The in-theater environment soldiers have to deal with today is much more complex than the conflicts of previous generations.
Image credit: U.S. Army/Mike Pryor.

Transformation Direction: Another Conversation with the T2 Leadership

MS&T's Editorial Board met with the DoD Training Transformation leaders at I/ITSEC 2006. Frank and free flowing discussions ranged from a follow up of last years issues to the newest concerns and goals of T2.

Introduction: A year ago, the editors of MS&T were invited to participate in a unique forum – an exclusive meeting with the three senior leaders of the US Department of Defense Training Transformation (T2) organization. But rather than a standard interview, the format the group chose was a less formal editorial board-style conversation. Just six people with considerable relevant experience exchanging thoughts on how to better serve the men and women on the front lines.

We weren't looking so much for a 'story'; rather, we want to understand the issues and direction the T2 leaders are focusing on for the future. As a publication whose sole charter is to reflect the news and views of the global military simulation and training community, *MS&T* values the insight and input of senior officials from throughout the industry – government, contractors, academia, and users. It is your interests that drive the topics we address throughout the year.

Our conversation last year with Dr Paul Mayberry, Mr Dan Gardner, and Dr Robert Wisher covered a wide range of subjects: the need to develop leaders who can adapt to dynamically changing situations (combat one day, humanitarian support the next), the concept and underlying principles of "jointness," security challenges in coalition training environments, data standards, and more. You can read the summary of that discussion in the online digital issue of *MS&T 2/06* at www.halldale.com/MST_DigitalIssues.aspx.

At I/ITSEC 2006, we were again extended an invitation to meet with the T2 senior leaders in the midst of their packed conference schedule. We presume they regarded our first meeting a year ago as a success and worth repeating.

The format was the same, and the free-flowing conversation was every bit as stimulating to us as previously. In fact, the session extended nearly twice as long as scheduled.

To set the stage, these are the folks who took part this time:

- **Dr Paul Mayberry**, who is the key US government policy driver for actions and initiatives impacting the readiness and training of American armed forces;
- **Daniel E Gardner**, US national coordinator for DoD training policies and programs related to NATO and Partnership for Peace (PfP) training;
- **Dr Robert Wisher**, the DoD's point man on Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL), he also provides direction for the development and refinement of the Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM);
- **Jeff Loube**, Managing Editor of MS&T for 6 years, with 26 years of Canadian Navy service and 22 years in the military simulation and training industry (and yes, he is that old!).
- **Rick Adams**, Technology Editor of MS&T since 1997 and a 22-year veteran of the simulation and training business;
- **Chuck Weirauch**, Training Procurement Editor of MS&T, Chuck has been a member of the National Center for Simulation since 1998; he has been covering simulation for Halldale since 2001, and prior to that for NASA at the Kennedy Space Center.

Unavoidably absent was MS&T Editor-in-Chief Chris Lehman, who broke his arm shortly before IITSEC. Chris participated in the initial meeting last year.

Discussion: *Following are some of the topics we covered in this year's roundtable.*

Mr Gardner noted that the in-theater environment soldiers have to deal with today is much more complex than the conflicts of previous generations. Just one example: coalition forces launch an attack on a carefully selected target, but a child is killed. Was it a wedding, as some claim to the TV cameras, or a terrorist training cell? How can soldiers get into the "information cycle" quicker than their adversaries? And if a mistake is made, be able to apologize, provide for the injured, and reach out to the populace.

Dr Mayberry noted, "It's not just a language issue." Soldiers down to the tactical platoon level need to understand the very different cultures of the communities they're operating in and the "range of possible behaviors" of the various people with whom they may interact. It might not be possible to "predict" how an individual or group will react to certain actions. But warfighters need to be equipped to appreciate the perceptions and implications of friendly actions (even simple gestures such as taking off sunglasses) and non-friendly, threatening moves.

Yet they also need to recognize that doing friendly things doesn't always yield positive responses. In some cultures, compromise can be viewed as strength, in others as weakness. There are also certain situations that demand a firm hand.

