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TECHNICAL REPORT

General Military Training

Standardization and Reduction Options

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Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense

NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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Summary

Background

All the military services train their members on general military topics, such as the Code of Conduct (CoC) or suicide prevention. Individual services direct some topics, and some are stipulated by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). Typically, military members receive instruction on these topics at some designated frequency, e.g., annually. This instruction competes for time and other resources with topics specific to a given service.

General military training (GMT) requirements are the same for the Active Component (AC) and Reserve Component (RC). However, AC personnel have greater availability for training, while RC personnel normally drill one weekend per month and complete a two-week training period during the year. Therefore, although the time it takes to perform mandatory GMT is equal for the AC and RC, the time available for drilling reservists to complete the requirements is less. And, with similar GMT demands, the time required to complete mandatory GMT requirements consumes a larger portion of an RC member's available training time.

DoD wants to reduce cyclic mandatory training (MT) requirements for the RC, thus easing the premobilization training burden on the services and increasing available training time. A goal of DoD's current effort is to optimize available training time and effectiveness and return time to the RC unit commanders.

Purpose

The objective of this research is to analyze current training approaches that the services use in meeting GMT needs, assess the GMT that is performed throughout the services, and identify opportunities to reduce and standardize training to meet GMT needs.

The analytical approach for this study involved six tasks:

- Develop a definition for GMT.
- Identify GMT requirements directed by law and policy (including those directed by DoD, the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Air Force).
- Evaluate different methods of delivery of the training.
- Establish a baseline of common requirements.
- Evaluate the requirements.
- Provide recommendations for standardization and reduction.

The services do not have a common definition of *GMT*, nor does a DoD-wide definition exist. We examined the services' definitions of *GMT* and, from those definitions, developed a working definition that the sponsor approved. The approved working definition follows:

> *GMT:* periodic, nonoccupational directed training that provides common knowledge and skills required for all uniformed personnel. Ancillary training or GMT enhances an individual's ability to (be prepared to) perform military duties or activities. An example of GMT is sexual assault awareness and prevention.

RAND researchers identified GMT requirements directed by law and policy, including those directed by DoD, the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Air Force. The researchers reviewed laws and DoD and service policies and instructions that relate to GMT. In addition, the research team interviewed service AC and RC subject-matter experts (SMEs), i.e., staff officers responsible for GMT policy, both individually and during an Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)–sponsored group session to gain a deeper understanding of the issues and challenges that GMT presents. Service SMEs provided the research team with the current service publications that direct completion of GMT.[1]

We assessed DoD directives and service GMT programs to identify GMT topics that met the working definition. Our assessment of services' training topics and approaches indicate that, although some training topics are common among the services' GMT programs, many topics are unique to each service. Some GMT topics that are mandatory in one service are not mandatory in others. The services also vary with regard to the number of required GMT topics on which uniformed personnel must receive training. Moreover, although DoD guidance directs training requirements that are required by law, many GMT requirements are driven solely by service policy. The services develop and provide GMT independently, and the prescribed delivery methods are different.

The Army, Navy, and Coast Guard GMT program requirements are required training for all uniformed personnel. The Air Force and Marine Corps organize their GMT programs differently:

- The Air Force divides its GMT into four categories (Total Force Awareness Training [TFAT], selected force training, event-driven training, and expeditionary skill training [EST]). TFAT is required for all uniformed personnel; selected force training is targeted to specific groups of personnel (e.g., commanders, supervisors); event-driven training is a requirement triggered by an event, such as in-processing; and EST is associated specifically with contingencies. The Air Force TFAT, selected force, and event-driven training are covered in Appendix E.
- The Marine Corps divides its training into two categories: formal and ancillary. Formal training requirements are those established by Marine Corps orders and directives, and ancillary training requirements are "additional, secondary training requirements that provide information to improve the administrative, social, or cultural aspects of military service" (Marine Corps Reference Publication [MCRP] 3-0A, p. C-2). We cover the Marine Corps formal and ancillary training requirements in Appendix F.

