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The Doctrine Division, Directorate of Training and Doctrine (DOTD), U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence (USAACE), Fort Rucker, AL 36362 produces the *Aviation Digest* quarterly for the professional exchange of information related to all issues pertaining to Army Aviation. The articles presented here contain the opinion and experiences of the authors and should not be construed as approved Army policy or doctrine.

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## ABOUT THE COVER

Army Aviation units engaged in collective training.



## The Command Corner



The Army Aviation Training Strategy (published in January 2016) reminds us that we will fight the way we train. It takes commanders and leaders at every echelon to drive relevant, rigorous, and realistic training to ensure that we train the way we intend to fight—integrated into unified land operations by conducting air-ground operations as the aviation maneuver force of the combined arms team.

Fifteen years of recurring deployments have contributed to the development of many skilled aircrews and aviation Soldiers with considerable experience in team and small-unit counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. Though skilled at team employment, we must prepare for larger formation employment to deter a future conflict, and if deterrence fails, win against a near-peer or peer threat. In fact, our aviation dominance in recent conflicts drives our adversaries to innovate in ways that attempt to exploit our capability gaps. We too must innovate. We must be creative in training to harness and sustain this hard-earned COIN proficiency while regaining the capacity to conduct larger scale operations at company, battalion, and brigade levels in the decisive action training environment and the ambiguous and complex situations we strive to anticipate.



Collective training in air-ground operations is essential to provide the combined arms team the inherent advantages of Army Aviation: mobility, speed, range, flexibility, lethality, precision, and persistent reconnaissance. At the same time, collective training is also key to our survivability strategy, by enabling us to build proficiency in employing the combined and complimentary effects of air and ground maneuver and fires through air-ground operations to present the enemy with multiple dilemmas.

Now and always, leadership matters. If building and sustaining combat readiness is the primary objective of every unit not decisively engaged with the enemy, then crafting and implementing unit training plans that build to collective mastery must be a central concern of leaders at every level. To do this effectively requires leaders that are able to think critically and are competent, agile, and adaptive. As we confront the challenges of our day—emerging threats around the globe, fiscal constraints, and reductions in force structure, to name a few—these leadership qualities become even more vital to ensuring that we are building and sustaining a combat ready force.

Standardized mission essential task lists (METL) for aviation formations help build a shared understanding of unit capabilities across the total force, but because limits on time, troops, training support, and other resources will seldom permit a unit to achieve full and lasting proficiency in every essential task, commanders must still prioritize METL to develop unit training plans that emphasize decisive action capability. As we prepare to fully implement objective training evaluation criteria—"Objective T"—the impact of leader decisions on how to best utilize training resources and leverage the live, virtual, constructive, and gaming training environments becomes even greater.

Our Army's senior leaders know that Aviation is a critical component to the joint combined arms maneuver fight. It is essential to train to this reality now, and it begins with every unit making it a priority. We have the best-trained aviation formations in the world, so refocusing to a decisive action collective proficiency is as critical as it is achievable. It begins with leaders making it a priority. So, let's get at it.

Above the Best!

William K. Gayler  
Major General, USA  
Commanding

