

to establish the cage under the XO's supervision. The XO is also responsible for the cage's placement and for coordinating the pickup of the EPWs. Although the company cage is only a temporary holding area, it still must provide some shelter, food, water, a trash point, and a latrine.

At least four guards are necessary, and they are provided by the capturing platoons. It is important that EPWs be handled according to the Geneva conventions and the Law of Land Warfare. It is also important not to put local civilians or displaced citizens in with the EPWs but to turn them over to civil affairs teams—unless they are suspected of supporting enemy activity.

All EPWs are searched, and their equipment is taken from them. Once a search has been completed, certain items are returned—personal protection items (helmets, flak vests, protective masks), personal letters and effects, and inclement weather gear. All other gear is tagged with EPW document tags. If no tags are available, the following information must be provided: location where the gear was found, name and rank of the person it was found on (if known), and the suspected use of the equipment. EPWs are processed according to company and battalion SOPs. The capture of EPWs must be reported immediately to the battalion S-2 so that interrogation can begin.

**Safety.** Safety is always an area of concern for the XO, both in garrison and during tactical operations. He needs safety indicators for all operations, from post guard to limited visibility live fire operations. Some safety prevention measures are easy—ensuring that soldiers have and wear the proper equipment, that the correct amount of water is available, and that a safety briefing is conducted before a range or movement. Other safety measures are not so easy: Are the platoons trained enough for a limited-visibility live fire, and is the commander incorporating enough safety measures into his plan? The XO needs to act as an advocate for the commander in ensuring that all possible safety measures are taken. In addition, the XO conducts a risk assessment for all training. Safety is not the unnecessary coddling of soldiers, but the intelligent prevention of accidents. Accidents waste combat power, and the XO must do everything possible to prevent them.

The challenges of operating the company headquarters, maintenance, administration, and tactical operations are ever-present and ever-changing for the company executive officer. He must always maintain the focus of the second-in-command and not place too much attention on any one area. He must supervise and monitor all areas of the company. He must continue to learn about his job, communicating and sharing with other company XOs. Continuing profes-

sional development as an infantry officer goes hand-in-hand with his continuing improvement as an XO. The techniques and methods discussed here are not authoritative dogma but a guide to help the XO do his job in an air assault infantry rifle company. A company that can maintain, administer, and logistically support itself is also a company that can fight and win on the battlefield.

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: Lieutenant Storlie has compiled a packet of detailed materials that could not be included in the article. The packet includes duty descriptions and standards of conduct for the members of the headquarters platoon; a contents page from the company Smart Book; examples and descriptions of tracking charts; sample vehicle and pallet load plans; a company CCP layout, and recommended procedures for handling EPWs.*

*This packet is available at no charge upon request from Editor, INFANTRY, P.O. Box 2005, Fort Benning, GA 31905-0605.*

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## Developing OPFOR Soldiers

**CAPTAIN GEOFFREY N. BLAKE  
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The success of the 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry (Airborne)—the opposing force (OPFOR) unit at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC)—lies in its ability to focus on the tenets of fighting and

to identify and exploit any shortcomings in the rotation unit's battlefield operating systems.

The OPFOR battalion is made up of two rifle companies, one cavalry troop,

and a headquarters company. Each of the rifle companies breaks down into three rifle platoons, a mortar section, and a headquarters section. The cavalry troop operates in four tank platoons with a

## TRAINING NOTES

headquarters section. The headquarters company consists of single scout, mortar, support, and medical platoons. The staff sections operate in a supporting role with the companies.

The battalion operates under field conditions about ten months of the year. It has approximately 460 authorized positions and is normally augmented by an engineer company and infantry units, which participate in the rotations, task organized according to METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time).

With the battalion and its augmenting units, the OPFOR battalion's strength during a rotation is close to 700 soldiers. The number actually on the battlefield at any one time depends upon the phase of the rotation and the threat being portrayed.

All OPFOR leaders at the JRTC are experienced and have previously served in the same positions; the platoon leaders, company commanders, squad leaders, and platoon sergeants are all experienced professional, dedicated, and respected soldiers of today's Army. They have served with soldiers throughout their careers and understand how to plan, prepare, and execute a mission with just a mission statement, a commander's intent, and a set of graphics.

Officers assigned to the OPFOR, like the NCOs, participate in almost every after-action review at every level. This in itself is an excellent professional development tool. Observing and interacting with the rotating unit makes it easier for the NCOs to learn the battlefield operating systems. The development of a plan

and the execution of a mission against a particular operating system justly reward squad and platoon leaders.

An OPFOR company commander continually matches his wits against those of battalion and brigade commanders. Operating with his few resources against a more volatile force measures his ability to synchronize his assets. It is here that a company grade officer can appreciate the fundamentals, seen through the principles of war.

The OPFOR cadre trains all the soldiers on four fundamentals before they participate in any force-on-force training at the JRTC—individual and collective tasks that focus on marksmanship (with MILES), fieldcraft, battle drills, and decentralized operations. Proficiency in these tasks at individual, squad, and platoon

### OPFOR INDOCTRINATION AND SUSTAINMENT PROGRAM

#### INDIVIDUAL TASKS:

- Conduct MILES familiarization with the MILES equipment found on the JRTC battlefield.
- Conduct advanced marksmanship training in order to improve the individual soldiers' ability to shoot at different and challenging stationary and moving targets.
- Execute fieldcraft skills to orient the OPFOR soldier on the methods of surviving on the battlefield. These skills include soldier's load, camouflage, and cache techniques.
- Familiarize soldiers with the JRTC scenario and that of the surrounding countries.
- Understand the order of battle with the composition of the forces that are portrayed on the battlefield.
- Understand the JRTC Exercise Rules of Engagement.
- Call for and adjust fire so that every soldier can properly call for and adjust indirect fire.
- Administer First Aid for hot and cold weather injuries to prevent and treat different types of environmental casualties.
- Conduct training on individual movement techniques focusing on the high crawl, low crawl, and rush in order to increase survival on the battlefield.
- Report enemy information to ensure the correct method of collecting/reporting of combat critical information.
- Train drivers to ensure that they are familiar with the procedures and hazards associated with driving in off-road conditions.

