

the JOTC's innovation a step further, substituting five-quart plastic water bottles from Air Force survival kits for the five-gallon collapsible jugs. This means that once a duffel bag is on the ground a squad member can pick it up and move from position to position, issuing water to the soldiers without the delay and spillage of transferring it to individual canteens.

While the JOTC recognizes that this resupply system may not be logical to use in some terrain, it feels the system is worthy of consideration by any unit that moves in the field.

The JOTC also welcomes any suggestions from units serving anywhere in the world that would make fighting in the jungle easier for the soldier on the ground.



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OPFOR Training

CAPTAIN JOHN H. PERRY

The opposing forces (OPFOR) program, formally initiated in 1978, is a great improvement over the old aggressor program, which it replaced.

The aggressor program called for a unit to represent an adversary, but an imaginary one and one that used its usual U.S.-style maneuver, formations, and equipment. Under the OPFOR program, by contrast, the unit designated to act as the OPFOR is more realistic: It is trained to use the tactics, formations, and doctrine of a potentially real adversary (usually the Soviet Union or North Korea) in maneuvers against U.S. units in training.

The U.S. Army FORSCOM OPFOR Training Detachment (RED THRUST) at Fort Hood, Texas, has the mission of training OPFOR units throughout the FORSCOM area, including Alaska and Panama. Unfortunately, though, this program has not progressed as rapidly as it should have. In fact, with the exception of the OPFOR units at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, which was trained by a RED THRUST team in late 1981, no organized OPFOR maneuver units

were being used at the various installations in the Army at the time this article was written.

Although many of these installations do have an OPFOR cadre to monitor the program and to conduct limited training, in most cases this training includes little more than Threat awareness. A week-long training session, for example, might feature as its main elements a day in the life of Ivan — consisting of Soviet style meals, PT, indoctrination, and training and discipline; familiarization firing with or demonstration of Soviet weapons; driving or riding in Soviet combat vehicles; and classes on Soviet tactics and capabilities.

Real OPFOR training includes much more: Classes on Soviet tactics, formations, signals and radio procedures; terrain board exercises with models; and full-scale practice in applying what has been learned in class. These practical applications include walk-throughs with drivers and vehicle commanders practicing the formations and signals; vehicle-mounted motorized rifle company (MRC) formations and tactics; an MRC defense (strongpoint); and basic motorized

rifle battalion (MRB) offensive formations and tactics combining three MRCs under a central commander. The value of this kind of training has been proved at the NTC.

In 24 training days, a 12-man team of instructors from RED THRUST trained an armor battalion and a mechanized infantry battalion to act as an OPFOR against units that would later rotate through the NTC for training. Units of these two battalions were trained to act as three MRBs, a tank battalion, an artillery battalion, a reconnaissance company, an antitank guided missile battery, a ZSU-23/4 section of an air defense battery, and an organic motorized rifle regiment (MRR) engineer unit.

These units perform their missions with doctrinally correct tactics and formations and with a speed and aggressiveness that usually surprises the units in training. In the process, they have convinced both the participants and the observers that there is a vital need for OPFOR training back at their home stations. They know that without it their soldiers will not be properly prepared to face the speed, the aggressiveness, or the

dirty battlefield that they may face in a war in Europe.

In many of the initial meetings between the rotational U.S. maneuver units and the NTC OPFOR, in both offensive and defensive actions, the U.S. maneuver units were unsuccessful. In subsequent encounters, though, the rotational units, more familiar with what to expect, began to do much better.

Why, then, don't units use OPFOR in training at their home stations?

Basically, the reasons fit into four general categories, as expressed by the leaders arriving at the NTC:

- "My people can't even execute U.S. tactics and formations. How can I teach them Soviet tactics and formations?"

- "If I spend the time on OPFOR training, I will lose valuable U.S. training time and probably confuse my people."

- "I don't have the time or the equipment to conduct OPFOR training."

