

Battle Dress SOP

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Many uniform and load-bearing equipment (LBE) SOPs are apparently written by leaders who spend a lot of time riding around in jeeps. It is unfortunate that these people do not complete a squad live fire or combat assault course first so their SOPs will be more appropriate for the conditions their men must fight in. What is worse, when their soldiers do try to rearrange their equipment to fit their more primitive needs, some other well-intentioned leader will probably stop them because the rearrangement violates the particular unit's SOP.

Most leaders know that SOPs help them check their soldiers' preparedness and the condition of their equipment. The principle behind an inspection according to an SOP is that equipment can be located quickly, and that if it is not where it is supposed to be, it is not there at all. What many infantry leaders forget is that their SOPs and inspections are only parts of the combat readiness process, not products themselves.

The primary purpose of a battle dress SOP, therefore, is to require soldiers to wear their uniforms and equipment so they can efficiently use them under the worst possible combat conditions. The fact that these conditions are short-term or infrequent in peacetime training does not mean that they should not underlie battle dress SOP requirements.

Unfortunately, the way most infantrymen wear their fighting load is dictated by the normal peacetime requirement to sit in Bradley fighting vehicles, M113 armored personnel carriers, and jeeps. Of course, there are also everyday rear area conditions—standing in formation, presenting a neat military appearance, and being able to swing the arms while marching—that influence the wear of equipment.

What would a battle dress SOP look

like if it were drawn up by an infantryman who had done a lot of tactical training and was willing to slouch during the few times he sat down with his load-bearing equipment on? This is probably what he would put in the SOP:

First, the front of the soldier is kept as clear and clean as an aircraft carrier's flight deck, because he will be coming in for a lot of rough landings on it. He will also be crawling across rocks, roots, and deadfall.

Accordingly, a soldier's ammunition pouches are at his sides so that he can continue looking forward while lying in the prone position. This also enables him to reach to his side to open a pouch, pull out an upside-down magazine, and rotate it up into his M16 rifle's magazine well without exposing himself unnecessarily and without losing sight of his sector or target.

POUCHES

Admittedly, side-mounted pouches do get in the way of a soldier's arms if he's standing at attention or marching, and he may not be able to rest his arms on the pouches if they are on his sides. But these shortcomings are logical consequences of tailoring a battle dress SOP to tactical conditions instead of garrison considerations.

All items on the LBE are moved as far back as possible and adjusted to fit closely together while being worn on the body, instead of while lying flat. A rolled-up rainsuit, poncho, or butt pack is worn in the center of the back. Many infantrymen do not wear a butt pack, either because it is not issued or because it gets in the way of sitting down. They should, though, because a butt pack can hold an extra MRE ration, a pair of spare socks

taped up in a ziplock freezer bag, and rain gear that can double as an emergency MOPP suit. A soldier never knows when he can get to his rucksack and survival load, so these lightweight items come in handy when he has to fight using only what he has with him.

A canteen carrier, a canteen cup, and a canteen of water are to the immediate right of the butt pack. A spare canteen and carrier, or an entrenching tool, depending on what buddy team equipment the soldier has been assigned to carry, is on the left rear in the same position. A bayonet and scabbard or a field knife is to his right rear side in front of the canteen. The two ammunition pouches are on the soldier's right and left sides.

Leaders carry a compass and case in front of the left pouch. Soldiers can carry a spare field dressing case containing a lightweight personal hygiene kit made from an old style two-piece telescoping plastic cigarette case to the front of the right pouch. This case holds a jigsaw puzzle assembly consisting of a cut-down toothbrush, a partial tube of toothpaste, a cut-off cartridge razor, a small signal mirror for shaving, a couple of spare razor blades, and a small bar of soap. The cigarette case is taped closed with duct tape.

The load-bearing suspenders and pistol belt are adjusted so that the belt fits loosely around the waist, and most of the weight is carried by the suspenders. The field dressing and case is worn in the fabric loop on the left suspender right side up so it does not accidentally open up while the soldier is crawling. A flashlight is worn by all soldiers on the left suspender to the left of the field dressing to keep it away from the face. The flashlight lens is covered with olive drab duct tape or coated with mud to lessen reflection.

An anodized or dark-painted aluminum

snap link is worn in the right suspender fabric loop. It holds a pair of black leather glove shells hung through the adjusting straps. The glove finger and thumb tips should be cut off so the hands and palms are protected and hidden while allowing normal feeling and finger control. Nothing bulky should be worn on the right suspender because it could interfere with the soldier's ability to rapidly shoulder and fire his M16 rifle.

The protective mask and case are worn slung across the right shoulder, with the case resting on the left side under the arm and the lower strap fastened around the chest. This position is better than on the left hip because the case will not get caught on vehicle hatches and equipment, and the soldier can protect it, or hold it down with his arm, while running. Wearing it under the arm also prevents the case from being snagged during crawling and allows better control while putting on the mask. The protective mask and case are worn beneath the LBE suspenders and pistol belt, not over them, so that the sol-

dier always has it on him.

In spite of a desire to present a good military appearance, the helmet camouflage cover must not be stretched and shrunk down to fit snugly over the helmet. It must be loose enough so that extra material can be pulled out to break up the helmet's outline and permit natural camouflage to be stuck into the holes in the cover.

A common defense of a garrison-oriented battle dress SOP is that it allows soldiers to ride comfortably in vehicles and go about their usual routine training duties with a minimum of inconvenience. After all, it is argued, soldiers can quickly change their equipment around if they actually go into combat. That may be true, but in some cases it may be too late. Generally, individual changes will not be made uniformly, and the unit will quickly lose the benefits of a preplanned and practiced battle dress SOP.

It is better for a leader to train his soldiers the way he believes they will have to fight instead of the way they would

prefer to fight. The distinction is small, but it is important. Training reinforces all behavior, both good and bad. Although soldiers may learn new tasks faster in combat, the habits they enter the fight with are the only ones they have to build from. And since poor behavior gets worse under stress, it is important that the right behavior be reinforced to begin with.

In a similar manner, our battle dress SOPs must conform to the environment we may have to fight in, not the one we usually train in. A good leader will recognize this critical difference and will develop a battle dress SOP that lives up to its name. His soldiers will then be better equipped to fit the ground when they have to hit the dirt for real.

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Space Systems

The Ultimate High Ground

MAJOR FREDERICK W. CONARD

The infantry has always known how important it is to use the high ground. But the ultimate high ground is space, and we need to know how to use that ground, too. We don't have to own it—just borrow it now and then.

Space systems are becoming indispensable to the execution of infantry missions. We already use them for everyday purposes. Aside from the obvious AUTOVON overseas telephone links, divisions and corps use AN/TSC-

85/93As, and RDF units have the portable PSC-3/VSC-7 TACSATs (tactical satellites) and URC-100s, all of which use military or leased communication satellites. We are already controlling the first of a constellation called DSCS III—the Defense Satellite Communication System—which is our most advanced and reliable communication satellite. It significantly improves communication, and its anti-jam features make it highly desirable for any level from corps to

special operations force.

We are all familiar with weather satellite information. The Defense Meteorological Satellite Program (DMSP) provides near real-time weather information to both tactical and strategic force commanders for staff weather office predictions. Unfortunately, sometimes the weather still arrives before the prediction. The Army has therefore defined the need for an Army Environmental Satellite System (AESS)