

# A Training Plan For OPFOR Dismounted Infantry

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The opposing force (OPFOR) at the National Training Center (NTC) receives three rifle companies each month as augmentees to replicate the OPFOR regiment's dismounted capability. All operations take place in open, rolling, or mountainous desert terrain; almost all are conducted in limited visibility and against an armored foe. These soldiers tend to function poorly when they are initially faced with the constraints of serving as OPFOR. By the time they figure things out, it's time to rotate home again, and three new companies arrive to learn all over again.

A simple three-day training plan can prepare a company for an OPFOR augmentee rotation. This plan covers the basics, is relatively cheap to run, and uses reverse cycle training. Although the original training fell short of the goal, if it is adequately supported it can begin improving the effectiveness of future OPFOR infantry from the first day.

The intent is to train OPFOR infantry in tank killing and night fighting skills that will help make the OPFOR more lethal. The desired result is well-trained rifle companies that can move and kill at night on the NTC battlefield. A brief overview of the training is shown in Table 1.

This training is relatively simple and inexpensive to run. For one company, a training area two or three kilometers long will do (although more would be better). Each company needs at least one armored vehicle with MILES (multiple-integrated laser engagement system) equipment and a radio. The best

vehicle to work against is the Bradley, because it will be the OPFOR's "opposition" at the NTC, and it has thermal sights. Less expensive to operate is an M113 with MILES; it is easier to kill, not as heavily armed (although its .50 caliber machinegun must be respected), and relies on the night observation devices of the track commander and driver. Spare vehicles should be laid on in case one goes down.

The support platoon provides enough

ATWESS (antitank weapon effect signature simulator) ammunition, white star parachute (WSP) flares, and small arms ammunition to conduct the training (see Table 2). (The totals shown reflect the *maximum* amount required. It is quite possible that less small arms ammunition will be used in the meeting battle. It is also likely that very little of the ammo forecast for the Day 3 night infiltration past the armored vehicles will be used.)

The normal complement of antiarmor weapons for an OPFOR rifle company is nine Dragons and 18 Vipers. This plan is flexible enough to allow a commander to make adjustments based on the situation in his own company.

The company links up with the armored vehicle in the early afternoon. All 18 Vipers establish maximum range on a stationary vehicle. Once all Vipers have killed, soldiers from squad leader up practice issuing volley fire com-

OVERVIEW OF THE TRAINING		
Day 1	AM	Mission Prep Lunch
	PM	Move to training areas Day Dragon and Viper practice Dinner (MRE) Night Dragon and Viper practice Move to rear
DAY 2	AM	Troop sleep Lunch
	PM	Move to training areas Day movement techniques Dinner (MRE) Night movement techniques Move to rear
DAY 3	AM	Troop sleep Lunch
	PM	Move to training areas Platoon/company battle drills Dinner (MRE) Company night movement

Table 1

AMMUNITION REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH COMPANY	
DAY 1	54 ATWESS, 18 WSP.
DAY 2	None.
DAY 3	36 ATWESS, 18 WSP, 900 M-60, 900 M-249, 2,100 M-16, ammunition for target vehicle according to type.
TOTAL	90 ATWESS, 36 WSP, 900 M-60, 900 M-249, 2,100 M-16.

Table 2

## TRAINING NOTES

mands with groups of three Vipers firing at a stationary vehicle. When all six groups can consistently kill a combat vehicle at 150 meters, the vehicle moves in closer and provides the infantrymen with a moving target. The vehicle increases its speed and its distance from the firing line until all six teams achieve consistent kills on a moving target. The intent is to standardize firing commands within the company (an example is shown in Table 3) and to show the gunners the limits of their systems. During day fire, each gunner should fire at least one live ATWESS round, always following the safety rules for firing ATWESS.

After the Viper fire, Dragons should fire individually at the stationary vehicle at increasing range. After the maximum range for each of the nine Dragons is established, three teams of three shoot in volley at first the stationary and then the moving target. Also, each Dragon gunner fires at least one ATWESS round. Soldiers not

involved in active firing may practice land navigation skills or common task training.

The company then eats dinner and prepares for night gunnery. Leaders control teams of three Vipers or three Dragons. The intent is to practice the coordination of the gunners, the fire commands, and the use of WSP flares. Initially, this should be a sort of known-distance range, with the Vipers firing at 100 meters and the Dragons at 300 meters. Gunners identify targets, orient on them, and confirm to the leader that they are ready to shoot. The leader then gives a preparatory fire command and launches a flare, taking the wind into account. After the illumination round bursts over the target, the leader finishes the fire command, and the gunners engage simultaneously. If teams show skill early, they can then try to engage the vehicle as it moves slowly toward them. Leaders should try not to use more than two WSPs per team, but should try to get each team a night kill

under illumination. Given six teams of Vipers and three of Dragons, they can expect at least 18 WSPs. Before leaving the area, leaders should coordinate the next day's training location and time with the target vehicle crew.

On Day 2, the company deploys after lunch, links up with the target vehicle, and rehearses platoon and company movement techniques, actions on contact, breaking contact with an infantry fighting vehicle as a platoon and as a company, and actions at halts.

