

TRAINING NOTES



Battle Drill React to Armor While Dismounted

CAPTAIN FRED W. JOHNSON

Most light infantry platoons and squads that rotate through the combat training centers demonstrate a lack of proficiency in reacting to contact against armored vehicles. One reason for this is infrequent training with or against armor. More important, because our training materials do not offer a battle drill for reaction to this kind of threat, units have no frame of reference for planning and conducting this training. The result is slow and indecisive action against a very lethal opposing force.

Units must develop their own conditions, standards, and performance measures for a *React to Contact Against Armor* battle drill. Then they should conduct situational training exercises that incorporate an armored threat.

The development of the training objectives for this drill must consider two separate conditions: The friendly unit identifies the enemy vehicle without being sighted by the enemy, or the enemy vehicle identifies the friendly unit first. Additionally, the contact may take place during daylight or during hours of limited visibility.

The performance measures for these two conditions may also vary, depend-

ing upon the availability of indirect fire illumination from mortars, artillery, or from the 40mm M203. The unit has either AT4 or Dragon antiarmor weapons, and the unit has been ordered to destroy enemy armor within its capability.

The standards should be that the unit destroys or disables the enemy vehicle, and that the unit sustains no friendly casualties. Although these standards seem obvious, the performance measures that lead to mission success must be executed promptly and efficiently. This can be done only if the actions are sequential and if they represent mental steps that require minimal orders. The unit must standardize these actions and rehearse them.

The friendly unit identifies the enemy vehicle first. When the vehicle is identified, the signal for *halt* is given, followed by a signal for *enemy armored vehicle*. If the platoon leader cannot see the vehicle, he moves forward to identify it and assess the situation. He must determine the availability of cover and concealment, the route to an assailable flank, and an attack-by-fire position. If the vehicle is within range of the platoon's antiarmor weapons, these weapons are deployed immediately to

the flanks of the platoon oriented on the enemy vehicle. The unit should already have task organized into several two-man or three-man AT4 teams with a leader responsible for their positioning. The weapons squad leader or the platoon sergeant positions the Dragons selected to engage the target in case the vehicle identifies the unit.

If the unit is identified, the command to fire is given immediately. The platoon forward observer initiates a call for fire to be executed on the platoon leader's command. The purpose of the indirect fires is to force the enemy vehicle to button up, reducing the commander's and the gunner's field of vision. Given this intent, variable time fuse is used. Since the unit may close to within 200 or 300 meters of the vehicle, the fires should be from 60mm or 81mm mortars because of their smaller minimum safe distance.

Once a route and an attack-by-fire position have been identified, the platoon conducts bounding overwatch to those positions, ensuring that both the moving and the overwatching units have antiarmor capabilities. The Dragons remain in the overwatch and are positioned to ensure the best possibility for a first-round kill. The AT4 teams

maneuver to an attack-by-fire position well within their range for a stationary target. The purpose of having both a support-by-fire with Dragons and an attack-by-fire with AT4s is to ensure that the unit has redundant means of destroying the vehicle.

Once both elements are in position, the platoon leader initiates the engagement, with the Dragons using the pair-fire method: One gunner fires while the other observes; if the first gunner misses, the second immediately engages the target. At this time, indirect fires are called. The engagement may be initiated with mortars to button up the enemy vehicle, but only if the unit does not have Dragons; if it has Dragons, the mortar fragments may cut the missile's wire. If both gunners miss, the attack-by-fire element initiates, using sequenced, pair, or volley fire.

During hours of limited visibility, the platoon leader should plan to use mortar or 40mm illumination or parachute

flares to illuminate targets for the AT4s. If the platoon does not have Dragons available—with their nightsights—illumination is critical for successful AT4 engagements. Ideally, the illumination should be fired from the support position instead of the attack-by-fire position to avoid compromising the engaging element.

The enemy vehicle identifies the friendly unit first. Although the most obvious reaction to being compromised by an armored vehicle is to break contact, this may not be the wisest choice. Unless cover is immediately available, it is unlikely that a dismounted platoon can successfully run away from a tank's main gun or coaxial machinegun.

The response to this situation must be immediate. The Dragon gunners, if within range of the enemy vehicle, immediately employ their weapons. Smoke is used and the remaining personnel maneuver to the flank or a blind side of the vehicle. If possible, the AT4

teams attempt to close with the vehicle, and the forward observer immediately calls for fire.

The actions described here are a starting point for platoons in developing standing operating procedures for reaction to an armored threat. These actions, at a minimum, should be addressed in the coordinating instructions of operations orders and should be rehearsed generically when the unit is fighting an enemy with armor capability. This training will help ensure that soldiers and leaders alike will be able to react with the required speed and precision when they unexpectedly encounter an armored vehicle.

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Rehearsals

The Key to Mission Success

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A junior officer serving as an assistant operations officer in a light infantry battalion is often given the additional duty of battalion rehearsal officer. In this role, he must be aware of the resources for a rehearsal kit and also of set-up procedures and execution methodology.

Gathering Resources. A rehearsal kit must contain all the required items, must be durable, and must be configured for transport by air, land, or sea. Its size depends upon the specificity and the variety of the battalion's rehearsals. The unit's mission essential task list (METL) and battle drills are good in-

dicators of the types of rehearsals likely to be conducted.

Waterproof, compartmented containers best protect and organize kit materials. A kit can weigh more than 50 pounds, and handles make the container easier to carry. Suggested containers include footlockers, empty ammunition cans, and filing cabinets.

Today's light infantry battalion task force is assigned missions within a wide range of military operations, and the versatility of the battalion's rehearsal kit must match the diversity of the unit's possible missions.

Materials must be gathered and

models built that represent operational symbols in accordance with Field Manual 101-5-1, *Operational Terms and Symbols*. In addition to the manual itself, the following materials are needed:

- Engineer tape for phase lines and unit boundaries.
- Candy-stripe tape for area of operation boundaries.
- Colored tape for routes, roads, areas.
- String for unit boundaries, group targets.
- Colored markers for friendly and enemy symbols.