

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

FIRST SERGEANT JOHN E. FOLEY

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,

machinegun, sniper) then competes in a shoot-off, firing each weapon in each category to determine the overall top firer in the Army.

Each post and division may send a team, but there is also a battalion team category, and individuals may shoot in the matches. The sniper and machinegun teams consist of two members, or a maximum of three, with the third serving as an alternate.

Training teams to compete in the matches should not be a rush job, in which the best shooters are put on separate duty status for a couple of weeks before the matches. A solid year-round unit marksmanship program is best. Not only will the shooters be better, but a unit will have its pick of the consistently good shooters. The chief benefit of this approach is that all the soldiers will be better able to handle their weapons in a professional manner and hit what they aim at, any time, anywhere.

The following are a few suggestions for a unit marksmanship program:

- Look at the combat arms match program, which explains the courses of fire in detail. It is impressive to note how little ammunition is fired—an average of 30 to 40 shots for a rifle match.

- Have a solid physical training program, including wind sprints and upper body strength. Firers must be physically fit.

- Plan to shoot once a quarter at least, but more often as time and resources permit. Plan your shooting around what you want to accomplish—snap shooting, prone rapid fire.

- Have individuals practice on their own. If they're using MILES, they should shoot to kill. Although MILES does not include wind drift or bullet drop, it does give the soldiers the basics of marksmanship.

- Incorporate the shooting skills needed for the real world and the matches into your unit marksmanship training.

A unit's best shooters, along with those who are interested enough to shoot on their own, will not need much encouragement to participate in extra training for marksmanship. But shooting well should not be for the elite few. All soldiers should be able to handle their weapons competently and hit targets with them. Still, knowing that the best shooters will be sent to compete, all the soldiers will have an incentive to strive for good marksmanship.

In the Army Combat Arms Matches,

the chief limitation is in the number of competitors the matches can handle. For the 1993 matches, for instance, the Active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve were given quotas for attendance, with each limited to 300. But a total of only about 540 competed, and roughly twice that number could have been accommodated. (Curiously enough, the ranks of the Active Army were somewhat thin, and infantrymen were a definite minority.) The major cost of competition is for travel to and from the site of the matches.

The next Army Combat Arms Matches are scheduled to be held at Camp Robinson, Arkansas, in March 1995. Additional information on the courses of fire is available from the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit at Fort Benning.

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