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## Combat Tasks and Peace Support: How Much Retraining Is Necessary?

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### INTRODUCTION

As we consider the role of military forces in peace keeping and peace making operations, and their relationship with their civilian partners in peace, it is important for both communities to understand what to expect and what not to expect in terms of military capability. This study supplies a glimpse at some of the answers. At the same time, it opens other questions for investigation.

Combat units of the U.S. Army have been increasingly deployed for peace support operations in the past decade. Although there has been some concern that this is not an appropriate use for combat units, the pattern is likely to continue. Another concern is the belief that once a combat unit has been involved in peace support operations for a length of time, it becomes dulled in its ability to perform its primary combat function, and must be extensively retrained.

There has not been much study of how much retraining might be required to ready a combat unit for a wartime role after completing a rotation in a peace support environment. Some senior Army leaders have asserted that it would take 90 days to retrain a combat division for a wartime mission after a year on peace support duty.<sup>1</sup> It is generally accepted that combat support and particularly combat service support units have a more directly applicable peace support capability, and that less retraining for these units would be required.

### THE ISSUES

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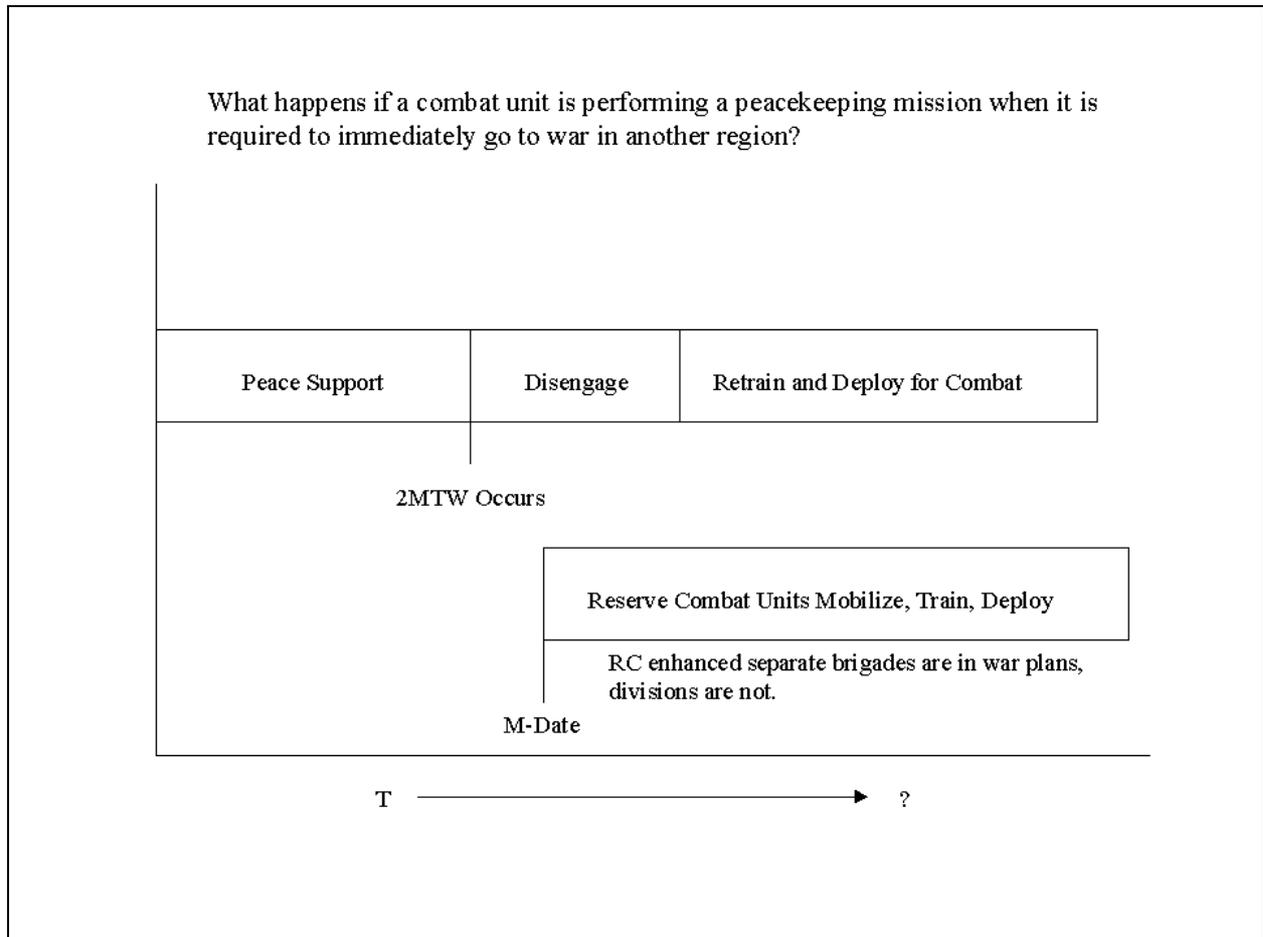
<sup>1</sup> Lt. Gen. Griffith, former vice chief of staff, U.S. Army, in a news article.

