

Survey seeks soldier input on training

More Guard participation needed, researchers say

By Jim Tice
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The Army Research Institute has launched its biggest job survey ever as training officials prepare to revamp the "common task" portions of enlisted, warrant officer and commissioned officer training programs.

Common tasks are the basic skills critical to unit readiness and mission accomplishment, such as handling an M16 rifle and other small arms; performing combat first aid; conducting force security, land navigation and communications; performing basic administrative functions; and adhering to Army values.

Service leaders want to confirm the relevance of these common tasks for current combat operations. They also want to introduce to officer and enlisted courses new tasks appropriate for the current operational environment and the Army's changing force structure.

The revamped listing of common tasks will be based in large part on the results of an ongoing Internet survey of active-component, National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers in the ranks of private through colonel, according to Ron Stump, chief of occupational analysis for the Army Research Institute.

The Reserve population targeted for the survey includes soldiers who have completed initial-entry training and are assigned to units. It does not include members of the Individual Ready Reserve, who do not belong to units or attend drills.

The survey complements a Center of Army Lessons Learned initiative through which soldiers

TAKE THE SURVEY

■ Go online to fill out the Total Army Common Task Survey at <http://2004commontasks.armyqualityjobsurveys.com>. Or click the "Army Wide Announcements" link on the Army Knowledge Online homepage at <https://www.us.army.mil>.

■ Address comments or questions to william.badey@hqda.army.mil or Sgt. Maj. Steve Merrill at steven.merrill@monroe.army.mil.

in the war zone and elsewhere feed their observations over the Internet to the Fort Leavenworth, Kan., center. In turn, the center provides information to soldiers in the field.

The Army Research Institute survey ends Dec. 31. After analysis, the results will be passed to Training and Doctrine Command by about June.

The survey comes just as the Army is updating and reorganizing most officer and enlisted professional development programs. On the enlisted side, this includes the NCO Education System and the Sergeants Major Course; on the officer side, it includes the basic, advanced and midcareer courses.

ARI launched the project in late October by e-mailing 600,000 active-component and Army Reserve soldiers. A week and a half later, 22,570 enlisted soldiers, 9,374 officers and 2,413 warrant officers had completed the survey.

The project is ARI's first use of the Internet for a major survey.

In 1998, the institute conducted a similar occupational survey, sending out about 20,000 computer disks to tactical units. About 4,000 soldiers responded.



SCOTT NELSON, GETTY IMAGES

Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division smash windows Nov. 9 as they take up fighting positions in Fallujah, Iraq. More than 600,000 soldiers are being invited to participate in a survey on many topics including lessons learned from the war zone.

TELL THE ARMY WHAT YOU THINK

As the Army strives to determine what skills should be taught, a survey is seeking soldier responses to a wide range of questions. Here's one of them, exactly as it appears on the Web site:

How much EMPHASIS should be given to training the Common Tasks below for Skill Level 1 positions?

	None	Very little	Some	Moderate	Considerable	Extremely high	No experience with this task
Search individual at checkpoint	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Search vehicle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Secure at halt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Segregate detainees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Select hasty firing positions during urban operation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Source: Army Research Institute

LISA ZILKA CHAVEZ, TIMES STAFF

"The disparity between then and now is just phenomenal," said Bill Badey, senior analyst for both projects. "The response rate in 1998 was considered a success, but in less than two weeks using the Internet we've got 24,000 responses."

Although the Army very much wants to include National Guard soldiers in the survey, Badey said, their participation so far has been minimal. That is because the Total Army Personnel Data Base does not include the e-mail addresses of most Guard members. Consequently, Guard members are unaware of the survey.

ARI officials are trying to ob-

tain Army Knowledge Online addresses so they can e-mail Guard members seeking their participation.

In early December, ARI employees will e-mail reminders to all soldiers, regardless of rank or component, asking them to complete the survey if they have not already done so.

The survey is voluntary, anonymous and takes about 20 minutes to complete. When soldiers access the survey site, they are asked to create a user name and password. Responses automatically are saved to the database, so that soldiers do not have to complete the survey at one sitting.

Grade and rank entries ensure that questions are appropriate for a soldier's experience and situation.

For example, junior enlisted soldiers are asked to respond to a variety of training requirement questions on first aid; nuclear, biological and chemical operations; unit operations; land navigation; communications; security and intelligence; crowd and riot control; leadership; and specific weapons (rifles, machine guns, shotguns, grenades and land mines).

The subject matter for non-commissioned officers and officers is much the same, but with a focus on leadership responsibilities. □