

it is not yet on the training calendar of the Army's TOE infantry battalions.

Bayonet training is a constant subject of conflict for commanders and trainers alike, because it reminds everyone of the ultimate job of the infantryman to disable or kill an enemy soldier. Technology and terminology have not made this job any easier to learn or any less deadly to practice. Today's bayonet training shows that the Army can produce an aggressive

and confident bayonet fighter. What it needs to do now is to match that

spirit with the best equipment and techniques it can provide.



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# Individual Training

**CAPTAIN WARREN D. WILSON**

In my initial field exercise as a company commander, I directed one of my platoon leaders to prepare a defensive position blocking a critical avenue of approach. I also told him to use a hasty minefield. When I inspected the completed platoon position sometime later, I found the men well placed and the platoon's weapons properly sited. The hasty minefield area also had been neatly blocked with engineer tape. The platoon leader was convinced that his platoon could hold the position and cited many tactical considerations to support his conviction.

But there was a major flaw in his plan. The squad he had assigned to put in the hasty minefield in reality could not have done so, because not one of its soldiers knew how to

emplace, arm, disarm, or recover the antipersonnel and antitank mines. The squad leader did not even know how to record a hasty minefield. And neither the platoon leader nor the squad leader knew what type of mines or how many of them were available in the unit's basic load.

My immediate concern was to find out how this situation had come about. I discovered that the platoon had been tested on hasty minefields a year earlier during an ARTEP evaluation, and that it had passed. Since then, however, because of the rapid pace of field training exercises, it had not practiced installing hasty minefields. Instead, minefields had always been simulated, because the "men know how to install them anyway." Unfortunately, many of

the men who had known what to do had left the unit.

I also discovered in all of the platoons other deficiencies in individual skills in basic combat readiness, which pointed to inadequate individual and squad level training. Many reasons for this were cited, but the one repeated most often was the lack of time. Competing requirements, many said, took scheduled individual training time away from the squad leaders. (This, of course, also gave a weak squad leader a ready excuse for the poorly trained soldiers in his squad.)

As I checked further, I became convinced that lack of time was chiefly a convenient excuse. True, it was difficult to schedule formal training time, but there was unscheduled time

available if a squad leader would just use it — time that became available either because the scheduled training ended early, or because of short delays on a firing range, or because of pauses in the action during field training exercises. There was a lot of such time. The problem was how to use it.

My first sergeant and I believed in one basic premise: a squad leader has the primary responsibility for training his men. As the leader closest to his men he is the one they should look to for training and guidance. Whether he is an experienced staff sergeant or a young acting sergeant, the squad leader's ability and leadership determine whether that squad could accomplish its mission.

## RESULTS

Stating the premise was easy. Producing results was a bit harder.

The program that worked the best for my company was based on Army Skill Qualification Training (SQT) and squad competition. Each month the first sergeant and I would select 25 to 30 specific SQT tasks to be tested at the end of the month during a Squad Competition Day. These tasks were chosen from each major SQT subject area with one to three specific tasks picked from each major area. For example, from the NBC subject area, the selected tasks might be to maintain the protective mask and accessories, to administer an antidote to a nerve agent casualty, and to initiate unmasking procedures.

The squad leaders were responsible for teaching their men the chosen SQT tasks before the competition. Although training aids and TEC tapes were available in the company area, they had to find the necessary training time.

We scheduled the Squad Competition Day in conjunction with our monthly weapon zeroing and familiarization firing. Fortunately, the range had an area large enough for us to set up the required number of test stations.

The chain of command, except for the squad leaders, administered the

competition. Each leader was made responsible for a major SQT subject area such as land navigation or NBC. He then developed the test for that station from the appropriate SQT manual. The tasks for the crew-served weapons were chosen on the basis of comparable difficulty, which meant that a line squad could be rated against a mortar or TOW section with a minimum of controversy.

In addition, we gave two written tests during the competition. The first was a simple 10-question squad member test, with questions ranging from those that might be asked by a promotion board to questions on information from the latest commander's call. The second was a 25-question test for the squad leaders. In it, the topics might range from leadership and counseling techniques to squad-leader level SQT questions.

## SPOTLIGHT

On Competition Day, the squad leaders were in the spotlight as they led their men through each station. At the more time-consuming stations only two men might be chosen to perform the task, while at others all the men would be tested. The results were then averaged for each squad. This stressed the importance of each soldier being a team member, because each man's performance affected his entire squad's score.

When the competition ended, each station placed the squads in rank order. Points were awarded according to squad position, thereby

eliminating the differences in scoring between the stations. Ties were broken by adding up the number of place points involved and dividing by the number of tied squads. The results were tallied and then prominently posted in the company area.

The competition always created a lot of interest and was generally the main topic of conversation for at least a week afterward. (Regardless of what soldiers may say, they thrive on good competition.) The soldiers of the winning squad were given four-day passes, while the squad leader received an appropriate letter of achievement. The second place squad members received three-day passes. The members of the most improved squad also received three-day passes. Every squad, therefore, had an incentive to do well.

This squad competition proved effective for several reasons, the principal one being that it gave the squad members a goal to strive for as a team. Additionally, in this way we could practice and test most of the basic SQT skills over a six-month period. In the process, the squad leaders learned how to manage their available time more effectively, and the company's leaders were able to assess the squad leaders' abilities to tailor their training accordingly.

What is most important, the company's combat readiness was much improved, and the next time a platoon leader was directed to prepare a defensive position and employ a hasty minefield, he could feel confident that his squad members knew how to do it.



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