

A synopsis of
Stifled Innovation?
Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Today

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1. **Summary**

In the U.S. Army, company commanders seldom execute autonomous, innovative training. Higher headquarters (HHQ) are to blame for three reasons:

- (1) HHQ directed requirements
- (2) HHQ dictated events
- (3) HHQ disruptive taskings

Senior leaders need to do *less*, not more.

“Senior Leaders...[have] gone too far in over-planning, over prescribing, and over controlling.” – General Wesley Clark

2. **Centralization** trends in administration have crept into small-unit training.

- a. Too many good ideas by HHQ.
- b. Non-mission training requirements have skyrocketed.
- c. Training Day Math

365 days per year -109 weekends / holidays = 256 possible training days
242 training days when long weekends and block leave is applied

Mandatory Training by Department of the Army, MACOM, Corps,
Division, Brigade =
297 training days

There are more requirements than there are days! Requirements for mission

training are 85%, non-mission training is 15%. Eliminating 50% of non-mission requirements would free only 21 days.

- d. Average Army company commander time in command = 11.4 months. When HHQ refuses to prioritize, company commanders learn to ignore regulations.
3. **Planning** and leading autonomous training is a critical leadership development experience. Innovation cannot be taught.
 - a. **1978**: 30 weeks of discretionary time for infantry companies.
 - b. 2001: 8 weeks of discretionary time for infantry companies.
 4. **Preparation for Combat Training Center (CTC)** rotations *consumes* company commander time. Brigade and Battalion exercises are now far more prevalent than before CTCs existed. In some Brigades, CTC build-up and execution consumes four months!
 5. **Support for HHQ events** consumes company commander's individual time.
 - a. Observer / Controller (O/C) for exercises preparing other units.
 - b. Division / Corps – level BCTP simulations consume 108 Captains (80 company commanders) for three weeks.
 6. **Formalized training events** consume company commander time. HHQ executes training. Company commander “moves” unit through.
 - a. Real-world, non-doctrinal mission preparation generates detailed checklists.
 - b. HHQ requirement to “certify” units. “An O-6 must sign off on this training.”
 - c. Bleeds over into CTC preparation events.
 - d. “More efficient” for resources, time, and specificity, but is it “more effective?”
 - e. Competition to excel sometimes vies for trying to learn.
 7. **The futility of planning training.** Distracters spoil well-planned training.

- a. HHQ late-notice taskers, *inside* six-week lock-on (76%). Mostly O/C requirements, other exercise support, base support, public relations.
- b. Training is then changed or disrupted. Schedules are non-binding.
- c. Few units plan progressive training cycles. Army “Red, Amber, Green” model rarely used.

8. **Company commander’s administration burden.**

- a. Data tracking, statistics, and reports.
- b. Email queries or taskers that skip staff levels. Queries from division straight to company commanders.

9. **HHQ garrison template** sometimes chops week into mandatory schedule that leaves no time for training. “Wednesday afternoon is NCO time.”

10. **Planning has become a façade.**

- a. Submitted schedules are not executed.
- b. Schedule lock-on at six-weeks is goal. Four, three, and even one week is sometimes the case.

11. **BUT...Culture seems to work even in this environment.** Company commanders know nothing else. By comparison, in Kosovo, company commanders reveled in independence and autonomy, regretted having to go home(!) Knew the over-controlling environment awaited them.

12. **What to do?** Army must seek a holistic solution.

- a. Do not mandate “One week per quarter for company training.”
- b. Senior leaders need to do *less*, not more.
- c. Decide what echelon rates top priority, then focus. Corps? Division? Platoon?
- d. Protect company commanders.