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# RED LEG

Update

The United States Army Field Artillery Branch's Newsletter

## King of Battle!

Hello from the 53rd Commandant of the USAFAS

### Timely Clearance of Fires

Observations from MG Richard Longo, USA Retired

Fort Sill Trainees 'Forge' into Soldiers during Basic Combat Training's new exercise

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**Purpose:** Founded in 2011, the *Redleg Update* provides past and present Field Artillery leaders with a monthly update of informational highlights to assist in their individual, collective and professional training efforts, as well as report on activities occurring throughout the Field Artillery community.

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Stephen G. Smith  
Brigadier General, U.S. Army  
Commandant,  
United States Army Field Artillery School

*Stephen G. Smith*

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#### Points of Contact:

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Additionally, if you have a story of interest or wish to initiate a discussion on any topic or issue facing the Field Artillery community, contact Ms. Sharon McBride, Field Artillery Public Affairs Officer, at (580) 558-0836 or [sharon.g.mcbride4.civ@mail.mil](mailto:sharon.g.mcbride4.civ@mail.mil)

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#### On the Cover:

Alpha Battery, 1-31 FA BCT navigates an obstacle course as part of their graduation requirements. *U.S. Army photo released.*

# From the FA Commandant's desk

## King of Battle!

It's an exciting time for our branch and our Army; I'm honored to serve in the capacity of the Field Artillery Commandant.

To better support our commanders in the field, here in the land of Block House Signal Mountain, we're increasing our focus on producing Warriors that are physically fit, mentally tough, and technically & tactically competent that can fully accomplish our Field Artillery mission.

To accomplish this, and to comply with guidance from the TRADOC, CAC, and FCOE commanders...we're increasing physical and academic rigor in all courses, we're increasing reps and sets of basic fire support and Artillery tasks...in the field...under combat conditions, and eliminating any current requirement that is not laser-focused on producing lethal, physically fit Artillerymen that destroy our enemies in support of our maneuver command-



ers; during large scale combat operations.

Our lines of communication remain open with everyone in the field. Thanks for all that you do for our branch, our Army, and our Nation.

Keep up the FIRE!

*BG Stephen G. Smith*

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# Timely Clearance of Fires

## Observations from MG Richard Longo, USA Retired

Over the last four years, I have had the privilege to serve as a coach and mentor to our Army's Division Artilleries and Field Artillery Brigades as they participated in over 16 Warfighter Exercises. As a result of these experiences, I come away with two major observations. First, these Field Artillery Commanders are much, much better than I was; when I served in that role. The many and varied experiences that these commanders have had have prepared them well to lead our Soldiers in a decisive action environment. Second, they face and overcome the same significant challenges in every Warfighter. These challenges themselves are not new, but the technology associated with them and the capability of our enemy to take advantage of them has grown exponentially.

The three main challenges I see commanders have to address are timely clearance of fires, protection of the force against a ruthless enemy and answering the question of how we seize the initiative against an enemy who hides either underground or in sanctuary. The purpose of this short paper is to help commanders and their staffs start thinking about how to overcome these challenges as they train to fight in our current operational environment.

The sheer volume of airspace users makes clearing fires a difficult challenge. Divisions usually find themselves taking over 20 minutes just to clear airspace on counter-battery missions or targets of opportunity, during the early part of their training cycle. Eventually, they figure things out and reduce fire times to a level where they have a more than reasonable chance to have effects on the enemy. There is no "secret sauce" to this, but the technique that enjoys the most success is when units "pre-clear" the air between the firing unit and the target. This is not as difficult a task as it may seem at first. A good Field Artillery intelli-



gence officer and staff, either in the Division Artillery command post or in the division's Analysis Control Element, can use reverse Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield to

determine the enemy's likely location for a given asset. This is initially informed by an understanding of the systems available to the enemy commander – the capabilities and limitations, as well as the likely mission and desired effects. Armed with that analysis, the intelligence officer can accurately predict the location of the enemy. As acquisitions of enemy artillery fires are captured, refinement of the enemy location takes place. The operations officer then projects the location of friendly firing units during that phase of the fight and then the pre-clearance can go into effect. Many units "turn on" and "turn off" airspace coordination areas between the friendly firing unit and the enemy at specific times during the fight; so as not to close off the airspace to other users when not absolutely necessary.