Language institutes are used to do things in traditional ways, but Dr Wisher suggested barriers are being reduced as expectations evolve. Joint Forces Command, the US Army Special

Operations Aviation Regiment, and the University of Michigan are exploring behavioral models and how to translate real-world outcomes back to the training audience so they can better adapt to future situations.

One of the more intriguing ideas is possibly using a "ruggedized iPod" device that would contain a database of scenarios. Tap the scenario menu, and the device offers the soldier potential responses, perhaps even a script. Another option might be for a remote adviser to speak appropriate phrases into a soldier's comms earpiece.

Resource constraints continue to apply pressure across the entire military command - the oft-repeated "do more with less" mantra. Among the solutions, of course, is shifting more training tasks from operational equipment to simulators. The critical issue, then, is evaluate performance – how do you make sure you're getting correct learning transfer?

Mr Gardner noted that, in contrast to older veterans who resist any reduction in flying hours, the younger generation coming into the Services is actually pushing for more virtual training. "It's second nature to them. They've grown up with gaming technology since age 5. So how do we take advantage of that?"

Moreover, the recent ramp up of Distributed Mission Operations (DMO) training systems, networking multiple simulators for mission rehearsal, is experience that cannot be duplicated in the real world because of the extreme cost and weather unpredictability.

Future training systems will also be increasingly scrutinized for mission rehearsal capabilities, and hence deployability (Can it be used to train in theater?) and rapid scenario generation are critical characteristics.

Joint training remains a major emphasis. For example, a recent Unified Endeavor exercise included units from the US Army 82nd Airborne who had just been in Iraq, numerous NATO staff, general officers from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Denmark, and even Afghan police.

Yet "jointness" is not limited to four Services and the Coast Guard. When planning a mission, a joint commander is now likely to want a Department of Agriculture representative to advise on the planting season in country, Dr Mayberry related. Is there a cash crop that can be used to replace opium-producing poppies? Who can supply the seeds and how might they be distributed to farmers?

Other partners to be considered are the NGOs – Non Governmental Organizations – especially in disaster relief situations after an earthquake, tsunami, or hurricane. It's a function of the military coalition to provide a secure environment in which the NGOs can operate. But there's longstanding skepticism between armed forces and private civilian groups. Trust needs to be built so both groups can learn from each other. One example: when the military arrived at the scene of Pakistan's earthquake last year, Doctors Without Borders was already there providing medical services. Commanders are interested in better understanding the capabilities and logistics networks of organizations like DWB. "Training is the foundational piece," Mr Gardner says. "When you train together it builds that mutual trust. Then when you're in theater it's a skill not a debate."

Dr Wisher added that ADL is also broadening into joint assessment of training tasks, citing more than 50 NATO nations involved in the Joint Knowledge Development and Distribution Capability (JKDDC). Partner capability is developing around the globe – Norway, Sweden, Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, Latin America, and so forth.

The ADL initiative marked its 10th anniversary in November, and the next core project on its plate is to migrate to a Services Oriented Architecture (SOA).

Some T2 issues are carryovers from last year's conversation. Dr Mayberry had lamented then, "We don't need 40 databases of Baghdad." Now some estimate that number has risen to 56 (and perhaps more). The Not Invented Here syndrome still seems to prevail; everyone wants to do their own thing. Perhaps what's needed is one repository, one validation custodian, similar to the ADL model. The dilemma: who takes charge of consolidating the databases – Operators? Trainers? An acquisition group? The analysts?

Another recurring frustration is slow progress on multi-level security, precluding the type of "train like we fight" coalition scenarios that true jointness requires. Lack of effective MLS is a barrier to training with other nations and NGOs. The problem is twofold: technology and policy. Dr Mayberry commented that one option might be dedicated training networks not connected to real-world operational systems.

Glance through the *MS&T* Editorial Calendar at www.halldale.com, and you'll notice transformation, language and cultural training, ADL, knowledge portals, human factors, and a plethora of other important subjects the T2 leadership and other industry experts have suggested be addressed in the coming year. We look forward to your thoughtful input in assisting us with our coverage. MST

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