
sent his situation report to higher headquarters while his leaders continued to consolidate and reorganize.

Then the enemy counterattack started. Targets popped up to simulate the enemy's gradually moving closer, starting at 300 meters and working their way in toward 50 meters. The convoy leader had the lead vehicle continue suppressing the targets while everyone else remounted the trucks. Once the convoy was ready to move, they broke contact and moved out of the kill zone while continuing to fire at targets until all of the vehicles were safely out.

The other four scenarios were variations of this *react to near ambush drill*. The convoy mission, however, was altered to include *move to and conduct a casualty evacuation*, or *move to and conduct a vehicle recovery*. In each situation, they encountered an on-site ambush. The other two scenarios we incorporated were conducting convoy operations and encountering an obstacle/minfield and then being engaged by enemy overwatching the obstacle, which required a breaching operation. The final scenario was reacting to an ambush and conducting a break contact drill.

Once the vehicles were off the range, the NCOIC directed all vehicles to halt and have all personnel dismount. Safety NCOs then supervised the clearing of all weapons and conducted a brass and ammunition check. Once all personnel, weapons, and vehicles had been

inspected for live ammunition, the NCOIC directed the vehicles to move to the parking area. From there, all personnel involved in the iteration moved to the AAR site, where the major lessons learned were reviewed. These lessons then became the focus for the next iteration.

At the end of the LFX, key leaders assembled for a discussion and recommendation meeting, which dealt with all the things that could make the range better and more realistic.

From this final AAR, we learned five major lessons:

- Planning for an event of this size should include several in-process reviews (IPRs) at least six weeks ahead to inform each participant of his role in the exercise.

- For special range set-ups, a whole day is needed to work out all of the bugs.

- A way of recording the iteration's marksmanship accuracy should be developed so that soldiers and leaders alike can see whether they are improving throughout the day.

- The *crawl, walk, run* training technique must be used with blank ammunition before conducting a live iteration. This should start with squad leaders training their men on battle drills, dismounting techniques, and individual movement techniques, and conclude with the convoy leaders supervising a full run-through of an iteration with blank ammunition.

- Many other things can be incorporated into a convoy LFX to add realism and improve training. These may include calls for fire, close air support requests, better operations orders, and fire support planning.

The convoy live-fire exercise, the first ever to take place at Schofield Barracks, tested the mettle of every soldier involved. The leaders were able to see how difficult it actually is to train soldiers on battle drills in a live-fire exercise as well as how important these drills are in keeping soldiers alive in combat.

Unit leaders also saw how important cross-level training is among several different specialties, from infantryman to medics to drivers to mechanics. Indeed, we all realized that, unless LFXs are conducted to train soldiers of various specialties to operate with each other in combat, neither units nor individual soldiers will be prepared for the confusion and stress of war.

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Platoon Attack

Role of the Platoon Sergeant and Platoon Leader

MAJOR KEITH P. ANTONIA

During a platoon attack, the unit's top two leaders must work together. A platoon sergeant and a platoon leader who are in the right places at the right

times, doing the right things will directly improve their platoon's force protection, increase the survivability of individual soldiers within the platoon,

and improve the entire unit's chances of succeeding.

The effective use of the platoon sergeant can free the platoon leader to

use and control all the assets available to him and remain aware of the enemy situation on and around the objective.

Too often, platoon leaders become too fixed on the objective during the attack, and concentrate only on that immediate fight. Some tend to forget about their forward observers, fail to consider enemy avenues of approach into the objective area, and are late during consolidation and reorganization in positioning key weapons, developing contingency plans, and confirming the fire support plan that was developed in the attack position, patrol base, or assembly area based on map or leader's reconnaissances. These deficiencies are not due to a lack of initiative. Rifle platoon leaders today are excellent. But they do get too involved in what I'll call the analogous "close" fight.

Generally, platoon leaders think that leading from the front means moving with the lead squad, directing traffic, or being personally involved in the close fight. But leading from the front does not necessarily mean these things. It means that the platoon leader is with his platoon and positioned where he can best command and control the entire platoon and employ fire support and key weapons to bring maximum combat power to bear upon the enemy at the decisive point to defeat or destroy the enemy while also protecting his platoon. I contend that the platoon's "deep" fight belongs to the platoon leader, and that the platoon's "close" fight belongs to the platoon sergeant and squad leaders.

Platoon sergeants should be up front influencing the action, especially when a squad reaches a point where it needs motivation or leadership to continue the momentum of the attack. The platoon sergeant has a sense of what is happening in the fight because of knowledge and experience that the platoon leader may not yet have.

To illustrate this point, I'll use an experience I had as a Ranger rifle company commander:

The company was executing a difficult night attack in the rain. The platoon with the main effort was bogged down while breaching an

obstacle, taking heavy casualties. The platoon's momentum of attack had stalled, and additional casualties were likely. Through my night observation device from a distance, I watched as a Ranger (who, I later found out, was the platoon sergeant) without hesitation aggressively moved into the breach, organized the remaining infantrymen, redirected close-in suppressive fires, breached the obstacle, and opened the way for the company main effort. He did not hold back at the rear of the platoon collecting casualties or direct supporting fires from the support position.

This platoon sergeant had trained the platoon medic to supervise and manage casualty evacuation at platoon level. The weapons squad leader controlled



supporting fires from the support position. The platoon sergeant got involved in the close fight and was able to influence the outcome of the battle.

Although the platoon sergeant is responsible for medical evacuation, he does not directly supervise. He should train the platoon medic to supervise the platoon aid and litter team and the combat lifesavers. When appropriate, the platoon sergeant should move to the platoon leader to provide advice on the tactical situation and help the platoon leader make the best possible tactical decisions.

During consolidation and reorganization, the platoon sergeant should get the assessment of combat effectiveness reports and send enemy information to the company command post. This will

free the platoon leader to evaluate observation and fields of fire, cover and concealment, obstacles and movement, key terrain, and avenues of approach (OCOKA) or potential enemy sniper or forward observer positions, position key weapons, confirm the fire support plan, and see that the squads' sectors are tied in. After this is done, the platoon sergeant briefs the platoon leader on ACE and intelligence and can also help the platoon leader position key weapons.

An additional point to consider with regard to the platoon leader's position during the attack is his survivability, which is directly tied to the platoon's survivability, force protection, and combat power, and the company's mission accomplishment. If a platoon leader is killed or wounded, a large portion of the platoon's command and control is degraded, and the platoon is likely to lose its ability to fight the deep battle. The platoon's overall effectiveness is diminished. For these reasons, the platoon leader should allow his squad leaders and platoon sergeant to fight the close battle.

It is not my intent to portray the platoon leader as a man who never becomes personally involved in the fight. There are instances in which he must display the courage and resolve to move to the front, but he must calculate the risk to the entire platoon and make sure the benefit outweighs that risk.

In brief, the platoon sergeant should fight the close battle. The platoon leader must concentrate on the deep battle and constantly think of how he can employ his assets and those of higher units to fight that battle. This will help protect the platoon, increase survivability, and improve the chances of mission success.

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