[1] Many service SMEs with whom we met indicated that the service GMT guidance is in flux and that governing policies and instructions would soon be updated.

The services use various methods to provide GMT. These methods range from traditional, instructor-provided training in a classroom to computer-based training (CBT). The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps prescribe instructor-led training as the primary delivery method. The Air Force's and Coast Guard's primary method is CBT. CBT can be interactive, in which a comprehension test is included in the instruction, or noninteractive (no comprehension test). Some GMT, such as physical fitness or marksmanship, is completed through hands-on training. Some GMT topics are augmented or delivered by video instruction. The preferred method of delivering the training also varies by service and, in some cases, by component within each service.

Findings

We find the following from our research.

Time Devoted to General Military Training

Although GMT in the aggregate requires a substantial number of hours across the services, the amount of time as a percentage of total training time for AC units is not high, constituting less than 1 percent total training time. The burden falls more heavily on some RC units because they must accomplish the same GMT as the AC and have far fewer training hours available. The Army and Marine Corps RC devote from 5 to 8 percent of available training time to GMT.

Standardization

Service GMT programs have been developed independently of one another and are not standardized across services. There appear to be opportunities for standardization, which could yield more-efficient use of time and resources.

Flexibility

All services want GMT that can be tailored to their specific purposes and that can be delivered in different ways to different audiences (such as CBT that could be used for makeup training for individuals who miss regularly scheduled training).

Reducing the General Military Training Burden

Several services have reduced the amount of GMT they require; however, in some cases, they have eliminated training that is still required. Some topics that should be included in service GMT plans are not. Additionally, our review of service GMT programs indicates that some topics that are required for GMT according to the approved working definition are not required training across all services.

Need for Training

Many GMT topics have been long-standing requirements, and these requirements should receive a careful review to determine whether they are still necessary and whether the current frequency requirements remain valid. Any new requirements should be scrutinized carefully.

Single Source of General Military Training Requirements

DoD GMT requirements are spread among many directives, which complicates the services' task of identifying what DoD requires.

Potential Efficiencies

Both the Army and Marine Corps could realize efficiencies, in terms of instructor preparation time and standardized content, by maintaining a site to download instructional materials and instructor guides. These materials could be made available online on their respective learning management systems (LMSs) and would also promote standardization across services and components.

Options

Several ways exist to reduce the GMT burden and to make GMT delivery more efficient. Some services have already implemented options, and these appear to reduce time required for GMT and increase efficiency. However, these options have not been thoroughly analyzed.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, we recommend that DoD or the services take the following actions.

DoD and the services should consider using a DoD-wide accessible site that the services and components could use to download standardized GMT curriculum. To promote uniform acceptance and standardization (and potentially reduce costs), training could be linked from the DoD-wide website to a service website. Service training management systems could then use the standardized training. A DoD-wide accessible site could provide downloadable, flexible training options for unit commanders, such as lectures and web-based (CBT) options. Compatibility issues among LMSs would need to be addressed for CBT instruction. Standardized GMT content would increase interoperability and training transferability.

DoD should consider adopting standardized CBT for GMT. Collaborating on new and improved CBT could be a significant way to engage stakeholders. The services have already taken steps to standardize GMT requirements and reduce the GMT burden, and continued progress could be made thorough increased collaboration and sharing of ideas. Services could share what lessons they learned. Service SMEs desire options for training delivery. The sharing of information and best practices by all in the use of CBT can help the services provide well-designed, service-generic CBT versions (whenever feasible) to meet GMT requirements. The development and adoption of this CBT could be an important way for DoD to perform its oversight role.

