TRAINING NOTES

Dismounted Training Day

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In many mechanized infantry battalions, particularly those located overseas where changes in personnel are frequent and mission and deployment schedules are intensified, there is often a lack of dismounted infantry training at the small unit level. This lack of training may create a dangerous situation for a unit if it should be deployed to a combat situation and called upon to carry out both mounted and dismounted operations to support a tactical plan.

In addition, it is important for mechanized infantry soldiers to understand that an armored personnel carrier (APC) is not a safe haven on the battlefield. It is no secret even to the most casual observer of modern warfare that today's highly mobile mechanized infantrymen are likely to become foot soldiers in the truest sense of the term soon after their unit has been committed to the fight. Even discounting hostile fire, there is always the problem of mechanical difficulties when APCs are operated under field conditions. In peacetime, "down" vehicles are a logistical headache; in wartime, they are a deadly serious problem.

We must therefore strive to train our mechanized infantrymen to perform equally well without the fire support, mobility, and long range communications capabilities of their APCs. We should stress training situations that get them out of their tracks and onto the ground on a regular basis.

It is probably fair to say that leaders in mechanized infantry battalions would be more than happy to do more dismounted small unit training. But

several factors (many unique to mechanized units) tend to combine to make this difficult:

- Vehicle maintenance, often the absolute, number one priority in garrison, takes an enormous amount of a battalion's time and manpower. Frequent command inspections, IG inspections, scheduled services (Q, S, A), daily PMCS, and command motor stables require most of a unit's soldiers and leaders for extended periods. Major field exercises and long range deployments of mechanized units also require extensive periods of preoperative and postoperative vehicle maintenance.
- Major training exercises and large scale deployments (such as REFORGER in Germany and TEAM SPIRIT in Korea) are controlled at such high echelons that they preclude any real small unit training. (Most units spend their time reacting to missions sent down by a higher headquarters or waiting in the "on order" mode for movement instructions.)
- As with all units, additional duties, taskings, temporary duty, schools, work details, and post support commitments all combine to draw soldiers away from their units (and away from potential training) on a daily basis.

Still, certain steps can be taken to improve the dismounted proficiency of our mechanized soldiers. One suggestion is to implement a mandatory "Dismounted Training Day" (DTD) for each company in a battalion, to be held weekly or biweekly, depending on the battalion's upcoming mission or deployment schedule. This training should be scheduled, monitored, and strongly emphasized at battalion level, but it should be planned and executed by company level leaders.

The training on these days should emphasize basic dismounted missions

and common tasks as they relate to these missions. The annual Expert Infantryman's Badge (EIB) testing provides excellent training for all infantrymen, as does common task training (CTT). But this training is no substitute for leaders teaching their soldiers how these basic skills serve as building blocks for successful missions. A soldier should know not only *how* to load and fire his M60 machinegun but also *why* crew-served weapons are essential to the success of his dismounted mission.

A dismounted training day should be conducted, if possible, in a local training area that is within road marching distance. This will eliminate the need for vehicular support from a transportation platoon or for movement of the unit's APCs. It will also force each company to road march at least every two weeks, and this is a skill that is absolutely critical to all infantrymen.

Leaders should try to decrease distractions and logistical requirements as much as possible. (The battalion S-3 should provide guidance and limited support.) Each soldier should carry only his rucksack with seasonal load and one MRE (meal, ready to eat) for the noon meal. His uniform should include helmet, load carrying equipment, protective mask, and individual weapon.

If this training is to be effective, the battalion commander must support and emphasize it. Everyone concerned must understand that when the battalion is not deployed to the field, DTD goes on, rain or shine, hell or high water. This is the only way a company will be able to set aside at least one day every two weeks for dismounted training and nothing else.

A typical dismounted training day schedule might resemble the sample shown here. Although this schedule uses a raid as the training vehicle, the topics for DTDs are virtually unlimited and might include movements to contact, infiltration techniques, withdrawals, and deliberate attacks, among others.

One of the most important aspects of DTDs is the involvement of the company commander. All too often, in garrison he is cloistered in meetings and briefings or has an office full of paperwork. When his unit deploys to the field he is constantly rushing either to operation order briefings, to meetings, or to planning sessions at the company command post. Because of the distances mechanized infantry companies often must cover during tactical operations, the commander may become, for days at a time, only a disembodied voice over the company net.

A dismounted training day gives the company commander an uninterrupted period of time (short though it may be) in which to teach, direct, and interact with the soldiers of his unit on a more personal basis. This closer interaction will enable him to get to know his people better and to better judge the strengths and weaknesses of his company. Free from the usual pressures, he can also work on the development of his lieutenants.

This same principle holds true for platoon and squad leaders; they can work with their people in a somewhat more relaxed environment. Unit SOPs can be forged, mistakes can be made, and everyone can contribute to the learning process.

Mechanized infantry headquarters companies containing scout, antiarmor, or heavy mortar platoons should also be included in DTDs. This can be an excellent opportunity for these specialty platoons to practice skills and techniques apart from their standard missions. This will also break the monotony of their usual training and allow their soldiers and leaders to teach and learn and to become more well-rounded infantrymen.

The involvement of junior leaders as instructors cannot be overemphasized. This training can serve not only to build a more proficient dismounted unit, but also to develop the tactical and teaching skills of the unit's platoon, squad, and team leaders. These leaders should be tasked with presenting most of the scheduled training. The more experience they get in front of their men, the more comfortable they will become, and the more confidence their men will have in their abilities.

Today's young infantry soldiers—whether airborne, light, mechanized infantry, or any other kind—must be able to accomplish any assigned mission and they deserve the best training possible. As leaders, we must prepare them for every contingency. This means we must use any and all of our available time to build confident, competent units.

SAMPLE DISMOUNTED TRAINING DAY SCHEDULE

TIME	EVENT	OIC/NCOIC	LOCATION
0500	Company formation/weapons draw	First Sgt	Co area
0600	Early chow	Plt Sgts	Co mess
0700	Road march to training site	Co Cdr	
0800	Platoon raid (an overview)	Co Cdr	Tng Site A
0900	Round Robin classes	Co Cdr	Tng Site A
	Station 1. Support team	1 PL/PSgt	
	Station 2. Assault team	2 PL/PSgt	
	Station 3. Consolidate/ reorganize	3 PL/PSgt	
1200	Chow (MREs)	PSgts	Tng Site A
1300	Walk/talk through platoon raid in separate platoon areas	PLs/PSgts	Tng Site A
1400	Execute platoon raid	PLs/PSgts	Tng Site A
1630	Critique/after action review	Co Cdr	Tng Site A
1700	Road march to company area	Co Cdr	
1800	Company formation/weapons cleaning/weapons turn-in	First Sgt	Co area

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