

Field expedient:

Battle Staff instructors deploy course to Kuwait

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Battle Staff Course instructors gave a new twist to the old saying about Mohammed going to the mountain. In this case, the course instructors went to the students, even though the students are deployed to Camp Doha, Kuwait, in a hostile-fire environment.

Five staff and faculty members from the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy deployed to Kuwait Jan. 11-Feb. 14 to train more than 100 NCOs.

A unit's battle staff is comprised of soldiers who track military operations in a wartime situation, according to Sgt. Maj. David Osborn, chief of the resident Battle Staff Course at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas. Osborn was one of the five NCOs who deployed to Kuwait to teach the course.

"They [students] learned how to best track the battle," Osborn said. "You can't

win a war, but you sure as hell can lose it," said Osborn. The unit's battle staff helps put the right support and supplies in place in a timely and accurate manner, or the war could be lost.

Osborn is adept at teaching battle staff operations in a classroom environment, yet he and his team faced a unique set of challenges in deploying to teach the course in a field environment, especially since this was a one-time mission.

"The challenge we had, when asked to do this in mid-December, is that this was over and above our regular mission," Osborn explained. "We didn't have the manpower from the Battle Staff Course to send everybody we needed. It almost got squashed there."

The Academy command group resolved the manning issue by enlisting the help of NCOs from the Academy's Quality Assurance Office. The QAO soldiers were able to pull double duty during the deployment. They served as

assistant instructors during each of the two courses. They were also able to validate the newly written Battle Staff mobilization program of instruction (POI).

Since the students usually complete Phase I of the course through distance learning, the Battle Staff instructors had no POI for Phase I instruction, Osborn explained. Before they could begin the field-expedient course, they had to write the lesson plans for teaching Phase I in a classroom...or, in this case, a converted warehouse.

The Battle Staff Course consists of two segments of instruction: Phase I and Phase II. The students complete Phase I through correspondence at their home station. They have 60 days to complete the 30 lessons, which equal approximately 10 days of classroom instruction. Once the students successfully complete Phase I, they then move on to Phase II of the course either by attending the four-week and one-day course at the Academy or via



Photos by Sgt. Erika Gladhill, Third Army/CFLCC PAO

Staff Sgt. Priscilla Davis, left, an operations analyst in Coalition Forces Land Component Command, and Staff Sgt. Joaleen Clark, an intelligence analyst, plot coordination points on an overlay.

a video tele-training site near their home station for about the same number of days. Soldiers attending either course attend classes seven hours each weekday.

Armed with their newly written POIs, the team shipped field manuals and all of the needed supplies, from alcohol pens to acetate, to Kuwait. All together, they mailed 48 70-pound boxes for a total of 3,360 pounds of manuals and supplies.

“We shipped all of the supplies and equipment, so that all [the units] had to supply was the bodies,” Osborn said.

At Camp Doha, the team compacted the course into three weeks of 14-hour days. Students and instructors conducted business as usual in a not-so-usual environment. The instructors taught the classes in a warehouse, where their maps

were barely lit by dull fluorescent lights. During group discussions, the soldiers often struggled to be heard over the traffic clatter on the busy road outside the bay. Through it all, Osborn and his assistant instructors worked to maintain the integrity of the course in terms of standards and information.

After attending the field-expedient Battle Staff Course, Staff Sgt. Calvin B. Lucas said he believes anything is possible. Lucas, a senior personnel sergeant and a student in the course, acknowledged that training will be conducted, even if it’s in a renovated warehouse bay somewhere in Kuwait.

“I am grateful to be in this course,” Lucas said. “It is exciting and rewarding. With the knowledge that I am picking up, I

hope I will play a more intricate part of the [unit’s] planning, war-gaming and strategic placement.”

Staff Sgt. Arlisa Rivers said the instructors taught to the standard by teaching quality not quantity.

“I should be a valuable resource to my immediate unit or whatever position I work in because I...can say, ‘This is the way it is supposed to be done, and this is the way we have to do it.’ I think the purpose of us being here is that we become assets to the Army as a whole,” said Rivers, an executive administrator.

