

# Adapting for the Fight

Changing the fabric of our Corps through training and readiness

by Maj Timothy J. Gillette Jr. & Maj Matthew Vaughn

In his recent planning guidance, the 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps listed education and training as one of his five priority focus areas. Training and Education Command (TECOM) is implementing the *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance* (Washington, DC: HQMC, July 2019) to “change the Training and Education Continuum from an Industrial Age model to an Information Age model.” This transformation includes making radical changes to the Ground Training and Readiness Program.

## Ground Training and Readiness Program

In the past, the Ground Training and Readiness Program review process was antiquated and reflected an Industrial Age approach that was rigid, inflexible, and non-responsive. Training and Readiness (T&R) Manuals were reviewed by communities on a triennial basis during a week-long working group hosted aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico with little modification, change, or community involvement in the interim. This approach did not consistently facilitate a relevant and accurate product that reflected appropriate changes associated with emerging concepts, lessons learned, and operational needs.

Ultimately, the process was not conducive to a detailed and holistic review, resulting in poorly written T&R Manuals that were disconnected from doctrine and training publications. Furthermore, these T&R Manuals were of inconsequential value to the Fleet Marine Force (FMF). Moving forward, T&R Manuals will reflect a “live and interactive” construct fostering greater community involvement, align with current doctrine and training publications, and incorporate a new syllabus initiative. The new ground T&R pro-

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*I have noticed over the past several years that there is an increasing dissonance between what we are doing with regard to training and education, and what we need to be doing based on the evolving operating environment.*

*—Gen David H. Berger*

cess will enable the Ground Training and Readiness Program to become relevant, flexible, and agile.

## Living and Interactive T&R Manuals

TECOM is moving T&R Manuals to an Information Age model through the utilization of a virtual online collaborative environment (OCE) to create living and interactive T&R Manuals. The OCE will create a one-stop-shop to train and educate; plan and evaluate training; and write, analyze, review, and validate T&R events. Inherently, the OCE is an enduring perpetual forum for T&R refinement and modification that is responsive to changes in the operational environment such as force design, emerging concepts, and integrating lessons learned. The OCE forum will create a more efficient feedback loop to align FMF and TECOM efforts. Additionally, the OCE facilitates maximum participation across the FMF and the Supporting Establishment by

reducing time zone and fiscal restraints on the review process. The OCE creates a community forum to enable 21st century learning where the community can continuously debate, share ideas, and transfer knowledge. This forum will also capture discussion and background information to facilitate improved learning analysis that is not solely reliant on course content review boards and formal learning centers.

Currently, many community T&R Manuals are not linked to doctrine or to learning resources, which has created a “learning desert” between formal instruction at our schools and the FMF. TECOM is seeking to fill this gap in our training and education (T&E) continuum by creating interactive T&R Manuals hosted on the OCE. Through the new design, T&R Manuals will directly tie to doctrine and training publications and be interactive, giving training designers and executors resources to facilitate and evaluate

training while also giving individual Marines the resources to learn outside of the formal learning environment.

Interactive T&R Manuals provide content through hyperlinks, serving as a critical conduit to the broader T&E continuum. This interactive content facilitates the connection of standards to doctrine and training publications, Marine Corps tasks, and learning aids such as videos, course curriculum, tactical decision games, simulations, background readings, and other training resources. Furthermore, the specific linkages to doctrine and training publications will be the bedrock of quality event development. Verbiage from appropriate references will be used to create all elements of T&R events. *T&R Manuals will serve as the focal point for solidifying changes to the training and education continuum* (see Figure 1).

#### T&R Vignette: Battalion Operations Officer

Based on the Battalion Defense Readiness Reporting System Report the Battalion Commander, LtCol Jones, and Battalion Operations Officer, Maj Smith, identify that the battalion will soon have degraded Training Readiness for Marine Corps Task

*1.6.1 Conduct Offensive Operations. Maj Smith advises LtCol Jones that the battalion needs to train and evaluate their E-Coded T&R event Inf-Man-7001 Conduct an Attack to maintain readiness based on the battalion Mission Essential Task List.*

*peditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO), Strategic Significance of Palawan Island, the Palawan Island tactical decision game, and conducts a tactical exercise without troops to supplement the training. In addition, Maj Smith coordinates with the Battle Simulation*

### Interactive T&R Manuals provide content through hyperlinks, serving as a critical conduit to the broader T&E continuum.