DoD should perform a gatekeeper role for future GMT requirements. There are many training demands for uniformed DoD personnel, and adding new requirements carries with it both opportunity and financial costs. If new GMT requirements are levied across DoD, the magnitude of GMT requirements can grow, forcing unit commanders to make additional decisions between mission training demands and GMT-mandated requirements. New training requirements that are additive to existing requirements have a big effect by increasing the time required to meet training demands and are multiplicative across the force. Even valid GMT requirements must be balanced with the need to conduct individual specialty and unit collective training. The time impact of new GMT demands must be kept in check and balanced to

provide time for mission and specialty training. A single DoD sponsor for GMT should compare new with current training demands to achieve this balance and reduce mission-readiness opportunity costs. The goal of this process would be to assess training requirements, increase effectiveness and cost-efficiency, resolve issues, balance priorities, and gain training efficiencies.

The services have indicated that GMT is a burden and that it can take time away from mission accomplishment. Our research examined both GMT directed by DoD and above and the training topics over which the services have direct control. In this report, we identify the extensive topics that the services require. The services have much discretion in reducing or eliminating these training requirements. If the services determine that GMT is a burden, an intraservice examination of training requirements may indicate that some of these requirements could be eliminated, reduced, or standardized.

DoD must engage with and get buy-in from GMT stakeholders. The stakeholders include the service leaders who develop GMT policy and service AC and RC training SMEs. Meetings with them could further assess opportunities to share ideas and consider potential standardization and reduction options. Training SMEs should be continually engaged to illuminate training issues and challenges and to share ideas. Service training programs, although developed independently of one another, have many similarities. The engagement approach with SMEs should focus on highlighting GMT similarities and reduce training differences between services.

All existing and new GMT requirements need to be challenged to determine whether they are needed or whether they could be standardized and reduced. DoD should engage with training-topic sponsors to validate training requirements. For example, the DoD equal opportunity (EO) office is in charge of the DoD EO instruction that requires periodic EO training (Department of Defense Directive [DoDD] 1020.02). The EO office, along with other training-topic sponsors, needs to be engaged to consider required content, periodicity, and reporting requirements for EO training. Involving the key stakeholders will serve to evaluate (and challenge) the training requirements, build consensus for change, and initiate change.

DoD should issue a single DoD directive that lists all GMT requirements. GMT demands are many; the aggregate effect on uniformed service members in terms of time demands across the force is high, especially on the reservists; and guidance that directs that training be completed comes from multiple DoD directives. A single directive or instruction would list GMT topics and periodicities and provide clarity to the services as they evaluate and further develop GMT programs.

Although the focus of this research was on GMT (done by all uniformed personnel), there is a great deal of training that is required by the services that could potentially best be performed by means of CBT for effectiveness and efficiency.

DoD, in conjunction with the services, should review the options that the services have implemented in their GMT curricula. Although the options or approaches taken appear to be having the desired effects of reducing the burden and standardizing requirements, they have not been analyzed to determine whether they have actually achieved these effects. Moreover, it has not been determined whether the options have undesirable consequences. Further analysis may suggest alternative or additional options to implement.

The Way Forward

The services have made efforts to standardize and reduce GMT. If OSD desires further standardization and reduction of GMT, it should lead this effort. To realize this opportunity, OSD should engage GMT stakeholders in a collaborative fashion to promote the sharing of successes and lessons learned. OSD might stimulate that collaboration by sponsoring a meeting in which the SMEs, responsible for the advances discussed in this report, discuss how they achieved those advances and lessons learned that would benefit other services.

Discussions or considerations about the reduction or standardization of GMT requirements should include an examination of the effectiveness and quality of the training. Training quality must be measured, understood, and maintained at a high level. Further research is needed to examine the quality and effectiveness of GMT. This additional study should evaluate the efficacy of different training delivery methods in terms of how well GMT information is transferred, i.e., what type of information or GMT topics best suit different delivery methods (i.e., stand-up instruction, CBT, or other), and delivery methods that are most effective for the intended audience. Such a study should evaluate the quality of the content and instructional design to identify additional opportunities to provide standardized training that can be prepared and delivered in less time than is required for current training programs.

Finally, new training requirements can pose significant time demands across the force. An OSD Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) should be designated to facilitate information sharing that will help the services provide well-designed, service-generic training of all new requirements, whenever feasible. This could be an important way in which DoD performs its gatekeeper role.