

TRAINING NOTES

rienced driver, preferably a noncommissioned officer, over soft sand while he explains to them the conditions under which they should accelerate and shift gears. Each soldier should then be given an opportunity to drive on representative desert terrain.

As part of this training, the soldiers should learn and practice the proper methods of extricating a vehicle that is stuck in the sand. If a vehicle is not stuck in sand accidentally, this situation can be created. The stuck vehicle should be jacked up as high as is safely possible (using the vehicle's additional jack stand to provide a platform), and the sand should be dug out from under and around each tire. One section of steel planking should be placed under one of the front tires and the other under the rear tire on the opposite side. Rocks, wood, sandbags, or other hard materials should be placed under the other two tires. All four tires may need to be deflated slightly for better traction. The driver should put the vehicle in Gear Four Low and accelerate according to the existing conditions.

Each driver should be allowed to practice desert driving and vehicle extrication repeatedly until he is competent and confident enough to know that he and his vehicle can overcome all desert terrain, obstacles, and other conditions.

The following key points (as modified from the guidance given to military observers of OGE, UNTSO) can be made about desert driving:

- Sand conditions change rapidly. Learn to read sand colors like a map.

- The "feel of the sand" is never the same, whether in the same vehicle or another vehicle. Experience is the only teacher.

- Getting stuck is normal. Accept it with patience.

- Cross a rippled sand area (if you cannot avoid it) parallel to the ripples and very slowly.

- Low fourth gear in four-wheel drive vehicles is the best overall gear to drive in.

- In soft sand, start the vehicle, accelerate, and (once moving) speed shift to second gear.

- Once you are committed to driving in sand, do not hesitate, slow down, or stop, but continue driving.

- Make all stops slowly and gradually. Plan stops. Never stop on an uphill grade.

- Never back into a position from which you cannot move forward.

- Plan your route from one terrain feature to the next.

- Know your exact location at all times.

- Accept backtracking; sometimes it is necessary.

- Never drive to the top of a dune—or get to a point where you are committed to do so—without first checking to see what is on the other side.

- Before cresting a dune, clear the sand from the vehicle's undercarriage. After cresting, use the low gear to go

straight down. Do not use the brakes.

- Never drive down into a depression among dunes where the sides are too steep to climb out.

- Communicate from high ground if possible.

- When patrolling in pairs, be mutually supporting.

- Vehicle recovery in a dune area is dangerous; repair on site if possible.

- Avoid mined areas, destroyed war equipment, and dunes that terminate in an oasis.

- Take a 15-minute "eye" break when sand blindness occurs.

- Reduce strain and fatigue by changing drivers and taking rest or meal breaks often. Start early and finish early.

- Never leave your vehicle unattended.

- Never attempt to walk out of the desert.

The thought of driving in the desert may intimidate some soldiers. With the proper equipment, realistic training, and opportunities to practice, they will develop a confident attitude and be prepared to accomplish their mission under all desert driving conditions.

Major Harold E. Raugh, Jr. is assigned to the U.S. Military Operations Group, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. He previously served on the faculty of the United States Military Academy and with the 7th Infantry Division and the Berlin Brigade. He is a 1978 ROTC graduate of the University of Wisconsin and holds a master's degree from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Advice for A Light Infantry Platoon Leader

CAPTAIN JOHN S. ZACHAU

New infantry platoon leaders are energetic and want to excel, but their energies are often unfocused. The

Infantry Officer Basic Course and the Ranger Course are excellent starting places, but they don't really provide

second lieutenants with all of the specific information they will need as platoon leaders.

Many of the things that affect an officer's career happen during those first crucial years when the platoon leader is being molded and prepared for duty as a specialty platoon leader, an executive officer, or a staff officer. His mistakes are often the result of good intentions that fail for lack of experience. Unfortunately, senior officers do not always have the time to give a platoon leader a detailed explanation of his duties. But nowhere in the rank structure is there a leader with so much responsibility and so little experience.

When I assumed the leadership of a platoon, I did not have a set of guidelines that I could use from the first day. But as I learned, saw my mistakes, and grew, I compiled some that I offer now to those of you who are about to assume that position.

There are some very important things you must learn quickly so you can get started. I have divided the platoon leader's jobs and responsibilities into four categories: training, maintenance, administration, and leadership.

Training. Training is what drives a unit in peace and what prepares it for war. Your platoon's level of training, with few exceptions, is a reflection on you. Take the time to ensure that you are expert with all of your platoon's organic weapon systems, and that you know squad, platoon, and company level tactics and instruction.

