

# Lead The Way

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Our leadership has told us in FM 7-0, *Training for Full Spectrum Operations*, that “all operations are now full spectrum operations” and that “full spectrum operations require mentally agile leaders able to operate in any operational theme.” As most of you know, the components of full spectrum operations are offensive, defensive, stability, and civil support operations, and the operational themes are major combat operations, irregular warfare, peace operations, limited intervention, and peacetime engagement. I couldn’t find anywhere in the manual that said our mentally agile leaders should be of a certain rank or position, so it’s a safe bet that this applies to team leaders as much as it does to our highest ranking officers. So how can we best prepare our private first class or second lieutenant engineer to be a mentally agile leader?



We should develop training in our unit that focuses on the transitions. We’ve all learned that engineers, cavalrymen, and field artillerymen are the most versatile Soldiers in the Army’s formations. As far as I can tell, we’re the only ones who have “Fight as Infantry” in our duty descriptions. Drill down within the Regiment and you’ll see combat and construction engineers performing duties in either field. How many military occupational specialty 12N horizontal construction engineers are out there performing route clearance duties? It takes mental agility within the platoon and company to recognize when to transition from an offensive, defensive, or stability mindset. Some Soldiers call it “turning on the light switch” and say that it can only happen when a Soldier understands the environment.

Ever wonder why we’re so smoked after the first four or five patrols? It’s because we don’t recognize the environment we’re in. Everything looks like an IED, and everyone looks like the enemy. The scouts have a great technique that they use when they’re on observation duty. They keep a log of everything that happens within their sector. They start documenting the patterns of people, traffic, and events while on patrol or at an observation post, and after a few days a pattern starts to emerge. The mind starts recognizing certain patterns of life and begins to recognize normal activity. How much better prepared would our Soldiers be if we were to train them in recognizing patterns? The training events could be as simple as instructing the platoon members to look for white pickup trucks on the way out to the rifle range—how many, what direction of travel, what make, how many passengers, and what were they

doing are just some of the intelligence requirements for every member of the platoon. Everyone will have varying degrees of change-detection expertise. Task your more experienced Soldiers to train those who need help recognizing patterns.

The same goes for engineering. We exist to support the maneuver formations and assure their mobility, enhance their protection, enable expeditionary logistics, and build capacity both inside the formation and with the civilian population. Simply put, they are battlespace owners; we are not. We have to look at every situation through the lens of an engineer. An engineer has to recognize the lay of the land, how to use the existing

terrain that provides the best cover, and what routes can best move the maneuver commander’s formations. More than likely, our maneuver units are doing three of the four elements of full spectrum operations all in the same brigade combat team. They need mentally agile engineer companies to do the same, where one platoon may be clearing routes while another is building a combat outpost and the other is orchestrating a vocational training program within a village. A key element to this is finding the subject matter expert in a particular field of engineering and getting that Soldier to the right place on the battlefield. Finding the experts in your unit before you deploy, developing their skills, and putting them in specific training events can only help you rapidly transition from one phase of combat to another. It is a worthwhile endeavor, because every maneuver commander will yell out, “Where’s my engineer?”

This will be my last article for the Engineer Bulletin as the Regimental Command Sergeant Major (CSM). CSM Terrence Murphy will be coming in, and I will be transitioning to the Maneuver Support Center after this year’s ENFORCE. As a former brigade combat team (BCT) CSM, I am pleased that we have focused on how to best serve our maneuver brothers and our own engineers in the BCT by asking the Army to insert an engineer battalion into every BCT. The BCT is the centerpiece of the Army’s formations and deserves our best efforts, whether that’s inside or outside the BCT formation.

I hope that all of you will join me in unveiling our memorial tribute to our fallen comrades during ENFORCE. It’s a fitting tribute to all engineers who have given their lives for their family, battle buddies, unit, and country.

Essayons!