Squads should move in wedges, platoons with squads in column or in a wedge. Companies should travel with platoons in column, by traveling over-watch, and learn rolling bounds to bypass contact.

The break-contact drill is for chance contact with a Bradley. The lead element taking Bradley fire returns fire violently just long enough for the element behind it to set a hasty firing line oriented on the Bradley. The lead element turns and runs through or to the side of the second element and continues to the end of the unit, turns and sets. The second element, now out front, sends suppressive fire as soon as the running element passes and pulls to the rear of the formation. The third element does the same. Bounds continue until enemy fire is no longer effective and the unit reaches defendable ground. Leaders then consolidate, reorganize, and figure a new route.

Action drills are the same as in any army. Volume of controlled fire, coupled with simple, decisive movement, often makes up for lack of numbers. The unit must not get pinned down (easy to say, but hard to do); immobility leads to death. If a unit can't maneuver forward or to the flanks, it pulls back. It is better to have only two survivors breaking contact than to lose all in a heroic stand.

Actions at halts need work. Often, a company that is moving well stops for a five-minute water break. This turns into a half-hour break-in-contact drill when somebody falls asleep or the lead of the column starts moving again before the

### EXAMPLE OF DAY AND NIGHT ANTITANK FIRE COMMANDS

**TASK:** Kill an enemy armor vehicle.

announce Identified. "Three, Two, One, Fire."

**CONDITIONS:** Given a leader, three gunners with similar antiarmor weapons (all Dragon or all Viper), a stationary or moving enemy vehicle vulnerable to the weapons on hand and within range, and enough class V, day or night. The enemy vehicle has not observed the team.

**Gunners:** All engage simultaneously upon hearing "Fire."

#### NIGHT

**Leader:** "Gunners, enemy (tank, Brad), direct front."

**STANDARDS:** Kill the vehicle with the first volley.

**Gunners:** Announce "Up" after clearing backblast area and weapon is ready to fire. Orient in general direction given.

#### DAY

**Leader:** "Gunners, enemy (tank, Brad), direct front."

**Leader:** "Sending illum now." (Pops white star para, directs gunners onto target.)

**Gunners:** Announce "Up" after clearing backblast area and weapon is ready to fire.

**Gunners:** Announce "Identified" when target is in sights.

**Leader:** "At my command...."

**Leader:** Waits for all gunners to announce "Identified." "Three, Two, One, Fire."

**Gunners:** Announce "Identified" when target is in sights.

**Gunners:** All engage simultaneously upon hearing "Fire."

**Leader:** Waits for all gunners to

Table 3

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tail of the column has closed. The trick is that, when a halt is called, every one stops *in place*. The tail of the column, if moving well, is *supposed* to be spread out. "Closing the accordion" is an undesirable tendency. The accordion stretches out when the column starts again because the men don't start moving until they see men in front of them moving. Units can try "all Bravo" call signs, "This is Bravo, halt for water, move again in five, acknowledge in turn." Units stop in place without changing the interval, and if the junior leaders watch the time, everyone starts moving again at the proper interval with no lag.

If a stop of an undetermined length of time is made, the commander stops, assembles key leaders, and then passes the time of the next start. If the soldiers are disciplined, each will get up at the time he has been told, not just when they see the guy ahead of them go. The interval between soldiers in the formations should be as far as one can make out a man without a night vision device, regardless of the type of formation. The distance between forward and flank security and the main body should be out to the limit of a night vision device's ability to make out groups of soldiers. Given the capability of the enemy, spreading out is the only defense against losing the entire unit to a single Bradley chain-gun engagement.

In some training, these drills resemble standard U.S. movement techniques, and some vary greatly. A well-honed unit may resist changing something that, for it, works well. These drills are designed to be simple and rapid for a unit that needs practice working in open ground. Too often, after a few kilometers in the dark, tactical movement turns into "follow-the-leader," and contact causes complete breakdowns. Sometimes command and control is re-established, sometimes not. These drills should be practiced until they are smooth in the daytime, then practiced in the dark. The target vehicle is placed on the route of march. The vehicle's commander can evaluate the approach and movement through his night sight, if he

has one. Critical things at night are breaking contact in good order and starting and stopping movement in good order.

On Day 3, the company links up. In the afternoon, it works on bypass drills with the target vehicle. If a sister company is doing similar training in the area, a meeting battle can be scheduled around mid-afternoon. The two companies should run headlong into one another for force-on-force, actions-on-contact practice. The commander's goal should be to keep his unit intact,

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*"The important things are always simple. The simple things are always hard."*

*Murphy's Laws of Combat*

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under control, and able to continue the movement after contact. This has the potential for turning into a MILES cowboys-and-indians melee, but he shouldn't let it.

After dinner, and after dark, the target vehicle is placed along a route. Use two vehicles separated by a kilometer or so if possible. The company uploads with live ATWESS and WSPs. The target vehicles engage if they can. The company makes a run, killing the target vehicle if it can, bypassing if it can't, and breaking contact if it must. Depending on performance and the time available, the commander can order additional runs down the lane.