Again, there is no single panacea for solving the timeliness of fires problem, but pre-clearance of airspace is a single best practice that gives our units the best chance to be successful.

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## Clearance ... Continued from Page 4

A Division Field Artillery commander must understand that his radars, command posts and delivery systems are at the very top of the enemy commander's high payoff target list. For that reason, he can reasonably expect that the enemy will use all means to destroy or disrupt those systems. He will use special purpose forces and unmanned aerial vehicles linked to long range fires, he will use attack aviation and close air support; and he will use sophisticated electronic capabilities to attack our communication and navigation systems.

The more successful units have a plan to counter each of these threats, and the willingness to change their tactics, techniques and procedures as the enemy evolves during a fight. There are certain fundamental starting points with which units can begin their training. A ruthless counter-reconnaissance plan and electronic attack of the special purpose forces communication is a good way to disrupt that enemy capability. Appropriately positioned air defense, aggressive use of passive defense measures and the recognition of the need to move immediately upon being acquired can mitigate the effectiveness of both unmanned and manned aerial systems. Finally, training to operate without the benefit of the upper tactical internet or global positioning systems can give us a sub-optimal capability to continue to take the fight to the enemy.

Staying on that theme of "taking the fight to the enemy," the idea of seizing the initiative is worthy of consideration by our commanders. The general way the Field Artillery fight takes place in the most recent Warfighter exercises, is that the enemy artillery will hide underground in sanctuary from our air delivered and long-range

fires until a time of his choosing and then we are forced to "react" to that action on his part. This "whack-a-mole" method is infrequently successful and definitely cedes the initiative to the enemy. Some units are changing this model to wrest the

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- MG(R) Longo

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initiative. Again, we are dependent on our great intelligence officers to think like the enemy and tell us what the necessary conditions are for him to come out of sanctuary and enter the fight. Then, we "act" to create those conditions so that his "reaction" is to come up from underground. Assuming we do this right, we can be poised with a counter-action of detection and rapid delivery by dedicated assets on our terms and at the time of our choosing. This is admittedly a different way of approaching the fight and there are no guarantees of success, but it will force him to fight on our terms and that is always a benefit to us.

I hope this summary can help units as they began their training cycles. The intent here is not to guarantee their success – as that is ultimately dependent on the commander and the great Soldiers who serve in our units. The intent is to share some of the lessons I have learned while watching units address these common issues and get them started off on the right foot.

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# Fort Sill Trainees ‘Forge’ into Soldiers during Basic Combat Training’s new exercise

*By Fort Sill Tribune staff*

A major change in Army Basic Combat Training, or BCT, better prepares trainees for today’s operational theater. The “Forge” is a grueling, 96-hour, cumulative training exercise that puts week-seven trainees in a patrol base as they encounter a multitude of combat and logistical scenarios.



It emphasizes **Trainees perform first aid on a “wounded” trainee during the Forge Basic Combat battle drills, tactical Training cumulative training exercise, July 9, 2018, at Fort Sill, Okla. (Photo Credit: U.S. Army photo by Fort Sill Tribune staff)** operations, and numerous foot patrols.

Forge replaces the 20-year-old Field Training Exercise 3, which had trainees working at a forward operating base, or behind the wire.

“It’s essentially a crucible,” said Capt. Jedidah Schlissel, D Battery, 1st Battalion, 31st Field Artillery commander. “It increases their mental toughness because they probably never imagined how tough this would be.”

Indeed – the final event of Forge is a rite of passage ceremony where trainees put on their berets for the first time in BCT, symbolizing that they are now Soldiers, said Drill Sergeant (Staff Sgt.) Michael Davies, D Battery, 1st Battalion, 31st Field Artillery.

The 434th Field Artillery Brigade here -- along with Army BCT brigades at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and Fort Benning, Georgia -- must implement Forge into their training by Oct. 1, Schlissel said. D Battery, 1st Battalion, 31st Field Artillery was testing the second Forge here, July 9-12, with an emphasis on night training to minimize heat injuries.

The brigade’s B Battery, 1st Battalion, 19th Field Artillery had performed a day version of Forge.

“It went well,” Schlissel said of the first

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**Trainee Pvt. Kaylie Buck sets a security perimeter during the Forge Basic Combat Training cumulative training exercise July 9, 2018, at Fort Sill, Okla. (Photo Credit: U.S. Army photo by Fort Sill Tribune staff)**

Forge. “We’re actually doing a night Forge with about double the (troop) movement that they conducted.”

