

Pioneers Leading the Way:

1st Battalion, 29th Infantry — The Army's Premier Lethality and Force Modernization Battalion

1ST BATTALION, 29TH INFANTRY REGIMENT



“The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike him as hard as you can, and keep moving on.”

— **GEN Ulysses S. Grant**

Winning matters. Winning requires decisive lethality directly at the point of contact. The 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment (Pioneers) is the functional lethality training battalion at Fort Benning’s U.S. Army Infantry School (USAIS). The Pioneer Battalion provides seven programs of instruction (POIs) that forge tactically and technically competent leaders on platforms specific to their operational formation. In addition to building winning lethality for the Army through training and developing its force, the Pioneers directly contribute to Army modernization through experimentation. Partnering with the Maneuver Battle Lab (MBL), a specialized force within 1-29 IN conducts experimentation and testing of emerging technologies to support the Army Futures Command and shape the fieldings for the future force. The Pioneer Battalion excels in shaping the U.S. Army of the future, training leaders, and strengthening interoperability mission sets on a global scale — we lead the way. To achieve this, 1-29 IN is composed of five companies, each charged with a unique mission set contributing directly to our Army’s lethality. Collectively, these five companies represent the elements responsible for shaping the future infantry force from the ground up.

Alpha Company

“It’s the infantry, still today, that suffers 70 to 80 percent of the casualties. I want those kids to have the best, bar none, with nothing held back — We owe it to them.”

— **GEN Mark Milley**

20th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Alpha Company is the Army’s premiere Experimental Force (EXFOR), the only unit of its kind dedicated to conducting experimentation on future Army equipment and directly informing force modernization. The mission of this unique organization includes two large-scale expeditionary experiments which are executed in concert with our counterparts in the United Kingdom. The EXFOR is dedicated to ensuring our Soldiers at the tip of the spear are equipped to win in any environment, present and in the future.

The Army Expeditionary Warrior Experiment (AEWE) is the Army’s primary venue for small unit modernization, providing the operational experiment to support both concept and materiel development. The insights from AEWE inform new concepts, organizational constructs, training methodology, and the integration of prototype capabilities into an operational environment. Such an undertaking spans six months of intense experimentation of more than 60 separate technologies over which the EXFOR is expected to exhibit mastery. AEWE culminates with a week-long force-on-force exercise, where a combined EXFOR and British force employs the emerging technologies



Members of the Experimental Force from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment, move into an area they've just scouted with use of a small drone. (Photo by Janet Sokolowski)

against a thinking enemy. The outcomes of this event, and a similar one conducted in the United Kingdom, translate into recommendations to the most senior leaders in the Army reference equipment, manning, training, and organizational structure. 1LT Juwan Gaul, one of the platoon leaders in A Company, noted, "Our goal is to be just as proficient as any platoon in a Forces Command (FORSCOM) unit. We do this by remaining focused on executing the fundamentals well. We strive to remain proficient in the execution of infantry tactics while keeping up with the experimentation requirement of MBL. We have exceptional training and experimentation events planned for the future, and the platoon is excited about the impact we have on the Army." The EXFOR emerges from its mission with some of the only Soldiers in today's Army with actual hands-on experience of the most conceptual and developmental technologies out there.

In addition to large-scale expeditionary requirements, the EXFOR conducts an average of 20 separate experiments per year. While the scale of these experiments is small, the impacts are far-reaching. These experiments represent an extraordinarily wide range of skills from platoon power generation and the Soldier Enhancement Program to frequencies on new radio platforms. During a recent organic precision-strike experiment, the EXFOR tested various tactics for employing the Switchblade, a miniature high-precision strike tactical missile system which is attached to an unmanned aircraft system (UAS). Other recent experiments included the Tactical Decision Kit featuring the Integrated Visual Augmentation System (IVAS) as well as autonomous UAS swarming and logistical resupply operations. To drive effective Army modernization, these experiments require an agile, adaptable, and tactically sound EXFOR.

Bravo Company

"The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."

— Phil Jackson

Bravo Company directly supports the USAIS by providing critical support for training and exercises at the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE). Its mission is to facilitate four courses focused on developing leaders: the Bradley Leader Course (BLC), Stryker Leader Course (SLC), Bradley Master Gunner Course (BMGC), and Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course (IBOLC). Bravo Company is primarily composed of NCOs who are responsible for maintaining and sustaining a battalion's worth of Bradley Fighting Vehicles (BFVs) and Stryker variants vehicles. By employing these vehicles as a part of BLC and SLC, Bravo Company helps forge officers and NCOs of character prepared to lead lethal formations across the maneuver force.

Bravo Company provides the crews to support field training exercises (FTXs) and live fires during BLC and SLC training, providing leaders valuable experience in leading maneuver formations. For newly minted lieutenants in IBOLC, Bravo Company provides exemplary BFV crews as part of its mounted operations FTX. After an initial familiarization and capabilities brief, the BFV crews integrate into troop leading procedures with the future platoon leaders and then execute missions during a culminating training exercise.