Four interrelated issues deserve attention:

- The appropriateness of using combat units for peace support operations. Typically these are active component (AC) units with some combat support and combat service support provided by reserve component (RC) units.
- The amount of training time necessary to prepare a combat unit to perform peace support operations.
- The disengagement criteria and, assuming some urgency, the time it takes to disengage from a peace support operation.
- And, the amount of retraining time necessary to prepare a combat unit to perform in its wartime role should a major theater war occur while that unit is performing peace support.

The importance of these issues rests within the scope of national military strategy (NMS). National military strategy, as posited by defense planing guidance (DPG), requires that U.S. forces be capable of dealing with two nearly simultaneous major theater wars (2MTW). Force structure and strength derive from this wartime scenario, and are also deemed sufficient to perform peace support operations and other smaller scale contingencies (SSCs) during peacetime as lesser included cases.

Two related problems arise if hostilities occur in a major theater while the U.S. is involved in a significant peace support operation, such as Bosnia. The first is how quickly the peace support force can disengage, and the second is how quickly it can then prepare for combat. If disengagement and retraining would take longer than the time that the unit is needed to be in the combat theater, but in less time than RC combat units could be made ready, then it might make sense to: (a) plan the use RC combat units in the 2MTW scenario; or (b) use RC combat units in peace support missions to begin.



*Figure 1:* Transition from peace support to wartime missions.

1. The first issue—the appropriateness of combat units for peace support— is political in nature. Although this analysis shows the degree to which the training of combat units may apply to peace support operations, it is not the principal focus of this paper.
2. The second issue—the training time needed to prepare for peace support operations—is important, and depends to a large extent on the current readiness status of the unit, the nature of the peace support operation and the peace support theater commander’s requirements. This analysis helps show the extent to which different types of units, by virtue of their peacetime combat training, are inherently prepared for peace support operations.
3. The matter of disengagement criteria is also important and has been the subject of some debate and discussion, but it is not addressed in detail here. Disengagement times could be either short or long and would depend on the urgency of the 2MTW situation, availability of backfill or replacement units if needed, and any problems that might arise during the disengagement.
4. The fourth issue—retraining requirements and retraining time for an urgent deployment to fight a war—is the principal one that is dealt with here.

## STUDY APPROACH

Combat missions and training tasks lend themselves to measurement. They are finite, and the range of the time to train to standard for each is bounded. They are arranged in a hierarchy by the type of unit, and it is possible to crosswalk individual skills and collective tasks to related higher order tasks and missions. Those missions and tasks that a unit (or individual) performs to standard in peacetime can be compared with the requirements for a peace support mission. The difference shows what must be trained before a unit deploys for peace support.

Those missions and tasks that a unit (or individual) does not perform during a peace support deployment will be those that are required to be retrained prior to commitment to a combat theater, plus the combat theater commander's specific METT-T requirements.<sup>2</sup> This difference is identifiable, and training plans and preparations can be made to accomplish the necessary retraining should a 2MTW require a unit already involved in peace support.

To approach the answers to these questions it is necessary to list the individual and collective tasks that Army doctrine and training manuals say are required in order to perform combat missions. Individual tasks are those tasks that members of combat, combat support and combat service support units must perform in order to be MOSQ (military occupational specialty qualified). Collective tasks are those tasks performed by groups of individuals—crews, squads, platoons, companies, battalions and so forth—and which must be performed to standard in order for the unit to be judged mission capable. Missions can be described by those tasks necessary for it to be accomplished.

