

- 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 con-

tact 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 obscurity, 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

signals reveals more similarities than differences. In comparing relative proficiency in visual signaling, however, the ROK Army units far exceed the "acceptable" levels found in U.S. units. This disparity can be attributed partly to the differences in emphasis. U.S. Army infantry squads and platoons rely most heavily upon electrical voice communications, while the ROK Army infantry places its primary emphasis upon visual signals. The seriousness with which the ROK Army approaches visual signaling is illustrated by the fact that its small infantry units are required to operate with a reduced allotment of radios.

The real key to the South Koreans' proficiency in visual signaling is the development of individual skills and teamwork through repetition.

In gathering information for this article, I observed two battalions of a ROK Army division in training. One of these battalions is responsible for the division's squad leaders training course. During this eight-week course, the soldiers receive a one-hour block of instruction on the use of hand and arm signals. These soldiers then get practical experience and master visual signaling skills after normal duty hours. As a prerequisite to graduation, the students must demonstrate their proficiency in the use of 39 hand and arm signals, and also their ability to teach these signals to other soldiers and lead them in executing the signals.

During my visit to this unit, a platoon in its eighth week of training demonstrated its proficiency. Each soldier wore a numbered vest designating his respective duty position and the corresponding position in the various formations. The student platoon leader briefed the platoon and explained and demonstrated the signals to be used; then the platoon members repeated the signals and executed the movements. The platoon leader initiated all the commands, while the platoon sergeant relayed them to the squad leaders.

Thirty different signals were used to direct the unit into virtually every established infantry platoon tactical formation. In addition, signals were used to command the platoon in a series of dismounted drill movements including platoon formations at normal, close, and double interval; open and closed ranks; facing



Student platoon leader directs platoon into a tactical formation.

movements; and marching. The unit's precision and responsiveness were impressive throughout the 20-minute demonstration, and the soldiers relied totally upon visual nonvocal signaling.

I also watched an infantry platoon negotiate a platoon attack course. While in the assembly area, the platoon leader and platoon sergeant rehearsed the platoon in the signals to be used in the exercise. During the rehearsal, the entire unit watched a demonstration of the signals and then executed them. On the course, visual commands for movement and fire control were supplemented with voice commands, but primarily to initiate actions previously signaled visually.

At no time was there any evidence of hesitation or confusion. Each soldier made a conscious effort to choose a concealed position that would afford him a direct view of his leader. All the soldiers exhibited individual initiative in adjusting their positions to maintain visual contact with the leader and to provide a clear view of their assigned sector. It was evident that these soldiers had been trained to alternate their attention between the leader, the adjacent friendly positions, and the enemy. As a result, maneuver and fire control were coordinated and synchronized.

The key to effectiveness and proficiency in hand and arm signaling is the mastery of individual skills, coupled with

teamwork. The ROK Army soldiers I observed had clearly achieved these goals.

If our Army's senior leaders increased the emphasis on visual signaling, and if junior leaders mastered the individual and collective skills, our small units could be substantially more combat effective. (The recent change in EIB qualification requirements is a small but positive step toward focusing attention on the use of hand and arm signals.)

In order to achieve the level of expertise demonstrated by the ROK soldiers, our units would have to conduct repetitive drills just as the South Koreans do. But repetition need not be boring. Imaginative, innovative leaders could vary training sites and the type and sequence of commands used. They could also instill a competitive team spirit to offset the potential for boredom.

In addition, our leaders would have to make a conscious effort to modify the current reliance upon vocal and electrical communications.

All kinds of communication—vocal, electrical, and visual—have their roles in small unit operations; each should be employed to capitalize upon its particular advantage in a given situation.

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