Field Manual (FM) 7-70, The Light Infantry Platoon, and FM 7-71, The Light Infantry Company, should be your bibles on platoon and company tactics. For training evaluations, ARTEP 7-8 MTP (Mission Training Plan) should be your primary source.

It is hard to lead by example if you can't set the example, but once you do, your platoon will want to meet your standards. Keeping your platoon combat ready is the key to mission accomplishment. To understand training, you should read and become familiar with FM 25-100, Battle Focused Training; this manual will explain how training is standardized and conducted throughout the Army.

Platoon training can be divided into six parts: Maintaining proficiency,

planning and executing training, supervising training, maintaining individual technical and tactical proficiency, using hip-pocket training, and conducting physical training.

In a light unit, a platoon must be trained and ready to deploy with no notice and your job is to make sure your platoon can do it. (Deploying within 18 hours is the standard for all rapid deployment forces.) Conduct telephone alerts to ensure that alert rosters are up to date and that people can be recalled if necessary. You don't want an emergency deployment readiness exercise to be your first test, especially if you can't find everybody.

Your platoon should train to the ARTEP 7-8 MTP standards. After an ARTEP, identify all squad deficiencies and make sure your squad leaders correct them. Personally see that platoon deficiencies are corrected, and continue to monitor shortcomings so that trends can be tracked and any systemic problems corrected.

PERFORMANCE ORIENTED

Conduct platoon training that supports designated light infantry tasks, as shown in ARTEP 7-8 MTP, according to your company's training plan. Training must be performance oriented; it is important to state task, condition, and standard before and during training to let the soldiers know the what and why of the training.

Don't wait for your company commander to direct you to come up with training ideas or plans. Write your platoon's training plan quarterly, and get ideas from the squad leaders and the platoon sergeant. Submit the platoon training plan within five working days after discussing the company training plan. The platoon plan should specify tasks, conditions, and standards, along with reference sources and task numbers. The training plan should also reflect any special training limitations such as lack of resources or training areas.

Rehearse and backbrief the appropriate leader no less than one week before

training, and program this time into the training schedule.

Always evaluate platoon training, and criticize and correct all platoon mistakes during training. Training must be event-and-standard oriented. Repeat unsatisfactory training on the spot, or as soon as possible.

Identify training support requirements one week before the training, and coordinate with your company executive officer (XO) on the items you will need.

Make sure your squad training supports platoon and company training. Have your squad leaders brief you one week before they execute the training. Supervise the squad leaders to make sure they request any support they need.

After-action reviews (AARs) are important. Do them after each major training event, and include time for them in your training plan. Critique your subordinates on the way they conducted their training.

A good technique is to evaluate training by phase. Don't watch one squad for an hour and then move on to another one. Watch an entire mission, planning phase, or actions on the objective. Be critical and teach everyone you work with to be critical, too. Criticism improves our abilities, but criticism that is not based on fact or doctrine is mere opinion.

An AAR discusses training and ways to improve; a critique discusses performance. Always strive for the most realistic training you can provide. Be careful not to belittle people during any critique or AAR. Treat people the way you would want to be treated if you made a mistake—with dignity and respect. If one of your subordinates has made a big blunder, discuss how it can be corrected during the AAR, then get the subordinate alone and discuss it in private.

Make sure every soldier is qualified on his weapon, his weapon is zeroed, and the zero is recorded. A good technique is to put the zero on a piece of tape and place it in the hollow of the hand grip.

Try to integrate cross-training into your platoon as much as possible. Try

to train two Dragon (M47) gunners, two radio telephone operators, and two combat lifesavers per squad. This will give your platoon immediate internal replacements if some of its men are wounded.

Train all your subordinates to handle responsibilities at least one level up, and preferably two. Corporals need to know how to lead their squad, squad leaders must be able to lead the platoon, and you must be able to lead the company. Make sure the squad leaders understand the machinegun team or Dragon team and perform tasks with these weapons.

Individual training should support platoon and company training in accordance with ARTEP 7-8 MTP or 7-10 MTP. If the company training plan says to train on jungle operations, don't let your men train on MOUT (military operations on urban terrain) room entry techniques.

Inspect your individual training records monthly to make sure they are being properly maintained. Either you, the platoon sergeant, or both of you should test the soldiers on selected individual tasks monthly to ensure that individual training is being executed to standard.

Individual training is a noncommissioned officer (NCO) function. Institute a training program with input from your NCOs, let them execute it, and check their progress. If they are not doing the training to the prescribed standard, counsel them, critique their performance, and take steps to ensure that they do it correctly in the future.