There are too many individual and collective tasks to make analysis simple. In order to simplify things, only core critical (or battlefield critical) tasks were considered here.<sup>3</sup> A core critical task is “a mission essential task that is absolutely critical to accomplish the basic mission of attack, defend or movement to contact.” These are the “basic building blocks common to combat operations.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mission, enemy, troops, terrain and time (available). In U.S. Army doctrine, these elements determine the specific combat requirements of a commander. In most cases there will be an overlap between METT-T requirements and extant training readiness of combat units in peacetime. The differential between peacetime training and MTW theater requirements may involve such things as MOUT (military operations in urban terrain) or river crossing operations.

<sup>3</sup> *Enhanced Brigade Training Strategy: Enhanced Infantry Brigade*, Fort Benning, GA, July 1995; and *Enhanced Mounted Brigade Training Strategy*, Fort Knox, KY, March 1995.

<sup>4</sup> *Enhanced Brigade Training Strategy: Enhanced Infantry Brigade*. Preface, pp ii. Op. Cit.

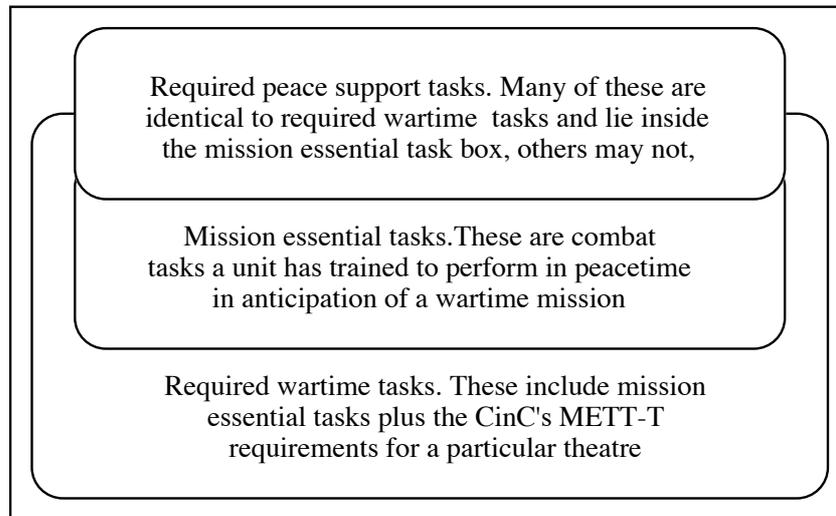


Figure 2: Notional depiction of the relationship of peacetime combat training, peace support requirements and wartime requirements.

