



At left, National Guard Soldiers conduct training as part of Defender 24 on 14 May 2024 in the Czech Republic. (Photo by SSG Jeff Clements) Center, National Guard Soldiers train for civil disturbance operations training in Los Alamitos, CA, on 11 June 2025. (Photo by SGT Chase Murray) At right, a Louisiana National Guard Soldier cuts debris from Hurricane Milton in Manatee, FL, on 16 October 2024. (Photo by SSG Noshoba Davis)

A Training Framework for the Three-Block War:

Preparing Army National Guard Units for Diverse Missions

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The Army National Guard (ARNG) faces unique challenges, balancing wartime mission-essential tasks (METs) with additional roles in civil disturbance (CD) and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HADR). These diverse missions align with the “three-block war” concept, introduced by U.S. Marine Corps Gen Charles C. Krulak in the 1990s.¹ This article outlines a training framework to prepare National Guard units for these simultaneous demands, given a drill weekend to integrate attack and defense, civil disturbance, and HADR training. By leveraging doctrinal resources, urban training centers, and experiential learning, units can develop the agility to transition more seamlessly between mission sets.

Three-Block War: A Persistent Framework

The three-block war — where in urban environments, Soldiers may conduct high-intensity combat on one block, stability operations like counterinsurgency on another, and HADR on a third — remains relevant, as demonstrated in recent operations.² For example, in U.S. Central Command’s area of responsibility (AOR), Soldiers hunt ISIS in one country, train with allies in another, and provide humanitarian aid to refugees in the same region.³ Urbanization amplifies the need for proficiency in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Specifically, National Guard units are often called upon for these domestic and overseas missions and must train to execute these tasks with precision and adaptability.

Training Framework Overview

This framework uses a three-day Army National Guard

drill weekend to train these three mission sets: attack and defense, civil disturbance, and HADR. Key considerations regarding operational environment (OE) variables include using urban training centers, specialized equipment (like civil disturbance kits, moulage kits, non-lethal munitions, role players, Close Combat Mission Capability Kits [CCMCK] “sim rounds”), and support from 1st Army observer-controller/trainers (OC/Ts). While the Army is currently transforming to the mobile brigade combat team (MBCT) force structure, this framework was developed for current modified infantry brigade combat team (IBCT) table of organization and equipment maneuver battalions.

Proposed Training Structure Methods

Units can organize training in several ways:

Post-Mobilization Training: Conduct this focused training only after activation for a specific mission.

Leader-Level Exercises: Use only tabletop exercises (TTXs), map exercises (MAPEXs), or tactical exercises without troops (TEWTs) for leaders to plan and rehearse while the rest of the formation continues to focus on large-scale combat operations (LSCO) METs.

Dedicated Drill Days: Allocate one day for CD and another for HADR during annual training to balance the finite training time available.

Decentralized Approach: Task companies to develop creative training plans independently, with battalion oversight to allocate resources and inactive duty training (IDT) slots.

Integrated Round-Robin: Conduct situational training exercises (STXs) as a battalion, rotating units through lanes for each mission set.

This article explores the integrated round-robin method.

Overall Concept

This method uses an urban training area with four lanes/ areas: a battalion command post (CP) assembly area, attack and defense lane, civil disturbance/area security lane, and a HADR lane. Units spend mornings on planning, preparation, and blocks of instruction, with afternoon iterations followed by after action reviews (AARs). Night iterations leverage limited visibility conditions to enhance realism and proficiency. The framework task-organizes a maneuver battalion across three days, as shown in Figure 1. Each company rotates through the lanes, supported by the battalion CP for mutual coordination and to conduct battalion enemy prisoner of war (EPW) collection point and casualty collection point (CCP) tasks.