*The battalion commander tasks his operations officer with planning a battalion field exercise with a battalion-level attack as the culminating event. Maj Smith receives the commander's intent and begins the planning process by logging on to the Online Collaborative Environment to access the T&R Manual as the primary tool to design, educate, and conduct training.*

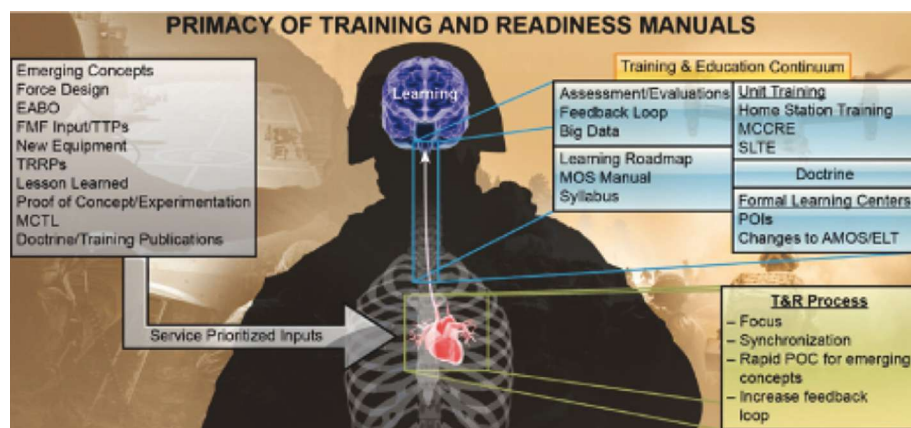
*Prior to conducting training, Maj Smith utilizes the training and education support learning aids in the T&R Manual to train and educate the battalion staff and company commanders. Maj Smith facilitates a battle (case) study on Ex-*

*Center to use the MAGTF Tactical Warfare Simulation EABO scenario and Joint Conflict and Tactical Simulation EABO scenario to train the Battalion Staff prior to the field exercise.*

*During the planning process, Maj Smith and the staff utilize the links to doctrine and training publications to provide background education and frame of reference for training design. This ensures the training is tactically sound and standards based. The training publications and the T&R event components provide an evaluation framework to ensure a standards-based evaluation that meets the battalion commander's intent.*

**“Any mission undertaken by the Corps will flow directly from our ability to both train and educate every Marine.”**

**—Gen David H. Berger**

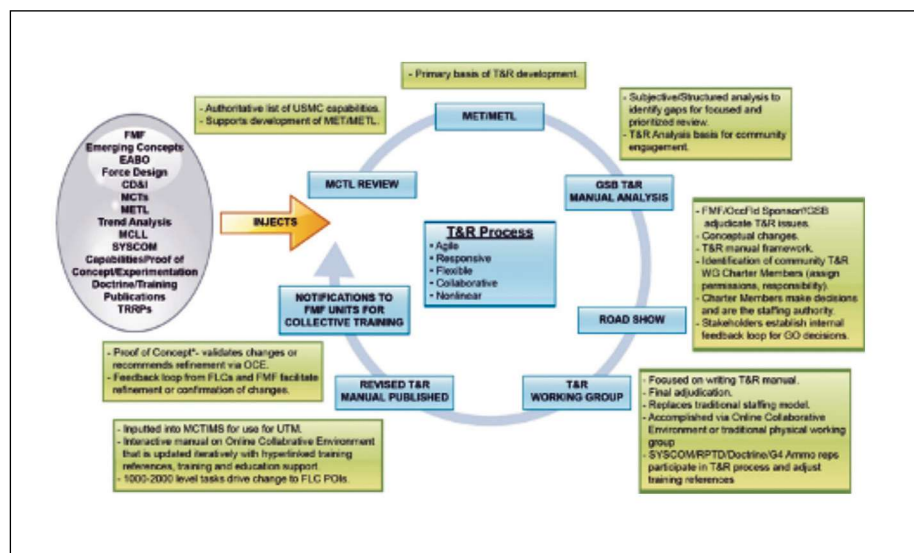


**Figure 1. Primacy of T&R Manuals. The T&R Manual is the primary mechanism to institutionalize service prioritized inputs into the training and education continuum. (Figure provided by author.)**

#### Syllabus Initiative

An additional enhancement to the Ground Training and Readiness Program redesign includes the syllabus initiative. Currently, Marines lack learning resources for personal development outside of formal education, leading to disjointed and haphazard facilitation of managed on-the-job training. The creation of a syllabus for essential billets provides a starting point to providing a learning (training and education) roadmap for Marines. Furthermore, the syllabus will provide a Service-level minimum standard for essential billets in ground communities. TECOM is conducting a proof of concept with an infantry squad leader and a logistics chief syllabus in CY20.