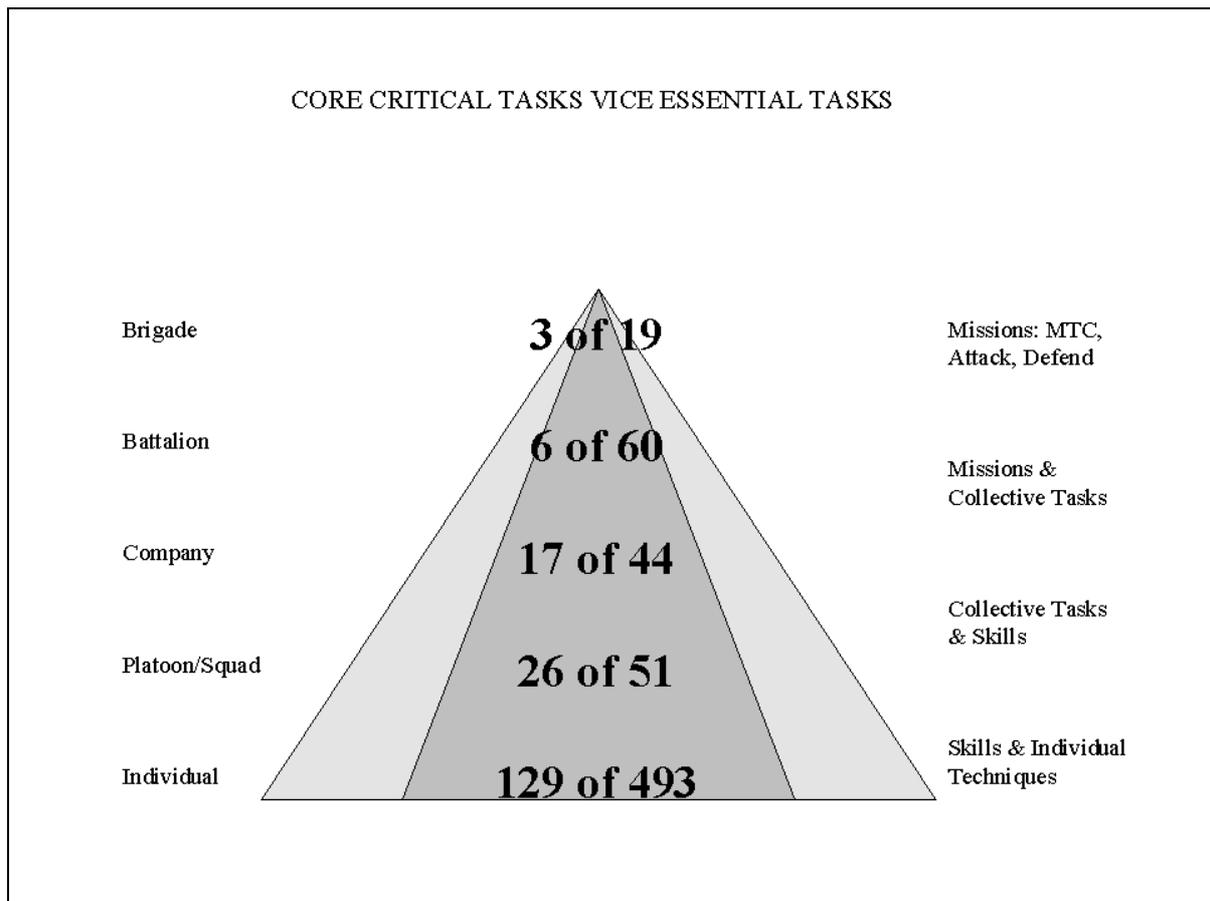


Figure 3: Core critical battlefield task hierarchy (for light infantry).

For example, there are 129 core critical tasks for an individual light infantry soldier, of a total 493 individual required skills. There are also collective core critical tasks which an individual must perform as part of a team. There are 51 light infantry squad and platoon collective tasks, of which 26 are considered core critical tasks; there are 44 light infantry company tasks, with 17 being rated as core critical.

By examining only core critical battlefield tasks, any bias in the analysis, due to the tasks, would presumably err on the conservative side.

Judging whether or not a task is applicable to peace support operations depends somewhat on the peace operation itself. If the operation is humanitarian in nature, the combat tasks would seem to have less applicability; if an operation is a peace enforcement or peace keeping mission, then combat tasks may be more directly related, or at least must be considered as possible. The method applied in this analysis followed a simple set of rules expressed as “IF-THEN-ELSE” statements. The argument is:

- IF a task is something a soldier or unit is expected to do as a matter of everyday fieldcraft, THEN it applies directly to peace support, ELSE
- IF a task is something a soldier or unit is expected to do to defend against the threat of violent opposition, THEN it may apply to peace support, ELSE
- IF a task is inherently aggressive in nature, e.g., conduct a deliberate attack, THEN it does not apply to peace support.

Judgments of “yes,” “no” and “may be” were used to categorize the applicability of combat tasks to peace support operations.

Several methods can be used to validate or refine subjective judgments. The subjective method used here is expert opinion. A validating and refining method might be to query a number of military participants in peace support operations to obtain data that can be analyzed. High and low values could be discarded and the mean taken from the remainder (Delphic Method). Or a “majority rules” method could be used. Another way would be to look at exactly what units and individuals did during a peace support mission.

A problem with these methods is that they are likely to be biased by individual experience, or by the experience and doctrine of the forces of the particular country performing peace support operations. This bias can also relate to the different services of a country’s military, e.g., U.S. Marine Corps vice U.S. Army practices. Further analysis would help normalize the output of the rule used here, and dampen the effect of biases.

## INITIAL FINDINGS

Tabulations in Table 1 show that a substantial number of core critical individual and collective tasks of combat units and members are *directly* related to peace support operations—48 per cent of core critical individual tasks for a light infantry soldier, 47 per cent of core critical collective tasks for a tank platoon, 35 percent for a light infantry company, 76 per cent for the common tasks and subordinate platoons of a light infantry battalion headquarters company.

In addition, tasks that *may be* related to peace support operations raise the applicability level higher. The “may be” tasks can be considered those that would apply in a worst case

scenario, but one that fell short of actual war involving sustained offensive operations by the military peace support force. An example would be Somalia, and Mogadishu in particular, where a humanitarian operation evolved into a low intensity combat operation.