Civil Disturbance Training

CD missions require measured restraint, protection of rights, and de-escalation. Recent National Guard continental United States (CONUS) mobilization to support operations in cities like Minneapolis, Kenosha, and Portland highlight the need for disciplined responses to riots and civil unrest.⁴ Overseas, units like the Indiana Army National Guard's 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team demonstrated restraint under fire in Kosovo, achieving positive outcomes.⁵ CD training structure involves (see Figure 2):

Morning: NCOs train individuals and small teams on tasks like escalation-of-force procedures using a teach-show-do methodology, along with familiarization ranges to introduce application of non-lethal munitions.⁶ Officers conduct collective-level leader training via TTX, TEWT, and/or MAPEXs.

Afternoon/Evening: The company splits into platoon versus platoon, or squad vs squad, to conduct STX scenarios. Equipment includes riot shields, combatives gear, and "non fragmentary-producing" training grenades.

Doctrinal references include Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-28.1, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)*, and ATP 3-39.33, *Crowd Control*. Sustainment requires Class 2 (riot gear), Class 5 (non-lethal munitions), and Class 8 (mouflage kits).

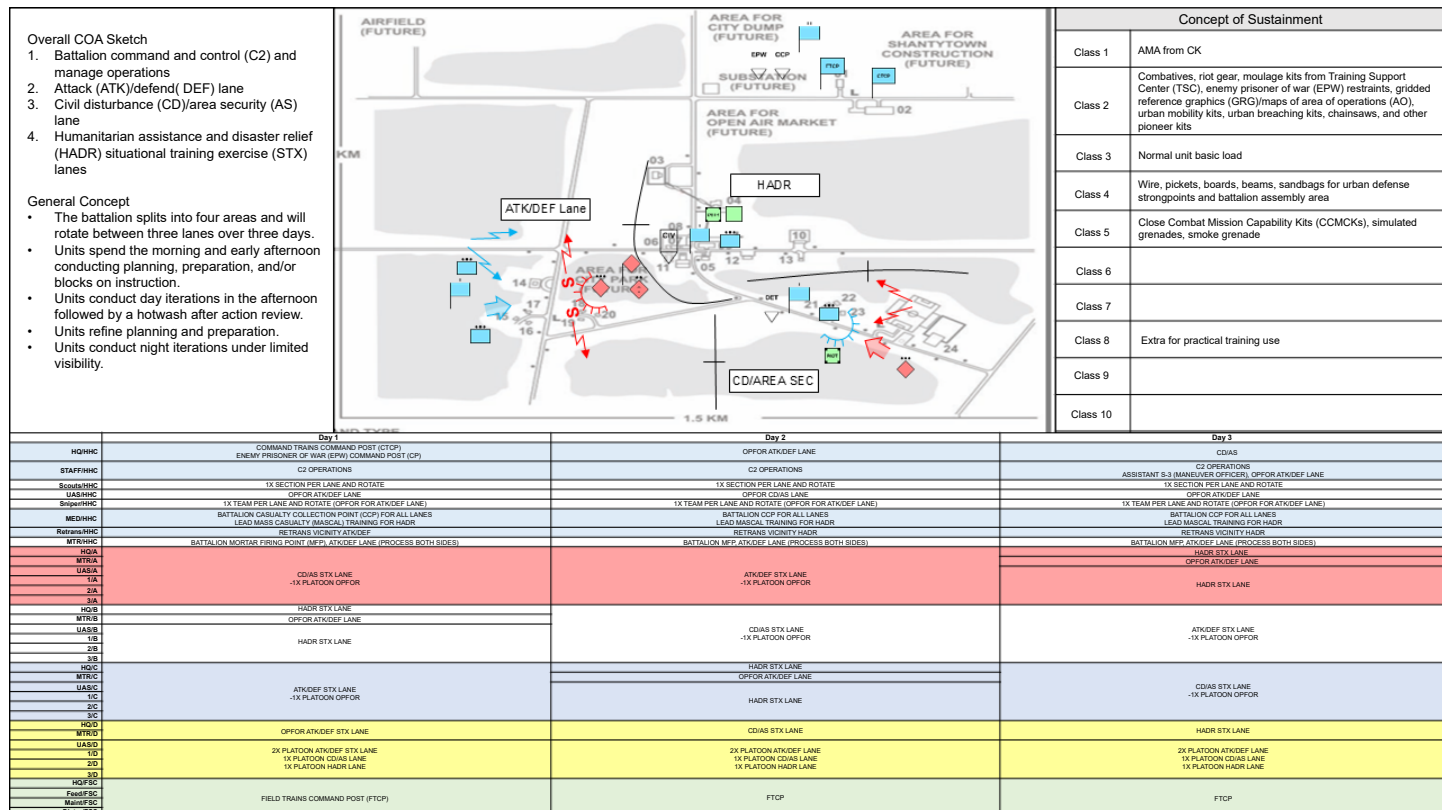
Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

