

Counseling in the Operational Domain:

A Vital Component to Platoon Leadership

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For decades, the Army has struggled to holistically assess the tactical application of a Soldier’s skills in current operational environments for individual weapons qualification or provide a program that effectively trained marksmanship. During the period between the Revolutionary War and Korean conflict, a standardized rifle qualification was nonexistent. It was documented that only a third of combat troops could accurately recognize and engage targets, rendering qualification difficult for commanders to use as a measure that accurately assessed the proficiency of their Soldiers in combat.

It was not until 1953 that a systematic training approach was established. This qualification template consisted of 56 targets (40 stationary and 16 moving targets), but due to the time and resource allocations of a draft-era Army, it was determined that Soldiers could not effectively engage moving targets so they were removed from the qualification. This 66-year-old qualification endured through more than 10 conflicts, four weapon systems, and numerous aiming devices. The Automated Record Fire (ARF) allowed Soldiers to disengage from target acquisition and change magazines at their leisure, was time consuming (15 minutes), and did not require Soldiers to demonstrate situational awareness or problem solving. However, on 1 April 2019, the U.S. Army Infantry School (USAIS) commandant, BG David M. Hodne, approved Training Circular (TC) 3-20.40, *Training and Qualification, Individual Weapons*. This publication is part of the overarching *Integrated Weapons Training Strategy (IWTS)*, TC 3-20.0, which seeks to redefine goals and requirements for weapons training through qualification at echelon.

TC 3-20.40 applies to all individual weapons and serves as a resource to help commanders, staff, and NCOs understand the requirements for planning, preparing, executing, and assessing training through qualification. TC 3-20.40 provides major updates to the qualification criteria for all individual weapons by taking successful unit practices and consolidating them for a common approach to training individual weapons through qualification. The strategy emphasizes weapons proficiency and focuses on IWTS principles such as providing a commander with flexibility and adaptability to change and the facilitation of rapid deployment capabilities.

Training Strategy

- **Table I** - Preliminary Marksmanship Instruction and Evaluation (PMI&E)
- **Table II** - Preliminary Live-Fire Simulations (PLFS)
- **Table III** - Drills
- **Table IV** - Basic
- **Table V** - Practice
- **Table VI** - Qualification

Table I, PMI&E, is the hands-on and cognitive evaluation of the critical tasks necessary to safely and effectively employ the Soldier’s assigned weapon. Table II, PLFS, is a simulations-based demonstration of the Soldier’s performance in applying the shot process outlined in each individual weapon’s TC. In this environment, leaders are able to replicate live conditions while providing critical feedback for their Soldiers that will better prepare them for live-fire events. Where Table II refines firing tasks, Table III, Drills, refines and evaluates the physical manipulations learned in Table I. Tables I-III are prerequisites to live fire where the Soldier must successfully pass the Gate to Live Fire (GTLF) before progressing to live-fire tables IV-VI. The tables can be executed in any order, provided they are evaluated within six weeks for active component, or six months for Guard and Reserve components, of any of the live-fire tables.

Table IV, Basic, is a live-fire condition used for basic skills training at a reduced tempo. For rifle, Soldiers must place eight of 10 consecutive rounds within the four-centimeter aiming point on the A8 zero target and then confirm their zero at 300 meters by hitting an e-type silhouette four out of five times. Finally, Soldiers are given ammunition to practice their application of holds at 100 and 200 meters before moving on to Table V.

Table V, Practice, is designed to be more difficult than the qualification by purposely inducing malfunctions and increasing the engagement tempo Soldiers are required to execute. This table builds the Soldier's confidence in the weapon, ammunition, optics, and training.

Table VI, Qualification, is the Army-standard record course of fire (COF) used to determine live-fire proficiency on an assigned weapon. For all weapons found in TC 3-20.40, Soldiers receive their rating from Stage 1, but they must receive GOs on subsequent stages to be considered qualified for collective live fire or a marksmanship rating. For rifle, Table VI is broken down into four stages:

- **Stage I** - Day Fire
- **Stage II** - Day Fire, CBRN (chemical, biological, radio-logical, nuclear)
- **Stage III** - Night Fire
- **Stage IV** - Night Fire, CBRN

Stage I comprises four firing phases where Soldiers engage 40 single or multiple stationary timed targets from the prone unsupported, prone supported, kneeling supported, and standing supported positions. The COF takes about four minutes to conduct, has no administrative pauses once initiated, incorporates artificial support, and requires Soldiers to execute positional transitions and magazine changes on their own. Soldiers must score a minimum of 23 out of 40 to pass this stage of the qualification.

Stage II comprises one firing phase where Soldiers engage 10 single or multiple stationary timed targets from the standing unsupported position while wearing a protective mask. Soldiers must score a minimum of seven out of 10 to receive a GO for this stage of the qualification.

Stage III comprises two firing phases where Soldiers engage 20 single or multiple stationary timed targets from the kneeling supported position while wearing their night-vision device (NVG). Soldiers must score a minimum of 14 out of 20 to receive a GO for this stage of the qualification.

Stage IV comprises one firing phase where Soldiers engage 10 single or multiple stationary timed targets from the standing unsupported position while wearing a protective mask and NVGs. Soldiers must score a minimum of seven out of 10 to receive a GO for this stage of qualification.

The Alternate Course of Fire (ALT-C) is no longer considered a qualification. It is now a validation event that extends (not grants) a Soldier's existing rating by six months. ALT-C can be executed no more than twice in a 24-month period and must be approved by the first general officer in the chain of command.

These changes, while sweeping, are intended to increase Soldier performance, provide a common language that consolidates standards in small arms training through qualification, and ensure the utilization of resources. The threat of hybrid and peer threats is ever increasing, and we will face them in the future. USAIS will be conducting leader professional development (LPD) sessions with units across the Army over the next year to gather feedback and facilitate implementation. To schedule a USAIS LPD, division or brigade operations should email a request to usarmy.benning.infantry-schl.mbx.usais-marksmanship-team@mail.mil.

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