

aging that the commander chose to put his mortars on a continuous program in which they deployed once every six to eight weeks on the capstone FTX. The design of the exercise (scenarios and terrain) was such that other battalion elements could be integrated as desired. Company headquarters could participate with the mortars, for instance, or the TOC (minus) could fill this role. The key point is that the mortars were exercised on a regular basis up to a "live shot." Thus, for ARTEP or readiness missions, they were proficient.

As the battalion moved into the second and third iterations of the mortar shoot, the effect on the mortar platoons became more apparent. The soldiers began to view themselves as being something more than an appendage of the companies and the battalion and increasingly as a vital and "elite" combat multiplier. They were mortar men and proud of it! The next round of 81mm and 107mm ARTEPs were proof. The mortars excelled despite soldier and leader turbulence. They were a respon-

sive and reliable combat asset of the battalion.

Although this program can certainly find parallels in many quarters, in my experience the battalion's approach was not typical. First, the leaders were willing to rise above the limitations in their past service experience and to focus on a specialized part of the organization that normally did not determine the day-to-day success or failure of the commander in traditional U.S. Army garrison routines. Second, the authority and responsibility given to the S-3 Air approached a company command level. But most impressive was the commander's vision in realizing how much fully trained and proficient mortar platoons would add to his warfighting capabilities. The happy combination of these and other factors produced a highly effective training program for a low density combat support arm of the battalion.

The battalion eventually applied this model to all of its combat support elements and, to some degree, to its

combat service support elements as well. Certainly success was not always achieved, but the unit always had a sound awareness of its strengths and weaknesses in the combat support and combat service support areas. It also had an effective system for improvement. It may be added that an aggressive effort to get officers and sergeants to the Infantry Mortar Platoon Course was another battalion trait.

This story illustrates what committed and resourceful leadership can do. There is no excuse for poor combat service support. This battalion validated that premise.

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SWAP SHOP



Thermal TRP

Ever since the Army adopted a thermal sight for our modern weapon systems, there has been one major problem with their tactical employment. That problem is how to set up a thermal target reference point (TRP) that will easily pick up an oncoming enemy without being totally obvious to him.

When the 24th Infantry Division deployed to Saudi Arabia for Operation DESERT SHIELD, my company commander tasked me to figure something out for our company to use as a TRP. He gave me two guidelines:

- Make sure the Bradley crews can clearly see the TRP at the maximum engagement lines (MELs).
- Don't let the Iraqis know it's there.

After experimenting with several solutions, I came up with a simple solution that any mechanized unit can adapt without having to obtain any special equipment or burn petroleum products that are needed elsewhere.

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:

- 1 7.62 or 5.56 ammunition can.

2 8-inch sections of quarter-inch cotton web rope.

1 5-gallon antifreeze or oil can.

1 long engineer picket.

2 feet of WD-1 wire.

1 gallon of diesel fuel.

CONSTRUCTION:

Punch two holes about four inches apart in the top of the ammunition can. Run a rope section through each hole. Fill the can with the diesel fuel and close the lid. Wire the ammunition can to the engineer picket, about a foot from the top. (The picket should already be driven in the ground.) Place the antifreeze can, lid removed, onto the picket, covering the ammunition can.

When lit, the burning ropes will heat the antifreeze can, creating a large thermal target but will not produce a lot of light. A few holes punched into one side of the antifreeze can will also turn it into a good TRP for use with night observation devices.

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