The graduation ceremony for the forward-deployed Battle Staff Course took place Feb. 7. Maj. Gen. James D. Thurman, director of training, Coalition Forces Land Component Command, attended the



Sgt. Maj. David Osborn, chief of the resident Battle Staff Course at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas, conducts a class in a modified warehouse. Osborn was one of the five USASMA NCOs who deployed to Kuwait to teach the course.

ceremony. Thurman said he is proud of the 53 NCOs who graduated in Class 701-03.

“The first thing that sticks in my mind when I look out into the audience that has [NCOs] graduating from a course historic for our nation and our Army is, ‘No one is more professional than I, Competence is my watchword...’ that is what I think.”

He said the graduates were taught by the best, the Sergeants Major Academy Battle Staff [instructors]. Speaking of the graduating students, Thurman said, “They represent the best our nation has. The men and women who serve in our military are national treasures. We are very proud of them.”

While deployed, the USASMA team taught two classes, both Phase I and II of the course. End result: they graduated 103

Battle Staff-qualified NCOs. The majority of the students are assigned to units within Third Army, 3rd Infantry Division or one of the various air defense artillery brigades deployed from Fort Bliss, Texas.

Osborn attributed their success to the support they received at Camp Doha. “There were some good officers, NCOs and contractors – both from [Army Central Command and Third Army] who supported us.”

While Osborn acknowledges that the Battle Staff Course is not staffed nor funded to support a mobile training team, he is pleased with the results of their one foray into the field.

“It was a good trip. We trained a lot of outstanding NCOs,” Osborn said. “We took the training to where it was needed: to soldiers serving in a combat zone.”

Course graduates become invaluable to unit

Noncommissioned officers who graduate the Battle Staff Course are invaluable assets to their commander and staff, according to Sgt. Maj. David Osborn, chief instructor of the Battle Staff Course at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas.

“The Battle Staff NCO is capable of tracking the combat and combat support soldiers on the battlefield,” Osborn explained. “These NCOs then use the information they gain from battle tracking to advise their commanders and their staffs, so that the commanders can make informed decisions.”

To fill the need for Battle Staff-trained NCOs in all units, USASMA offers a resident course six or seven times a year and another six or seven video tele-training (VTT) courses. Slots are available throughout the year.

“We talk about training as we fight, and Battle Staff is where NCOs learn how to make important contributions to the fight,” Osborn explained. “Commanders can improve the unit’s performance by enrolling NCOs who are filling authorized slots. Commanders and their NCO leadership should work together to identify soldiers who will potentially fill those slots in the future and schedule them to attend the course also.”

The Battle Staff Course is broken into two phases. The soldiers complete Phase I through correspondence courses at their home station. Phase I consists of 30 lesson plans, equal to about 10 days of classroom instruction. The soldiers have 60 days to complete the coursework.

Once they complete Phase I, they are then enrolled in Phase II. Phase II training is conducted in a classroom environment. The soldiers can either attend the resident



course at USASMA (this is often the case for soldiers who are en route to their next duty stations) or attend video tele-training at a site near his or her home station.

“Soldiers who attend the battle staff training by VTT receive the training at minimal cost to their units because we send the course to them by distance learning,” Osborn explained.

“We have to choose the hard right over the easy wrong,” he said. “We have to invest in our soldiers and make the time for our soldiers to go to school.”

The quality of instruction is the same for the VTT course as it is for the resident course. In fact, assistant instructors from local NCO

academies monitor the VTT courses to ensure quality, according to Command Sgt. Maj. Lesley McCorkle. As the Company B, USASMA, commander, McCorkle oversees both the resident and VTT Battle Staff courses.

The one challenge soldiers participating in the VTT have over those who attend the resident course is that the soldiers at the VTT site are not always afforded the time to focus solely on the training, according to Osborn. They often feel obligated to go back to their offices or units in the evenings, instead of studying the course material.

“For soldiers attending by VTT, their units can assist their soldiers’ chances for success by treating the soldiers as if they were TDY, allowing the soldiers the opportunity to focus on the course,” Osborn said.

To attend the course, the soldier must be an NCO in the rank of staff sergeant or higher. The soldier must be in a Battle Staff (2S designated) position on the Military Table of Organization and Equipment or Table of Distribution and Allowance.