It is useful to note here that there are several myths concerning MILES antiarmor systems. Debunking these myths is not MILES gamesmanship but rather learning to use a weapon system to exploit its strengths and avoid its weaknesses.

MILES antiarmor weapons *must* be volley fired. Each system has a probability of hit and a probability of kill. When a sensor receives enough MILES "kill" words within a certain amount of time, that system dies. It is vital, therefore, that multiple weapons be fired at

the same time at the same target. With these factors and the fact that one gunner might miss and another might have an unserviceable weapon, this still gives a fair chance of killing a target. Firing must not be staggered during a volley.

Given the importance of good volleys, perhaps antiarmor weapons should be organized so that the platoon leader directly controls the three Dragons in a single element. Each squad leader should have control of the three Vipers in his squad. These "teams" need to be close enough together to be under voice control. Squad leaders and platoon leaders need WSP so they can kill in the dark.

The hunter-killer team of a Dragon and a few Vipers is not effective because of the dissimilarity in the tracking time of the weapons. What matters is the volume of kill words received in a short period of time.

Gunners should not be in a great hurry to shoot, especially in the dark, because as soon as they fire, they lose the advantage of surprise. All advantages (mobility, protection, firepower) go over to the soldier who had been sleeping soundly until a gunner rushed his shot and missed. The gunner should take his time while he has it, and make sure everything is right before he shoots.

It used to be accepted as fact that a Bradley's MILES system could not die as long as its 25mm gun was firing. Now it appears it can die. Nevertheless, anyone shooting at a firing Bradley has already lost the element of surprise.

Shooting under WSP at night requires patience. It burns long enough for the gunners to acquire a target, for the leader to issue a calm, clear, fire command, and for the gunners to track a target.

The OPFOR soldier's primary mission is to kill U.S. tank-killing systems. The only way to do that to standard is to rehearse and practice often. MILES weapons should be boresighted and checked before every operation. Soldiers can practice on stationary and

moving armored vehicles at the longest possible ranges. There is a noticeable difference between units that actively practice and boresight and those that just "check the block" without really boresighting.

It is the training unit that holds every technical advantage. The only way for the OPFOR to win is to use its basic soldier skills in the dark more expertly than the training units who are relying on their technology.

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# U.S. Army Combat Arms Matches

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The U.S. Army Combat Arms Matches are more than marksmanship competitions. They are practical and applicable to actual combat operations, where soldiers face real challenges and danger, and where the disciplined application of small arms fire, with or without visible targets, can pay big dividends. The participants in the matches are soldiers who have exceeded the basic Army qualification standards in unit-level marksmanship training, and the skills they develop can improve their units' marksmanship training.

On the battlefields of today, it is not how many rounds a soldier fires at the enemy but what he does with those rounds. Especially in operations other than war, accuracy is even more important because of the number of innocent bystanders likely to be in harm's way, and accuracy requires confidence: A soldier who has confidence in his weapon is more likely to use it when the time comes, and he is better able to withstand pressure and stress and to hit a fleeting target in less than two seconds.

For many years, Army marksmanship was conducted under the Trainfire system, which was defensive in nature; zeroing, field firing, and qualifications were all done from prone or supported prone positions. A shooter was allowed

only one shot per target and could load and fire only on command. Although this system was convenient and satisfied safety concerns, it did not teach soldiers to handle their weapons aggressively or to exercise personal initiative.

The two major goals of the Combat Arms Matches (formerly called the All-Army Small Arms Competition) are to promote interest in small arms marksmanship training and to raise the standards of proficiency in the use of individual service weapons—rifles, pistols, and machineguns.

The things that make these matches different are that the soldiers fire from long range to short range, which corresponds to closing with the enemy; they fire more than one shot at a target in most stages of fire; and they must engage up to three targets at once with their rifles, or four with their pistols. The shooters reload at their own discretion, although the range cadre may suggest how they should load and change magazines.

The shooters move down range with loaded weapons. Although the range cadre checks to see that all weapons are on "safe," it is up to the shooter to keep the muzzle down range and not to endanger fellow competitors. Any soldier who is not behaving responsibly in this regard is pulled off the firing line

and, in extreme cases, disqualified and removed from the range. No longer can a shooter passively await commands from the tower. Each firer is responsible for his own conduct, with penalties to the individual instead of the whole firing line. In other words, each soldier has to think, move, reload, and shoot accurately, all on his own.

The soldiers fire from prone, kneeling, sitting, squatting, and standing positions; fire after sprinting 100 yards; and fire at small, fleeting, camouflaged targets. In the long-range match, they fire from 600 and 500 yards (549 and 457 meters) at man-sized targets.

This means a firer must take into account the effect of range and wind, or he will miss his target completely. A crosswind of ten miles per hour at 600 yards will cause an M-16 bullet to drift 43 inches, or 68 inches at 600 yards, and this is from a 300-yard zero. (This data is for the AO59 M885 ball ammunition, but it is similar for the M193 ball as well.)

At these matches, it is not enough to be a good rifle, pistol, or machinegun shot. All competitors fire the rifle and pistol Excellence in Competition match. The rifle shooters fire all the individual pistol matches, and the pistol shooters fire all the individual rifle matches. The top firer in each event (rifle platoon,