

Soldier System from 1991 to 2006, with the goal of providing improvements in combat effectiveness. Among these improvements will be a fully integrated positive combat identification system designed with the specific intent of reducing fratricide.

A soldier-to-soldier positive combat identification capability is of considerable concern. To date, there is no suitable covert, passive method of positively identifying friendly, threat, and neutral soldiers under all battlefield conditions at ranges greater than those provided by the unaided eye.

Such optical enhancements as rifle scopes and binoculars will allow com-

bat identification range to be extended for short distances during clear daylight operations. Night weapon sights, image intensification and thermal weapon sights are minimally effective in positively identifying dismounted troops. The goal is to give the dismounted soldier a combat identification system compatible with those of other friendly soldiers, vehicles, and aircraft that will provide a 360-degree positive identification. This device must have little or no probability of detection by similarly equipped threat forces.

The Infantry School is dedicated to the prevention of fratricide and is making every effort to evaluate and imple-

ment fratricide prevention techniques as they become available. As technology evolves, the infantry will be able to increase its combat capability with the added benefits of reducing fratricide by using sound doctrine, training, leader development, organization, and materiel solutions. The ultimate goal will be to field the world's finest infantry fighting force and, at the same time, to make fratricide a thing of the past.



A Framework for SOPs

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Standing operating procedures (SOPs) provide the glue that binds a unit together. It is not high-speed plans, abundant resources, or the outstanding abilities of key personnel that enable an infantry unit to win in combat. It is small groups of organized soldiers doing routine tasks *routinely*. And routine tasks are executed through established SOPs at levels from battalion down to buddy team. Most of the shooting, moving, and communicating that lead to mission accomplishment are not new at all; in fact, they are routine—they are SOP. And knowing the SOP gives soldiers confidence during periods of uncertainty.

We are often subjected to a time-constrained operations order (OPORD) that gives the guidance, "Per SOP," for many tasks. But what happens when the order is complete and subordinate orders are issued? Do the riflemen have a basic understanding of what is

required, or have they been referred to an SOP which is outdated, obsolete, or—worse—nonexistent?

There are many ways to mold unit SOPs. I would like to share a simple, proven *framework* from which to begin: "Left to right, 1, 2, 3; and front to rear, 1, 2, 3."

An infantry company—whether tactically employed (attacking or defending) or administratively employed (police call)—is arrayed from left to right, 1st Platoon, 2d Platoon, and 3d Platoon. Once the soldiers are trained using this framework, they will move out immediately, or assume attack formation, on the single command, "Per SOP."

The 1st Platoon is always on the left flank of the company; the 2d Platoon is always the center platoon; and the 3d Platoon is always on the right flank of the company. In a reconsolidation during a night attack on a difficult objective, for example, confusion reigns, and

with casualties and enemy prisoners of war to take care of, what happens when a rear security team is recalled by the 3d Platoon leader? The security team leader moves forward, makes contact, exchanges the appropriate challenges and passwords, and upon seeing a soldier from 2d Platoon immediately executes a right face (in relation to the direction of attack) to link up with his platoon. He knows that "per SOP" the 3d Platoon is always to the right of 2d Platoon.

The possibilities are unlimited, and leaders must ensure that they formulate their SOPs and plan missions in accordance with this framework. This does not mean the commander cannot be flexible in maneuvering or that he cannot designate special tasks to particularly proficient platoons. But whenever he does go against his SOP, he must announce to his personnel, "This is not SOP," and say it twice. His subordi-

nates will realize that they are now doing something different that requires their particular attention. The opposite is also true.

Here is a tip for continuity. If a leader requires the 3d Platoon (or 3d Squad) to lead in the order of march, or to attack or defend on the left side, he should reverse the SOP to reflect front to rear, 3, 2, 1 or left to right, 3, 2, 1. When the 2d Platoon is to be the lead element, or when it is to attack or defend on the left, he moves the 1st Platoon to the rear or the right side, arraying his personnel left to right, 2, 3, 1, and front to rear, 2, 3, 1. By adding these few ground rules and adhering to them when planning and executing operations, a leader reinforces and strengthens his SOPs.

