

A MESSAGE FROM LAND COMPONENT COMMANDER



Train Hard, Train Smart, Train Safe

In previous *Army News* articles, I have discussed how a strong and resilient force contributes to the overall culture of readiness for operations, and that culture can often create the surety for mission success. So too does realistic and multifaceted training and the culture of safety associated with effective training. Realistic and complex training is critical to prepare our officers and soldiers for the full range of military options and operations expected of us, both domestically and offshore. We are required to intentionally expose our personnel to perceived and actual physical and mental danger to mimic the operational experience and environment and grow resiliency. Realistic and complex training does not mean risky training. Well planned, controlled and executed training ahead of an operational deployment results in mission success, and reduces the chance of accidents and casualties.

In the contemporary Army, live field firing is not the only activity that poses some risk to our personnel, nor should this be deemed as the pinnacle of our martial training. Military driving, some PT including close quarter combat and conditioning for the Land Combat Fitness test, adventurous and experiential leadership training, demolitions, training in domains other than land or at night also incur an element of risk. How we manage that risk is critical to ensuring safe and effective training.

We know that culture is what is accepted, what gets done, and how it gets done, in any organisation. A culture of safety in training is owned by all members who serve. Each of us has responsibilities as commanders, leaders, practitioners, training deliverers and receivers; and as writers of policy and doctrine. We need to be constantly asking, and discussing, “am I, and the soldiers that are about to undertake this training activity qualified, current and competent?” Similarly, our mind-set should seek to improve safety in training not see it as a burden or restriction on good training. Innocuous training conducted poorly, in ignorance of policy and safety standards, or training that does not align to the generation of a unit to meet its DLOC requirements, or OLOC for operations must be avoided or ceased. A strong cultural approach does not diminish other organisational approaches such as command and leadership responsibilities, policy, and doctrine, but it does reinforce their successful implementation.

Last month, we as a Component, took a pause to examine our safety in training culture at all levels of our part of the organisation; Component, Formation, and Unit. We have had a couple of recent live field firing and other training accidents over the past couple of years and it was timely for us to ask ourselves some hard questions and to challenge our assumptions. We

held Safety in Training Seminars in Linton, Burnham, and Waiouru at the start of June led by the Land Training Advisory Group and members of my staff, and attended by the majority of you at the JNCO and Young Officer level through to senior commanders and trainers.

The purpose of the workshops was to be an informative, supportive, enabling and engaging seminar; not to preach, but to generate awareness and discussion in order to improve our safety in training culture. The seminars each centred around three themes; to reinforce our responsibilities towards safety in training and looking after our personnel; to reiterate the vertical alignment of commanders and trainers to risk, training design and expectations, policy and processes; and to provide a safe forum for articulating obstacles that hinder safe (but realistic, multifaceted, and progressive) training and determine a path ahead to remove those obstacles, and to shine a light on new ideas and perspectives in training.

The engagement and feedback were great, confirming my belief and trust in our commanders, leaders, and trainers as wanting to provide world-class, agile, adaptive, and varied training to better prepare our personnel for the rigours of operations. At the same time, we conducted a review of recent Courts of Inquiry to determine if there were any patterns that

could inform future actions. The outcome of this was largely that our policy and doctrine is sound, comprehensive and allows for the safe conduct of all military training. They do need to be understood, however, and used, otherwise they atrophy, and this is when mistakes and accidents in training have occurred either by the incorrect actions of the individual under training or by the conducting and supervising staff and trainers. This is something we can all work on.

We had some outstanding feedback and conversations during the seminars and I acknowledge the contribution of all who attended, especially the junior commanders. We identified many work-on areas including addressing tempo, information management, better methods to access and search training doctrine and policy, use of simulation and technology, a faster lessons learned loop process, and supporting graduated training by providing resources (including time) for training to include the requisite ‘sets and reps’ to be competent before moving to more complex activities. These were but some of the many suggestions that we are working through, led by the Land Training Advisory Group, and that will help improve our cultural behaviours towards safety in training.

Now what? We are all on the hook to address some of the concerns presented at the seminars, and I need all Commanders to do so in their area

of responsibility and accountability. Whilst many attended the Seminar, we didn't get the whole organisation, so the conversation needs to continue in the Regular and Reserve units.

Building a positive and strong culture of safe training is more than just a mantra of ‘operations first, safety always’. We have to live it. One of the highlights of the Safety in Training Seminars was the willingness of junior commanders to offer suggestions and to identify problem areas. This takes a bit of courage in front of peers and superiors. Well done, it is that behaviour during training, putting the hand up if something is not quite right, or calling ‘stop’ that can prevent death or serious injury. We owe that to ourselves, our comrades and our mates.

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Jim Bliss
Brigadier

UNIFORM UPDATE



The NZ Army is in the process of updating its Multi Camouflage Uniform (MCU). The update addresses materials that can no longer be sourced and takes advantage of changes in material colours including commercial multi cam patterns. The update will also include design and material fabric enhancements to improve comfort and fit.

The camouflage pattern of the new uniform is similar to that worn by the United Kingdom Defence Force but with a New Zealand colour scheme. It is known as NZ Multi Terrain Pattern (NZMTP). The colour, camouflage pattern and material have been approved by the Chief of Army. Initial production of uniforms is planned for late 2019 with distribution early 2020. NZMTP will be phased in over four years, ending 2023.

Extensive operational and training use of the current MCU, in a range of conditions and environments, has identified a number of comfort and fit issues relating to the design. These include heat-related issues, and the uniform cut not suiting parts of the Army team. Specifically, fit issues for female service personnel has been an on-going source of dissatisfaction.

The colour and pattern of the NZMTP is similar visually across a broad range of commercial Multi-Cam™ products enabling Army to take advantage of a range of Commercial off the Shelf military clothing and personal support items. This provides opportunity to evolve the clothing and personnel support items at a quicker pace than the current MCU clothing system enables.

The initial design of the combat shirts and trousers, produced in the NZMTP will be styled on the former Disruptive Pattern Material (DPM)

uniform, the predecessor of the current MCU.

In addition, a clothing sizing system review has begun using data from a NZDF 2016 anthropometric survey, with Australian Defence Force assistance. This is to ensure the NZMTP sizes are engineered to meet the body shapes and sizes of all NZDF personnel. Alternate designs will be trialled early 2020 which will allow confirmation of the materials, design and fit. The trial will utilise participants across Army to ensure female and male feedback is available to influence the final design and sizing system.

Logistics Commander (Land) Colonel Stephen Piercy said the aim of the uniform change is “to utilise the feedback received and commercial changes available to deliver a sustainable next generation uniform that meets operational needs but also ensures the uniform accommodates an increasingly diverse Army population – our people look professional, feel supported and are proud of the uniform they wear”.

Further information can be gained through contacting: army.clothing@nzdf.mil.nz