature of the live fire in addition to ammunition availability through Department of Defense stocks within a given region or area or responsibility (AOR). These two major factors directly relate to the type of live fires units conduct. In case of the Pacesetters, the Toruń national forest doubles as a training area, and

live fire restrictions and fire categories based on relative humidity are dictated by the Polish Forest Service. Even the Polish Army must comply with the direction of the Forest Service, and responsible individuals can face severe personal fines for any damage or loss of timber due to negligence or disregard for restrictions. Upon arrival in Poland, the Pacesetters were informed that illumination and smoke rounds were banned from use in the Toruń training area. After several cancellations of live fire ranges following several dry and arid days, the Pacesetters began to look at creative ways to ensure their future live fire ranges could go as planned. During a meeting with a Polish brigadier general, the Pacesetter leadership presented the idea of an exception to the no live fire restriction during Fire Category IIIB if the 155mm ammunition was only the M1122 training rounds (concrete or liter round) instead of M795 or M107 high explosive (HE) round. The M1122 has one-seventh the explosive ordinate of the typical M795 HE round, reducing the potential for fires. The general agreed to champion the idea and although an approval did not come back during the Pacesetters' rotation, it demonstrates an example of the creative thinking with a willingness to use relationships to find acceptable solutions that work within the host nations' existing policies and operating procedures.

Figure 1-2 below is an excerpt from TC 3-09.8 showing total smoke and illumination rounds to be fired during an Artillery Table XV.

Total HE	166	166	83	83
*** Total WP / SMK	22	(12 WP / 10 Smk)	11	(6 WP / 5 Smk)
Total ILLUM	34	(24 III / 10 IR III)	17	(12 III / 5 IR III)

Figure 1-2. Artillery Table XV (ABCT) Compos I and II Class V quantity per TC 3-09.8

Through discussions, the Pacesetters were fortunately able to conduct the required smoke and illumination missions using dry fire following the Polish restrictions, but once again, commander's assess risk and reductions measures differently. In this case, the commander approving the live fire qualification for AT XV using dry fire for smoke and illumination missions.

Logistics

Unlike the firing batteries, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery (HHB) and F Company (the

Battalion Forward Support Company) encountered a variety of unique challenges. The Pacesetters were dislocated from any other maneuver unit. However, the parties involved, from sensor to shooter, naturally came together to execute the kill chain. Due to individual and differing missions of the battalions within 3ABCT, 4ID, detailed planning across battalions and multiple touch points enabled fire support teams (FiSTs) to conduct movements within Poland to support the Pacesetters' artillery table progression. Additionally, host nation requirements necessitating radar observation as a secondary means posed additional coordination measures between the respective batteries where fire was conducted. Maintaining systems that require a field service representative (FSR), in this case radars, become more thorough when FSRs are located in adjacent or distance counties, as many FSRs are regionally aligned within the overall AOR.

F Company encountered the distances between units and additional aspects of detailed coordination required within Poland for the movement of Class V (ammunition) and Class IX (repair parts). While commercial vehicle and/or commercial line haul via a civilian freight carrier enabled a reprieve from the very tedious and nuanced paperwork and long lead submission times, these factors became a constant when developing the planning timeline for live fire artillery tables. The requirement of march credits to allow U.S. military tactical vehicles to move classes of supply over civilian roads required dutiful monitoring of necessary approvals to be received and approved on time as requested. Furthermore, understanding additional road requirements for the specific country facilitated better ease of use upon arrival. Poland requires ADR certification (the agreement of September 30th, 1957; concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by road) for fuelers and any vehicles that would transport hazardous materials. The Pacesetters completed the necessary modifications to seven of distribution platoon's palatized loading system vehicles, providing the distribution platoon and others with a number of organic vehicles to transport bulk hazardous materials. However, while it is important to understand the level of detail specific to Poland, not all the Polish processes and requirements were the same in other European Union and/or NATO countries. Aligning an intelligent, proactive

and reliable individual to manage these processes will significantly benefit any unit conducting a rotational deployment. Finally, in the case of the Pacesetters, a familiar phrase that "Europe is a continent and not a country" reminded staff and planners that while a specific set of procedures might apply to transporting material here in Poland, sometimes a different set of requirements also applied if that same mission was to cross over into neighboring Germany.

Conclusion

In conclusion, units conducting rotational deployments globally will face unique challenges when executing their vision of training while forward. U.S. based facilities provide unparalleled advantages with U.S. training doctrine and compared to many of the locations we find ourselves in when supporting a rotational deployment. To enable deployed units' ability to conduct their required qualifications, additions and amendments to established TCs should be considered and implemented. Leaders must come together and agree on what the minimum qualification execution looks like in austere and restricted environments. This enables staff planning efforts deployed and enables commanders to ensure their units are postured to execute their mission in any environment.

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