Type of Unit	Number of Core Critical Tasks	Directly Related to Peace Support	%	May Be Related to Peace Support	%	Total Percent (rounding errors)
INF BN (L)	6	3	50%	1	17%	67%
RIFLE CO (L)	17	6	35%	5	29%	65%
RIFLE PLT (L)	26	8	31%	8	31%	62%
SCT PLT, INF (L)	29	13	45%	11	38%	83%
TANK PLT	32	15	47%	12	38%	84%
11B SL1	81	37	46%	36	45%	91%
11B SL2	14	9	64%	3	21%	86%
11B SL3	12	7	58%	4	33%	92%
11B SL4	22	9	41%	6	27%	68%
SL1-SL4, Inclusive	129	61	48%	49	38%	88%
HHC & PLTS, INF BN (L)	41	31	76%	8	20%	95%
CO & STAFF, BDE SPT BN	26	24	92%	2	8%	100%

*Table 1:* Selected Examples of Core Critical Combat Tasks and Relevance to Peace Support.

## FINDING 1

It appears that combat units and their members are inherently trained to conduct peace support operations. In the toughest peace support environment, short of combat, 88 per cent of an infantry soldier's individual core critical skills can have applicability; 65 per cent of a rifle company's collective core critical tasks can apply; 62 per cent for a rifle platoon; 83 per cent for a scout platoon; and 84 percent for a tank platoon.

To compare rear echelon headquarters and combat service support units, this study tabulated the applicable peace support tasks for an infantry battalion headquarters company (including common collective core critical tasks and collective core critical tasks by platoon/section).<sup>5</sup> There are a greater percentage of directly and possibly related core critical tasks of these units to peace support operations than the combat units.

<sup>5</sup> The platoons/sections in an infantry battalion headquarters company are: headquarters section, maintenance section, medical platoon, signal platoon, support platoon.

## FINDING 2

It strongly appears that combat support and combat service support units and their members are inherently trained to conduct peace support operations. In the toughest peace support environment, short of combat, 95 per cent of an infantry battalion headquarters company's platoon's and section's core critical collective tasks may have applicability; and 100 per cent of an infantry brigade's support battalion's core critical collective tasks for its commander and staff are relevant to peace support.

### ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

While it appears that soldiers are inherently trained to accomplish many of the tasks required in a peace support operation, the reason for being of combat troops is to fight. This is reflected in the missions of companies, battalions and brigades in the hierarchy of core critical battlefield tasks. As one moves up the hierarchy, and as skills and collective tasks give way to core critical unit missions, these missions—movement to contact, attack, defend—have less to do with peace support and more to do with combat.

Based on the rules established earlier, a brigade or battalion would not conduct an attack mission during peace support operations, although it is possible that they may have to conduct some form of defense. It is possible that a brigade or battalion might execute something that appears similar to a movement to contact, although with a different purpose, which would not be to engage an enemy force by hasty attack or hasty defense, thereby fixing that force to be defeated by follow-on forces.

The only core critical battlefield tasks for an infantry brigade are the missions: movement to contact, attack, defend. An infantry battalion has these same core critical missions, plus the tasks: move tactically, occupy an assembly area, perform a tactical road march. While these latter tasks would apply in a peace support environment, only the defend mission may have applicability.

When a combat brigade or battalion go to the field to train, or conduct command and staff simulation-based training, these missions bound the focus of that training. It therefore makes sense to assert that combat brigades and battalions coming off of a peace support rotation would have to retrain in these major mission areas.

This does not mean that every soldier from the individual skill level on up through every collective task in the hierarchy of critical battlefield tasks must be completely retrained. Bradley Fighting Vehicle and M1 Abrams tank crews would have to perform gunnery qualification, but they would not have to be retrained in tactical movement techniques, nor would the soldiers have to be retrained to use a compass or read a map. It does mean, however, that extensive retraining at the battalion and brigade levels must occur if the unit is to be judged mission capable for a major theater war.

## RETRAINING TIME AND REQUIREMENTS

For this paper, retraining times and events for the scout platoon of a light infantry battalion and a light infantry company (defend mission) were compiled as case examples. These are shown in Tables 2 and 3. Some of the events are consolidated for brevity. Greater detail is available in the enhanced brigade training strategy documents developed at Fort Benning (infantry) and Fort Knox (mounted/heavy), and in the doctrinal references listed in these documents.

