

fire teams and squads, confronting the difficulties and hazards of maneuvering two separate elements against a hostile force. Most soldiers serve at least once as team leaders, learning basic leadership skills that even junior enlisted soldiers may be called upon to exercise in combat. It is easy to see the improvement in combat skills as the squads move through the various lanes. By the end of the last lane, the soldiers have reached a level of proficiency that will sustain them through their first taste of combat, where the most casualties normally occur.

In the context of the overall BCT POI and mission training plans, the training environment at Fort Knox also offers unique opportunities to young infantry leaders. Company commanders and XO's, in particular, benefit from the warfighting focus and the commitment to excellence.

There are virtually no training distrac-

tions for these officers to deal with. Their single overriding priority is to graduate qualified soldiers, and all of the resources are focused in that direction. The officers can plan training in detail two to three months ahead, and then execute the plan with few changes.

BCT is an intensely satisfying environment, both personally and professionally, especially for infantry captains and senior lieutenants. In only eight weeks, a BCT company commander and XO take 200 new and completely untrained soldiers from zero proficiency all the way to sustainment training level in individual combat skills and infantry small-unit collective tasks. Consider, then, the level of proficiency that can be achieved and sustained by applying some of the same techniques in a rifle company, with experienced soldiers who already have a strong base of skill and professional knowledge to build upon.

In summary, any infantry lieutenant or captain who masters the challenges of training the Army's new soldiers is well prepared for the similar task of training the soldiers in infantry line units to win the close fight, whether it is fought with MILES bullets at a combat training center or with real bullets in the streets of a city such as Mogadishu.

BCT is a training environment tailor-made for honing the skills of infantry captains and senior lieutenants in preparation for returning to infantry line units.

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The Infantry OSUT FTX

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The soldiers undergoing infantry one-station unit training (OSUT) at Fort Benning participate in a field training exercise (FTX), usually during the twelfth week of the 13-week cycle. The purpose of this FTX is to give the soldiers an opportunity to improve their individual and crew tasks in the context of squad-level collective tasks and help them make the transition to the training they will receive in their units. The FTX, the culminating point of the training, also serves as a final assessment of the soldiers, is the culmination of training, and helps maintain the cadre's infantry skills.

During the FTX, the soldiers are trained in MOSs 11B (Infantryman), 11C (Indirect Fire Infantryman), and

11H (Heavy Antiarmor Weapons Infantryman). The soldiers in MOS 11M (Fighting Vehicle Infantryman) are trained in 11B skills during the FTX and then receive two weeks of mechanized infantry training after the thirteenth week.

Although OSUT company commanders have considerable flexibility in the design of the FTX for their soldiers, one technique is to conduct three or four squad tactical exercise lanes that draw out the required individual skills of all infantrymen. These skills either coincide with or overlap the combat critical tasks the Infantry Training Brigade considers important. The individual skills involved in each collective task are taken from ARTEP 7-8 MTP, *Mission*

Training Plan (MTP) for Infantry Platoon and Squad; from ARTEP 7-90 MTP, *Mission Training Plan for the Infantry Mortar Platoon, Section, and Squad*; and from ARTEP 7-91 Drill, *Drills for the Antiarmor (TOW) Platoon, Section, and Squad*.

A company commander chooses the individual tasks for the FTX on the basis of his assessment of the soldiers' performance. The drill sergeants normally gather this information for him, as they track soldiers' performance during the cycle. Since the soldiers train and test on skill level one individual tasks throughout the cycle, the drill sergeants have several opportunities to assess their soldiers on each of these tasks. By the time the FTX is prepared, they have a

good idea of which soldiers are weak at which tasks and can have that information available for the commander.

Field Manual 25-101, *Battle Focused Training*, lists several sources for training assessment, including the following:

- Personal observations of training.
- Assessment and feedback from higher headquarters.
- Local external evaluations.
- After-action reviews (AARs).
- Performance scores.
- Inspections and drills.
- Common-task tests.

A drill sergeant plays an important role in the success of the FTX. Ideally, he trains soldiers of his own MOS. An OSUT company may not have enough drill sergeants qualified in MOS 11C or 11H, and augmentee support must be provided for these MOSs to improve the ratio of soldiers to non-commissioned officers.

For the FTX, soldiers are assigned to squads consisting of nine to 12 men each, depending upon platoon size. Each squad is assigned M249 machineguns, an M60 machinegun, a Dragon antiarmor weapon, and communications equipment, along with pyrotechnics, simulators, and tear gas for added realism.

Each platoon occupies a tactical assembly area (TAA) from which the squads conduct routine procedures. From the TAA, each squad conducts rehearsals and briefbacks, prepares for combat tasks, and then crosses the line of departure to execute a lane. The squads move through the lane in rotation: For example, while one squad is in the TAA, conducting routine assembly area procedures, a second squad conducts rehearsals, back briefs, and battle drills behind the line of departure; and the third squad, having already conducted rehearsals, is across the line of departure executing the squad exercise. Members of the squad in the TAA also provide an opposing force (OPFOR) on the lane, conducting an actual mission.

The drill sergeant briefs his squad, using a fragmentary order and a sand table, while the other drill sergeants (whose squads are not engaged) control



Soldiers conduct mortar crew drills in MOPP IV.

the flow of the exercise lane. If execution is going poorly, the drill sergeant may stop the squad long enough to correct the problem, or may start over, either at the assembly area or the line of departure. At the end of each squad mission (or during the mission, when appropriate), the drill sergeant, with the squad and the OPFOR, conducts a thorough AAR that focuses on individual tasks.

Each MOS has specific tasks that must be executed, and all MOSs receive equal emphasis. The 11C soldiers, for example, must perform specified tasks ranging from preparing mortar positions to conducting fire missions; and the 11H soldiers must conduct TOW battle drills, tracking exercises, dismounted positions, overwatch missions, and antiarmor ambushes. The training for both MOSs can be integrated into the 11B training.

The 11C soldiers attached to infantry squads can construct mortar positions to standard, camouflage the tube positions, and conduct fire missions. The M109 mortar carrier is available for this training, in addition to special equipment such as the mortar ballistic computer. The 11H soldiers can use their mounted and dismounted TOW systems as overwatch, when the terrain permits it. High-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs) and improved TOW vehicles (ITVs) are used for TOW training, and special equipment, such as TOW tracking boards, is available. The 11C and 11H soldiers also train on

squad movement techniques during this training.

All of the soldiers conduct introductory night training, using night vision devices, and each squad conducts night reconnaissance probes or similar missions under the supervision of the drill sergeant (squad leader). The soldiers also conduct nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) training in which they are required to operate in full protective gear for a period of at least four hours. NBC activities may include routine squad movement, recovery operations, and field sanitation. The soldiers must also complete a 25-kilometer (approximately 15-mile) road march, usually at the end of the FTX.

All training during the FTX is tactical, including field feeding. The soldiers maintain proper uniform and camouflage, and the leaders enforce field hygiene and sanitation.

OSUT companies train soldiers who can fight in all conditions and against various types of enemies. The Infantry OSUT FTX helps polish the basic skills of the infantrymen who will serve proudly in units around the world.

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