

Heavy lifting at NIE makes lighter duty for Soldiers in the field

Signaleers,

When I visited Fort Bliss and saw the maneuver company-level 25U Signaleers in action, I learned those Soldiers are the most popular people at the Network Integration Evaluation.

Here at Fort Gordon, our 25U Soldiers learn about radios and antennas. At the 2-1 Brigade Combat Team, the 25U Soldiers learn about satellite systems that work on the move, IP-based radios that are more computer than radio, SIPR NIPR Access Points, military-grade wireless routers including the Agile Comms Tactical Router and the DTECH tactical routers, relay radios on drones, RINGTAIL, Roamer net, NETT Warrior, \$1 million GMR radios, TACLANes, MAINGATE, HNR Inc 2, WIN-T, JBC-P, SRW, GNOMAD, Harris 117-G, WNAN - the acronym soup goes on and on.

"Twenty-five Uniforms are used to working with green radios," said SFC Class Sonton Lunnemon, the non-commissioned officer in charge for the 2-1 Brigade S6 shop. "Now they have to be a 25B, 25U, 25Q and 25S all rolled up into one."

The 25U is performing a critical function for the future of the Army. They help the combat Soldier with new comms equipment that the Army may buy. To win a war, our Soldiers have to be able to call for help when they need it, no matter where they are. And the NIE makes that happen quickly by testing equipment in a remote, harsh environment.

But to make sure we don't overwhelm the 25U Soldier, we need to do two things:

1. Make the equipment simple on the outside and put all the complexity on the inside. If an 11B can figure it out without calling on his one maneuver company Signal Soldier, then the 25U can concentrate on higher-level tasks. That only happens if industry makes the equipment simple to use.

2. Improve the training. The days of death by Powerpoint are over. Soldiers have to get their hands on the equipment and have the opportunity to make it work. Not just in a classroom, but in the motor pool and in the field. And that training has to be networked. If your radio acts as a wireless router, then you have to put data across that radio using your command and control systems. Virtual training has to be a big part of the training package, too.

And we have to improve

training here at Fort Gordon to help men like SGT Albert Cruz, a 25U who was the lone commo Soldier at A Troop, 1-1 CAV, 2-1 BDE. He said he got less than four hours of sleep a night during NIE testing and very little he learned at Advanced Individual Training at Fort Gordon applied to his job at NIE with up to six new commo systems in his troop every time he rolled to the field.

A normal unit won't have the same steep learning curve SGT Cruz experienced. But the 25U of the future will have an IP-based radio and we must set those Soldiers up for success.

Pro Patria Vigilans!

