

NEWS FROM THE FRONT

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1-153 IN Regt, Task Force Warrior
CJTF-HOA Pre-deployment Activities

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The Army Reserve and National Guard participation with the active component providing support for theater security operations and exercise both CONUS and OCONUS has increased drastically over the past 15 years. Army Reserve and National Guard units are given the maximum time possible between the date alerted and the date required to report for active duty. Some units may be alerted, but not actually begin active duty for several weeks. However, under mobilization conditions, an emergency situation may require extremely short active duty notice. This news from the front (NFTF) provides insights into one National Guard battalions' mobilization process as it prepared to deploy to the Horn of Africa.

Mobilization for a reserve unit consists of several steps. 1) Preparation. During the preparation phase, reserve units train, plan, and prepare for mobilization. This occurs during peacetime at monthly battle assemblies and two week annual training (AT). 2) Alert. During the alert phase, units are notified of their upcoming deployment and prepare to transition from reserve status to active duty status. 3) Mobilization at Home Station. During mobilization at home station, unit personnel report in at a specified date and time to begin their active duty. 4) Movement to Mobilization Stations. During this phase, units depart home station and report to a mobilization site (MOB site) to receive validation on battle drills. 5) Operation Readiness Improvement. During this phase, reserve units make final preparations before actual deployment at mobilization site.

In June of 2015, 1st Battalion, 153rd Infantry Regiment (1-153 IN Regt), Arkansas Army National Guard (AARNG), was notified of its upcoming deployment to Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, Africa, in support of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). 1-153 IN Regt immediately put the wheels in motion. According to the Command Sergeant Major (CSM), the unit's first priority was medical readiness. He said, "We could make up training, but not medical readiness." With support from the state, 1-153 IN conducted four different Soldier readiness processing (SRP) activities for this deployment using U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) standards to ensure the Soldiers they took to the MOB site would meet the medical standards. The CSM also stated, "Out of the 689 Soldiers brought to the MOB site, only 3 were found to be non-deployable" Prior to mobilization, Soldiers from the 153 IN contacted the MOB site training unit, 5th Armor, and the unit they were replacing (1-124 IN Regt, Florida Army National Guard) for insights and information on the mission. Also prior to mobilization, 1-153 IN conducted two iterations of pre-mobilization training (PMT) that were three weeks each. The first PMT covered all individual tasks and the second PMT covered team and mission specific training.

All training was tracked and documented by the state Pre-Mobilization Training Assistance Element (PTAE). The unit also conducted the 40 warrior tasks, 11 battle drills, distance learning (DL) courses, and as much mission specific training as it could prior to deployment.

With a large task force preparing to deploy, there is always a percentage of Soldiers expected to be deemed unable to deploy during SRP. The SRP is broken down into two parts, administrative and medical. During the administrative portion, which normally takes the least amount of time, Soldiers visit several stations including legal, chaplain, life insurance, family situation changes, and security clearances. During each of these stations, the representative asks the Soldier if he/she has any new information to add or delete from the current information on file. If the

Soldier wishes to file a new will, the attorney at the legal section will draft a will. The medical section of the SRP includes a series of medical examinations and evaluations consistent with the physical stamina, upper body, lower body, hearing, eyes, and psychiatric (PULHES) factor rating scheme, which is used to qualify a soldier's physical profile for each military skill. The Soldier can anticipate receiving immunizations, the taking of a blood sample, electrocardiography (if needed), and a dental exam. Upon completion of this section, the Soldier will meet with a healthcare provider. The provider will review all of the data collected on the Soldier throughout the SRP to determine the overall deployability of the Soldier. The Soldier is then classified as medically deployable or non-deployable.

After conducting home station training, units will move to a MOB site, where they will meet deployment or other unit validation criteria, this is to insure the unit is mission capable. This is also where members of reserve components transition to active duty. Additionally, commanders conduct individual and collective training that may vary as evaluations and circumstances dictate. Training that was conducted at home station was accepted at the MOB site. The battalion CSM stated that "Everything done prior to arrival at the MOB site was documented by the state PTAE, signed by the TAG, and accepted."

After receiving the training at the MOB site, 1-153 IN was able to refine its standard operating procedures (SOPs) and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP), as well as any platoon and squad-level SOPs.

Insights:

1. A Pre-Deployment Site Survey (PDSS) is needed to fully understand the mission.
2. Understanding the supply systems at CJTF-HOA was a challenge. The S-4 should be included on the PDSS.
3. To prevent heat injuries, the battalion leadership developed clear guidance on physical training prior to deployment. For the first month, the battalion executed a decentralized, but leader established, PT program, allowing for Soldiers to become acclimated to the harsh environment and weather of Camp Lemonnier.
4. Prior to deployment, establish clear command policies and procedures in writing and ensure that Soldiers and their families understand and know what to expect in areas such as leaves (emergency and general).
5. Due to the citizen Soldier aspect of the Reserve and National Guard, family support groups can be a challenge. Prior to deployment, establish a rear detachment support group early, ensure standard meeting locations and times are known, update contact rosters, and encourage participation.
6. CSM's advice to follow-on units: task organize prior to deployment so that relationships and team building can start as early as possible.