Day 1 began with a 10-mile road march followed by medical Squad Training Exercise, or STX, events at Training Area 81.

In the STX, a squad of 12-15 trainees on patrol encountered indirect small arms fire. During the attack, the squad suffered casualties that had to be moved to a landing zone for an air medical evacuation, which they called in.

Another training event involved an equipment move to resupply a unit. Trainees carried various pieces of gear. That evening trainees performed a troop movement under direct fire at the night infiltration course.

Day 2 included pugils competition, which simulated fighting hand-to-hand with a rifle. At

the reflexive fire range, trainees fired M-16 rifles from various firing positions.

“This provides them with more trigger time, more weapon manipulation to get them more comfortable with their weapon system,” Schlissel said. “It’s slightly more advanced than shooting at targets in a qualification course.”

Another training event was a mass casualty scenario where trainees were faced with an ethical dilemma, i.e., what to do with captured wounded enemies who need to be transported.

Trainees never knew what the next event would be, so they were constantly surprised. “It’s mental exhaustion; you’re just doing one strenuous thing after another,” Schlissel said.

Day 3 consisted of a combatives tournament

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of grappling to determine squad champions.

Later, a road march provided a warm-up to a combat obstacle course, followed by another road march to the 1-mile track for the Monti Challenge. Here, trainees were tested on warrior tasks, such as performing a weapons check on an M4 rifle, and donning a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or CBRN, and explosive mask.

For the last day, there would be yet another night obstacle course, and then the rite of passage. Over the four days of events, the trainees probably navigated about 46 miles, Schlissel said.

Trainees lived in the field. Davies noted that the trainees would not be getting as much sleep as they were used to, and probably only slept four hours the first day.

Forge was the third Field Training Exercise, or FTX, that trainees experienced. The first was Hammer, a one-day, one-night FTX during week 3 of BCT, Davies said. Trainees used all the warrior tasks and battle drills they had learned up to that point during the FTX.

In Hammer, for example, trainees learned how to apply camouflage paint on themselves, and how to create a security perimeter.

The Anvil FTX, conducted during week 6, built upon other skills such as squad tactics, medical training events, and CBRN attacks.

All the FTXs are named after blacksmith terms to emphasize that Soldiers are “forged” during them, Schlissel said. The Forge exercise follows the theme, as well as its reference to Valley Forge, one of the Continental Army’s encampment sites during the Revolutionary War.

Forge does not increase the duration of the 10-week BCT, but it does increase its intensity, Schlissel said. And because Forge is new, drill sergeants are learning how to implement it, said Davies.

“We know the material, but there is more (troop) movement and we’re staying up longer,” Davies said.

Drill Sergeant (Staff Sgt.) Jon Schroeder, D

Battery, 1st Battalion, 31st Field Artillery, helped develop Forge training here with Senior Drill Sergeant (Sgt. 1st Class) Francisco Soto.

Soto visited Fort Jackson to see how a battalion was implementing the training into its BCT. Fort Jackson has a lot of resources and runs Forge week as a battalion, Schroeder said.

Learning from Fort Jackson, and using 434th Field Artillery Brigade resources, he and Soto came up with a tentative training plan to implement Forge week at the battery level here. Soto presented it to D Battery’s executive officer. With the assistance of the operations and logistics shops, it was put in motion, Schroeder said.

To prepare trainees for the physically demanding Forge, drill sergeants increased ruck marches weeks before the exercise, Schlissel said.

“Instead of be transported by buses to the training areas, they were mostly walking,” he said. “That’s been a major impact on their physical fitness and endurance.”

On Day 1 of the medical STX, trainee Pvt. Thomas Archibald, D Battery, 1st Battalion, 31st Field Artillery, said he was using all the skills he’s learned in BCT.

“With the drill sergeants taking us through FTX 2 (Anvil) and putting us through night training, it’s prepared us for Forge,” said Archibald, of Olive Branch, Miss. “If we had not gone through the medical lanes before multiple times conducting many tests, we would not know how to do this.”

Archibald added that things we’re going well.

“I’ve gotten a lot stronger physically and mentally than I thought I could be,” he said.

Davies said Forge will make his trainees better.

“I want them to know that they can push themselves past what they thought were their limits,” he said. “They will become not only better Soldiers, but better people.”