

TRAINING NOTES

of the defense, the XO and first sergeant are also needed during the final phases of the preparation. Once the SEE (small emplacement excavator) or dozer is on site, the first sergeant can be used to ensure that these assets are used as efficiently as possible. Once he gets the engineer vehicle, he should stay with it until the work is complete or the allotted time for its use has expired. The first sergeant should direct the vehicle from one location to another and ensure that the positions are dug to standard. He should arrange for the operator to eat while the vehicle is being refueled. Once the work is done, he should see that the vehicle links up with the next company.

After the XO has ensured that Class IV and V supplies have been dropped off at the appropriate locations and all supply issues are resolved, he can become responsible for the emplacement and construction of obstacles and man-made TRPs. If an obstacle is being emplaced in the company's sector, the XO should link up with the engineer in charge and see that the obstacle meets the intent of the battalion or company commander. He should also supervise and inspect the construction of company level obstacles, including the emplacement of protective, tactical, and

supplemental wire and hasty protective minefields.

The priority of work most often neglected due to time constraints is the rehearsal of the engagements and contingency plans. Unfortunately, commanders at the JRTC rarely use any of the three types of rehearsals—backbriefs, reduced force, and full force. When time is short, the backbrief can be a very effective technique if it is used as a synchronization tool. The commander can gather his subordinate leaders and verbally fight the battle by asking, "What happens when . . . ?" questions to stimulate the unit to take the appropriate action. He can also accomplish this using a terrain model or the company fire plan sketch. If the leaders cannot be gathered at one location, a similar rehearsal can be conducted by radio.

Units that rotate through the JRTC usually have SOPs for conducting the defense. These SOPs generally outline priorities of work and provide examples of range cards and sector sketches. But they do not address timelines for accomplishing the tasks or a division of labor for the best use of the time available. Since most of the tasks during the preparation phase of the defense

require a very limited decision-making process, the preparation of a defense can be made into a battle drill. An execution check list is an excellent way to outline the steps of the drill. Then, like all SOPs or battle drills, it must be practiced.

If time is not used wisely in the defense, it can be as great an enemy as the attacking force. When time is used to the fullest during the preparation of the defense, more effort can be dedicated to rehearsing and resting soldiers for the upcoming fight.

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SWAP SHOP



Protect Your Ear Protection

The Army issues you a pair of ear plugs, inside a carrying case. But what good will they be if, within moments after use, they pop out and are lost in the woods? What if you want to remove them briefly to listen for sounds of the enemy? You don't want to fumble with—or worse, search for—tiny rubber ear plugs in the dark in deep vegetation.

Many commercial ear plugs have built-in cords to catch them when they fall out. And the U.S. Army Soldiers Integrated Protective Ensemble (SIPE) has a corded ear plug/radio receiver that will let you go to normal hearing quickly and listen for sounds of the enemy.

But you don't have to buy commercial plugs or wait for SIPE gear. You can dummy cord your own issue ear plugs:

- Take about 12 inches of 550 parachute cord, and remove one of the seven inner strands.
- Thread the strand on a large sewing needle.
- Run each end of the cord through an ear-plug handle, and tie an overhand knot to secure the ends.

You can wear the plugs with the cord loose, stored in the issue carrying case, or at the back of your head; if the plugs pop out, they will stop at your neck instead of falling loose on the ground. Or you can wear them tied by a girth hitch to the inside of the helmet or BDU cap for more secure carry and storage out of the way, inside your head gear.

Either way, your ear protection will be protected.

(Contributed by Mike Sparks, U.S. Army National Guard, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.)