- "I don't have anyone in my unit who knows Soviet tactics well enough to do the training. And I can't afford to lose my trainers for the length of time required to research and develop an OPFOR training plan."

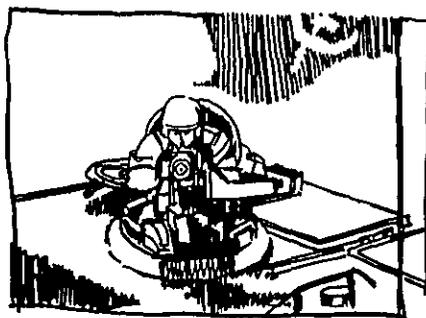
These all sound like pretty good reasons, but none of them are really valid. They reflect a misunderstanding of what OPFOR is and what it can do for a unit.

The OPFOR training plan developed in Field Manual 34-75 and the plan developed and proved by RED THRUST can effectively train anyone to create a Soviet-type OPFOR in a short time. The training is also easy to retain. The NTC OPFOR units, for example, went 35 days between the completion of their RED THRUST training and their first employment against a rotational unit without any additional training. Yet their performance after this break was just as good — in some respects, better.

Neither do soldiers lose their U.S. training while training as an OPFOR; in fact, they may gain from that training, because they not only get an op-

portunity to observe and learn from the good and bad practices of the opposing U.S. unit, they also develop a better appreciation for the combined arms concept. Besides, when they act as a potential adversary, they concentrate only on those actions, formations, and tactics that will give visual cues to the unit they oppose. Unobservable actions such as leadership techniques and common skills can still be taught according to U.S. doctrine. And no confusion between the two should result, because the basic formations and tactics of Soviet style doctrine are quite distinct.

As for having time to train, time is something that is always available for any training that the commander really wants to conduct. Eliminating the



prolonged Threat training that some units call OPFOR and substituting real OPFOR training is one way of finding the time.

Equipment is not a key issue in OPFOR training. While real equipment or visual modifications do contribute to the appearance of the OPFOR unit, the meat of the OPFOR's effectiveness is its proficiency in training — not its appearance. Besides, except for a light infantry unit, every maneuver battalion in the Army has more than enough equipment to create an OPFOR unit. An MRC, for example, requires ten BMPs (APCs), an MRB only 31. A mechanized infantry battalion has far more than 31 APCs, and other types of units are similarly equipped. A number of inexpensive devices can be used to differentiate the OPFOR unit, including hanging a red flag from each vehicle's antenna.

People with knowledge of the

Soviet tactics needed to conduct OPFOR training may be easier to find than a commander might think. Someone who likes war games, for example, often knows quite a bit about Soviet tactics and formations and might like to teach them. If there is no wargamer, most major units have an OPFOR cadre that is ready to put together a training program to do the training for smaller units.

Finally, a unit can ask RED THRUST to send a mobile training team to conduct this kind of training. This team will train a unit's OPFOR cadre and give them the lessons and materials they need to maintain an effective training plan for the unit. (For units overseas, these training materials can be obtained from RED THRUST through OPFOR points of contact at the major commands.)

There are no really valid reasons for a unit not to use OPFOR in its training plan. The means are available, if a commander will schedule time for OPFOR training, if he will use his organic equipment imaginatively, and if he will seek any outside assistance he may need. Then, when an OPFOR has been trained, it should be used realistically in the unit's FTXs and ARTEPs.

In a peacetime army the heart of its training effort is to prepare its soldiers and leaders so that in combat they will have the best chance to survive and to win. In 1968, a sign hung at the entrance to a training area at Fort Benning read, "More sweat in training, less blood in combat." It was, and is, an excellent thought. But if that sweat in training is spent on unrealistic or otherwise inappropriate training, all a trainer develops is a group of dead-tired soldiers. To be ready for the next war, then, we should concentrate on proving that more realism in training can mean less blood in combat.

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