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Transportation Soldiers combat mid-tour fatigue

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CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq — Soldiers in the 70th Transportation Co., 391st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, are combating mid-tour fatigue with up-to-date combat training.

The Mannheim, Germany-based 70th Transportation Co. Soldiers are serving in the tenth month of a 15-month deployment.

Capt. Patrick Henrichs, commander, 70th Transportation Co., and Seattle, Wash., native, challenged key leaders in the company to counter mid-tour fatigue by refining platoon-level performance standards.

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HENRICHS/2-2-2

Normally the company keeps a high pace and aggressive posture in battalion and brigade-required trainings such as counter improvised explosive device lanes, combat lifesaver certifications and weapons familiarization and qualification, said Heinrich.

“I asked the platoon leadership to go beyond required trainings by diligently planning and executing exercises and drills tailored to their sections,” Heinrich said.

In second platoon, assigned to perform area recovery and escort missions, Soldiers completed traffic control exercises, practical navigation and recovery and escort battle-drill lanes.

During recent recovery and escort battle-drill lanes, Soldiers were required to use their knowledge gained in previous exercises while at the same time being challenged in leadership roles. Specialists and sergeants in the platoon were assigned as key leaders for the lanes and were evaluated on combat reports, command and control in maneuvers and navigation to pick-up site.

With this comprehensive approach, Soldiers were able to focus on individual improvement by performing repetitive yet increasingly more complex tasks, Heinrichs said.

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Company leaders were also challenged. Lieutenants submitted for approval a list of training concepts and goals, and platoon leaders critically evaluated priority areas for focus within their perspective sections, and then leaders mapped out decisive plans for meeting goals in training.

Staff Sgt. Michael Toyco, of Abileen, Texas, led recovery and escort battle-drill lanes.

“This experience was good for me because it required me to work with the lieutenant, almost like a platoon sergeant needs to, in order to meet a set objective,” said Toyco.

“She identified for me her concept for training and desired end-line result. Then I got busy planning how to make it happen.”

The company is seeing results from the training, said Henrichs.

“In addition to meeting all standards and tasks of assigned missions, all platoons are successfully hitting their targets in training, strengthening morale in the sections and building team cohesion,” said Henrichs.

The commander said the training has been essential in combating mid-tour fatigue.

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“As the last company in the 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command to do a 15-month tour, I thought it was especially important we take this period in the middle of our tour to reassess and refocus our training priorities,” Henrichs said.

By making the platoon leaders and platoon sergeants accountable for planning training and benchmarking success, Henrichs said he was able to develop a keen and alert team in company leadership. The flexibility in platoon-level exercises has been essential to combating unit mid-tour fatigue.

And leaders have to evaluate performance, identify deficiencies and tailor a plan to achieve goals, Henrichs said. It is not only keeping Soldiers and leaders actively engaged in the mission, but it is building a deep sense of accomplishment in the transportation company.



Staff Sgt. Colan Roberts, platoon sergeant, 70th Transportation Co., 391st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, and Staff Sgt. Alfredo Reyes, squad leader, 70th Transportation Co., test communication equipment before transportation Soldiers head out onto recovery and escort battle-drill lanes at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq. The training was dual-purpose, said Capt. Patrick Henrichs, commander, 70th Transportation Co., and Seattle, Wash., native. “As the last company in the 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command to do a 15-month tour, I thought it was especially important we take this period in the middle of our tour to reassess and refocus our training priorities,” Henrichs said. The Mannheim, Germany-based Soldiers of the 70th Transportation Co. are currently on the tenth month of a 15-month deployment to Iraq. (Courtesy photo)