

## Lawrence Assists with Military Training

*Lisa K. Patterson*

*It appears that the attack upon Lawrence by the Wildcats came as a complete surprise to the local Jayhawk population. City government and the news media believed the war was over and that friendly forces of Jayhawks had secured the border. Locals are suspicious of any information provided by the U.S. Army. Radical forces caused some casualties in the local police force, but civilian casualties have been almost nonexistent. The national media are downplaying the incident to prevent panic in the population at large.*

Is this a description of an event in Lawrence, Kansas, or a scene from a war-torn country? The answer is, both. This Jayhawks-versus-Wildcats scenario has been taken from a training exercise used in the battle commands development course by the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College located at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Nearly three years ago, now-retired Lieutenant Colonel Bob Topping, who was developing a program for urban command training at Fort Leavenworth, came to Lawrence City Manager Mike Wildgen for assistance. The college was looking to expand its training initiative for battalion and brigade commanders beyond the existing computer simulations into a real-world experience. The Lawrence community offered a prime location to exercise the skills learned in an urban setting. Supporting our dedicated military officers, Wildgen and city officials agreed that the city would participate in the Army's training.

Using enhanced-simulation tactical technology, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College conducts pre-command training in a three-week course held 12 times a year for combat arms battalion and brigade commanders. The course develops officers who can direct and sustain units; fight; solve tactical problems despite uncertainty; and understand the link between decisions and decision-making tools.

The main purpose of the program is to allow commanders to practice making complex decisions amid the fog, friction, and uncertainty normally associated with military operations. The relationship established with Lawrence gives commanders the opportunity to participate in a unique training session.

Lawrence staff members spend approximately a half-hour every few weeks meeting with the commanders, either one-on-one or in groups of two. Participants in the training exercise include the directors of the departments of

public works, neighborhood resources, human relations/human resources, planning, finance, and information systems, as well as the police chief, wastewater treatment superintendent, parks and recreation assistant director, communications coordinator, and transit administrator.

The Army takes good advantage of the entire Lawrence community by also meeting with members of the local media, emergency management staff, and the chamber of commerce. The official exercise involves role-playing exchanges and a continuation of the scenario. Most often, however, the conversations are real-world discussions about the intricacies of providing services to a community and maintaining an infrastructure. City staff have met with military personnel who have been in combat, as well as shared insights with those who are about to take command of their first units.

The commanders' time in Lawrence entails their exploration of the complex nature of urban terrain. They also gain an exposure to "stability" operations, handling of the news media, interviews with civil authorities, and assessments of vulnerabilities. Meetings with city officials and selected citizens fit well into the training's focus. The intent is to prepare commanders for the process of entering a situation, gathering information, and making decisions. Discussions permit commanders to explore the processes that will be needed in entering a conflict area and providing support and stabilization to the local government.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Mike Williams from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, this interaction with a civilian government is unique in the Army. Interaction with actual local leaders is something that cannot be simulated. Participation of Lawrence's city leaders is vital to the program because the Army does not have the manpower or the experience to carry out realistic role-playing exercises on its own.

Commanders gain an understanding of the complexity of the battlefield in an urban area, as well as an appreciation of the magnitude of what it takes for local government leaders to establish and maintain a sense of normalcy in a populated area. For their part, city staff members develop an appreciation of how military forces might be integrated into Homeland Security operations in the area.

Even though simulated experiences are used in one week of the program, the Army is currently engaged in exactly these kinds of stability and support operations in several parts of the world, including Bosnia, Kosovo, and parts of Afghanistan. And the possibility that future commanders will become involved in operations of this type during their assignments is high.

When commanders return from the meetings, they share the information and insight they gained from their interviews. Feedback they receive drives the follow-up discussion on how to deal with a variety of "commander" problems

normally found in post-conflict stability and support operations. One Army attendee commander summarized his learning experience in this way: “Excellent field trip. Military leaders need this practice and exposure to civilian leadership/populace concerns. Also, from a big-picture view, it benefits both military and civilian participants to work interactively and often in this country. It facilitates bridging the civil/military gap in our society (perceived or otherwise).”

The only similar program between the U.S. Army and a local government exists in Pinehurst, North Carolina, where the U.S. Army Special Forces have an arrangement to support the training of the Army’s Green Berets. However, Fort Leavenworth’s relationship with Lawrence is the only program designed to support the training of battalion and brigade commanders. More than 250 Army personnel graduate from the program annually.

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