

personnel may quickly face life threatening situations. The best way to maintain contact is to conduct an advance reconnaissance and mark the route, follow established paths (if tactically feasible), maintain a steady pace, and take brief periodic rest halts during which leaders can check their

personnel.

Movement in mountainous terrain demands continuous training and proper conditioning, both mental and physical. And because that terrain imposes its own rules, Infantry leaders at all levels must study and understand them, and then must obey them.

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Platoon ARTEPs on the Run

LIEUTENANT COLONEL THOMAS R. ROZMAN

Seldom do actual events allow a unit to carry out its best-laid plans to the letter. Often, the plans that are most significantly affected are the ones that units live with most closely — their training plans.

In keeping with this observation, it is probably a rare battalion operations and training officer (S-3) who has not thought at least once, "Why bother planning? It'll all change tomorrow anyway." But, of course, the answer is always that some plan is better than none. At worst it provides a base point to adjust from. And as training resources to support plans become less and less forgiving, the importance of flexible planning will increase.

Here is an illustration of the way one unit — a mechanized battalion in a heavy brigade based in the continental United States — did plan flexibly, and successfully, for a significant training event. That event was platoon Army Training Evaluation Program (ARTEP) exercises, which are frequently a casualty of schedule changes. The ideas this battalion used may prove useful to other training planners.

The battalion S-3 had prepared a well-thought-out and systematic annual training plan that emphasized the battalion's mission essential task list (METL). The focal point of the

maneuver training program was the battalion's ARTEP.

To make sure the battalion was trained to standard on all individual, crew, and collective tasks, the S-3 had carefully planned to bring all maneuver and support platoons to ARTEP standards. His plan to do this provided each platoon with a scheduled ARTEP and the necessary resources from the battalion, brigade, and support elements. The plan scheduled the support platoons first, then the rifle platoons. Time was also allowed on the training calendar for company commanders to conduct their company level programs.

SCHEDULING PROBLEMS

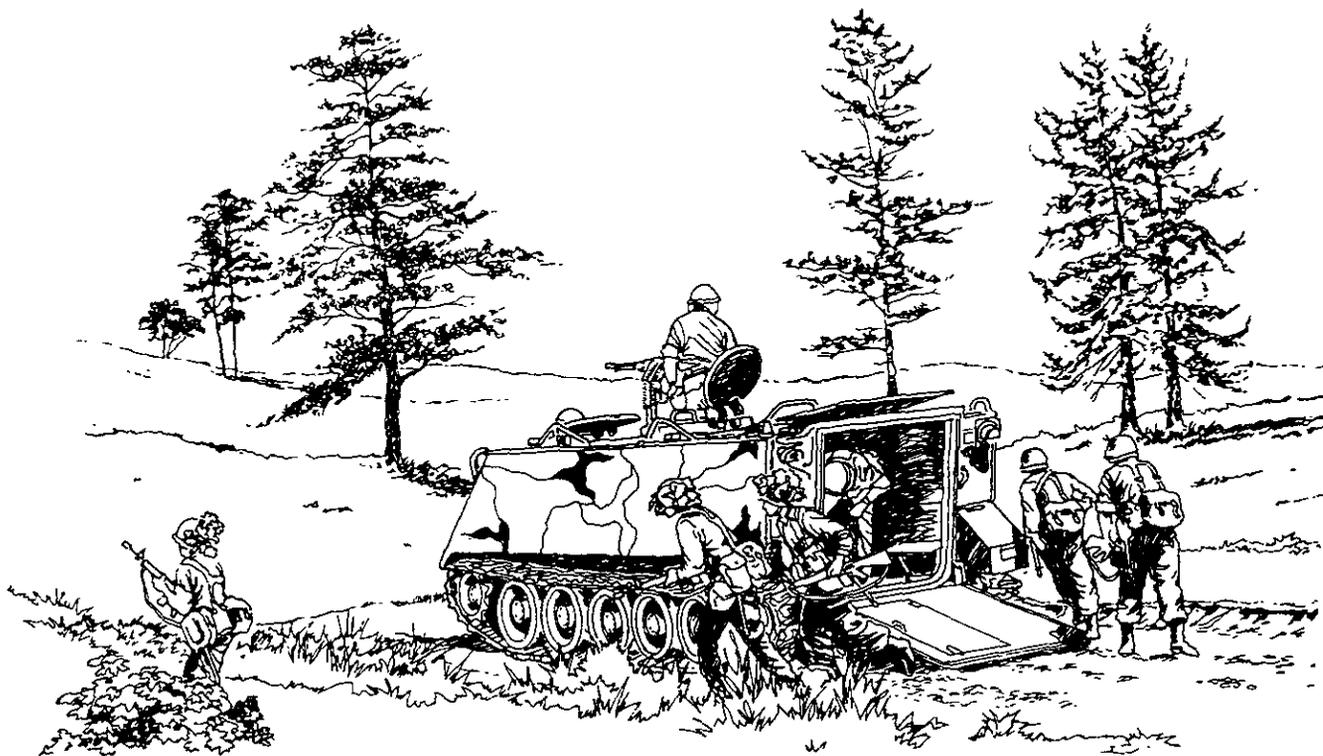
Then the unforeseen occurred. Adjustments to a joint exercise schedule and subsequent changes in the units identified to participate would place the battalion at an Air Force base some distance away at the time it planned to conduct its rifle platoon ARTEPs. Worse, the planning, preparation, and post-operation time requirements for the exercise consumed more of the training calendar time. This loss of time before and after the exercise eliminated possibilities for rescheduling the rifle platoon ARTEPs to these time frames.

