



Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) Warfighters' Forum: A New Army Paradigm for Home Station Unit Training

Introduction

In the evolution of knowledge management and its integration into training and leader development, the Army has reached a major milestone. The commanders of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Forces Command (FORSCOM) have created the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) Warfighters' Forum (SWfF) as a new home station unit training paradigm that ultimately will serve as a model for light and heavy formations as well. The concept for the SWfF grew from the earlier successes of an I Corps initiative called the Stryker Center for Lessons Learned (SCLL), at Fort Lewis, Washington.

Stryker Center for Lessons Learned (SCLL)

In January 2005, I Corps launched an initiative focused on capturing lessons learned from ongoing combat operations and applying them immediately to training exercises being conducted at the installation's mission support training facility



(MSTF). The initiative's potential became evident when contract staff began training the 3d Brigade, 2d Infantry Division (the Army's first Stryker BCT) and then maintaining contact with key unit personnel after their deployment into combat. The program manager of the MSTF envisioned a center to capture near real-time operational lessons and immediately apply them to training, especially the training of the newly-forming additional SBCTs stationed worldwide. I Corps recognized the utility of this endeavor, formed a team¹ and named it the SCLL. The mission of the SCLL, as validated by the I Corps commander, is to:

- a. serve as the focal point for I Corps and Fort Lewis knowledge management;
- b. maintain reach (contact) through a home station operations center;
- c. capture near real-time lessons from ongoing combat operations and exercises; and

¹ The contract team was headed by a retired colonel and former brigade commander, who moved to the job from his position as professor and deputy director of the U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In short order, other highly qualified contract employees were added to the task. These included a recently retired Army officer who commanded a Stryker infantry battalion, served as the deputy commanding officer (DCO) of a Stryker Brigade Combat Team, and later as the director of operations for Task Force Olympia, then the senior headquarters in northern Iraq. Soon thereafter, another retired colonel—a SAMS fellow and instructor, and former chief of plans for Third Army—joined the team. This small but uniquely qualified group of defense contractors compiled a list of extraordinary accomplishments in a very short time.

- d. provide operational, training and leader development support to SBCTs and other I Corps units to aid in the development of competent, confident, agile and adaptive Soldiers, leaders, leader-teams and units skilled in tactical, technical, conceptual and interpersonal competencies.

The SCLL immediately created numerous training and leader development support products and facilitated several leader development exercises.

The center also created the web-based knowledge portal StrykerNet² as a means to build a virtual community of practice and share the knowledge being accumulated (and the products created) across the Stryker community and with other I Corps units.³

New Home Station Training Paradigm

Based on the success of the SCLL, I Corps drew upon that experience and began developing a concept for a new training paradigm for the conduct of home station unit training consistent with the Army's Force Generation Model (ARFORGEN).⁴ As the new training paradigm was conceived, it was labeled "Stryker University" to reinforce a dramatic departure from previous thinking during the concept development phase. Once the concept reached maturity, the accepted naming convention became the Warrior Training & Leader Development Center – Stryker, which was later modified to "SWfF." The name structure became critical as senior Army leaders saw the eventual creation of two other force types predominant in the Army; the Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT) and the Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT). The FORSCOM



² See AUSA's Torchbearer National Security Report *Accelerating Momentum: The Stryker Brigade Combat Team as a Learning Organization* (June 2006), available online at <http://www.ausa.org/webpub/DeptILW.nsf/byid/JSUR-6QLHTM>.

³ These initiatives gained momentum and visibility across the Army; within only a few months of its creation, the SCLL was increasingly recognized as being at the bow wave of the implementation of knowledge management theories with Army forces on the ground. Acknowledging this fact, the Department of the Army presented the Stryker Center for Lessons Learned with its 2005 Knowledge Management Award for Best Community of Practice. The center was also nominated again in 2006 for the same award for contributions to battle command. Moreover, the SCLL is also cited in new doctrinal manuals as the "The I Corps Model"—providing a number of practical examples of how knowledge management principles are actually applied in the operational Army.