Bravo Company is also integral to supporting BMGC. When asked about Bravo Company's support of the course, SFC Shawn Moran, one of the company master gunners, stated, "Bravo Company's support to the Bradley Master Gunner Course consists of highly trained crews capable of qualifying on Gunnery Table VI in accordance with the Individual Weapons Training Strategy (IWTS). The company provides the M2A3 vehicle platform and qualified crews to facilitate Bradley Master Gunner students to execute what they learned in the course."



Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course students learn how to incorporate Bradley Fighting Vehicles into the attack. (Photo courtesy of 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment)

Charlie Company

"Blessed are those who, in the face of death, think only about the front sight."

— Jeff Cooper, USMC Retired

Charlie Company builds small arms combat-focused lethality by leading both the U.S. Army Sniper Course (USASC) and Marksmanship Master Trainer Course (MMTC).

The USASC is a seven-week course that trains students to an expert level on the employment of the M2010, M110, and M107 sniper weapons systems. USASC graduates are experts in sniper fieldcraft, mission planning, reconnaissance, and employment of indirect fires. Currently the Sniper Course has two major initiatives: updating Sniper employment and training doctrine for large-scale combat operations and the start of the One Station Unit Training (OSUT) Sniper Assessment Program. The OSUT Sniper Assessment Program creates an OSUT-to-Sniper



Army Sniper School graduates set up a camouflage demonstration at Fort Benning on 28 February 2019. (Photo by EJ Hersom)

pipeline, molding snipers directly out of newly graduated Soldiers. Both initiatives are key to warfare as they provide unit commanders additional tools to kill the enemy in any environment.

The MMTC is a five-week course designed to turn senior NCOs into marksmanship master trainers. Phase 1 of this course focuses on fundamentals of individual marksmanship. During this phase, students are trained on the shot process, effective employment of the M4 carbine, M249 automatic rifle, and M17 pistol. Students are also trained to engage targets out to 600 meters with iron sights, using day, night, and thermal optics. Phase II of the course focuses on engaging targets using advanced marksmanship techniques, understanding unit training management, and effectively coaching others to become better shooters. This phase culminates with students developing comprehensive battalion-level IWTS nested with the Army's new marksmanship doctrine (Training Circular 3-20.40, *Training and Qualification – Individual Weapons*). MMTC remains at the forefront of the Army's fielding and testing of new marksmanship equipment. Integrated into the POI are the M17 Pistol Aiming Light (PAiL) system, binocular night-vision devices, and the Mantis X dry-fire training system. Graduates leave MMTC fully trained on the next generation weapons systems and fully prepared to train, coach, and mentor the next generation of Soldiers upon returning to their unit.



A student from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment completes a small arms transition qualification as part of the Marksmanship Master Trainer Course on 1 August 2019. (Photo by SGT Timothy Hamlin)

Delta Company

“Once we have a war there is only one thing to do. It must be won. For defeat brings worse things than any that can ever happen in war.”

— Ernest Hemingway

Delta Company leads three courses — the Bradley Leader Course (BLC), Stryker Leader Course (SLC), and Heavy Weapons Leader Course (HWLC). By leveraging the knowledge of master gunners and expert tactical instructors, Delta Company mentors young Infantry and Armor leaders poised to assume leadership roles in the operational units of tomorrow.

Graduates of BLC are technically and tactically proficient in maintaining, operating, and employing a mechanized infantry platoon or company. BLC prepares graduates to confront many of the challenges experienced on the battlefield. The rigors outlined in the new course curriculum readily challenge students’ ability to defeat a thinking enemy in a field environment. Our new curriculum also tests students’ ability to successfully employ the BFV under simulated combat conditions, which builds confidence and fosters success in the future. A recent graduate of BLC noted that the course has provided him the opportunity to receive the requisite training needed to be successful in an armored brigade combat team (ABCT). He also added that his comfort level drastically increased based on his ability to conduct the gunnery skills test (GST), execute a live-fire training event, and physically maneuver the BFV.

The second course facilitated by Delta Company is SLC. Similar to BLC, SLC has undergone a curriculum revision that added additional rigor to the course. The new course POI also reinforces the importance of properly employing and maintaining the Stryker vehicle. Students now have the opportunity to tactically employ the Stryker against a thinking enemy, validating what they have learned during the course. While the counterinsurgency doctrine



**Soldiers in the Stryker Leader Course complete simulations training.
(Photo courtesy of Stryker Leader Course)**

remains relevant in many parts of the world, feedback from the field and new threats continue to shape what's being taught to students. This course adjustment reveals the dexterity of the POI to pivot towards the next war. CPT Christian Mendez, a recent graduate, highlighted, "I judge Stryker Leader Course on whether or not the information we learned makes us better at what we do... closing with and destroying our adversaries. This course excels in this endeavor! Additionally, it leverages the experience of knowledgeable cadre to instill the lessons learned in operational units across the globe."

