

# TRAINING NOTES



## Pathfinder Training

CAPTAIN KEITH P. ANTONIA

A Pathfinder is a soldier who has been trained to control helicopters in any phase of airmobile operations. Army of Excellence TOE changes expand aviation assets while, at the same time, eliminating most Pathfinder units. As a result of these changes, the U.S. Army Infantry School's three-week Pathfinder course has been redesigned to train designated soldiers in units to perform Pathfinder skills instead of training soldiers going to Pathfinder units. (The new program of instruction is shown in the table.)

AirLand Battle doctrine dictates a highly mobile battlefield, and aviation assets will be used extensively by light, airborne, and air assault divisions for moving troops, equipment, and resupply on that battlefield. It is essential, therefore, that leaders and soldiers at all levels in these units be well prepared to conduct helicopter operations.

Leaders who are trained in Pathfinder skills and assigned to Infantry units can greatly assist the company and battalion commanders with the technical aspects of planning, reconnoitering, and executing both air movement and resupply operations with helicopters. A Pathfinder-qualified company executive officer, for example, can position troops and equipment on a pickup zone for a smooth, safe, and orderly extraction to suit the tactical mission. He ensures that squads and platoons maintain unit intergrity so that they will be able to maneuver as units and provide

the greatest possible amount of firepower when they arrive on a landing zone in an objective area. He can use airmovement tables, airloading tables, and bump plans, and he can provide pickup zone control and ground-to-air communication if nec-

essary. Furthermore, he can rig and inspect external loads for airmovement and is trained in the use of most available slingload equipment.

A Pathfinder-qualified leader is also an expert in recommending the formation



Pathfinder students act as hookup man, static probe, and slingload point signal man. Instructor is in left foreground.

and number of helicopters that can land safely in a pickup or landing zone. He can mark night landing zones and advise the pilots of obstacles, wind conditions, surface conditions, the enemy situation, and friendly indirect fire around the site. He is familiar with the limitations of various aircraft with respect to ground slope, wind conditions, and other hazards and can educate the leaders in his unit on these matters. He also knows the configuration and the capabilities of medical evacuation aircraft and can call for the air evacuation of casualties.

In addition to his expertise with helicopter landing and pickup zones, a Pathfinder can reconnoiter drop zones and mark them for parachute drops of supplies and equipment by either Air Force cargo aircraft or Army helicopters. For this purpose, he is familiar with the use of the ground marking release system for day or night operations and can put the

NEW PATHFINDER POI	
SUBJECT	HOURS
Airmovement planning & pickup zones	43.5
Slingload instruction	28.0
Air traffic control	12.0
Drop zone operations	28.0
Medevac operations	3.0
Army aviation overview	1.0
Land navigation test	4.0
HLZ/PZ operations	71.0
	190.5

resupply right where a commander wants it. (Army aviation assets may be conserved by using Air Force cargo planes for resupply when this is feasible.)

A commander can also use a Pathfinder-qualified leader, such as a platoon sergeant or an S-3 Air NCO, for example, to train other leaders and soldiers in the unit on Pathfinder skills. He can teach vehicle rigging and hookup procedures

for slingload operations and can conduct training on helicopter safety, loading procedures and techniques, hand and arm signals, and the marking of night helicopter landing sites using the inverted Y.

In short, a Pathfinder's knowledge applies throughout the airmobile planning sequence. If his commander will tap his expertise, their unit will be able to conduct safer, more efficient operations, which will contribute to the success of its overall mission.



Captain Keith P. Antonia is now assigned to the Ranger Department, USAIS, Fort Benning. He previously served in the Pathfinder Branch of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 507th Infantry. He was a scout platoon leader in the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 508th Infantry on Grenada in 1983.

## Motorized Support Lessons Learned at the NTC

LIEUTENANT KARL P. MONGER

An NTC rotation is a challenge to any type of unit, and logistical support for the unit is a big part of the challenge. Logistical support for a motorized unit in a light infantry brigade is an even bigger challenge.

In early 1986, Company A, 2d Battalion, 60th Infantry (Combined Arms-Heavy)—the first unit in the Army to receive the M966 HMMWV-TOW and to train with it—participated in an NTC rotation as an antiarmor augmentation force for the 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, 7th Infantry Division (Light).

Supporting the company required a significant support slice. In addition to its own organic elements, the company was augmented by two ammunition trucks

(M35A2, with one M105 trailer and one M149 water trailer), a tank and pump unit (TPU-M54 with 1,200 gallon capacity diesel), a wrecker (M816), a support battalion contact team (M35A2 loaded with ASL parts and an M886 contact truck and three mechanics) and an ambulance with two medics. This large slice proved necessary because a light division does not have the vehicles or the supply capability to support or sustain an attached motorized unit.

Company A, 2d Battalion, 60th Infantry is part of a combined arms-heavy battalion, originally formed under the assault gun concept. Previously outfitted with M901 Improved TOW Vehicles (ITVs) structured into three line platoons

of four vehicles each, the company was reconfigured into four line platoons of five HMMWV-TOWs in each platoon as part of the new motorized MTOE.

Without delving too deeply into tactical play, a light battalion focuses upon stealth, noise and light discipline, and the ability to hide. The amount of supplies and the number of vehicles that can be channeled through the combat trains, therefore, are extremely limited. A daily flow of supplies for Company A, however, includes 21 cases of MREs, 120 TOW rounds, small arms and miscellaneous ammunition, a TPU (diesel) carrying 40 gallons of mogas in cans, package POL (10w40 oil, brake and transmission fluids, and the like), a water buffa-