⁴ See AUSA Torchbearer National Security Report *2006 and Beyond: What the U.S. Army is Doing* (March 2006), available online at http://www.ausa.org/PDFdocs/TBSecRpt/TBear_March_06_optimized.pdf.



and TRADOC commanders together directed that a pilot program be conducted at Fort Lewis for the 3d Brigade, 2d Division SBCT on its return from combat in late 2007. The results of that effort will be used to inform the organization and process not only for the SWfF but also for the follow-on HBCT forum at Fort Hood, Texas, and the IBCT forum at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The current FORSCOM commander reconfirmed this initiative as nothing short of a new paradigm for the conduct of home station unit training in the Army.



The SWfF operates under the strategic vision and direction of the commanding generals of TRADOC, FORSCOM and Army Materiel Command (AMC) through a general officer steering committee consisting of the deputy commanding generals of FORSCOM and AMC, along with the Combined Arms Center (CAC) and I Corps commanding generals. The concept recognizes the I Corps commander as the Army's senior mentor for the Stryker force. His deputy commanding general serves as the director of the forum, while the TRADOC Capabilities Manager (TCM)-SBCT is the deputy director. Two assistant deputy directors (one from FORSCOM and one from TRADOC) are on the ground at Fort Lewis to orchestrate the small combined organization that operates the SWfF.



The mission of the SWfF is to enhance SBCT leader, leader-team and unit training throughout the ARFORGEN process; to include the incorporation of lessons being learned by all SBCTs, in order for SBCTs to perform at higher levels of mission proficiency in each subsequent deployment; and to serve as a conduit of SBCT operational experience for training, doctrine and force design and as a model for other Army training and leader initiatives.



The SWfF leverages concepts and capabilities developed by the progenitor SCLL and moves to a new level of networked collaborative training, leader development and knowledge sharing. The SWfF follows the combat operations of deployed SBCTs, confirms the unit commander's intent and objectives for training upon redeployment; facilitates the unit's planning for training activities upon redeployment; and then ensures the integration of resources from across the Army and civil sectors, as necessary, to meet



unit needs throughout its ARFORGEN process. The SWfF is a global, networked Army initiative that resides on the campus of the Fort Lewis Battle Command Training Center (BCTC). The SWfF sustains a repository of experience and expertise in the SBCT community and maintains a “community of practice” among SBCTs, home stations and the institutional Army schools and doctrine developers. It enhances the planning, coordination, integration and facilitation of unit training and leader development; and leverages the community of practice to marshal resources from across the Department of Defense, the interagency, academia, and state and local agencies to support home station unit needs. The center uses a collaborative, distributed, continuous learning methodology that is operationally based. It increases the Soldier and leader experience base and enhances unit learning and performance throughout the ARFORGEN process.

What’s Next

Progress to date includes the utilization of the StrykerNet web portal to share near real-time observations, insights and lessons from ongoing combat operations with others across the Stryker community; the further use of StrykerNet, along with Adobe Connect, to conduct a series of virtual Stryker symposiums, networking participants in Stryker Brigade Combat Teams from Hawaii and Alaska, across the continental United States and Germany, to units in combat in Iraq; the conduct of distributed, networked doctrine reviews to provide timely feedback from operational units; and preparations for enhancing training and leader development for 3d Brigade, 2d Infantry SBCT on their redeployment to Fort Lewis.



The concept will adjust and evolve with the experience gained over the months ahead, and as new opportunities and technologies arise. But it is important to note that the same team that conceived, developed and produced the Stryker Center for Lessons Learned now staffs the new SBCT Warfighters’ Forum as it moves forward in implementing this dramatic new home station unit training paradigm. As the results of the pilot program emerge in 2008, the SWfF and its conceptual sister organizations, the HBCT and IBCT forums, will play an increasingly critical role in transforming Army home station training and significantly enhancing Army readiness.

**The Stryker/Heavy/Infantry Warfighters’ Forums:
Maximizing the effectiveness of
Home Station Unit Training in the 21st century.**