Hip-pocket training is prepared training that can be executed on order. All platoon trainers should be prepared to do this critical training on ten minutes' notice. Put priority hip-pocket training on the training schedule in the "remarks" column to support weekly training. Have your NCOs put it on 3x5 cards and brief you so you are familiar with their lesson plans. Conduct it during all extended breaks and during any training delays. Time is a precious asset. You and the other leaders must be careful that you do not waste any of it.

Light infantry platoons conduct physical training (PT) five days a week. Give the soldiers the task, condition, and standard for either strength, abdominal, or endurance training, and execute the training to those standards. Identify people who do not meet the standards, and develop a remedial PT program to help them improve. Make sure all your NCOs can conduct and lead PT to the standard established in FM 21-20, Physical Training. Never use or tolerate profanity or rude or sexist comments during PT or during runs.

After a PT session, a drill and ceremonies cool-down phase is a good idea. You can cool down and also give your troops and leaders some refresher practice in drill and ceremonies.

Vary PT to make it interesting to the soldiers. Some possibilities are sports, swimming, orienteering, sprints, or road marching. Get guidance on this from your company commander.

Maintenance. Without operational equipment, your platoon is not mission capable, and you are failing your men as well as the unit. Never rest until you know the status of a pacing item (an item that can't be deadlined for more than 24 hours at the organizational level), and if it is possible to fix it on your level, don't rest until it is fixed.

Make sure all equipment is serviceable and well cared for. Every piece of equipment should have primary and assigned operators for accountability and to ensure follow-up on maintenance.

- Inspect the soldiers' individual equipment (CTA 50-900) quarterly.

- Schedule and conduct monthly instruction on the care and use of equipment. Use experts such as the company armorer, the NBC (nuclear, biological, and chemical) NCO, or the communications chief.

- Conduct a 100 percent inventory and inspection quarterly to ensure property accountability and serviceability. Understand proper inventory adjustment procedures, and make sure your hand receipt is up to date.

- Know the status of your equipment at all times. Conduct a weekly check of all on-order equipment with the supply

sergeant, as well as equipment in direct support maintenance.

- After return from the field, spot-check maintenance on 100 percent of the crew-served weapons and radios and 20 percent of the individual weapons, night observation devices, NBC equipment, and binoculars.

- Inspect all unassigned platoon equipment monthly.

- Conduct preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) in accordance with the appropriate -10 series manuals.

- Schedule the company XO to inspect an area of maintenance in your platoon monthly.

- Personally ensure that any deficiencies found are corrected.

- Know the appropriate technical manuals (TMs) for maintenance, and make sure they are the ones being used for maintenance standards.

Administration. Administration may not seem important at first, but it is critical. You may be doing many good things, but without documentation to prove what you have done, your platoon can have problems. You must supervise platoon administration as follows:

- Make sure a good counseling program is in effect.

- Do not turn in paperwork late.

- Make sure that each Enlisted Evaluation Report (EER) is accurate, that it properly evaluates the individual, and that it contains no spelling or grammatical errors.

- Submit all awards within three days of return from the field, and track the paperwork so you know where it is in the system. Submit all PCS (permanent change of station) awards 120 days before the individuals' PCS dates.

- Monitor the promotion of all your NCOs.

- Maintain high standards in your additional areas of responsibility—energy, crime prevention, safety, key control, and alcohol and drug program. Update SOPs, and have the XO inspect your books or area monthly.

- Payday should be the cutoff for counseling statements to be signed. Don't tie the troops up on payday.

Spread the counseling out over several days before.

- Prepare a platoon notebook. Get a three-ring binder and keep important information on each of your men—name, age, social security number, position, weapon qualification, PT, and family information or problems. This book can also be used to maintain the last ARTEP status, the awards list, and the platoon chain of command. Carry it with you everywhere. When the battalion commander asks you how many of your men qualified on the last range, you can open it to the weapons section and give him the answer. Respect the privacy of the information; keep the book away from those who don't need to see it.

Leadership. Leadership is your reason for being in the U.S. Army. You are an officer, a role model, and you need to act like it. You will make some tough decisions in your career. You must set an example as a professional, disciplined, and intelligent leader. Three of the greatest challenges you will face as a platoon leader are ensuring the safety of your platoon, caring for your men, and having the commitment to be a true leader as opposed to just the person who has the most rank.

Safety is a primary mission during peacetime, so make sure your soldiers do not develop unsafe habits that could lead to accidents. Understand the battalion safety SOP, and execute it faithfully. Safety is everyone's job, but especially a leader's.

