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### Point of View

## Role of Training Systems in Military Readiness Gains High-Level Attention

by Fred Lewis

Welcome to I/ITSEC 2000! This is the premier annual event for the training systems industry, and while you are here with us, we hope that you take full advantage of this great opportunity to hear top-level briefings on leading-edge technologies and to experience the marvelous developments in “state of the art” arrayed in the exhibit hall.

Our staff is here to ensure that this is a productive event for you.

Now, let me mention a few other things that might be of interest.

In other articles, I have made mention of NTSA’s direct involvement in two very important study efforts—a Defense Science Board (DSB) Task Force on Training and Education in the Military and the Fiscal Year 2000 Army Science Board Summer Study, looking at the deployability of Army units in the 2015-2025 time frame.

Both of these study efforts are now concluded, and the “draft” reports are being routed for review and briefing to senior officials.

While I can’t comment directly on the contents of the draft DSB report, I can say that one of the most important recommendations from the task force is that training again be recognized as equal to the other service chief Title 10 responsibilities of “manning and equipping.”

Title 10, U.S. Code states that the service chiefs are responsible to “man, equip, and train” their services, and yet the DSB task force found that training often is the last thing to be funded and the first thing to be cut. Further, the task force also found that the “crown jewels” of training, the service combat training facilities at Fallon and Nellis, in Nevada, at Fort Irwin and 29 Palms, in California, have enormous land and airspace-use pressures on them that might threaten their long-term utility. Vieques is a good example. These national assets have begun to deteriorate in terms of threat-replication capability. At a minimum, the DSB task force recommends that the Defense Department “do no further harm” to these national treasures.

As for the Army Science Board Summer Study and the “training dominance” panel, of which NTSA was a part, the report and recommendations were praised by the chief of staff of the U.S. Army, Gen. Eric Shinseki, as being forward looking and thought provoking.

Comments in this report were similar to those contained in the DSB report, but the approach was very different. Rather than focusing on facilities, the training panel looked at future weapon system complexities (information systems, network centric warfare, among others) and tried to determine the type of personnel and training needed to operate and maintain platforms such as the Army’s Future Combat System.

To paraphrase the bottom line of the report, learning and knowledge management systems need to be developed and put in place to prepare current and future generations of U.S. military service members for these future tasks. Advanced Distributed Learning technologies figure very highly in all of this.

It is interesting to note that subsequent to the DSB and Army Science Board work, the chief of naval operations, Adm. Vern Clark, has kicked off an initiative to revolutionize training in the Navy.

In line with all of these efforts—and in order to provide the NTSA membership with insights into what appears to be a new direction for training—a successful conference on “Advanced Distributed Learning and Embedded Training” was conducted in Orlando, on 6-7 September. The robust agenda included speakers from the Defense Department and the private sector, such as the heads of training from IBM and Chase Manhattan Bank. Further, lively panel discussions regarding the “Learning Environment of the Future” stimulated the audience, and provided useful insights as to growth potential for these technologies and methods of delivering learning and knowledge. Response from the 350 attendees was uniformly positive and supported the notion of a follow-on conference in about a year. Stand by for further information on this subject.

Again, welcome to I/ ITSEC, and enjoy the show!

Fred Lewis is the executive director of the National Training Systems Association, in Arlington, Va.