#### COLLECTIVE TASKS:

- Infiltrate an area of operation without the enemy determining size, composition, destination, or orientations.
- Establish and occupy a patrol base to prepare for the next mission.
- React to combat (mounted/dismounted) both by direct and indirect fires.
- Conduct box attack by squad during the day or night against a known or suspected enemy location.
- Breach an obstacle moving either mounted or dismounted.

#### PLATOON COLLECTIVE TASKS:

- Prepare for combat
- Assault (mounted/dismounted)
- Defend
- Occupy assembly area
- Move tactically
- Cross danger area
- Perform tactical road march (mounted)
- Defend built-up area
- Breach obstacle (mounted)
- Construct obstacle
- Defend against air attack
- Consolidate and reorganize
- Airborne assault
- Raid
- Perform helicopter movement
- Employ fire support

#### SQUAD COLLECTIVE TASKS:

- Perform tactical road march
- Perform stay-behind operations
- Infiltrate/exfiltrate
- Reconnaissance
- Perform helicopter movement
- Assault (mounted/dismounted)
- Disengage
- Defend
- Cross danger area
- Defend against air attack
- Counterreconnaissance
- Construct obstacles
- Occupy patrol base
- Perform link-up
- Employ fire support
- Breach obstacle (dismounted)
- Overwatch/support by fire
- Perform hasty ambush
- Move tactically
- Conduct operations security
- Consolidate/reorganize
- Establish Cache



**OPFOR soldiers at the JRTC conduct rehearsals for a deep strike air assault against a brigade TOC.**

toon levels allows the unit to be an excellent, uncompromising OPFOR.

The battalion conducts an indoctrination and sustainment program. Each company plans, prepares, and executes the program for all newly assigned soldiers and as part of refresher training. This program is conducted in two phases. Phase I focuses on the individual skills in which the soldiers need to be proficient before they participate in a rotation. This is a training event conducted monthly as part of troop rotations. Phase II, conducted at squad and platoon level, is intended to integrate new soldiers into crews, teams, and squads. It is normally conducted as part of the planning and preparation for each rotation.

The training conducted at the JRTC is hazardous and demands close attention to detail; safety is therefore a continuing training focus before every mission. Safety briefings are conducted as part of troop-leading procedures before each phase, and the OPFOR battalion holds all leaders accountable for the safety of their fire teams, squads, and platoons.

Certain potential safety problems go along with working decentralized.

Dehydration is a big concern during dismounted operations; headaches and lethargy can occur after operating for 36 to 48 hours, and leaders must force soldiers to drink enough water to prevent these symptoms. Although classes on the

subject also help, the leaders must be the ones to enforce hydration. A thorough inspection of rucksacks before deployment is also needed to check the weight of the soldiers' rucksacks and the type of clothing they are wearing and carrying.

Sleep deprivation is also a safety hazard for the OPFOR. Roughly 48 hours before deploying to the field, the OPFOR is confined to the battalion area—not only for troop-leading procedures and forced hydration but also for rest and food. Once they are in the field, sleep is critical for roughly a week of continuous operations. The OPFOR stresses that soldiers and leaders alike must get restful sleep in the patrol base—away from the radio and monitoring of operations, but still in a secure, overwatched position.

Animals also pose safety problems—from insects to rodents to larger animals. With the proper repellent, identification, and working knowledge of what to do if bitten or attacked, the OPFOR can reduce the threat of non-battle injuries from animals.

Careless mistakes as well as freak accidents can cost lives, especially in inherently dangerous air assault and airborne operations. Attention to detail and well-executed rehearsals can reduce the risk of serious injury.

Driving wheeled or tracked vehicles is risky. A soldier who is not qualified to operate a piece of equipment simply is

not allowed to operate it, day or night. In a vehicle, each driver will have a non-commissioned officer as a vehicle commander. The speed limit for the OPFOR in the field is 25 miles or less per hour, depending on the conditions.

Driving at night requires more stringent measures for the OPFOR. Since most operations are conducted during periods of limited visibility, drivers and vehicle commanders must be experienced and dependable. A driver who is not qualified with night-vision equipment is not allowed to drive at night. In assembly areas, each vehicle has a ground guide, regardless of the time or the conditions.

Safety is incorporated into everything the OPFOR does—in all written and verbal orders. There is no room for compromise when it comes to safety.

The soldiers and leaders in the OPFOR continually assess their fighting ability, holding all squads and platoons accountable for proficiency in the collective tasks. With the OPFOR indoctrination and security program as the starting point and the rotation itself as the measuring tool, the OPFOR members assess themselves monthly on all of the squad and platoon level tasks.

These OPFOR soldiers and leaders take pride in their actions because they understand the principles of fighting. Facing all types of light infantry units (airborne, air assault, Ranger, and light), and having seen the success of their own squads and platoons, they continually stress the tenets of marksmanship, battle drills, fieldcraft, and decentralized operations.

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