Other firm mission commitments precluded any shifting of the battalion's scheduled ARTEP.

The battalion commander appeared to be faced with deleting the rifle platoon ARTEPs from the battalion's pre-ARTEP training strategy. It seemed that the only possibility remaining was to make the most of the shortened company training periods and to determine what, if anything, could be done during the joint exercise to augment rifle platoon training. He believed it was particularly important to give his platoon leaders and their company commanders some uniform feedback on where they were in terms of training the platoons to standard (a proficiency to standard that was to be determined by observers from outside the company).

The battalion commander instructed the S-3 to examine all possible ways to salvage the platoon ARTEP program. The battalion S-3, in turn, gave the mission of analyzing the possibilities to his primary assistant, the operations and training officer for air operations (S-3 Air). Time being short, the battalion determined that it had three weeks to rework its plan; the S-3 Air made his report the next day.

Fortunately, he had been in his current position for more than eight



months and was soon to take command of one of the battalion's rifle companies. Over this time, he had planned and conducted all of the battalion's support platoon ARTEPs and had already completed the planning and coordination for the rifle platoon ARTEPs.

As the S-3 Air considered the problem, he realized that the vital element would be finding enough time to conduct the ARTEPs. He also concluded that the next most critical factor would be resources, most specifically supporting personnel and their abilities.

A few quick pencil and paper studies of adapting the original plan to a compressed schedule showed that the only solution might be to put more than three platoons at a time through a given cycle. One problem in doing this was that in anything less than multiples of three — say four or five platoons per cycle — some platoons would be under a company headquarters other than their own. The battalion wanted to keep the organic company headquarters involved with its platoons, if possible, to benefit platoon and company command and control relationships. This objective was considered key to the pre-

battalion ARTEP training strategy.

It quickly became apparent that any compression of the schedule that exercised more platoons at the same time would probably stretch one resource to the breaking point — the available OC and OPFOR personnel. Most other resources, including the desired readiness mind-set throughout the battalion, would not be a problem if the ARTEPs could be conducted near the joint exercise site.

But the critical factor was time. Too little time would produce poor quality no matter what the plan might be, and this was an important point. If the limited time available meant negative training, the ARTEPs would be counterproductive. The original plan had called for 48 hours with five OCs per platoon and a platoon size OPFOR of three vehicles and 20 soldiers. If 48 hours could be made available during the joint exercise, there might be a way to save the platoon ARTEPs. It would mean deploying all nine rifle platoons at the same time across an extended front, however, giving each platoon enough space in which to operate. The tough part would be finding enough

OCs and OPFOR to sustain the quality of the original plan.

