
Defense Report

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The National Training Center— Another Army Success Story

The Army has always known that teaching one young man to lead twenty other young men across a fire-swept field cannot be accomplished entirely in the classroom. Yet, historically, many unit commanders have had to lead their troops into combat lacking the experience that comes from tough, fast-paced training under conditions that realistically simulate combat. This circumstance has sometimes been costly in lives and equipment, given that actual combat is a harsh training ground indeed.

To survive and win the land battle, Army commanders know they must eliminate the mistakes of inexperienced soldiers and leaders in combat. At its National Training Center (NTC) at Ft. Irwin, California, the Army has found a way to inject needed realism into training in a manner designed to overcome such inexperience and to be successful in a real war.

Located in the heart of the Mojave Desert, the NTC's 1000 square miles of maneuver area and firing ranges support full-ranging exercises for the infantry, tank and artillery battalions from all the Army's stateside divisions.

Every 18 months, selected battalions undergo two weeks of intensive tactical training which includes live fire exercises merging all the weapons of the combined arms team in offensive and defensive scenarios. This realistic battlefield exercise gives the task force the opportunity to bring to bear all its weapons against an array of electronically controlled targets representing a large enemy force.

Of equal importance, units are pitted in battle maneuvers against a live opposing force organized as a Soviet motorized rifle regiment, trained in Soviet tactics and operating Soviet tanks and vehicles. Soldiers of the opposing forces engage each other with laser devices which "kill" or "knock out" troops and targets on both sides as the battle progresses.

At the National Training Center, our soldiers and their leaders are gaining battlefield experience and increasing their proficiency in individual and team war-fighting skills. Short of actual combat, the NTC provides the best training found anywhere in the world and the Army leadership is fully committed to insure its continued support and operation.