

what he would do if he were selected "on-the-spot" to be a company executive officer or a weapons platoon leader. He might be required to run a reaction course or to run a certain distance in a specified time.

A similar process could be used to test his knowledge of garrison and administrative procedures. He might be required to check on troop financial or promotion policies, to prepare elimination procedures, to perform as a survey officer, to supervise a supply room, or to inspect weapons, NBC equipment, and vehicles.

A battalion officer school organized in this fashion could be used to improve and sustain the quality of the battalion's officers and its effects should eventually be transmitted to

the battalion's NCOs as well. At the very least, the qualitative rating of the junior officers could be assured by comparing the individual against specific measurable goals. What is

more important, the school could provide the basis for a universal framework for developing leaders of high quality for an effective volunteer Army.



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Platoon Inventory

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After meeting his commander and receiving a briefing on the unit, a newly assigned lieutenant faces his first real challenge — conducting a 100 percent inventory of his platoon's equipment. His signature on that inventory will mark the final step in his full assumption of responsibility for his platoon, and he should take care to do it right.

His first step in the inventory process should be to get together with the experts — the battalion S4 or the property book officer, the company executive officer, and the company supply sergeant. Thirty minutes with an expert can unravel what at first may look like an insurmountable problem. During the discussion, he should ask them about any recent change or problem that could affect the inventory.

At the same time, he should obtain from them the current technical manuals, supply bulletins, supply catalogs, and any other publications he will need to conduct the inventory. In addition, he must make certain that the appropriate TM for each piece of equipment, along with its publication date, appears on the master hand receipt.

These publications are essential; without them an inventory is a waste of time, because they describe the equipment through photographs and equipment listings. The major components of the equipment must be reviewed with reference to both the descriptive pictures and the BII (basic issue items) list.

This advice cannot be stressed too strongly. Failure to use the current publications in the inventory process

is probably the most common mistake a new platoon leader makes, and the most costly. He should therefore follow the rule: "If you ain't got the book, don't look."

Once he is satisfied that he is sufficiently educated and equipped, the lieutenant can begin the formal inventory process.

A change of command inventory is a joint mission. It should be done with both the outgoing and the incoming officers present; it should not be conducted if one or the other is absent. A sufficient amount of time should be set aside for the inventory, and the entire process should be well organized. Unrelated tasks must be set aside until the inventory has been finished.

All items that are to be inventoried — that must be counted — should be

put out in the open where both parties can see them. The front of the company's area is probably as good a place as any. All of the platoon's equipment must be made available; otherwise, those taking the inventory will spend a lot of time trying to chase down the missing items.

When physically counting equipment, both platoon leaders must be certain of the actual accountable quantity. For example, a unit may have been issued or may have turned in items since its last master hand receipt was made. (If the unit is using the division logistics systems (DLOGS), a computerized list will be provided.) Normally, the master hand receipt is updated before the inventory, and this should eliminate any need to review "sub-hand receipts." But a platoon may have equipment signed out to its members; if so, it must be turned in before — not during — the inventory and then re-issued. This simple formula can be used to insure a correct balance sheet: Hand receipt count, plus issues and minus turn-ins, minus equipment in maintenance, equals the accountable quantity.

One critical aspect of accounting for the equipment that is in maintenance is to make sure the complete item is turned in. Although this is normally required, sometimes components are turned in but not some of the other end items.

The identification of equipment may be difficult, too, but the new platoon leader must stick with it. He may even have to measure, weigh, and compare certain items carefully. Above all, he must be certain of the presence and composition of every item of his equipment.

During the inventory, equipment should also be checked for its serviceability. If it is badly worn and a replacement can be ordered, it should be done at that time. Any missing

CHECKLIST FOR PLATOON INVENTORY

- Check with the experts.
- Without the book, don't look.
- Inventory together or not at all.
- See it all; touch, measure, be certain
- Organize, and follow the schedule.
- Inspect and order as you go
- Excess items belong to Uncle Sam.
- If it has no purpose, turn it in.
- Problems? Go back to the experts.
- Correct administrative errors now.

items should be reported immediately to the commander and to the S4 or property book officer, and supply actions should be started to remedy the shortages. This equipment should not appear on the hand receipt.

At the same time, any excess equipment must be turned in to the supply people; this is as much a moral problem as it is a physical and monetary one. It may be found, also, that certain items no longer serve a purpose within a unit, and with the commander's approval, they should be turned in as well.

If any problem arises during the inventory that seems impossible to resolve, the platoon leader should go back to the experts and insist on a detailed explanation. Often the prob-

lem will turn out to be simple administrative errors on hand receipts — even experts can make mistakes!

Finally, the new platoon leader should be sure that the master hand receipt he signs reflects things as they really are. To discover otherwise later can be professionally and financially devastating.

After the new platoon leader has signed for his platoon's equipment, he should make it a point to continue to inventory and inspect that equipment throughout his tenure in that unit. In fact, the semi-annual inventory is as important as the initial one. He must pay special attention to any items that might be added to the BII after his initial inventory and see that they are put on the hand receipt.

At the end of his tour, he must conduct a final 100 percent inventory with his successor.

Supply discipline and equipment accountability are high priorities for today's unit leader. A 100 percent inventory may not be as exciting as a combat patrol or a platoon raid, but it is at least as important. And any platoon leader — either a new one or an old one — owes it to himself to do it right.



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