

# Engineer Training at NTC



By Major Larry J. Lyle, Jr.

**T**he National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, remains at the forefront of training for the War on Terrorism. Rotational unit training is conducted in conjunction with the latest tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) from the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters, as well as current and emerging doctrine using situational training exercises (STXs) and full spectrum operations mission rehearsal exercises (MREs). The training is now embedded with a set of counterinsurgency (COIN) fundamentals based on Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. NTC can train all types of engineer units, to include the following:

- Mobility augmentation companies
- Horizontal/vertical construction companies
- Organic maneuver brigade engineer companies

The purpose of the training at NTC remains focused on helping the unit see its strengths and weaknesses and get better each day. This article focuses on the training NTC offers to engineer units.

## Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration

**A** rotation at NTC begins with a 5-day stage of building combat power called reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI), followed by a 14-day MRE. The MRE is typically divided into a 6- to 8-day

STX followed by full spectrum training for the remainder of the rotation, culminating in a brigade-level operation. The engineer units that train here continue to remain as flexible and adaptive as ever, whether conducting route clearance operations, constructing entry control points (ECPs), or supporting maneuver forces for an out-of-sector mission. Engineers continue to be at the tip of the spear in both lethal and nonlethal missions.

The RSOI process continues to evolve and change with an ever more robust schedule of training events and equipment distribution for the rotational unit. The engineer units that come to NTC find this is a time of fast-paced training with new equipment drawn from the Army Center of Excellence (ACOE). The equipment listing from ACOE is not all-encompassing and continues to evolve as NTC receives new equipment that not only enhances training but also helps improve a unit's combat readiness. Now engineer units must balance the prerequisites of rail download operations, Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES) installation, negotiations training, and vehicle and equipment preparation while simultaneously training on the aforementioned list of equipment. ACOE training includes many different focuses: robotics, route clearance equipment such as the Buffalo and Husky, and tools such as the Biometric Automated Toolset and Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment. Training on intelligence-gathering equipment for intelligence section personnel will assist them in the fight against



**An engineer element conducts route clearance operations.**

improvised explosive devices (IEDs). After 5 days, RSOI training transitions to a combined arms operation with a tactical road march into “The Box” and the occupation of forward operating bases (FOBs) to begin conducting company-level STX lanes and the battalion/brigade relief in place (RIP)/transfer of authority (TOA) process.

### **Situational Training Exercises**

**T**he STX lane training at NTC drills down to the Soldier and company team levels. A full rotation of STX lane training is executed throughout NTC with a specified level of enemy personnel, civilians on the battlefield (to include Iraqi-American role players), and real-time after-action review (AAR) capability for the most realistic training available. Possible STX missions include the following:

- Area clearance
- Route clearance
- Mounted combat patrol
- Dismounted combat patrol
- FOB/ECP security
- Medical trauma
- COIN classes
- Personnel recovery

STX lanes focus on collective training based on the individual Soldier skill sets gained during RSOI. Each lane is executed using an observer/controller script that is standard throughout the operations group. Battalions and companies can tailor lane specifics to meet their training objectives.

STX lanes execution is normally conducted at the platoon level for route clearance and FOB/ECP security, and at the company level when conducting mounted and dismounted combat patrol. Additionally, units can request lanes that are tailored to other training if they request it at least 90 days out. Feedback on the STX lanes is immediate, with AARs after every iteration. Units can retrain multiple times on a lane if leaders want to increase readiness or train on different TTP related to the lane.

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Live-fire training such as convoy operations, urban operations, and air-ground integration can also be conducted during STX lane training when coordinated through the higher unit headquarters of the brigade conducting the rotation. Soldiers and crews must be qualified on their individual weapons or must have conducted crew qualification to standard to participate in live-fire training. Engineer units have also conducted live demolitions training at NTC, to include dynamic breaching charges in the urban environment.

### **Full Spectrum Operations**

**F**ull spectrum operations begin after the RIP/TOA has been conducted and the rotational unit assumes control of the battlefield. Full spectrum missions for engineer units may include route clearance/sanitation, counter-IED working group, and division-directed construction or



**A Buffalo mine-protected vehicle interrogates an IED.**

improvement operations at FOBs, ECPs, combat outposts, or joint coordination centers. The counter-IED fight encompasses a significant amount of the full spectrum operations effort as engineers work in conjunction with the land-owning unit. Route clearance operations training teaches units to incorporate route clearance team efforts with the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance planning of the maneuver unit and the historical pattern analysis of IED attacks within the area of operations. The counter-IED fight incorporates all elements—to include battalion and brigade staff integration—as well as the planning, preparation, and subsequent execution of the patrol matrices.

The IEDs replicated at NTC represent the latest emerging threats of anti-Iraqi forces from the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters. Units are continually challenged by a well-rehearsed enemy in a realistic environment.

NTC continues to give the rotational unit as many TTP as possible to “add to their kit bag,” and while not all may pertain to the unit’s assigned area of responsibility in-theater, they nevertheless increase the knowledge base of the Soldiers and the unit. Also, Soldiers are encouraged to

use skills gleaned from United States Army schools as part of their training.

### **Conclusion**

**N**TC continues to offer engineer units the same world-class training that it has since its inception in 1982. The War on Terrorism and the rapidly changing pace of the United States Army mandates the need for the combat training centers to design and conduct training as current as the fight in-theater. Training at NTC will continue to reflect the need for intensely focused, mission-specific training for this fight, and provide the Army’s Soldiers and leaders with the best training in the world. 



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