



Material from the Center for Army Lessons Learned is made available to Soldiers from 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. CALL, along with other agencies including TRADOC and the Consumer Research Team attended as part of Umbrella Week, from March 27-29, 2018, which provides an opportunity for agencies to meet with Soldiers following a recent deployment. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Scott Kuhn)

Why the Center for Army Lessons Learned is more relevant than ever (and how NCOs can harness this resource)

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In a recent interview with *Army Magazine*, Gen. Stephen Townsend, commander of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, noted the importance of constant improvement to the development of Soldiers and officers. He specifically mentioned how the resources at the Center for Army Lessons Learned can support that development. “We still sometimes make the

same mistakes two or three times, but when one leader or one unit learns a lesson somewhere in the Army, there’s a deliberate process to spread that around. I think it’s one of the strengths of our Army,” Townsend said (Cavallaro, 2018).

That strength has been a formal part of the Army since the mid-1980s. During this period, the Army’s leadership

recognized that despite significant investment into the National Training Center, there was no method or place to record the lessons captured there. This, coupled with the need to preserve lessons from Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada, led to the establishment of the Center for Army Lessons Learned (“CALL” as it is commonly known) in 1985 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (Kohl, 2015). Since then, CALL has collected lessons during every major military operation, archiving hundreds of thousands of observations and best practices, and delivering thousands of publications into the hands of Soldiers.

Today, CALL is the Combined Arms Center’s lead in driving Army change — the focal point for adaptive learning, providing timely and relevant knowledge to the warfighter and directly enhancing combat readiness. Each year CALL collects on and observes 21 “dirt” combat training center rotations, all Mission Command Training Program Warfighter Exercises, and operational-level Army service component command exercises; answers more than 250 requests for information from deployed units within 24 hours; produces over 50 publications resulting in more than 300,000 copies distributed Army-wide; and conducts “deep-dive” analysis on more than 300 observations and after action reports. Most of the information archived at CALL is available and searchable via the Joint Lessons Learned Information System repository or via [CALL’s Common Access Card-enabled website](#).

What is CALL?

CALL’s mission is to drive Army change. It accomplishes this by:

- Identifying, collecting, analyzing, disseminating, and archiving lessons and best practices in collaboration with other lessons learned agencies.
- Maintaining global situational awareness in order to share knowledge and facilitate the Army’s and unified action partners’ adaptation to win wars.
- Serving as the office of primary responsibility for the Army Lessons Learned Program.
- Leading the Army Lessons Learned Forum (ALLF) (Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2018).

Knowledge and information is meaningless if it is not shared. CALL accomplishes this by publishing and disseminating material throughout the Army in the form of handbooks, newsletters, information papers, bulletins, *News from the Front* and *News from the CTC* articles, graphic training aids, and other documents.

CALL informs both the noncommissioned officer and officer corps about the capabilities and assistance they provide to the force. Using the request for information capability, Soldiers can submit questions on specific topics; a CALL analyst will search the Army database and provide an answer within 72 hours. CALL answers RFIs from deployed Soldiers in 24 hours.

CALL also conducts post-deployment collection visits where analysts interview Soldiers and leaders to gather information regarding the theater of operation and lessons learned. The information collected is used to inform both senior leadership and follow-on units on challenges they may face during their deployment. CALL refers issues requiring Army-level attention to the Army Lessons Learned Forum for resolution. In the past year, the ALLF addressed 14 issues at the general officer level, leading to more than 220 leader resolution actions focused on large-scale combat issues.

Underused, Valuable Tool

During my 14 years in the Army, I knew about CALL but never truly understood it. Since being assigned as a CALL military analyst, I realize it is a valuable but underused tool. Thinking back on the times I received a mission I never executed before, I wish I had known about the RFI system. Why shouldn’t I learn from others who executed the same task?

Now that the Army is focusing on large-scale combat operations against near-peer threats, CALL’s relevance is clear. The Army has executed counterinsurgency operations for most of the last decade. Lessons learned before this time still apply today and can expedite our transition to fight the next war. Knowing why the Army created CALL, its mission, vision and its first combat collection in 1989, a few questions must be asked. Is CALL relevant for junior leaders and Soldiers? Can Junior NCOs and Soldiers use CALL products to learn from others and improve performance? Can they contribute to CALL and drive Army change at the tactical level with their own lessons learned?

The answer to all these questions is an easy YES. CALL provides resources for junior NCOs and their Soldiers, which help guide and mentor them towards best practices and lessons learned by those who came before them. Why reinvent the wheel? This happens more than we care to admit. Especially, at the lower echelons where Soldiers may be challenged to accomplish a new or unfamiliar mission. CALL provides handbooks, bulletins, catalogs and many other publications for best practices and lesson learned. Those who are unable to find what they need can submit an RFI on the CALL restricted website. Once an RFI is submitted, CALL will respond quickly.

Lessons Learned

NCOs and Soldiers can drive Army change with lessons learned. Remember the black box mounted on

a pole in front of the Humvee? This device is known as the Rhino and is used to defeat passive infrared-triggered improvised explosive devices. An NCO created this device after his experiences with IEDs. His actions drove Army change which saved many lives (Higginbotham, 2018).

In 1944, during the Normandy Campaign, Sgt. Curtis G. Culin welded steel scrap to the front of a tank which was used to knock a hole into hedgerow walls. Due to the “Culin Hedgerow Cutter’s” effectiveness, the Army mass manufactured it and installed it on M4 Sherman tanks and M10 tank destroyers. The Culin Hedgerow Cutter was also used by the British

Army. Culin’s creation helped drive the Army’s advance into Normandy (Zapotoczny, 2018).

Conclusion

NCOs and Soldiers can drive Army change by sharing their lessons learned and use CALL as a forum for that change. It provides many publications and best practices that can help develop NCOs and Soldiers in their careers. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. By using CALL to share information across the force, Soldiers can learn from those who came before them and, likewise, share the hard-earned knowledge they acquired when faced with their own unique challenges. ■

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