

## **SOUTH CAROLINA ARNG**

### **Armor, Cav Components of 218th HSB (Mech) Train for the NTC While Unit's HHC Takes the Cake in Army-Wide Competition**

This year's training focused on preparing the 1-263d Armor for deployment to the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, in the Year 2000. Training was supported and evaluated by a variety of units IAW the new (GFRE) Ground Force Readiness Enhancement concept described in AR 350-2. The battalion Resident Training Detachment (RTD) provided lane training, and the 2d Regional Training Brigade (RTB) evaluated task proficiency. The proficiency of specified platoon collective tasks for TY-97 were derived from the requirements of the FORSCOM NTC Certification Matrix (Appendix 1). The matrix identifies training proficiencies that must be met in prescribed time frames in order for enhanced brigades to receive approval for attendance at the NTC.

Training Year 1997 was an eventful year for the South Carolina Army Na-

tional Guard armor force. The 1-263d Armor and tank platoons from Troop B, 202 Cav — both elements of the 218th HSB (M) — conducted aggressive tactical platoon lane training, culminating in the firing of modified gunnery on Tank Table VI. Meanwhile, the combat service support personnel of HHC, 1-263d Armor were heavily involved in a national competition for the Philip A. Connelly Award for Excellence in Army Field Feeding.

The first two quarters of Training Year 1997 saw aggressive platoon maneuver training, with platoons executing collective tasks that supported the company METL. An intense combination of SIMNET training and mounted tactics culminated in an external evaluation by the 2d RTB during Inactive Duty Training (IDT) in March. The evaluation became an excellent tool for gauging the

strengths and weaknesses of the junior officers and their platoons. The training began with rehearsals during Readiness Management Assemblies (RMAs)/Training Meetings. The platoons conducted their next series of IDT periods mounted, on HMMWVs the first weekend, and on M1A1s the following weekend to provide more realism. The platoons spent the next IDT in the SIMNET to sharpen tactical skills, with the 2d RTB's evaluations on the following IDT. Although the objective of the evaluation was to achieve a "T" or "P," the key issue was the realization that effective management of crew duties and responsibilities lead to a successful evaluation. The success of the platoon lay in the hands of the noncommissioned officers, from the gunner to the platoon sergeant.

The annual training (AT) period was devoted to platoon maneuver training

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and selected company/team tasks. The 15-day AT period included one day of deliberate company/team breaching, one day for CSS certification lanes, a day for platoon defense training; and one day to train platoon attack. Five evaluation days included three days of company/team STX, one day for a platoon movement to contact STX, and one day for a platoon defense STX. The remainder were travel and vehicle/personnel maintenance days.

Offensive and defensive STX evaluations would have produced more "T" and "P" ratings if the training had been conducted on the day prior to the evaluation. However, the limited number of trainers and other resources would not support this demanding training matrix. Future operations should allow for offensive training lanes followed by offensive STX evaluations, and defensive training lanes followed by defensive training STX evaluations.

Annual training in 1997 allowed company/team commanders to integrate combat multipliers into their planning and execution. Engineer and FIST assets greatly enhanced the skills of commanders and platoon leaders. The ultimate test was the deliberate breach operation.

One of the highlights of the 1-263d Armor training year was winning the Philip A. Connelly Award for Excellence in Army Field Feeding. HHC, 1-263d Armor had competed in the annual event since 1993. The unit received the coveted trophy in August during ceremonies in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Reserve Component training goal is to produce a force trained to Army standard that can promptly mobilize, achieve METL proficiency at the level organized, effectively and efficiently deploy, engage the enemy and win anywhere in the world, and redeploy on order. The armor force of the South Carolina Army National Guard has adopted this goal and strives for its implementation since its National Training Center Rotation in 1986 and its mobilization during Operation Desert Shield/Storm.

*(Article prepared by CPT Rayford J. McDowell, commander of D-1-263 Armor, SCARNG.)*