

Improving MOUT And Battle Focused Training

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The doctrine in Field Manual 25-101, *Battle Focused Training*, provides guidance on planning, executing, and assessing training. In practice, however, personnel turnover, conflicting priorities, and inadequate resources—especially time—often conspire to produce less than the desired results.

The inherent danger in failing to achieve excellence in training is that the practice may become a habit. Even though junior leaders may memorize FM 25-101, if they do not occasionally have an opportunity to practice its doctrine, they may not fully grasp the standards. Training in military operations on urban terrain (MOUT) provides a superb opportunity to employ the doctrine correctly and get the expected results.

Infantry battalions generally conduct MOUT training annually. This training is characterized by several factors: the availability of considerable planning time (divisions usually allocate their battalions the use of MOUT facilities 12 to 18 months in advance), the total commitment of a battalion to the training's execution (given the importance of the training and scheduling difficulty), and the logical progression from individual and team skills to higher level collective tasks.

Given these characteristics, a battalion should look beyond the obvious goal of increasing its capacity to fight in an urban setting to the goal of improving its ability to conduct battle focused training. Assuming this broader goal is adopted, what plan of action might best lead to its accomplishment?

For purposes of this discussion, we will assume a battalion has been allocated 18 consecutive days of training in a MOUT facility that consists of a small mock village and a live-fire MOUT assault course; furthermore, let's assume that no MOUT training has been conducted within the past eight months, and urban warfare skills are lacking from individual through battalion level. Finally, no specific division or brigade directives tell the battalion what it must accomplish during its upcoming MOUT training period.

These assumptions roughly match the limits with which most infantry battalions operate as they begin their short-term planning for the period of the scheduled MOUT training.

At the outset of the planning process, the battalion must determine at which levels to focus its collective training. The "much is good, but more is better" approach sounds good but it often leads to less than spectacular results. As FM 25-100 says, it is better to train to standard on a few things than to fail to achieve the standard on many things.

It can be argued, given the constraints on time and on control and evaluation resources, that a battalion should focus its training efforts on the individual, squad, and platoon levels. The overhead in observer-controllers (OCs) for company and battalion MOUT force-on-force exercises is extraordinarily high; and even if this investment is made, realism at squad level is often lost. Furthermore, a rifleman who is "killed" in the first minutes of a company or battalion action

will miss from one-half day to a full day of training as he awaits the end of the exercise. Commanders and staff members can be instructed through tactical exercises without troops (TEWTs) and map exercises (MAPEXs). These exercises should not necessarily take place during the battalion's MOUT training cycle, because they may distract the leaders from their primary goal of building trained squads and platoons.

If we insist on doing well on a few events, at the expense of the others, the battalion's chain of command may find it has to relearn—and use—the tenets of battle focused training once it leaves the MOUT site.

Having established the goal of developing proficient platoons during MOUT training, the battalion leaders must define proficiency and structure an enabling strategy. Many references are available to help in this process:

ARTEP 7-8-MTP, *Mission Training Plan for the Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*, outlines two maneuver tasks for a rifle platoon in a MOUT environment—"clear a building" and "defend a built-up area or building." The training and evaluation outlines (T&EOs) for both tasks are fairly comprehensive. With these outlines as a starting point, the battalion's chain of command should then actively participate in developing the MOUT training cycle. While it may not always be efficient to solicit the thoughts of many different leaders, it is more effective and should be done when time is available (as it is in this case). The involvement of many leaders in planning

takes advantage of the cumulative experience of the members of the organization and leads to a broader sense of personal commitment later during execution.

There are many ways to expand participation during planning. For example, the command sergeant major can be tasked with preparing a list of individual baseline skills, while the companies are assigned to develop certain squad or platoon tasks. The headquarters company (HHC) commander can work with the appropriate staff officers and his platoon leaders to address the specialty platoons. As an alternative, the three rifle company commanders can be directed to focus, respectively, on individual, squad, and platoon training tasks. What is important is not the method used but the purpose, which is to involve the entire unit's leadership in the planning process.

In determining the tasks that must be trained to standard at various levels, junior leaders can turn to various publications, including the following:

- ARTEP 7-8-MTP, *Mission Training Plan for the Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*.
- FM 7-8, *The Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*.
- FM 90-10, *Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain*.
- FM 90-10-1, *An Infantryman's Guide to Urban Combat*.
- TC 90-1, *Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain Training*.
- STP 7-11BCHM14-SM-TG, *Soldier's Manual and Trainer's Guide MOS 11B, 11C, 11H, and 11M Infantry, Skill Levels 1/2/3/4*.

