



Joint combat training and education

the vision of the Staff School's DEP

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Published on 02/07/2020

Engagement opérationnel

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Combat refers to the action of small units (1), and joint action refers to the combination in the same action and on the same terrain of means from different weapons (2) with complementary capabilities but often opposing needs. Joint combat is conducted by the leaders of small infantry or cavalry units, sometimes TLA (3), reinforced with elements of various weapons.

The conduct of joint combat therefore requires that leaders of small units be aware of the capabilities, limitations and needs of units of all weapons that might reinforce them, or that they themselves might have to. They must also know the technical and tactical basis for the use of the various means; they must master the procedures for making these means work together for the benefit of one another.

All of this presupposes that the individuals, manager and troop, have been initially trained, i.e. instructed in the technical and tactical knowledge they need, and that this knowledge has been maintained through regular and rigorous individual and collective training.

Training includes above all mastery of the techniques, tactics and procedures specific to the weapon and to each weapon speciality, since there is obviously no efficiency to be expected from the combination of specialised mediocrity. This is why all armies, at all times, and regardless of the degree of proximity of the various weapons in combat, have organized themselves into distinct weapons to build their military tool. There is no interarmy without weapons! However, each weapon always fights in the midst of and in cooperation with the others, and training and instruction as well as training in the weapon's own tactics and procedures inevitably includes knowledge of the other weapons. But this "joint" knowledge will never reach the breadth and depth that must be required in each weapon for the weapon-specific knowledge: that is why a leader of a small unit must be trained to advise and interact with a leader of another weapon.

To date, the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and know-how has been divided in

most cases into specialised weapon training courses, including the acquisition of basic knowledge about the capabilities, limitations and needs of other weapons; training conducted in weapons schools; specialised training technical and tactical training within the units of the weapon; and truly joint training formerly conducted during exercises of large or small units at the maneuvering camps. The training is now conducted only at the level of small units (due to lack of means), but with very rich means in specialized centres. To take a comparison in the building trade, each weapon or trade instructs its craftsmen in their own trade and prepares its "masters" to take part in a site meeting, while staff formations train master builders. (4). And the training allows, through repeated exercises, to give everyone the experience and reflexes of a collaborative work. We train in the profession of the weapon, including its inter-weapon dimension, and we train in an inter-weapon manner. This scheme has proved so successful that attempts to organize small joint units have been abandoned everywhere.

Our operational commitments, however, are gradually giving credence to the idea that ever-increasing joint integration would be required at ever-lower levels of command. The corollary of this reality is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the leaders of small units to conduct increasingly complex combat, a difficulty that is being addressed by increasing the number of deputy and assistant leaders and by raising the level of qualification and the quality of joint training for those leaders. The first track has the drawback of increasing the proportion of command personnel and means to the detriment of combat means. The second leads to the idea of deepening joint training, earlier in the career and for the lower echelons.

In this respect, whatever choices are made in the organisation of our army, the definition of this joint combat training should be "bordered" by the principle of foresight and the principle of reality. On the one hand, this training cannot be based solely on observations of our current commitments characterised by the application of "exceptional" solutions that would probably not stand up well to any other future commitment scenario. On the other hand, it is not certain that the difficulties of our leaders of small units can be fully resolved, neither by an increase in training, nor by an increase in qualifications or rank, nor even by an increase in technology. It's probably just not possible for a small unit leader to handle the complexity that is normally the role of a large unit commander assisted by a staff to do just that.

The improvement we seek in the ability of our small units to conduct joint - and joint - combat is therefore likely to be achieved primarily by consolidating the inherent "joint" character of weapons formations, by improving the coherence of the doctrines of it will probably require first and foremost a consolidation of the "joint" character intrinsic to weapons training, an improvement in the coherence of doctrines for the use of weapons among themselves, an improvement in the continuity between doctrine, training and training, and the improvement and multiplication of exercises and exchanges between schools, as far as possible, since all this costs time, which must not be lacking in the learning of each individual's profession. In this sense, it must be considered that the idea of reducing training time is in any case incompatible with the desire for progress in joint and combined arms capabilities.

¹ "Small units" are units smaller than the brigade, although in the modern sense and in large armies comprising corps and divisions, the brigade itself would probably be counted more as a small unit.

² Or "operational functions."

3 The DEP CDT considers that the hypotheses for the use of joint units built around support units relate to exceptional circumstantial decisions which, by definition, are not doctrinal. It also considers that, all other things being equal, the systematization of inter-service organizations adopted in advance and for the duration of a campaign (GTIA, SGTIA, etc.) is a matter of exceptional circumstantial decisions which, by definition, do not fall within the scope of doctrine. It also considers that, all other things being equal, the systematization of inter-service organizations adopted in advance and for the duration of a campaign (GTIA, SGTIA, etc.) always results in depriving the command of part of its freedom of action, and that, consequently, the organization of support and sustainment elements into homogeneous units is not a matter of doctrine. The organization of support and sustainment elements into homogeneous units in the hand of the head of the large joint unit must remain the rule, and that therefore the units of the contact should only be "joint" because of the choice of the joint commander (articulation) and not because of their nature. The allocation of support and sustainment resources is never an "acquired right".

4 Staff schools train individuals in the staff writer trade, a trade that requires a broad and in-depth knowledge of maneuvering. Staff colleges train individuals in staff drafting, a trade requiring a broad and thorough knowledge of the manoeuvring of large units and the employment of units of the various services, and a mastery of staff techniques and methods. To distinguish it from joint combat training, these courses will be called "joint command training" since staff personnel are, by definition, assigned to the service of so-called "general" officers, i.e. joint.

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Release date 22/04/2018
