

## **The Practical Use of Operational Rations**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Industrial base planning is a valid part of Army transformation and impacts on the requirements of the mission. Commanders are urged to have knowledge of and use the full family of operational rations. Use of the full family of operational rations is a mark of readiness. It supports the ability to deploy and maintain an industrial base to ensure the right meal is available at the right time at the right place. The commanders' role, with assistance of the food advisor, is the establishment of an appropriate feeding plan based on Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops available – Time and Contractors on the battlefield (METT-TC). The commander has two types of rations to be used. They are the Individual and Group rations.

### **INDIVIDUAL FEEDING**

The primary individual feeding ration includes 24 menus of the Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE). The MRE is prepared entrees and supplemental items to complete the meal. Improvements include menus with whole muscle meat such as chicken breast. The variety and taste are well received by soldiers. There are very aggressive processes to review and improve the MRE. The MRE is packed twelve meals in a case with two vegetarian meals. Commercially prepared religious meals, Kosher and Halal are available when required. Unit Chaplains identify troop requirements for these meals to unit food operations personnel. Special Meal, Cold Weather rations have been redesigned to enhance nutrition in colder climates. The Long Range Patrol ration is individual feeding for specific and restricted special operations.

### **GROUP FEEDING**

Group feeding is accomplished using the Unitized Group Ration. The UGRs are provided as follows: the Heat and Serve (H&S) and The "A" Ration. With the UGR-H&S ration, the entire meal is prepared by submerging prepared food trays in hot water or by adding hot water as required to reconstitute the product. All food service operations personnel have been trained on the use of these products. Including the UGR-H&S option in all field exercises will ensure the commander that his food operations soldiers retain the necessary skills to provide a quality meal. The METT-TC requirements of the field often make the UGR-H&S the right meal for the right time and place. Improvements in technology have resulted in improved tray technology as evidenced by the replacement of the steel tray with a polymeric tray. The UGR-A is the newest group ration. It reduces the ordering process from as many as thirty line items into two stock numbers. Development of this group ration completed the goal of unitizing and aids in configured loads as one of the tenants of military logistics. Again, the use of this ration is METT-TC dependent on equipment and battlefield posture.

## **SUPPLEMENTS AND ENHANCEMENTS**

The Office of the Surgeon General has determined milk is the required supplement for group field feeding. Salad, fresh fruit and dry cereal are enhancements and should be made available METT-TC permitting.

## **WATER IN FOOD PREPARATION.**

Water is the most important nutrient for our soldiers. Food operations personnel will need to boil chlorinated water when preparing food and beverages in the field to ensure soldier acceptance.

## **COMMITMENT TO QUALITY**

There are many personnel and resources involved in ensuring the quality of Army field feeding. Soldiers and civilian representatives at the Quartermaster Center and School, Army Center of Excellence, Subsistence conduct training and policy development to support the Army Food Program. Scientists from the Soldier, Biological, and Chemical Command (Natick) and the procurement specialists of the Defense Logistics Agency, Defense Supply Center, Philadelphia assist the Army in providing Class 1 to its soldiers. Commanders are encouraged to take their place in this commitment by ensuring the use of all types of available rations to enhance training, inventory management, and unit readiness.