



Winter Training

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The objective of winter training is to teach soldiers to shoot, move, and communicate in the cold and the snow. But before mission training can be conducted in winter, the soldiers have to accomplish certain basic individual and collective tasks that are usually lumped together under the heading of winter survival training or cold weather indoctrination (CWI).

An understanding of the difference between winter mission training and CWI is a vital first step in planning effective winter training. Without a clear differentiation between them, the means may become the end. When that happens, units can find themselves spending precious field training time learning how to live in the cold instead of learning how to fight in it.

The best winter training, obviously, is conducted by Active Army units stationed in areas that have a distinct winter season. Unfortunately, many Army units, both Active and Reserve Component, are stationed in the southern half of the United States and have to travel farther north to conduct winter training. The challenge for the commanders of these units is to find a way to conserve mis-

sion training by cutting the time they have to devote to CWI without risking cold weather injury in the process. This means that their CWI must be preparatory training, training that should be conducted well in advance of the unit's scheduled mission training.

The problem is that while the content of mission training is spelled out in the appropriate soldier's manuals

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and ARTEPs, laying out a program of instruction for CWI is not as clear cut, because there is no single source document for developing a CWI program of instruction.

Cold weather indoctrination should consist of eight tasks: Fitting, adjusting, and wearing individual cold weather clothing and equipment; hygiene and first aid; leadership; maintenance; ahkio loading and hauling; bivouac routine (tent drill); snowshoeing; and skiing. The last of

these, skiing, is the only task that requires a winter environment for skill training. The others can be taught in any climate any time the equipment is available. And units that do not have winter equipment on hand can plan to draw some early enough to conduct their preparatory training.

A good example of how this works is the way the 205th Infantry Brigade (Separate) of the U.S. Army Reserve prepares for its annual training. The brigade is scheduled for winter training in February 1983, and even in Minnesota where it is stationed, the unit will not have had enough winter weather before that time for comprehensive cold weather training. To prevent wasting mission training time at annual training, therefore, the unit began training in all the CWI tasks except skiing in August 1982.

As an example of the performance-oriented training conducted during the 205th's monthly training assemblies, during the first hour of each assembly, a rifle squad is required to move its loaded ahkio outside, set up its tent and yukon stove, then dismantle, load, and store the loaded ahkio. By the time the soldiers have



to do these tasks in the snow, they will have a set procedure for doing them.

The following training and evaluation outline should prove useful to any unit that is preparing for winter training:

Task 1: Fitting, adjusting, and wearing cold weather clothing and equipment. Individual clothing and equipment should always be issued at the unit's home station and issued early enough to make sure the troops have enough training in fitting and wearing their clothing before they are exposed to a cold environment. The first fitting session should be during the initial issue of clothing, and leaders need to check each man on more than one occasion later for proper fit and wear of his clothing.

Task 2: First aid and hygiene. These subjects must be taught early with refresher training just before the unit's winter deployment. Buddy systems, in which two soldiers check each other, should be established early and checked periodically.

Task 3: Leadership. The best trained soldiers can become casualties if their leaders place them in situations where they are needlessly exposed.

This means particular care must be taken during mission training in defense, ambushes, and any other training that requires troops to be relatively inactive for long periods of time. Leaders at all levels need to understand that "stand-around time" must be eliminated.

Two leadership techniques not found in the manuals are worth attention. Overheating is always a problem. Soldiers tend to wear too much clothing, particularly while they are on the move. This is because when they start out they are usually cold enough to wear their full kit. But, then, as they warm up from the exertion of moving, they either are not given an opportunity to strip down or are not inclined to do so. Once they begin to perspire, their chances of becoming cold casualties increase dramatically. One way a leader can prevent this is to have the men move out at a rapid rate for five minutes, then stop and remove their outer garments and adjust their harnesses. From this point on, the troops should move at a steady pace that is just fast enough for them to keep warm without overheating. During breaks, leaders should require their soldiers

to don their outer clothing.