With these thoughts in mind, the S-3 Air reviewed all deployment and movement data available for the unit displacement from its home base to the site of the joint exercise. Contracted flat-bed tractor trailer trucks would move the battalion's vehicles over a week-long period. The trucks would be dispatched to the battalion area, picking up the battalion's armored vehicles in small numbers around the clock. The first vehicles would arrive and be turned over to the battalion's advanced detachment six days before the exercise. The battalion's main body was scheduled to reach the Air Force base two days before the exercise was to kick off. The last vehicles were scheduled to be unloaded at the air base about 50 hours before the battalion's scheduled start point (SP) crossing for the exercise.

In effect, the companies, with varying numbers of vehicles, could be involved in pre-operations preparation for two full days, to include the platoon ARTEPs. In fact, the ARTEPs would be a good "pre-exercise shakedown" for the battalion.

As the S-3 Air completed a more detailed analysis and coordination effort, the original plan — now expanded to exercise all nine platoons simultaneously — appeared increasingly feasible. A maneuver “box” (a designated area of terrain) 5 kilometers wide and 20 kilometers deep was available outside the joint exercise box. (There were some Air Force restrictions on terrain that were intended to minimize maneuver damage to trees, but these were considered manageable.)

The challenges of having additional OC staff and OPFOR were tougher to solve, but even this hurdle proved manageable. Within 24 hours of being tasked, the S-3 Air was able to report to the S-3 that the battalion could do the platoon ARTEPs at the Air Force base.

The S-3 reviewed the S-3 Air’s analysis and findings and concurred. When the battalion commander was briefed, he made several adjustments to the proposed outline plan and approved it.

The approved plan had actually simplified a lot of the logistics for the exercise. All of the platoons would be deployed and in a more ideal readiness and operational posture than could have been achieved at home base. But the reconnaissance of the maneuver box and all the details associated with expanding, instructing, and rehearsing the OC staff had become much more complex.

Providing at least a platoon (minus) of OPFOR in front of each platoon was also a challenge. The battalion wanted to ensure that the OPFOR also obtained useful mission training while deployed. In the original plan, OPFOR operations had been designed to mirror or complement an evaluated platoon’s operations in such a way that the OPFOR unit performed tasks consistent with its normally assigned missions and that would permit it to achieve training objectives that would benefit its own training.

Now, though, the requirement for nine OPFOR elements greatly complicated the process of achieving these objectives. A scenario that would support the

platoons taking the ARTEP and also provide realistic training opportunities for the OPFOR element consistent with its missions required a careful, detailed design. It was no small task to ensure that the mission statements in the OPFOR orders set the proper stage for these units to achieve the stated training objectives.

The necessary attachments and direct support personnel were also an unknown and worrisome quantity. Most of the soldiers in this category would be from the direct support artillery battalion. But with the need to exercise nine platoons simultaneously, additional outside support would be needed to provide enough OPFOR.

Added to these preparation requirements were all the necessary movement, scheduling, and planning issues that had to be considered and resolved. To simplify the operation, it was decided that the battalion would operate as a deployed organization during the ARTEPs as part of the overall exercises; the deployed battalion TOC would control the ARTEPs, and the trains would support it. Thus, normal battalion operational chain of command and support arrangements would control and support the ARTEPs. A major challenge to achieving this objective would be the number of personnel withdrawn from the control and support elements to serve as OCs and OPFOR.

PLANNING

The S-3 Air began an intense period of backward planning and coordination for the necessary additional resources and OC and OPFOR training. All of this had to be accomplished on top of the battalion’s preparations for the joint exercise.

There was no question that the battalion may have stretched itself, but as the first week and then the second wound down, the project took on the air of a typical battalion operation. OCs and OPFOR were identified and the necessary instruction, rehearsal, and certification were conducted.

When the last tractor trailers had

departed from the home station, the battalion personnel were readying the vehicles for operation. The OCs were with their assigned units, the OPFOR had already deployed, and the TOC was in control on the battalion’s command and control net. Up to this point, the operation had gone according to plan. Soon, all nine platoons would be deployed against an OPFOR on a 48-hour exercise. The last two hours would be used for a feedback session.

Fortunately, the initial joint exercise mission placed the battalion in an assembly area, which eased the transition by allowing time for rest and refitting after the ARTEPs. It also gave the battalion and company commanders time to consider the ARTEP results and correct any shortcomings during the joint exercise.

