Mounted Land Navigation

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A platoon leader in Europe encounters tremendous obstacles and limitations with respect to the availability and adequacy of military training areas. His resources expand considerably, though, when he looks around and examines the training potential of his surroundings. (Sometimes the same applies as well to platoon leaders serving in other areas of the world.)

As the scout platoon leader of my battalion in northern Germany, I found that training in certain tasks and skills had been neglected for lack of maneuver areas. I needed a field problem that would train and test the platoon's soldiers in all the tasks in which they were deficient.

I found that although northern Germany does not have many military maneuver areas, as the least populated part of West Germany it does have many roads and trails that interlace its small villages and its wooded and farming areas. I felt that these features would be ideal for training in mounted land navigation and therefore determined that this would be the main focus of my field problem.

As it turned out, the exercise became more than just a way of training the troops (and myself). It evolved into a means of assessing the performance of my squad and section leaders as well, for they too would find themselves under the pressure of completing numerous tasks in a field environment that was not familiar to them.

The problem I developed did not require much in the way of equipment—four jeeps, 15 coffee cans (readily available from the dining facility), some 5" by 8" blank index cards, some acetate to weatherproof the cards, and a good map of the maneuver area.

I first made a map reconnaissance to find 15 objectives or points that would be useful in training (such as bridges and rivers). I then scouted the area personally and developed a number of tasks that an individual soldier could accomplish at each objective. These tasks were diversified so as to provide training in several different military skills.

The tasks were then printed on the index cards and the cards covered with acetate so that they could be placed in coffee cans at each of the 15 points the day before the scheduled field problem. (They could also be used again, in other field problems or by other platoon leaders.)

TRAINING COURSE

I then set up a training course with the 15 points, which were often up to 20 kilometers apart, so that each of the four jeeps, each carrying four soldiers, could reach them and the soldiers could accomplish all the required tasks at a rate of at least five points a day. This would enable the entire platoon to cycle through all 15 points of the course in the allotted three days of the problem. At each objective the final task on the card directed each jeep to the next point.

To control and monitor the individual jeeps, I planned to man a command jeep to which the soldiers would have to call in all tasks upon their completion. I would therefore be able to monitor the entire course and grade all the tasks immediately and give the soldiers prompt feedback on their progress in mastering the required skills.

Squad leaders or section leaders (or both) rode in the jeeps to be on-the-spot trainers and to evaluate the weaknesses of their own squads or sections. From that, they could then determine the areas in which further training would be needed in the future.

The tasks varied at the 15 points. Initially, the troops were given an encoded eight-digit grid from the CEOI, which, when decoded, would direct them to their first point. When they found that point on the map, they proceeded to the objective and, once there, called in the location to the command vehicle. In reporting in, they used the CEOI with specific set and period to decode or encode the eight-digit grid, depending on the task instructions on the card they found at the point.

One index card, for example, gave a soldier these instructions and tasks:

You see to your south at 1,000 meters, six enemy vehicles on line:

- *Identify the vehicles.* (A vehicle identification card would be attached to the back of the task card.)
- *Report.* (Spot report using SOPs.)
- *Call for fire and/or call for attack helicopter.*
- *Identify type of unit that is following.*

Your next location will be Set 32 Period 4 MC BDMUAWBA.

Other tasks included classifying bridges or rivers. At one objective, two simulated mines had been buried, and the troops had to use a mine sweeper to remove them.

These are just a few examples of the tasks given the soldiers. By the time he completed the entire 15-point course, each soldier had received training in the following military skills:

- Mounted land navigation (day and night).
- Radio procedures.
- Use of the CEOI.
- Call for fire.

- Vehicle and aircraft identification.
- OPFOR organization.
- Use of platoon SOPs (various reporting/requesting methods: NBC 1, spot, MEDEVAC, maintenance, and the like).
- Squad level training such as the use of mine sweepers, decontamination procedures, and similar activities.
- Jeep driving.

This training exercise was extremely successful. First of all, the soldiers were eager to be off post, training in a new and unfamiliar area. And the uniqueness of the field maneuver served to motivate them to participate willingly in the tasks at each objective.

As the field problem progressed, tasks were added or made more complex. A soldier calling in would be asked, for example, to call for MEDEVAC because one of his men had been hit by sniper fire. This required that he authenticate using the CEOI. The pressure applied in such situations served to make the tasks and the mission more realistic for the soldiers. At the same time, their contact with actual structures—bridges and rivers—enabled the soldiers to conceptualize better and to better understand and retain what they had learned.

During the exercise, the section and squad leaders were surprised to find that the soldiers who had seemed adept and well-trained from their classroom instruction had actually proved to be less than prepared to deal effectively with actual field situations.

As each day of training passed, though, a marked improvement was observed in the way the tasks were being accomplished, and the soldiers seemed to realize that this was the type of terrain that they might actually have to navigate over and defend in the event war came to the area.

Often during the exercise, the squad and section leaders had also found themselves lacking in expertise, and in several cases had to refer to field manuals for instruction and verification.

The kind of training described here is not unique to northern Germany or to a scout platoon. By applying imagination and initiative, any platoon leader can adapt it to meet his own needs and missions. More to the point, any platoon leader can develop and implement other training that will stimulate and tax not only his troops but himself as well. All he has to do is look around him and use what is available. All platoon leaders must be inventive and creative and must use their existing resources to the fullest so that today's soldier can be tactically prepared for the mission at hand.

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Hand and Arm Signals
in the ROK Army

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Throughout the history of warfare, success on the battlefield has been directly related to the timeliness and accuracy of orders and instructions. In the heat of battle, a small unit leader's ability to control weapon fire and direct the movement of soldiers to key positions at the critical time could determine the success or failure of a mission.

With today's electrical communications systems, all leaders have the ability to issue timely instructions and report battlefield situations as they occur. As important as these systems are on today's battlefield, however, there is evidence that the U.S. infantryman has come to rely too heavily upon them. The fact is that there are situations and circumstances in which they fall short of the ideal. A case can be made therefore for augmenting, supplementing, and in some instances, replacing radio and telephone communications with hand and arm signals—particularly in infantry squad and platoon operations.

Visual signaling offers many advantages. It is direct and timely, and it reduces the possibility of misunderstanding. Unlike voice commands, visual signaling is not affected by battlefield sounds, nor does it violate noise discipline when a unit is near enemy positions. During periods of limited visibility and obscuration, it can be supplemented by voice commands.

Recently, I have had an opportunity to observe units of the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army during their tactical training. The ROK Army places a great deal of emphasis on hand and arm signals and conducts intensive training on their use. A look at this training may help to refocus our own attention in that direction.

A comparison of the U S. and ROK Army manuals that address hand and arm