



Army Experiment Explores “Adaptive Thinking”

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FORT MONROE, Va. (Army News Service) – The Army is a step closer to its goal of building future leaders [who] can think “outside the box.”

As they near the end of Army Experiment 6, staff members of Training and Doctrine Command’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Training [DCST] at Fort Monroe, Va., believe they were successful in developing “adaptive” training programs which stress how to think in addition to what to think.

“I have a very good feeling about where we’re at right now,” said Col. David Prewitt, director of AE-6. “My gut tells me we’re onto something, that further development of [battle staff] digital training is the smart move.”

Culminating with May’s “Adaptive Thinking Experiment” – a computer-assisted warfighting drill conducted at the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kan. – AE-6 is now amid the data collection phase.

Led by Prewitt and Lt. Col. Charles Allen III, AE-6 deputy director, staff members of the DCST will scrub after action reports, computer data, and exercise evaluations to determine the successes of the recent experiment.

Particular attention will be paid to AE-6’s key objectives and whether they were fully and effectively met. Those objectives include:

- Training leaders in a digitized environment.
- Developing a training methodology for “how to think” training
- Enhancing training support systems, like the Staff Digital Leaders Reaction Course and Mission Planning Rehearsal Tool [MPRT], used to train and sus-

tain leaders and staffs in digitized units. AE-6 was also driven by a basic premise: “In order to effectively and efficiently train adaptive and multidimensional leaders and soldiers, new training methodologies must be developed to teach leaders ‘how to think’ when faced with difficult challenges.”

Advances in technology and an increase in complexities and types of missions are two “difficult challenges” current and future leaders will have to face.

Commanders and senior NCOs must be able to operate in digitized tactical operations centers. They must be prepared for increased situational awareness through new technologies being fielded across the forces. And they should be trained and ready for extremely fluid operations – battles that change from a decisive engagement into peacekeeping operations overnight.

Both Prewitt and Allen said they were impressed by the complex, high “optempo” of AE-6’s Adaptive Thinking Experiment. Participants were repeatedly “thrown curve balls” – or “probes” as the AE-6 team officially refers to them – as souped-up simulations continuously changed event scenarios.

“At any given point, a [participant] mobilizing for battle would be told the enemy was surrendering and the mission would now become humanitarian in nature. And, oh, by the way, you also have a line of tanks moving toward the border,” Allen said. “So, what are you going to do about that?”

Diversity was also a plus realized during the Army experiment, Allen said. Participants could be provided any combination of support units, and the simulation systems offered immediate feedback concerning the commander’s use of those assets.

“The overall result is increased situational understanding,” Prewitt said. “Horizons are expanded. That leader can better associate with the wide variety of options available for completing current and 21st century missions, and he is far more capable of reacting quickly and decisively if the unexpected happens.”

Prewitt said he witnessed very favorable reaction to the AE-6-driven events. Participants appeared “totally immersed,” he said. “And, based on what I’ve seen in the after-action reviews, the level of understanding was up remarkably. Participants were thinking on several levels, rather than just one action and one expected result.”

Further development of the Army’s “Mission Planning Rehearsal Tool” is also on the list of AE-6 accomplishments. In its earlier form, the MPRT consisted of five desktop computers equipped to run mission simulations in areas like Bosnia or the National Training Center, located at Fort Irwin, Calif. Several commanders have already used the MPRT to prepare for upcoming deployments to Bosnia.

“One drawback was its size,” said Maj. Mark Miskovic, AE-6 information officer. “Hauling the PCs out to the field to run a mission rehearsal exercise was a real chore.”

During AE-6, the system was scaled down to five laptops, Miskovic said. Commanders from the 10th

Mountain Division, the Army Reserve, and the Army National Guard tested the new system during an early-May exercise at Fort Polk, La., and Fort Rucker, Ala.

“This new version opens up a lot of possibilities,” Miskovic said. “A command group could even carry it on the plane and conduct mission rehearsal drills on the way (to the deployment area). When you think in terms of Strike Force and rapid response scenarios, the benefits are pretty obvious.”

The ultimate goal, Prewitt said, is to have MPRTs “embedded” into the Army Tactical Command and Control System.

A presentation of findings will be the final step of the AE-6 journey. Prewitt and his team are well on their way toward piecing together highly visual and very sophisticated displays for the Association of the U.S. Army annual meeting in October.

“This is a dynamic story, and we want to be sure we’re telling it right,” Prewitt said. “Our soldiers and leaders need to know we’re on track with defining the developing ways to train the future Army.”

Editor’s Note: Buffett is a writer in the Public Affairs Office, Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Va. This information is in the public domain at <http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/news/> on the Internet.