

TRAINING NOTES



AIR DEFENSE TRAINING

CAPTAIN ROBERT KILMER, JR.

The United States infantryman in the twentieth century has rarely had to fight a battle in which his side did not enjoy almost complete aerial superiority. There were times in North Africa in late 1942 and early 1943 when his supporting air forces did not control the air — and he paid a price because of it. The same situation existed at times during 1942 in the Pacific Ocean areas as well.

But since the end of World War II, with rare exceptions, whenever he went to war the U.S. infantryman could count on fighting under a protective aerial umbrella. Unfortunately, because he could count on that umbrella, he did not practice how to defend himself against an enemy aerial attack as much as he should have. Today's infantryman doesn't practice it much more.

Using an infantry unit's organic weapons in an air defense role is not

as unrealistic as it may sound. During the Korean War, for instance, the U.S. Air Force lost five times as many aircraft to ground fire as it did to aerial combat. In the fighting in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s, the U.S. military and naval forces lost more than 400 fixed wing aircraft and 2,000 helicopters to small arms fire alone.

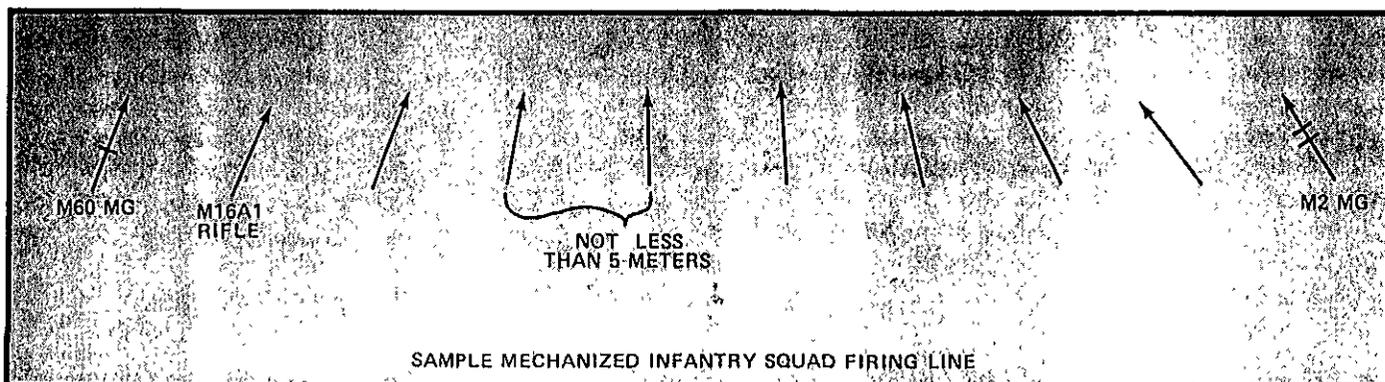
Infantry units using their organic weapons can defend themselves against an air attack, provided their soldiers are properly trained. And this training can be easier than it sounds, if a unit's leaders will only make the necessary effort.

The best training, of course, should consist of both dry fire and live fire exercises against a suitable aerial target. It goes without saying, therefore, that a range is the first prerequisite, followed by ammunition and then a suitable target.

Ranges and ammunition supplies are generally available for this kind of training, but the unit will have to do a certain amount of preliminary planning and coordination before it can actually begin firing.

For example, the unit must forecast its range and ammunition needs well ahead of time, allowing at least eight weeks for its ammunition request to be filled. The ammunition load itself should consist of all tracer rounds so that the soldiers will be able to track their bullets more easily and make any needed adjustments quickly.

The range control office should understand that the unit will be firing at a moving aerial target, and they will also need to know the kinds and calibers of the ammunition the unit will be using. The range itself may have to be surveyed because of the extreme elevations (greater than 35 degrees, usually) at which the unit's



weapons will be fired.

Because an actual aircraft will not be available for the live fire portion of the training program, the unit can count on having a most suitable substitute — the FQM-117A radio-controlled, miniature, aerial target (RCMAT). Most training and audiovisual support centers (TASCs) have RCMATs and may also be able to furnish trained operators. (The July-September 1981 issue of AIR DEFENSE Magazine has an excellent article on the RCMAT.) If they cannot, then the unit will have to train its own operators, and it can expect to have to spend five to seven weeks doing so. This need, like those for a range and for a supply of ammunition, should be forecast by the unit well ahead of time.

The unit should also be developing a good training program. The basic document for this kind of training is the September 1979 version of Training Circular 23-44, Small Arms Against Air Attack. It does more than list training objectives; it also contains a great deal of information that the soldiers should absorb before they start shooting live bullets. One thing they should definitely know is the difference between the football field and the reference point methods of engagement. These methods are clearly spelled out in the circular.

When the unit's soldiers are considered trained and ready, they

should be taken to the range and spread out along the appropriate firing lines. Only the size of the range should limit the number of firers at any one time, although for safety reasons there should always be at least a five-meter distance between each firer. A suggested arrangement of a firing line is shown in the accompanying drawing.

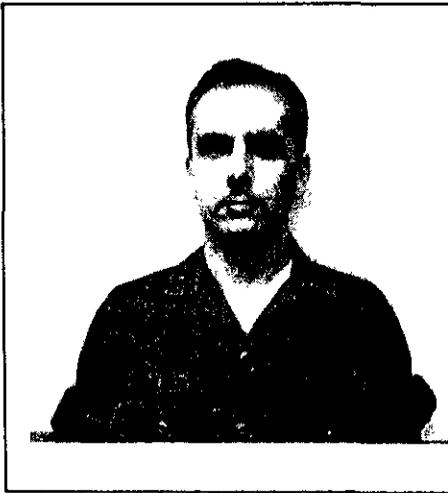
All of the unit's organic small arms should be on the firing line and should be used. The machineguns can be either on the ground or mounted on vehicles. The main point should be to show the soldiers how much fire they can put in the path of an aircraft.

The RCMAT should make a number of passes from each direction — left to right, right to left, and head on. This will give the soldiers a good

opportunity to practice the two methods of engagement.

After an exercise has been completed, the RCMAT should be landed and brought before the soldiers so they can see how many hits they scored. Then a critique should be held so that the unit's leaders can point out what went right and what went wrong, and what the soldiers should do to correct their mistakes.

This training is too important to be addressed lightly, as it has often been in the past. The benefits to the unit from this kind of training far outweigh any efforts that have to be made to make it successful. Before an infantry unit can consider itself ready for combat, it must be able to defend itself against an enemy air attack. With this training, we'll be ready to do just that.



CAPTAIN ROBERT KILMER, JR., a 1972 ROTC graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, is now Deputy Director of the Weapons, Gunnery, and Maintenance Department of the U.S. Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. He has served with the 1st and 8th Infantry Divisions and has completed the Infantry Officer Advanced Course.

Flex-HOC

SPECIALIST-4 ERIC P. JORVE

Army Reserve infantry battalions that are severely understrength but faced with growing requirements often find it difficult to cope with their training problems. One such battalion, though, has found a way to

do it — and to double the percentage of its soldiers who pass the skills qualification test (SQT) in the process.

The 3d Battalion, 3d Infantry, a part of the 205th Infantry Brigade (Separate), 88th U.S. Army Reserve

Command at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, developed what it called "Flex-HOC" (flexible hands-on component), a new system of administering the hands-on component of the SQT.