The scout platoon is illustrative because, regardless of the core battlefield mission of the battalion (movement to contact, attack, defend), its training requirements are about the same in any case.<sup>6</sup> The defend mission was selected for the light infantry company to show that even a liberal example will require about 50 per cent retraining.

Arguably, the selection of light infantry for analytical focus presents a liberal case overall. Heavy units (armored or mounted infantry) would require retraining in gunnery, which would add to their timeline compared to light infantry units.

Scout Platoon Collective Tasks (condensed)	Normal Time to Train (Hours)	Post-Peace Ops Time to Retrain (Hours)
Develop plan, move tactically, occupy AA, prepare for combat	16	8
Execute disengagement, employ fire support	57	30
Infiltration/exfiltration, recon route, recon zone	13	5
Develop plan, screen, employ fire support	18	18
Squad maneuver (recon zone, employ fire support)	12	6
Platoon situation training exercise (screen)	16	16
Platoon live fire exercise (MTC)	12	12
Tactical road march, occupy AA, prepare for combat	13	4
Platoon combat operations training	46	26
Total	203	125

*Table 2: Scout platoon retraining times for collective tasks not performed in peace support operations. (Includes both “no” and “may be” tasks.)*

Infantry Company (L) Collective Tasks (Defend Mission, i.e., Liberal Case)	Normal Time to Train (Hours)	Post-Peace Ops Time to Retrain (Hours)
Develop plan, move tactically, occupy AA, prepare for combat	16	8

<sup>6</sup> In fact, for the three core critical missions, 88 per cent of subordinate collective tasks and individual skill requirements are common to all.

Battle drill training, ambush, disengage, etc.	59	35
Squad defensive exercises (build obstacles, assault)	10	4
Squad situational exercises (defend, assault)	16	8
Squad live fire exercise	12	12
Platoon situational exercises (defend, attack)	16	8
Platoon live fire exercise	20	20
Company maneuver training and situational lanes	118	44
Total	267	139

*Table 3: Infantry company retraining times for (defend) tasks not performed in peace support operations. (Includes both “no” and “may be” tasks.)*

What of the retraining time for battalions and brigades? This analysis suggests that, regardless of the appropriateness of many battalion and brigade level collective tasks for peace support operations, full battalion and brigade maneuver retraining would be required because of the need to conduct maneuver training for movement to contact and attack missions.

A typical training program for a combat battalion would use 5-11 days for company and battalion combined arms live fire exercises and 6-7 days for battalion task force operations, for a total of 11-18 days. To retrain a brigade, an additional 13-17 days of battalion task force and brigade operations would be needed.<sup>7</sup> If the brigade or battalion in question is heavy, then the Abrams and Bradley crews would need more training, on the order of 10-26 days.<sup>8</sup>

Individual/Unit Level	Optimistic Retraining Duration (days)	Pessimistic Retraining Duration (days)
Individual (11B, SL1-SL4)	4	8
Squad/Platoon Collective Tasks	10	17
Company Collective Tasks	12	22
Battalion Task Force Training	11	18
Brigade Operations	13	17
Total	50	81
Gunnery (for heavy forces)	10	26
Total	60	107

<sup>7</sup> *Post-Mobilization Training of Army Reserve Component Combat Units*, Thomas F. Lippiatt, et. al., RAND, Arroyo Center, ISBN: 0-8330-1301-7, Santa Monica, CA, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* The optimistic figure is from Department of the Army Inspector General’s office; the larger figure is from active component battalion plans.

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*Table 4: Optimistic and pessimistic positions on individual/unit level retraining for combat after a peace support operation rotation.*

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The retraining times shown in Table 4 are consistent with other training timelines and plans developed by Army brigades and divisions.<sup>9</sup> It appears that combat units involved in peace support operations need substantial (but not excessive) retraining after a rotation. However, not because combat units are inherently unsuited to conduct peace support, but because at higher organizational levels they do not practice the movement to contact or attack missions than wartime operations would require.

More work should be done in this area: to add additional case data; to refine and validate results; and to provide those results to those who plan the use of force in peace and war.

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<sup>9</sup> Recent plans, one by the 48<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (M), Georgia Army National Guard, the other, by the Texas 49<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, show 81 and 69 days respectively to train a brigade for combat.