

# Increasing Your Unit's Javelin and ITAS Proficiency

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Today's commanders and combat leaders employ the deadliest high-caliber weapon systems that have ever existed. Combat arms branches continue to increase their lethality, preparing for the forthcoming mechanized fight. We train to win the first battle of the next war. The operational force has returned focus to large-scale combat operations and is prepared for the great power competition with strategic competitors such as Russia and China. U.S. Army leaders at the company level and below are vital contributors to this environment. The infantry company has at least one of two anti-armor capabilities, one being the Javelin Close Combat Missile System. The other is the Improved Target Acquisition System (ITAS) which fires the tube-launched, optically-tracked, wire/wireless-guided (TOW) missile. Leaders ranging from team leader to commander must know how to employ these powerful armaments in a tactical environment. In this article, I will cover the institutional course that provides heavy weapons training, the functional training trends that course instructors have observed, and a proposed training plan for units that wish to increase their Javelin and ITAS proficiency.

## Heavy Weapons Leaders Course (HWLC)

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) offers this two-week course at Fort Benning, GA, which is designed to train leaders on how to adaptively employ heavy weapon systems. HWLC is available to Soldiers in the ranks of sergeant through first lieutenant. Classroom instruction covers the M98A2 Javelin system, M41 ITAS with the TOW missile, M3 Carl Gustaf, and basic machine-gun theory that applies to the MK-19 and M2. HWLC is the only institutional course in the U.S. Army that executes in-depth hands-on training on the Javelin weapon system. While the course is not designed to certify gunners, it does enable graduates to plan, resource, and lead training on these weapon systems within their respective brigade combat teams (BCT). Students with



A Soldier with Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, fires a Javelin missile at enemy targets during decisive action rotation 19-08.5 at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, LA, on 29 July 2019. (Photo by SGT Michelle U. Blesam)



**An Infantryman with the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, operates a tube-launched, optically-tracked, wire-guided (TOW) missile Improved Target Acquisition System in a mobile Collective Skills Trainer on 15 May 2012 at Fort Stewart, GA. (Photo by SGT Mary Katzenberger)**

the Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 11B (Infantryman) graduate with a B8 additional skill identifier (ASI), marking themselves as proficient users and employers of the TOW missile.

### **Functional Training Trends**

HWLC cadre observe and assess training trends after each class iteration. During Fiscal Year 2019, Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment, graduated 247 students from HWLC with a 100-percent graduation rate. Thorough exam seminars, extensive retraining, and clearly communicated actions, conditions, and standards for each terminal learning objective (TLO) contribute to historically high graduation rates. Although the annual course failure rate is miniscule, HWLC instructors discovered a distinct trend across the seven resident and seven mobile training team (MTT) classes conducted that fiscal year: The students reported minimal home-station training on the Javelin and ITAS weapon systems.

The target audience and the majority of HWLC students are staff sergeants and sergeants first class who are already assigned to a heavy weapons unit. However, direct feedback from students during class discussion, end-of-course critique results, reports from observer-coach-trainers (OCTs) at Combat Training Centers (CTCs), and communication with organizations during MTT executions all act as anecdotal evidence suggesting a functional training gap. CPT Jason Valadez, a senior OCT with the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) Operations Group - Task Force 3, stated that during his time observing trends in 2019 at Fort Polk, LA, 45 percent of rotational training units (RTUs) had at least one HWLC graduate in each heavy weapons company. He also observed that the average Infantryman had a limited amount of knowledge on Javelin and anti-armor weapon employment.

Fortunately, HWLC instructors produce unit trainers who can create and implement an ITAS and Javelin training program at their unit. HWLC also encourages units to utilize the systems available to them on their installation. All major and large-scale installations have a Training Audiovisual Support Center (TASC) on site. These training support centers provide training aids, devices, simulators, and simulations, especially for the M98A2 Javelin and M41 ITAS.

### **Training at Home Station: A Way Ahead**

In the same way many units have successfully implemented the Integrated Weapons Training Strategy (IWTS) in accordance with Training Circular (TC) 3-20.0, home stations must also integrate a Javelin and ITAS training program into their maneuver training to increase unit lethality. I will discuss resources for training and a three-day



training method that units can execute in their footprint, similar to the Javelin and ITAS training in HWLC.

Regarding trainers, HWLC conducts classes with a 1:6 instructor-to-student ratio (ISR). Units, such as heavy weapons companies, should maintain this ISR for their home-station training to maximize instructors' ability to assist and better train students during practical exercises. In terms of equipment, TASC can provide the Javelin and ITAS Basic Skills Trainer (BST) and the Field Tactical Trainer (FTT) necessary for heavy weapons training (see TC 7-21.10, *Infantry and Weapons Company Guide to Training Aids, Devices, Simulators, and Simulations*).

Leaders who have been part of an RTU at one of the Army's three CTCs may be familiar with the FTT. The FTT is a Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES)-compatible, fully integrated, three-dimensional, force-on-force or force-on-target training device. For example, the Javelin FTT combines the Command Launch Unit (CLU) with the simulated Javelin round and uses a laser transmitter to simulate engagements during training exercises. The FTT student station provides visual, aural, and physical cues that Javelin and ITAS gunners experience when employing the weapon. TASC can also provide the BST, a computer-based, indoor training computer that is used to train and qualify gunners on these weapons systems. In accordance with TC 3-20.0 for individual gunners, units can create a three-day heavy weapon system training plan under the IWTS model.

Day 1 begins with preliminary marksmanship instruction and evaluation (PMI&E) and simulations. The instructors provide weapon characteristics and target engagement criteria through presentation and utilization of the BST. Students execute PMI and simulation tables (Tables I and II under Gate 4 of the IWTS training cycle).

Day 2 includes drills, zero, and practice. Instructors incorporate the BST and FTT to execute Tables III, IV, and V under Gate 4. Students will demonstrate the ability to configure, program, boresight, and execute proper engagement procedures on the FTT/BST.

Day 3 concludes with qualification. Instructors test the Soldiers' ability on the FTT to determine probability of a successful engagement in a simulated engagement area. Live-fire qualification is unlikely due to unit budget restraints, but Soldiers can still qualify Table VI on the FTT/BST. Additionally, I recommend that instructors implement a comprehensive written exam that covers the components and purpose of the M98A2 and M41.



**Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), fire the TOW missile system during a live fire at Fort Campbell, KY, on 24 October 2018. (Photo by CPT Justin Wright)**



**An NCO guides an Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB) candidate through firing procedures on the FGM-148 Javelin during EIB training at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, on 16 October 2019. (U.S. Army photo)**

## **Conclusion**

Infantry companies across various BCTs are capable of deadly and immense firepower against armored threats. If leaders want to maximize their direct fire capabilities, they must integrate Javelin and ITAS training into collective training tasks where team, squad, and platoon leaders can implement the lethality of heavy weapons in a tactical environment. Leaders should utilize recent HWLC graduates to assist and train operators in accordance with the IWTS model to improve proficiency and the overall lethality of the unit. I encourage units to send at least one weapons squad leader per company to HWLC. For more information, contact the HWLC operations section at (706) 626-3250 or Delta Company, 1-29 Infantry Regiment operations at (706) 544-6392.

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