

talion. He is not told the field location, the phase of war, or the attachments. On site, he receives a written problem and is given two hours to conduct a reconnaissance, to deliberate, and to formulate a course of action. After that time, he presents to the panel, in ten minutes or less, his organization for battle and his outline plan. Following this briefing, the student then defends his plan for another ten minutes against questions from the board members.

On the third day the panel convenes for an indoor tactical problem at brigade level. Students, organized into three-man groups, present solutions in the same format they used for the outdoor TEWT. On both problems, each officer is evaluated on his knowledge of combined arms operations and of

the tactical employment of units.

The Grade II Staff and Tactics Course is the final resident training program in the New Zealand Army officer education system. In its role as a "finishing school," it presents an intensive regimen in which the skills requisite for upper level command and staff are nurtured and evaluated.

As for the U.S. officers who attend, with rare exception, none has failed to place in the top 25 percent on the final testing board. This record can be attributed to the detailed screening process that led to their selection. The nominees are evaluated on everything from their military records to their advanced course performance and their civilian education. Additionally, the final four candidates receive an extensive grilling from a general officer who

spends up to an hour with each nominee before making his decision.

The course, with its small class of carefully screened students and its intensive curriculum, is particularly valuable to infantry officers because of the orientation of its tactics training. It is certainly one of the most challenging courses of its kind in the world.



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Machinegunners

MAJOR HARLIE R. TREAT

The machinegun is one of the most potent weapons in a rifle company's armory. It can support the rifleman with a heavy volume of close and continuous fire in both the attack and the defense, and it can engage distant targets with a heavy volume of controlled and accurate fire. The machinegun can deliver long range, close defensive, and final protective fires as an integral part of a unit's defensive fires.

But machinegun training, as it is conducted today, is clearly inadequate for these tasks. Many machinegunners assigned to units throughout the Army, for example, say that they have never fired an annual qualification course with the weapon and

that few of them know how to employ it from a defilade position, how to prepare range cards, or how to engage targets during periods of limited visibility.

This is not a new problem. Many machinegunners in Vietnam had to be replaced because they simply did not know enough about the weapon to be confident in its reliability and its killing power. Many soldiers did not want the job, because they were not sure they could fire the gun accurately or take immediate action in case of a stoppage.

Clearly, we cannot afford such deficiencies in future wars, and some major changes in our machinegun training should be made — changes

that would give machinegun crews confidence in the weapon and in their ability to use it.

At present, all infantry trainees are taught to be riflemen, automatic riflemen, grenadiers, Dragon gunners, and machinegunners. As a result, our infantrymen generally know some aspects of each of these jobs but do not know any one of them thoroughly. It is too much to expect that they should be able to master all of these weapons and to maintain their proficiency with every one of them.

But training machinegunners cannot be either easy or fast. Soldiers should go through at least 185 hours of individual instruction before they can be considered trained as machine-

gunners. They must learn and understand the nomenclature of the weapon, its assembly and disassembly, operation and functioning, maintenance, techniques of fire, and marksmanship.

A special training program of instruction should therefore be developed for machinegunners that would qualify them for their own particular military occupational specialty (MOS). Such a program now exists for the mortar and antitank MOSs. In other words, riflemen and machinegunners should be trained separately in their respective duties after they have all received training in such general subjects as first aid and map reading. Such a program would produce both riflemen and machinegunners who knew and performed their jobs far better than the infantrymen the present system produces. (The crew members of both the M60 and the caliber .50 machineguns should have this new MOS, since both of these weapons are organic to infantry and mechanized infantry battalions.)

If a machinegunner had his own MOS, he would be more likely to perform that duty in each unit to which he was assigned, instead of being a rifleman in Georgia, a grenadier in Germany, and a machinegunner in Korea, as happens under the present system. Proficiency in a task can increase only with experience and training.

Even with a separate machinegun MOS and a revised training program, something more is needed. If machinegunners are to be trained properly in rifle companies, they and their guns must be removed from the TOE of the rifle platoon and placed in the weapons platoon as a separate machinegun section. As long as they are organic to the rifle platoon, the machinegunners will be used to perform aggressor details, to fill in for riflemen who are preparing for rifle squad ARTEPs, and to perform countless other details that seem to be more important to platoon leaders than machinegun training.

Such training conflicts would not occur in the weapons platoon. Given a machinegun section, there could be no doubt in the weapons platoon leader's mind as to its mission, and the machinegunners would spend their training time preparing for that mission.

We reach the height of folly, in fact, when we assign machineguns to mechanized infantry platoons without assigning crews for them. The soldiers in rifle squads who are assigned to carry these guns do just that — carry them — and then complain about the heavy load. They complain, generally, because they know very little about the gun. In their view, it must not be very important because the Army does not value it enough to train and assign machinegun crews as

it does with mortars and TOWs.

A few years ago, machinegun units were organic to infantry battalions, and from all reports, the Army then had machinegunners in the true sense of the word. Those soldiers knew their weapons inside and out; they could fire, maintain, and employ their guns expertly. Today, soldiers are expected to maintain their proficiency with several weapons that are more complex and that have greater capabilities than ever before.

It is time we faced reality. Being a machinegunner is a full-time job. A machinegunner needs his own MOS and a TOE that supports his training and the tactical employment of his weapon. We cannot allow such an expensive weapon with such great firepower to be placed in the hands of untrained or poorly trained crews. By implementing these suggested changes, the Army would take a giant step toward making sure it had proficient machinegunners when it needed them, and not just men to carry the guns.

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