Additionally, there are excellent unit publications, such as the 10th Mountain Division's MOU SOP for training, as well as foreign sources such as the German Infantry School's *Rifle Squad Leader's Training Guide*. A determined effort to tie training objectives to the appropriate doctrinal references helps instill in the chain of command the correct use of training resources and the importance of integrating collective and soldier tasks into any training plan.

Although the size of the MOU training facility, its location (on or off post), and other factors influence decisions on

the exact sequence of training, several observations are in order:

First, many MOU sites in the continental United States are best suited to units no larger than a rifle company with some attachments. Space is often inadequate to allow an entire battalion's 27 squads or nine platoons to train simultaneously in a realistic setting. (For example, training lanes that adjoin units conducting unrelated activities are often substandard).

Second, experience tells us that more than six or seven consecutive days of extremely rigorous MOU training may be counterproductive for any group of soldiers. With this in mind, a possible 18-day infantry battalion training cycle might allocate each rifle company (with the HHC sharing) six days in the MOU

facilities with the following schedule:

Day 1: Individual and Team Skills.

Days 2-4: Squad Force-on-Force Lanes (2 days); MOU Assault Course, Day and Night (1 day).

Days 5-6: Platoon Lanes and Clean-up.

In this schedule, during Days 2 to 4, one rifle platoon with HHC attachments spends one day and night alone on the MOU assault course, while the other two platoons rotate through the squad force-on-force lanes. This relieves the congestion that occurs when an entire company descends on an assault course site.

Once the general training matrix is set, leaders can proceed with more detailed planning. With tasks identified for individual/team, squad, and platoon level training (see table), responsibilities for

INDIVIDUAL SKILLS AND COLLECTIVE TASKS

Individual/Team:

1. **Outside movement:** Cross a wall; observe/fire/move around a corner; move past a window; move past a basement window; move parallel to a building; cross an open area; move between positions.
2. **Inside movement:** Move within a building under attack; hallway procedures; room entering (buddy team); enter through a mousehole; use a doorway.
3. **Lower level entry:** 2-man lift unsupported; 2-man lift supported; two-man lift with heels raised; 1-man lift; 2-man pull.
4. Use of rope with grappling hook.
5. Rappel entry from a roof.
6. Room clearing.
7. Establish fighting positions.
8. Use of booby traps and demolitions.
9. Use of hand grenades.

Squad:

1. Perform subterranean reconnaissance, and clear a floor from bottom up (that is, transition from the reconnaissance to an attack on order).
2. Enter a building from the top down, and clear a floor.
3. React to a sniper, clear an obstacle, and enter a building.
4. Prepare a hasty defense and repel a counterattack. (In this case, it is more effective to terminate the preparation of the hasty defense, allow an opposing force team to be "magically" inserted at random by the OC into one of the defended rooms; "kill off" any friendly forces in that room, and resume action at that point. While this is unfair to the friendly forces, the performance of the task of counterattack can best be measured against a standard under these conditions.)
5. Clear a small building.
6. Emplace obstacles and booby traps.

Platoon:

1. Conduct a hasty defense.
2. Clear a medium-sized building.
3. Clear three small buildings in succession. (NOTE: Two platoons simultaneously conduct an attack against the third platoon, which has the mission to defend the one medium and three small buildings.)

developing T&EOs should be assigned. It is critical to ensure that the T&EOs are, in fact, performance oriented, challenging, and relevant to combat. For example, the use of a rope with grappling hook is a required individual skill. Too frequently, this task is not further developed with specific conditions (soldier's load, height to throw and climb, enemy situation, and the like) and standards (number of throws allowed, length of time). If precision is not emphasized during individual training, a lack of focus will soon be evident during squad and platoon training as well.

For the particulars of MOUT, it is crucial that infantry battalions standardize and master individual skills; the battle is, after all, one of individuals and teams that we must build upon. Beyond this, we again have our best hope of reinforcing the principles of FM 25-101 if we insist that our individual training and collective lanes be structured so that the results are both measurable and mission oriented. Since conditions affect standards, it may be that T&EOs for collective tasks cannot be entirely developed until we have seen the training site. But if it isn't possible to visit the MOUT facilities early in the planning process, we can still draft T&EOs, even if we are only roughly familiar with the site layout. Then we can refine them as we get additional information.