By the time the battalion occupied its initial assembly area to take part in the joint exercise, it was primed for the fray. Overall, the ARTEP operation went well. The feedback sessions proved particularly effective, though the full benefit was not realized until after the joint exercise. The platoons and platoon leaders had learned much about each other’s strengths and weaknesses. Because the entire battalion command and control apparatus had participated in the ARTEPs, company commanders and the battalion command and control structure had a solid and sure sense of their operational strengths. Weaknesses were identified and were already being corrected. The most impressive bonus was that the battalion was now poised to capitalize on the joint exercise as a full dress rehearsal for its own ARTEP, getting every drop of training benefit from the expensive fuel, lubricants, and spare parts that would be consumed.

Three weeks later, as the battalion completed its after operations checks at its home base, the battalion commander could feel vindicated in his decision. Although barely a week remained before the battalion ARTEP, the soldiers were confident and knew their measure. It was a tight schedule, but worth the risk and the effort.

The battalion took its ARTEP as scheduled, and one senior evaluator

pronounced it highly proficient in mounted operations.

Many battalions are unwilling or unable to rise above unforeseen schedule changes to the extent this battalion did. It saw opportunities where others may not have seen them and reaped big dividends.

But I think there is a larger lesson to be drawn from this story. We all know that despite our efforts we will have to deal with the dynamics of schedules and personnel. We also know that there are excellent guides — such as Field Manual 25-100 and Field Manual 25-101 — that tell how to be smarter in planning

training. Certainly, today we have the objective of our training effort down to a superb orientation on the unit METL. The advent of such training resources as the National Training Center have almost institutionalized the kind of positive professional opportunism this battalion demonstrated in conducting its platoon ARTEPs.

The larger lesson is one that all trainers of mounted units must grasp early, especially as maneuver areas, fuel, lubricants, and spare parts become less and less available. The lesson is that, even in the bleakest situations, there are always training opportunities. When

flexible thinking and planning are applied, a training event that has become a schedule change casualty may find in the change a powerful training opportunity.

Although this may sound obvious, such examples are always worth a little reflection, because too often the results are not nearly so favorable.

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Employing Machineguns

LIEUTENANT COLONEL WILLIAM J. MARTINEZ

Technological advances in recent years have produced lethal and devastating weapons that range from the M1 tank to the latest attack helicopter. Although these sophisticated weapons enable us to focus on the AirLand Battle, they alone cannot hold ground or destroy an enemy fighting force in enough detail to prevent cohesive unit action. That task requires infantrymen, and at battalion, company, or platoon level, effective machinegun fire is still our greatest combat multiplier.

If this is true, why haven't we paid more attention to the effective employment of machinegun fire? Why isn't every leader, from squad leader to battalion commander, proficient in employing and controlling machineguns in both the offense and the defense?

Other armies have had to do similar tasks with less. The Australian Army, for example, places great emphasis on the employment and control of its machineguns. In its infantry basic and advanced courses, as well as in each

infantry battalion, the leaders are constantly drilled on machinegun positions and control measures as well as engagement techniques. We in the U.S. Army might consider using these same techniques to use machinegun fire more effectively.

The basics of machinegun employment include the siting of the machinegun, the trajectory of the rounds, target control, and target identification.

Several factors must be considered when siting a machinegun. The most important are the ground and the characteristics of the beaten zone, the area in which the rounds land. These are intimately related and cannot be viewed separately.

The positioning of a gun to ground (forward or reverse slope) affects the killing ground as well as the protection for the gunner both from observation and from enemy fire. The ideal machinegun position is in a defilade or partial defilade that gives the gunner some cover from direct fire to his front, but

the ground from the machinegun to the killing ground or target area is just as critical. An infantryman also needs to be able to find ground that affords good grazing fire (6 to 18 inches above the ground). Otherwise, his rounds will go over the head of an enemy soldier who is in a prone position. Sometimes, however, the position of the gun does not lend itself to good grazing fire, and a series of compromises and trade-offs must then take place.

The beaten zone is also affected by the ground. On steep uphill terrain, for example, the beaten zone is reduced; on downhill terrain, the ground conforms to the trajectory of the round and the beaten zone is extended. The characteristics of beaten zones vary greatly and are directly influenced by the direction in which the guns are sited.

To get the most from a beaten zone, enfilade fire is best, because it facilitates mutual support and helps conceal the location of a machinegun position. Frontal fire is the least preferred, but