The third and final course facilitated by Delta Company is HWLC. HWLC graduates are combat multipliers for unit commanders. The course increases lethality for units at the battalion and brigade level. The course also empowers leaders with the requisite knowledge to build heavy weapons training plans and the hands-on experience to employ heavy weapons. A recent HWLC student, SSG Gregory Morgan, noted, "The most beneficial aspect of the course was our ability to leverage the instructors' experience and receive hands-on training using actual equipment. I enjoyed the competition and simulations!"

In addition to training leaders, Delta Company manages the Bradley New Equipment Training Team (NETT), a team of experts responsible for the fielding and implementation of new and existing Bradley platforms throughout the Army.

The Bradley NETT provides training for various units undergoing modernization across the Army. Most recently and critical to the success of Army modernization, the Bradley NETT facilitated the successful conversion of 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division (Fort Bliss, TX) to 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. The conversion included the fielding of 200 Bradleys and providing the critical training needed to enable the ABCT to perform its critical mission which includes sustaining and employing the vehicle.

Echo Company

"That is the whole secret of successful fighting. Get your enemy at a disadvantage; and never, on any account, fight him on equal terms."

— **George Bernard Shaw**

Eagle Company leads the Combatives Master Trainer Course (CMTC) and the Small Unmanned Aerial System (SUAS) Master Trainer Course (SUAS-MT). This company is the only organization within the Army that implements and trains the latest advances in either of these areas of expertise.

CMTC is integral to instilling the Warrior Ethos, skills, and confidence in warfighters. With modern Soldiers becoming increasingly technical in their field and hybrid threats arising against our force, it is paramount to ensure we retain the requisite tasks to close with and destroy the enemy in the last five meters of the fight — if needed through hand-to-hand combat. The primary initiative of the program is the introduction of tactical scenarios used to forge Soldiers in the crucible of simulated combat. CMTC enhances combat readiness by building Soldiers' personal courage, confidence, and situational responsiveness to close quarters threats. The course increases these



Students in the Combatives Master Trainer Course grapple during the tactical phase of the course at Fort Benning. (Photo courtesy of 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment)

attributes across the Army by building master trainers. CMTC instructors are also responsible for tournaments as well as the All-Army Combatives Championship, the Lacerda Cup. During tournaments we employ realistic and demanding scenarios to simulate the stresses of combat. By using simulations of close combat, impact reduction suits, and other training aids, we are better able to assess and modernize our training methodology while achieving individual Soldier lethality.

SUAS-MT is a course designed to impart the skillsets required to manage battalion and below operational training program (OTP) for UAS, train new operators, and develop and administer flight evaluations. The first initiative taking place in the SUAS-MT course is to maintain pace with emerging technologies, specifically in the employment of Class A UAVs which traditionally operate at relatively low altitudes. SUAS-MT is the only course of its kind.

We are involved and support institutions showcasing and developing new technologies. The experts of the SUAS-MT participate in the concepts development community to evaluate and test emerging ideas such as rucksacks designed for carrying UAS and future counter-UAS capabilities.

Conclusion

“Out of every one hundred men, ten shouldn’t even be there, eighty are just targets, nine are the real fighters, and we are lucky to have them, for they make the battle. Ah, but the one, one is a warrior, and he will bring the others back.”

— Heraclitus

1-29 IN is a trusted team of teams that forges lethal leaders for our Army. The Pioneer Battalion is not only the Army’s premier functional training unit, but we are also at the cutting edge of modernizations efforts, both in areas of technical development and tactical employment. Whether it’s testing new UAS systems, improving long-range precision weapons, providing critical input for the Bradley M2A4 development, re-aligning POIs with the most recent doctrine updates, or pushing the tactical capabilities of new weapon systems, 1-29 IN does and will continue to represent the best the USAIS has to offer.

In parallel to executing its assigned missions, the Pioneer Battalion understands the importance of continuous leader development and Soldier occupational proficiency. All five companies ensure their Soldiers and leaders leave 1-29 IN ready to bring their next unit the highest level of technical and tactical expertise and professionalism. According to CPT Ryan Goodin, Bravo Company commander, “There is danger in allowing both Soldier and leader skills to atrophy as they support POI. We take advantage of the leadership courses within the battalion and MCoE to make them better leaders and Soldiers in any maneuver formation.”

1-29 IN builds winning lethality at the point of contact — winning matters. To maintain this mission, the Pioneer Battalion needs to continue its tradition of having the most technically and tactically proficient leaders in its formation, so it can build lethal leaders of tomorrow. For it is their expertise, knowledge, capability, and sheer grit which drive the future and truly build winning lethality. Be a part of a winning team.