

Advisor Training Shifts to Fort Polk *Army Establishes Enduring Mission*

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The mission of preparing advisors and training teams for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has moved from Fort Riley, Kan., to Fort Polk, La., building a foundation to advance advisory and assistance training and establishing the training capability to perpetuate those skills beyond current conflicts and reinforce lessons that have been relearned.

On September 1, the recently constituted 162nd Infantry Brigade at Fort Polk was scheduled to take over the advisor training mission that had been performed at Fort Riley by 1st Infantry Division units since 2006.

BG James C. Yarbrough, commander of the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) and Fort Polk, said that the Army has recognized that the capability to train combat advisors in security assistance roles is an enduring mission and that the Army intends not to “let the good functions and training and art and science of this task atrophy and die out like we did after Vietnam—the last time we made a

concerted effort to train combat advisors. When we disestablished that program, it went dormant for probably 30 years. It is a hard task with much finesse, and it is correct to take the stance that we need to keep it alive as an enduring center of excellence.”



With the Army's advisory and assistance training mission's move to Fort Polk, La., the lineage designation as the 162nd Infantry Brigade has been given to the newly established unit that will carry out that mission, with corresponding shoulder sleeve insignia. Divided into two fields by a lightning bolt (symbolizing swiftness, power and the impact that advisory teams have), the upper left field is dark blue, signifying a traditional association with the Infantry. The red Cross of Lorraine denotes the brigade's World War I service in the Ardennes, and the palm frond represents the brigade's World War II campaign credit for the Philippines and Western Pacific campaigns. The lower right background is black (signifying consistency and honoring the fallen) with circles and points illustrating a compass rose, which symbolizes readiness and represents the brigade's ability to provide advisory and assistance teams worldwide. The red and yellow colors were taken from the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam shoulder patch, displaying a lineage to that organization.

BG James C. Yarbrough, commander of the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, La., discusses establishment of the 162nd Infantry Brigade at Fort Polk to train advisory and assistance teams.



The 162nd Infantry Brigade will have a cadre of about 825 soldiers, organized into five maneuver training battalions and one support battalion. Most training will be accomplished by mobile training teams as the Army organizes existing brigade combat team (BCT) structures for an increased advisory and assistance role, initially for BCTs scheduled to deploy to Iraq, and as the situation dictates in the future, for BCTs headed to Afghanistan.

Under current plans, BCTs deploying to Iraq will be augmented with 20 or more field-grade officers—depending on the number of Coalition units that will need to be covered in their individual areas of responsibility—to head a corresponding number of training teams, trained for military, police or border police advisory missions. The BCT will identify and allocate the necessary number of officers and NCOs already serving in the BCT to fill the ranks of 11- to 16-soldier teams under those augmenting team leaders.

Each Iraq-bound BCT commander will have full responsibility for manning, integrating and overseeing the advisory and training mission in the BCT's area of responsibility. Previously in Iraq, advisory and assistance teams—called military or police transition teams—were composed of personnel from outside the BCT who were assembled and trained at Fort Riley and deployed as external team packages under oversight of the Iraq Assistance Group to operate side by side with BCTs.

Announced by the Obama administration as advisory and assistance brigades, the teams are officially called, according to BG Yarbrough, brigade combat teams augmented for security force assistance.

Such designation maintains the full spectrum capabilities concept of BCTs, rather than implying that they will be geared solely toward advising, training and host-nation assistance.

"It is a full spectrum operations, standard go-to-war brigade that is augmented with additional majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels to build teams from within the brigade, controlled by those high-ranking officers [who] have the seniority required to plug into and assist Iraqi and Afghan

leaders at the battalion, brigade and division levels," BG Yarbrough explained.

"The Army has decided to unify those transition teams that used to be external to the brigade," he added. "They were operating side by side; the brigade had ownership and had attachment of those teams, but they were still not within the brigade. They were a different entity, trained differently, not assigned to the brigade. They met on the battlefield. The brigade took ownership and employed them."

BG Yarbrough's previous experience with training teams started when he was an assistant division commander in the 1st Infantry Division as the transition team training mission was established, and he went on to command the Iraq Assistance Group.

"With the evolution of the mission set in Iraq, driving toward security force assistance as the primary mission, and by the change in scope of the mission to no longer do combat operations in Iraq, it makes absolute sense to embed these transition teams within the brigade, assigned within the brigade," he said. "The beauty of this is that it allows the brigade commander to build his teams with those additional senior ranking officers [and] task-organize to meet the mission on the ground. He will be organized from the lowest rifle platoon all the way through the brigade headquarters as he embeds himself with his host-nation counterparts. Before, we did business with only the advisory teams being embedded with the host-nation counterparts. There was a little separation as far as the brigade went."

The general concept of training advisory teams will change with the mission's move to Fort Polk. Previously, teams were assembled and trained at Fort Riley through a residency course. The 162nd Infantry Brigade will advance the training concept by sending mobile training teams to a deploying BCT's home station and conducting training in three sessions as each BCT prepares for its predeployment mission readiness exercise (MRE). Trainers from the 162nd will accompany the BCT during its MRE to exercise and certify the training, either at the colocated JRTC or the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.

Some advisory team members will continue to go through residence training at Fort Polk—team members designated for Afghanistan (until those teams are nested within a BCT like those deploying to Iraq) and individual members of the National Guard, Navy and Air Force who have been designated to serve with advisory teams.

Previously, about 5,000 team members were trained annually through residency at Fort Riley. About 2,500 now will go through residency training at Fort Polk.

The mission transfer required moving about 14,000 individual pieces of equipment from Fort Riley to Fort Polk and expedited construction of a brigade area by the Corps of Engineers for the 162nd at Fort Polk using modular buildings.