The other technique involves establishing, as a standing operating procedure, the rule that, whenever units are ordered to halt, they are placed on 30-minute standby. This means that when they are ordered to move again, they have 30 minutes to get ready. This will prevent units from remaining at the ready while exposed to wind and weather. Too often troops remain immobile in an exposed position for long periods of time because their leaders expect orders to move immediately. The 30-minute-standby rule allows for the preparation of field expedient wind shelters and perhaps for the serving of hot drinks.

Task 4: Maintenance. The care and maintenance of weapons and other TOE equipment, as well as special winter equipment, must be taught before deployment.

Task 5: Ahkio loading and hauling. The ahkio, loaded with squad tent, stove, shovels, axe, and so on, is called the ahkio group. The composition of the load and the location of the items on the ahkio should be standardized. The ahkio group should be stored intact for ready access by the

assigned squad or section. Soldiers should practice loading, unloading, harness rigging, and hauling techniques prior to field deployment.

Task 6: Bivouac routine (tent drill). Units should practice establishing bivouac sites until all its procedures are standardized and can be accomplished quickly with no wasted motion. At least half of this training should be at night. The important things that should be stressed are that there should be no wasted motion, that every member should have assigned tasks, and that everything should be in its place. During winter, the time between an ordered halt and the establishment of a warm shelter is critical, and all troops should learn to stay busy during that time to prevent chilling.

Task 7: Snowshoeing. Snowshoeing takes little practice to master and can be taught on grass. Standard issue magnesium shoes are very

durable and can be used anywhere. The older wood and gut shoes are more easily damaged, but they, too, can be used on lawn grass, with care.

Task 8: Skiing. Attempts to teach skiing on anything besides snow — on straw, for example — have proved largely ineffective. For units not stationed in northern areas, ski training is generally impractical. Although the ability to ski provides a distinct mobility advantage for well-trained troops who can travel light, as long as troops are required to hand-haul ahkio loads, the maneuver advantage of skiing is lost anyway. Snowshoes are better than skis for hauling ahkios, and under these conditions skis are effective for local security patrolling and not much else. The program described in TC 90-11-1 requires about two weeks for training to proficiency on skis. Even units such as the 172d Infantry Brigade in Alaska and the 205th Infantry

Brigade in Minnesota usually limit ski proficiency to their scouts.

Victory on the winter battlefield presupposes the ability to use the environment as a force multiplier. The enemy understands this very well; he is trained and equipped to use winter conditions to provide a strong advantage over a less prepared force. The measure of our projected success during winter operations is how well our units can conduct their ARTEP tasks in the cold and the snow. And how well they conduct their ARTEP tasks may be dependent upon how well they have conducted their preparatory cold weather indoctrination.

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Jungle Rappelling

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Rappelling operations have become a routine part of virtually every infantry unit's training program in recent years. But one problem still faces each rappel mission — how to deploy the ropes safely. This problem can become catastrophic if the mission is to rappel into an area covered by dense vegetation, such as the jungles of Panama.

Rappelling is an effective means of inserting troops rapidly in a jungle. But it can be effective only if the ropes can get through the triple

canopy foliage, and often they cannot.

In the past, units based in the United States but undergoing jungle training with the 193d Infantry Brigade's Jungle Operations Training Center (JOTC) at Fort Sherman in the Republic of Panama have had their jungle training severely hampered by tangled ropes. As a result, the Jungle Warfare Branch of the JOTC set out to find a solution.

Many rope deployment systems had been tried at the JOTC — every-

thing from wrapping a rope around a log and letting it unroll as the log descended to just dropping a carefully coiled rope out the door. But none proved entirely dependable.

The Branch's cadre began experimenting on its own but could not find a workable solution. Eventually, a senior instructor, Sergeant First Class Carol D. Frady, by integrating his parachuting background with his rappelling experience, did come up with a solution to the problem.

The rope deployment bag issued as