

can and should do to place him in the best posture for the board. Besides making sure that he is placed in the challenging jobs that prepare him for the increased responsibility of being a company first sergeant and rating him accurately and clearly, commanders and sergeants major need to force the issue of updating photos and personnel quali-

fication records. They can also push civilian education and send soldiers back to military courses they have failed, after the proper re-training. With a little more emphasis on these and the other items mentioned here, we can better prepare more of our senior soldiers for the tougher jobs that lie ahead.

**Lieutenant Colonel John M. Mitchell** recently completed an assignment in the Directorate of Operations and Training at the Infantry School and is now attending the Army War College. He commanded the 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry in Korea. He is a 1973 ROTC graduate of the University of Tennessee and holds a master's degree from Central Michigan University.



# SWAP SHOP

## SAND TABLE STRING DRILL

Countless after-action reviews from the combat training centers, along with experiences in Southwest Asia, highlight the problems associated with fire control and distribution. Gunnery manuals and unit SOPs provide the tactics, techniques, and procedures for engaging multiple targets, but putting these theories into practice can be a challenge.

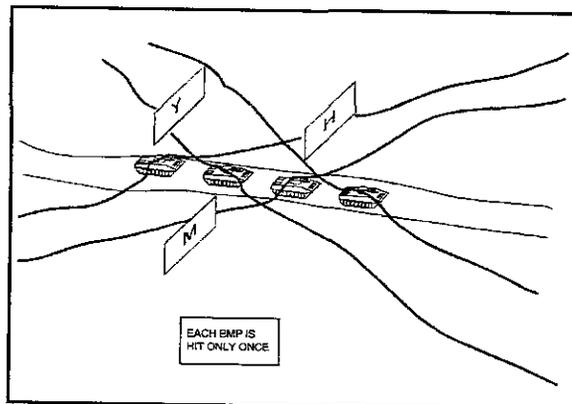
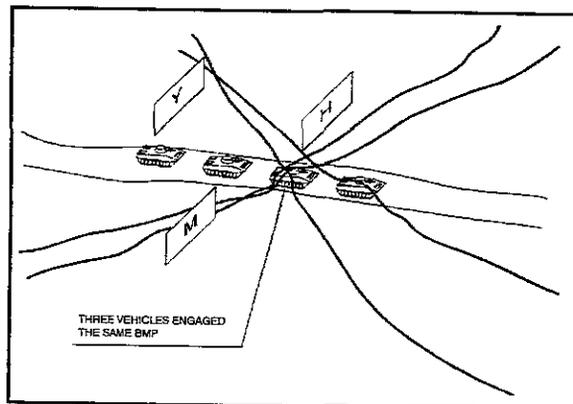
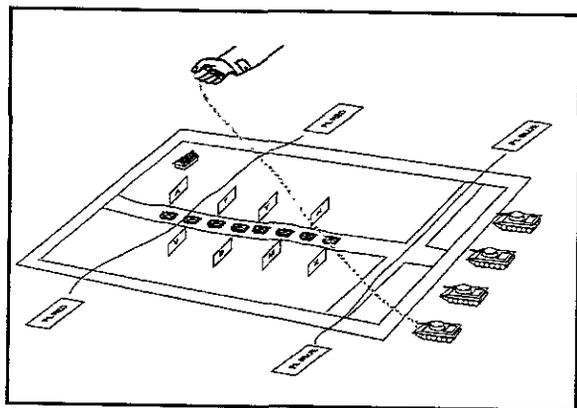
A good training technique is the sand table string drill. First, you will need a sand table (4'x8'), colored yarn, 3x5 index cards, and some simulated enemy targets (rocks, blocks of wood, models). Then proceed as follows:

- Make a terrain layout showing only such basic terrain features as hills, buildings, and roads. Give each gunner a piece of yarn that stretches from his position to the opposite side of the terrain board.
- Develop a target scenario. A good starter scenario is an engagement against a column of enemy vehicles moving along a road. Arrange the targets and put a 3x5 card marked with a letter or number next to each potential target. This allows each crew to positively identify its target. Phase lines (PLs) and target reference points (TRPs) should also be clearly marked.
- Issue a fragmentary order (FRAGO) that identifies fire control measures and engagement criteria. For example, the platoon leader designates fields of fire, identifies TRPs, and describes how he plans to fight the position.
- The platoon leader issues an appropriate fire command. For the example above, assume that the unit is a mechanized infantry platoon in a hasty defensive position. The platoon leader gives a

fire command such as, "Delta, this is Delta 25, 8 BMPs, direct front, depth, fire!" Each vehicle commander or gunner then selects the first two targets to engage and records the letter or number on the card next to each.

After target selection, have each vehicle commander identify the first of his two targets. As each target is identified, place the yarn across it (Figure 1), and continue this until each vehicle commander has engaged two targets.

Often, two or three crews in a platoon will engage the same enemy vehicle (Figure 2). But with a little practice and SOP refinement, they will be able to kill more enemy vehicles more quickly with fewer rounds (Figure 3). A few minutes on the sand table can help save precious training ammunition and possibly lives on the battlefield.



*(Submitted by Captain Theodore D. Martin, Training Management Division, Combined Arms Command, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.)*