What we must avoid is merely copying the MTP T&EOs and not planning any further—an all-too-common approach. An MTP T&EO should serve as a starting point and be modified to suit the existing conditions on a particular lane, which in turn affects the standards.

As a simple illustration, the T&EO for ARTEP 7-8-MTP task "clear a building" does not mention the use of light antitank weapons (LAWs) or AT-4s, which are most useful for clearing rooms (from supporting positions) and blowing entrances in structures. If we do not think this through in advance, we may develop lanes on which light antitank missiles are not used. If these weapons are included only as an afterthought, the OCs will not be prepared to give due credit for their proper employment. This is not to criticize any of our MTPs; it is

only to stress that they are of a general nature and that leaders must analyze and modify them to suit their units' specific needs.

Two final points should be made about developing T&EOs. First, we must keep in mind that our primary purpose is to prepare our soldiers for urban warfare. If we construct complex T&EOs that entail lengthy operation orders, we will waste precious training time and resources working on generic tasks that could be accomplished just as easily in garrison. Simple squad and platoon lanes executed with minimal time for troop-leading procedures—similar to the ARTEP drill series—will make the most of opportunities to train and retrain to standard on MOUT skills.

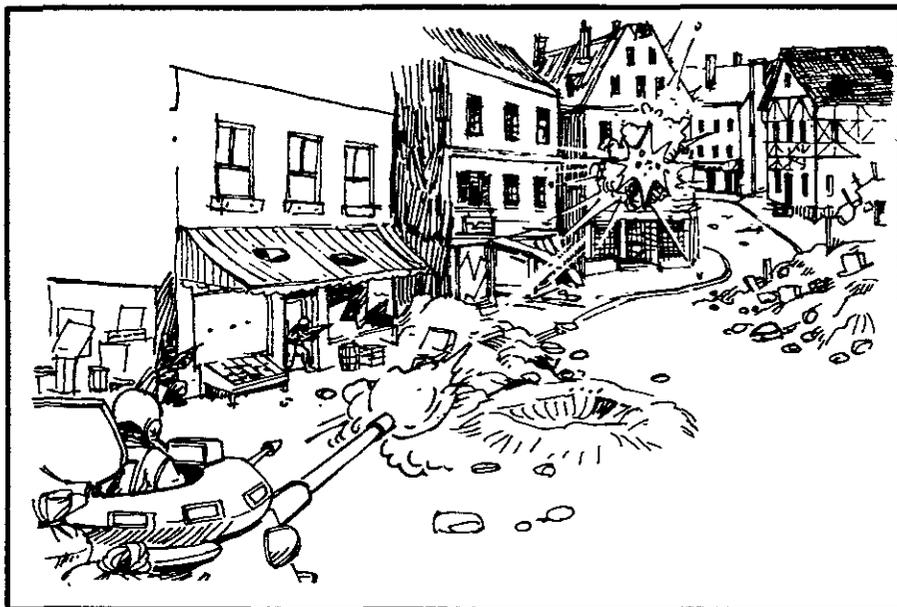
Second, we must make sure the proposed T&EOs are briefed, modified, and approved at a battalion training meeting. MOUT SOPs must be clearly understood within the battalion, and T&EOs should address these SOPs. Furthermore, unless we know the existing standards at one level, we cannot formulate the standards for the next higher one. Finally, in the context of improving our units' ability to conduct battle focused training, we also adhere to FM 25-101, which directs that we centralize planning while decentralizing execution.

As the MOUT training cycle draws near, the battalion should intensify its preparations. Two of the many issues in

a thorough preparation need to be emphasized: training the trainers and gathering the resources to support the training. *Battle Focused Training* tells us that good preparation gives trainers confidence in their ability to train, and that they must rehearse and review the tasks and subtasks to be covered during the training. The fast pace of everyday life in a unit often prevents us from putting this dictum into practice, but MOUT training provides an opening for it.

We must teach the chain of command how to execute and assess training, and the first step is to allocate time for this to occur. While the chain of command is preparing itself for the MOUT cycle, commanders should schedule events—such as organized athletics, equipment maintenance, and accountability inspections—that do not require a major presence of leaders. One technique for training the trainers is to direct each company to set up demonstration stations and lanes and have the largest feasible number of junior leaders observe the execution of the tasks. This approach is commonly used during preparations for Expert Infantryman's Badge testing. Alternatively, members of the chain of command can be organized into squads and platoons and execute the tasks themselves. This latter method will lead to better results, but it is also more time consuming.