Never let your men play with weapons under any circumstances. Always make sure, whenever live ammunition is used, that weapons are constantly checked to make sure they are on "safe" and the chamber is clear, especially during cleaning. Safety overrides training any time. Your goal should be that no soldier in your platoon loses life or limb from a preventable accident. The standard is 100 percent safety at all times, with no exceptions and no excuses.

The general welfare of your men should also be important to you. Caring does not mean being a buddy to them or having them think you're a great guy.



In the field, caring means making sure they have food and water and, most important, that they are taught to standard (safely) so that they will do the job right in combat.

In garrison, be aware of any personal problems your men may be having. A good technique I used was to inspect the living quarters of married personnel with my platoon sergeant. You can

learn a lot about your soldiers and whether they have problems they may not want you to know about (such as a house with no furniture, for example).

You must be committed to having everything done to standard. The men must clean weapons before they sleep, and security must really be in place and checked so that the platoon is never caught off guard. Fighting positions

must be built correctly, and PMCS executed. This is called the "hard right" and, as you will see, tired, cold, and hungry men will always want to take a little break. The break may mean missing a phase line or not making your "not later than" time, and nobody will know but you. If you allow this to happen, you lower your standards. You know what you should be doing, but you're not doing it. Nothing should keep you from doing all that you can every time. Complete every mission,

and execute every order (or implied order) you receive. Commitment is never lowering your standards, or your superiors' standards.

Being a light infantry platoon leader can be one of the greatest assignments an infantry officer can have. It teaches you leadership and hardship, maneuver and terrain evaluation at ground level. The fact that you can actually be in combat in less than 18 hours, in almost any part of the world, should really drive home the importance of the job of

light infantry platoon leader, and the importance of doing that job right.

Captain John S. Zachau served with the 7th Infantry Division and the 1st Cavalry Division and participated in Operations JUST CAUSE and DESERT STORM. He has held the positions of platoon leader, antiarmor platoon leader, and staff officer at battalion, brigade, and division levels. He is now assigned to the 177th Armored Brigade (OPFOR) at the National Training Center.

Tenets of AirLand Battle

If You Understand Football, You're Halfway There

CAPTAIN FRANK A. KREEGER

The increased emphasis on teaching AirLand Battle doctrine to newly commissioned lieutenants in the Infantry Officer Basic Course is an important step toward a more proficient and cohesive officer corps. But teaching this doctrine to lieutenants with less than six months in the Army, or to any other group of soldiers with limited experiences, is also a perplexing problem.

How do you explain doctrine to a soldier who has had no tactical experience that he can relate to it? A teaching technique occurred to me while watching a football game. I realized that the offensive nature of football and our doctrine are very similar. Below is an outline of the examples I have used to explain the tenets of AirLand Battle to newly commissioned lieutenants.

Initiative. A leader preserves the initiative by preventing the enemy from reducing his unit's freedom to act. With the freedom to act, he can dictate the terms of the battle. In football, the quarterback on a team is the offensive leader, and the offensive line protects him so he can retain the freedom to act.

With this freedom he can now dictate the action and execute the play.

Initiative does not stop with the leader; his subordinates must also use their initiative. The subordinates, if they are to use their initiative properly, must understand the commander's intent. In football, when the quarterback calls a play, the team must understand the purpose (or the intent) of that play.

For example, the quarterback wants to throw a down-and-out pass to his wide receiver to get a first down. The fullback's job on this play is to protect the quarterback by blocking. When the play starts, the fullback misses his block and realizes the quarterback is about to get sacked. The fullback then takes the initiative and runs into position to receive the ball. The quarterback, just before he is hit, throws a pass to the fullback and gets the first down. The fullback's first task was to block, and the purpose of the block was to enable the team to get a first down. If the fullback had not understood the purpose, he would not have been able to take the initiative and go on to get the first down.

Agility. To seize or retain the initiative, a unit must be able to react faster than the enemy it is fighting. This begins with the agility of the leader, which includes his ability to think rapidly through many courses of action (COAs) and likely enemy reactions to them. He must then determine the most effective and least costly course.

The quarterback calls a running play. When he comes to the line, he sees that the defense is prepared to stop the run and immediately realizes that his play (COA) will not work. He decides that the most effective play (COA) is a pass, calls an audible signal, and passes for a long gain. This play works because the team has rehearsed plans (SOPs) that can be carried out in response to a signal from the quarterback. In combat operations, a unit also has well-rehearsed plans and battle drills that enable the soldiers to respond quickly to a signal from their leader.

Depth. Depth is the extension of operations in time, space, and resources. Planning operations in depth results in maintaining the momentum in