HADR missions respond to natural disasters like floods, wildfires, or hurricanes, as seen in recent Texas flash floods.⁷ Training focuses on search and rescue, breaching, and medical response (see Figure 3):

Morning: NCOs again train individuals and small teams on tasks like breaching and casualty extraction, led by the battalion medical platoon. Officers prepare via deployment readiness exercise (DRE) TEWTs, TTXs, and MAPEXs in order to better coordinate with state joint operations centers.

Afternoon/Evening: Units practice STX for survivor extraction and coordination with local first responders. Equipment includes chainsaws, bolt cutters, ropes, and medical kits.

Figure 1 — Example Framework





Attack and Defense

ations, requires unique considerations: mobility challenges (vertical, subterranean), higher force ratios (5-7 or even 9-15:1 attacker-to defender), and significantly higher Class 5 consumption rates.⁸ Training organization includes (see Figure 4):

Morning: Blue forces conduct troop leading procedures and area reconnaissance while opposing forces (OPFOR)

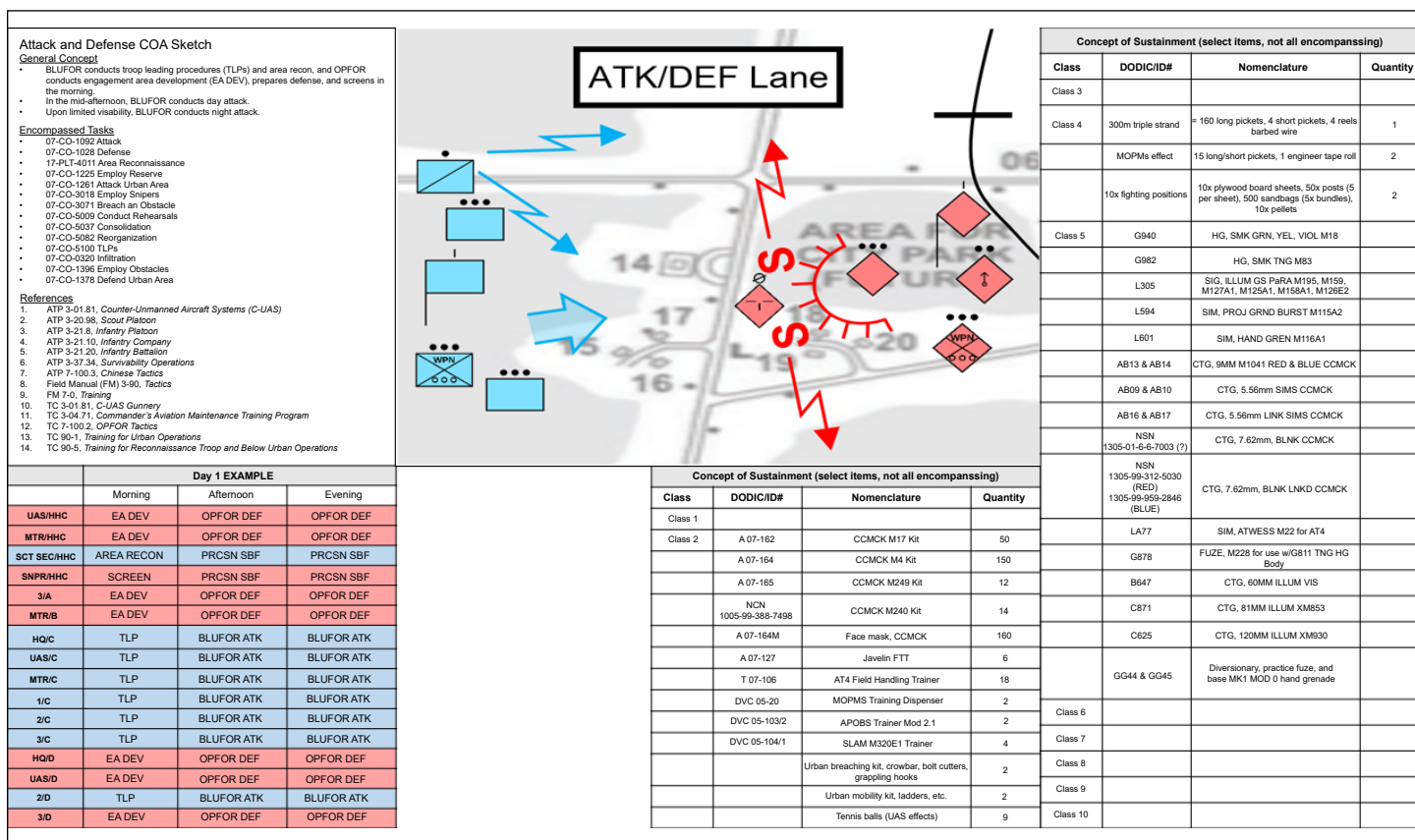


Figure 4 — Example Attack and Defense Training Structure

prepare defenses/screens and conduct counter-reconnaissance. Equipment includes CCMCKs and breaching tools.

Afternoon/Night: Blue forces execute attack iterations, followed by AARs and night operations. Additional assets (scouts, mortars, motorized platoons) enhance realism.

References include ATP 3-21.8, *Infantry Platoon and Squad*, and Field Manual (FM) 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense*. Sustainment requires Class 2 (mobility kits), Class 4 (sandbags, wire), and Class 5 (CCMCK, smoke, and illumination mortar rounds). A gap exists in replicating indirect fire; parachute illumination rounds are recommended to simulate effects.

Conclusion