A syllabus is a T&R standard-based inventory of core competencies, expressed as a comprehensive portfolio of training and education support materials to complement essential billet



**Figure 2. T&R Manual process.** The new T&R process is designed to be responsive, create a relevant Manual that meet the needs of the FMF, and provide a continual feedback loop that can meet changes in the operational environment. (Figure provided by author.)

training and education. Essential billets are those billets identified by the occupation field sponsor and the FMF as requiring a mastery of fundamental knowledge, skills, and attitudes, specifically individual training events necessary to support a unit’s mission essential task proficiency. The syllabus will complement and support the T&E continuum for the essential billet. Ultimately, a syllabus stands to serve as a mechanism to support readiness reporting down to the individual level.

Furthermore, the syllabus will provide commanders with better resources

vidual key billet proficiency, assists in reintegration to the occupational field post-B-billet, and enables career progression.

**Syllabus Vignette: Infantry Squad Leader**

*Sgt Wright is an infantry rifleman who left the Fleet Marine Force three years ago as a fire team leader and a newly promoted sergeant. He is currently serving as a canvassing recruiter at Recruiting Station Fort Lauderdale; after a successful recruiting tour, he has received Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders back to*

*one. Sgt Wright asks himself, “How am I going to train and lead a squad when I need to refresh my grunt skills?”*

*Shortly after receiving orders, SSgt Williams reaches out to Sgt Wright as his command sponsor to ease the transition of a PCS. One of the first questions Sgt Wright asks his sponsor, SSgt Williams, is what he can do to set himself up for success professionally at his new unit, and how can he come in prepared to hit the ground running?*

*Immediately, SSgt Williams provides him the link to the Infantry T&R OCE and the Infantry Squad Leader Syllabus. During the transition period, Sgt Wright begins to go through the standards and education resources contained in the syllabus. Sgt Wright immediately begins learning through the recommended self-paced readings, case studies, tactical decision games, and interactive simulation exercises. Sgt Wright also noted that once he gets to the unit, he should talk to his leadership about getting a school seat in the Infantry Small Unit Leader Course to continue his professional development.*

**New T&R Manual Process**

The T&R Manual process, as depicted in Figure 2, is designed to ensure Marine Corps requirements are effectively institutionalized throughout the T&E continuum. The process will ensure T&R Manuals are aligned with Service priorities and reflect relevant events to build capabilities described in mission essential task lists. The T&R Manual process is enduring and non-linear, it includes two key nodes to facilitate reviews, the TECOM road show and the T&R Manual working group (TRMWG). Both the TECOM road show and the TRMWG can be hosted virtually via the OCE or in person as required.

The road show is TECOM’s primary means for FMF engagement, serving as the foundation for the T&R Manual review process. The intent of the road show is to explain the review process, communicate participant expectations, and to standardize working group procedures. The road show establishes the T&R Manual framework through input of TECOM analysis and policy updates, adjudication of overall T&R issues, and

**... TECOM is transforming the T&E continuum by revolutionizing T&R Manuals, moving to an online collaborative environment, and creating living interactive T&R Manuals.**

to train, educate, and evaluate a qualified billet holder. It also provides leaders and Marines with a Service-level minimum standard and resources to support managed on-the-job training, sustainment, and skills progression training. This establishes learning targets along a career roadmap and is especially beneficial to Marines for improving indi-

*an infantry battalion. After three years of canvassing the streets of Fort Lauderdale in search of the next generation of Marines, Sgt Wright realizes many of his skills from his days in the fleet have atrophied. He is unsure of what resources are available to refresh his skills and prepare him to be a squad leader. He knows he will be expected to lead a squad on day*

conceptual changes to the Manual to set the foundation for the review. The road show includes levelling briefs, T&R event construct, and a detailed plan of action and milestones for the TRMWG. Once assigned, charter members and action officers serve as the staffing authority for their community and respective commanding general. The TRMWG conference serves as the culminating event for the final confirmation and adjudication of the T&R Manual and replaces the traditional staffing model. Using this new T&R process, TECOM, Ground Standards Branch, has facilitated the successful revision of multiple ground T&R Manuals in FY20 to include infantry, ground supply, light-armored reconnaissance, and engineer and utilities manuals to name a few.

**Conclusion**

Today's ever-changing operational environment requires the T&E continuum to be flexible, agile, and responsive

to create critically thinking and adaptive warfighters who can consistently make quality decisions faster than any opponent in any domain. To meet these requirements, TECOM is transforming the T&E continuum by revolutionizing

**The battalion commander tasks his operations officer with planning a battalion field exercise ...**

T&R Manuals, moving to an online collaborative environment, and creating living interactive T&R Manuals. Over the past year, TECOM initiated a detailed review and complete revision of the Ground Training and Readiness Program. This revision began in Febru-

ary 2019 with the infantry and has since expanded throughout the ground communities. These changes in overarching ground T&R policy will help pave the way to support the ongoing efforts to modernize the force for future threats.

*>Authors' Note: This article was written based on the inputs and contributions made by members of the Ground Standards Branch, Policy and Standards Division, and the Training and Education Command.*



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