

'Lion' Brigade Takes New Approach to Training

Change is needed

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Training Circular (TC) 6-02.1 was published in July of 2019, coincidentally before the fielding of the first expeditionary signal battalion-enhanced (ESB-E). This latest version of the training circular included new "Signal Assessment Tables" (SATs) drawn from models of maneuver branch gunnery tables. Similar to tank and Bradley gunnery, the SATs escalated from individual, to crew, to section training, certification, and validation, including a total of seven tables.

When this TC was published, most signal elements still operated Warfighter Information Network-Tactical (WIN-T) Increment 1b or 2 assets, which included multiple four to eight-man teams that combined into sections responsible for providing services.

For example, under the WIN-T architecture, a Satellite Transportable Terminal (STT) or Phoenix (PHX) team is responsible for satellite transmissions, and a Joint Network Node (JNN) or Command Post Node (CPN) team is responsible for network services, which forced units to integrate separate nodal and transmissions teams to provide user services. In this case, section training was relevant and still applies to brigade combat teams, division signal companies, and S6/G6 staff sections that operate WIN-T equipment today. However, with the advent of ESB-Es, "section" training validation (tables V-VII) are no longer an appropriate model, given smaller Scalable Network Node (SNN) teams of network communication systems specialists (25H) that operate both the satellite terminal and network node. With the four-man SNN team, there are no longer separate STT teams and separate JNN/CPN network teams that would require validation together as a section. Therefore, training conducted simultaneously with multiple teams reduces the complexity for the SNN team, which would otherwise operate alone and unafraid.

Since the model has not yet formally changed, units often attempt to comply with concurrent team training to form sections. However, this "section training" resources the team with oversight and increased cognitive diversity they wouldn't typically have on site during missions.

The validation of eight or more Soldiers in a section formation would provide cognitive and experiential diversity in training that is not available on a real-world mission. Any training above a four-man team configuration will essentially make validation easier, especially when units interpret validation as lining up nodes in a

field together in a race to install.

For SNN teams, the real test comes as they experience complex challenges at the team level and technically troubleshoot and think critically, while isolated from other peers and leaders in their organization. This is the scenario we must replicate in training, where there is no available on-site assistance. SNN teams require a new approach to training, and it must be centered around the critical high-payoff tasks in ESB-Es: troop leading procedures (TLPs). Priority should focus on training, certifying, and validating the four-man SNN team as the unit of action and as an isolated element.

The training also requires teams to perform mounted navigation at night to link up with the supported unit, and then perform signal site selection while assuming enemy observation. Ultimately, this level of training will equip the SNN team to perform in real-world scenarios where they are attached to supported units without the comfort blanket of mid-grade leaders from their organization and company network operations (NETOPS) support on site. Advanced SATs will ready teams beyond the fundamentals, empower them to solve complex problems, gain confidence in operating independently, and ultimately produce expert Signaleers.

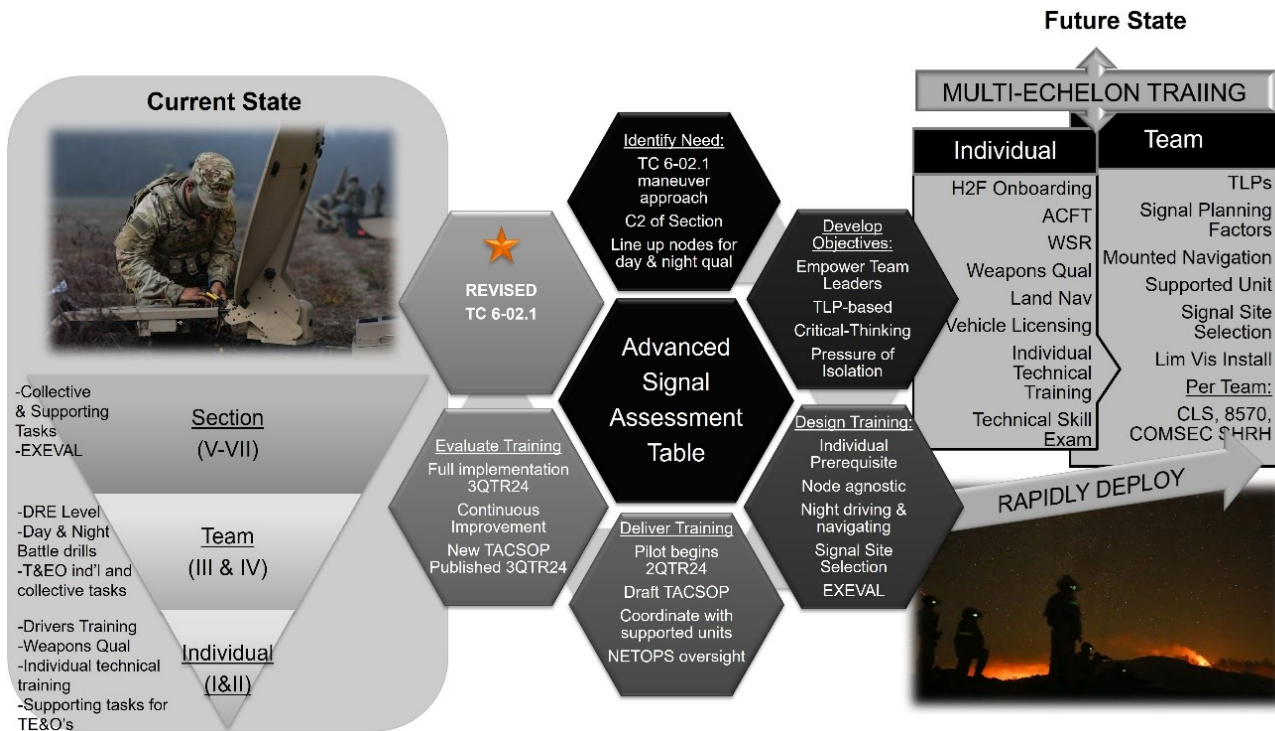
The graph on the next page depicts 35th CSB's approach to develop advanced SATs tailored to SNN teams and ESB-E formations. The "Future State" emphasizes the glidepath of individual warfighting tasks, technical skills, and collective tasks at the team level. Instead of the traditional seven gunnery tables, 35th's proposal features individual validation followed by qualification on an advanced SAT. This approach provides the opportunity for multi-echelon training that extends to the battalion and brigade levels, all designed to integrate within a rapid deployment timeline.

The advanced SAT is TLP-based, empowering team leaders with the critical thinking skills to receive a mission, make their own plan, reconnoiter, and then perform mounted navigation to link up with a notional or real supported unit. Once on the objective, teams are then required to think critically and solve problems as they are evaluated on signal site selection and equipment installation procedures. This new validation standard will increase competency and confidence at both the individual and team levels.

While this condensed but more challenging training solution appears to be working for teams in the 35th CSB, there needs to be broader change in the signal community. Without the ability to lock crews sternly on a training glidepath like Bradley or tank crews,

signal training often ends up being ad hoc and on-the-job-training, either partially validating teams or fully validating a partial team. Adopting a model with individual prerequisites prior to a one-time team validation gives Soldiers back their greatest resource of all: time. This additional time will allow them to approach training support missions and real-world operations with a fully certified team in-lieu of a seven-step certification process.

It is time for signal leaders to notice that change is needed, to include publishing a communally reviewed update to TC 6-02.1 that acknowledges the ESB-E equipment set. Along with updating the TC, revised SATs need to be introduced across all signal professional military education to ensure that Soldiers arriving to all tactical signal formations understand the processes and standards for training and evaluating team readiness.



Bios

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