The three-block war framework prepares National Guard units for the dynamic demands of modern operations. By integrating attack and defense, CD, and HADR into a three-day drill weekend, units develop the agility to transition between missions. Experiential learning, supported by doctrinal resources and sustainment, ensures Soldiers are ready to protect life — whether American citizens, allies, or global populations.

Authors Note

This article has an accompanying video presentation accessible at <https://youtu.be/bhehEsapWyo> along with the presentation slides (3 Block War Training Framework Presentation Slides JUL2025.pdf).

Notes

¹ Gen Charles C. Krulak, U.S. Marine Corps, "Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Leatherneck* 82/1 (January 1999), <https://www.mca-marines.org/wp-content/uploads/1999-Jan-The-strategic-corporal-Leadership-in-the-three-block-war.pdf>.

² Ibid.

³ U.S. Central Command, n.d.

⁴ SFC Jon Soucy, "Guard Members in 23 States, D.C. Called Up in Response to Civil Unrest," 31 May 2020, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2202946/guard-members-in-23-states-dc-called-up-in-response-to-civil-unrest/>.

⁵ MSG Jeff Lowry, "More than 300 Indiana National Guard Soldiers Awarded Combat Patch for Kosovo Force Mission," 25 June 2025, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/501603/more-than-300-indiana-national-guard-soldiers-awarded-combat-patch-kosovo-force-mission>.

⁶ Field Manual 7-0, *Training*, June 2021, 1-2.

⁷ Rose L. Thayer, "Guard Joins Rescue Efforts in Texas after Devastating Floods," *Stars and Stripes*, 7 July 2025, <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/2025-07-07/national-coast-guard-texas-floods-18364338.html>.

⁸ *Mosul Study Group: What the Battle for Mosul Teaches the Force* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2017), [https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/Primer-on-Urban-Operation/Documents/Mosul%20\(Public%20Release\).pdf](https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/Primer-on-Urban-Operation/Documents/Mosul%20(Public%20Release).pdf); ATP 3-06, *Urban Operations*, July 2022.

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