Leaders, or at least those who will



serve as observer-controllers during the MOUT cycle, must also be trained on after-action review (AAR) techniques. In our case, squad leaders train and assess their own soldiers on individual skills through round-robin station, which does not necessitate comprehensive OC training; platoon leaders and sergeants serve as OCs for squad force-on-force lanes; and company commanders, executive officers, and first sergeants—augmented by battalion command group and staff personnel—are OCs for platoon lanes.

Again, demonstration lanes should be used. A member of the chain of command observing the demonstration should be selected at random to lead an AAR upon completion of the exercise. Then all of the observers should conduct a subsequent AAR, focusing on the quality of the AAR just delivered. The narrow confines of MOUT lanes will enable the OCs to walk through an engagement again with all of the participants and have the significant actions reconstructed and discussed.

A skilled OC can facilitate learning dramatically. For instance, after watching a squad make a tentative attempt to clear a building, an OC may decide to emphasize the importance of aggressive assault during room clearing, stressing the relationship between the explosion of the hand grenade, spraying the room with small arms fire, and getting up quickly. He can have the attacking force stand in an occupied room, have a dummy grenade tossed in, and ask the defenders to demonstrate the actions they took. The grenade creates a window of opportunity that is apparent to all the soldiers as they see the defenders' scramble for cover, their hesitation before resuming their firing positions (if not neutralized by the blast), and the disadvantages they now face if the attackers have already established themselves in the room. Despite the importance we attach to the AAR process, we rarely take time to acquire the necessary skills to do it right. During preparation for MOUT training, we can and must do so.

We should carefully examine our T&EOs to ensure that we will come to training with all the material we need to

provide the highest possible degree of realism. Junior leaders must be involved at this stage, because they are the experts and also the best innovators. (The obvious may often escape the battalion operations section, which may be intent on the big picture and overlook less salient points.)

For instance, it is no secret that hand grenades play an important role in urban combat. Yet battalions can often be seen in MOUT sites, training their soldiers without any sort of grenades. Solutions ranging from tennis balls to rolled and taped cloth provide easy answers if we only ask the questions. The search for realism will lead to the procurement of smoke generators, dummy mines, anti-tank missiles, and the like. If we cannot produce an adequate simulation of a device or condition that is fundamental to the execution of a particular T&EO, then we must modify the lane. Otherwise, we risk having our soldiers draw the wrong conclusions from the training. Additionally, we should devote similar attention to detail in gathering material to support training assessments. If we fail to plan out our AARs in advance, we sometimes overlook aids that are as available and useful as video cameras, for example.

Some observations about the execution of the training itself: First, if a battalion is deploying off post for MOUT training, the advance party should include not only logisticians but also trainers (at least down to platoon level), and other leaders and staff should move the main body. We frequently overlook this important point, because infantry battalions aren't responsible for structuring their training during most deployments (for example, those to the training centers).

Second, company commanders should be allowed to set up their own individual skill training stations and squad and platoon lanes. The battalion command group should ensure that the agreed-upon standards are achieved consistently throughout the units, but the specifics of execution must be delegated to subordinates. Such decentralization is in accord with our doctrine, and it enables junior leaders to develop their own training management skills.

The entire chain of command should be present for training. When the battalion's total effort is being applied to MOUT training, there is simply no excuse for a leader's absence. Over an 18-day period, there are numerous opportunities to mold the entire chain of command's approach to the execution and assessment of training.

Finally, we must make a continuing effort to review and share the lessons learned from our execution and assessment of training. Upon completion of the training, daily meetings should be conducted at every level, with the participants addressing salient lessons. For example, discussing execution, a commander—as a result of a day's observation of training—might identify the usefulness of the AN/PVS-7 in subterranean reconnaissance and the need for the OCs to remain as inconspicuous as possible instead of blocking the hallways during the training. Sharing these lessons will increase the effectiveness of all subsequent training and will help develop leaders who reach for excellence by continually critiquing their own effort and performance.

The training doctrine set forth in FM 25-101 is sound and straightforward, but we must admit that theory and practice frequently diverge. Part of the problem is that unless we occasionally find opportunities to apply the principles of battle focused training our leaders will not be prepared to employ the doctrine under any circumstances. Infantry battalions that recognize and use MOUT training for the superb opportunity it is will find that their units are more proficient in city fighting, and that their leaders are much more capable of planning and conducting all combat training.

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