Although I never dictated that my platoons adopt this company-level framework at platoon level, they still arrayed themselves left to right, 1st, 2d, and 3d Squads. All the squad leaders positioned their Alpha fire teams on the left and Bravo teams on the right. This meant that the 1st Squad leader habitually conducted flank coordination with the 2d Squad leader (and the unit on our left flank), the 2d Squad leader coordinated with the 1st and 3d Squad leaders, and the 3d Squad leader coordinated with the 1st Squad leader of the 2d Platoon. A habitual relationship was established between fire team leaders of adjoining squads. Thus the company SOP provided structure down to the lowest level of execution.

A commander who is truly committed to making this work strengthens his SOP every time he resists the urge to let his "best" platoon lead during movement or tackle the "sticky" part of an objective. When he deploys his forces "per SOP," everyone knows where to go, and a platoon's mission depends on its placement in relation to the SOP—no "favorites," no singular dependence on one "strong" platoon, only delegating tasks, strengthening confidence, spreading the wealth of responsibility, and thus adding flexibility to the company as a whole. Each platoon remains attentive, knowing that the commander is committed to simplicity and that at

any moment that platoon may be the main effort. When most of the decisions are predetermined, the orders process is greatly reduced.

My company's technique for perimeter defenses or patrol bases was the triangle. Regardless of the preferred technique, we were arrayed in relation to the direction of march in which we had occupied the position—left to right, 1, 2, 3, per SOP. The 1st Platoon was the left shoulder of the triangle, 2d Platoon formed the base, and 3d Platoon was the right shoulder. Once a misoriented soldier (or leader) ran into someone along the perimeter, it was easy for him to move to the proper location. He knew where to go in relation to the platoon or squad he had just contacted, because it



was SOP. By reducing internal movement, this also greatly improved control and noise discipline.

Building on the initial framework, a leader can also assign platoon (or squad) colors in the order red, white, blue—red for 1st Platoon, white for 2d, and blue for 3d. These colors can correspond to numerous activities, from the embossing tape that marks platoon equipment to the sub-objectives for which a platoon has tactical responsibility. Tactical objectives or areas are manned as red for 1st Platoon and in descending order for 2d and 3d Platoons. Objective RED is subdivided for 1st Platoon's squads—RED 1, RED 2, RED 3. At a glance, the leader knows who is where by virtue of the objective name. A company objective (given in the battalion OPORD) is divided from left to right—Objective RED, Objective WHITE, Objective BLUE, per SOP!

This framework, taken still farther, can be applied to specific tasks and sub-tasks; for example, the occupation of a pick-up zone (PZ) in preparation for an airmobile operation. The PZ is organized in relation to the aircraft approach heading, front to rear, 1, 2, 3. Given the heading, 10 UH-60 aircraft, landing in trail with only one serial, and given the unit's field strength, the leader subdivides the aircraft, then cross-loads key personnel and equipment (where this is tactically sound). Generically, chalks 1, 2, and 3 belong to 1st Platoon; chalk 4 to Headquarters; chalks 5, 6, and 7 to 2d Platoon; and chalks 8, 9, and 10 to 3d Platoon.

The leader delegates PZ security responsibility at 1, 5, and 9 o'clock in relation to the aircraft approach heading. This means a 1st Platoon element mans the 1 o'clock position, a 2d Platoon element mans the 9 o'clock position, and a 3d platoon element mans the 5 o'clock position—front to rear, 1, 2, 3, per SOP. The PZ is secure, and the soldiers are ready to be airlifted out in a short time. With this specified task completed quickly, more time is available for equipment checks and back-briefs.

This SOP framework is a simple technique that really pays off. When soldiers know their commander employs them in a certain manner, they prepare for combat instinctively, anticipating his commands. Units that are trained to make their SOPs within this basic framework can react instantly to any situation. Units continually learn (especially at the National Training Center) that windows of opportunity open only for short periods, and units that react instinctively win. Left to right, 1, 2, 3, and front to rear, 1, 2, 3, will get them through these windows.

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