

TRAINING NOTES



Dismounted Mechanized Infantry In the Deliberate Attack

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In his *Third Army Standing Operating Procedures*, General George S. Patton, stated the following on the use of infantrymen:

The heavy weapons set the pace. In the battalion the heavy weapons company paces the battalion. In the regiment the cannon company paces the regiment, but it is the function of the rifles and light machine guns to see that the heavy weapons have a chance to move. In other words, the rifles and machine guns move the heavy weapons in to do the killing.

This concept of integrating the dismounted elements into the heavy task force scheme of maneuver is not new or strange to our doctrine. Several manuals address to some degree the integration of dismounted and mounted forces into the fight. In a desert environment such as that at the National Training Center (NTC), can a dismounted element instead be used to "do the killing" as General Patton described it? If adequate planning and preparation are conducted at all levels from task force to fire team, the answer is Yes. But a dismounted operation forward of the FEBA (forward edge of the battle area) that is not properly planned and coordinated, and beyond the range of mounted element support, is doomed to failure. Many task forces at the NTC

try to conduct dismounted operations but fail to plan and prepare adequately for them.

The following are some of the most obvious planning, preparation, and home-station training problems as observed during several rotations at the NTC, along with some recommended solutions:

Seeing the terrain. When defining the battlefield environment for a dismounted

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element of the task force, some commanders and staffs fail to consider that the area of operations and interest for the dismounted element may differ from that of the rest of the task force.

Terrain analysis as a part of describing battlefield effects is often overlooked as a part of the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) process. The military aspects of terrain are rarely considered during planning. Usually, a planner of the operation asks only, "How much of a walk will the mission require?" re-

gardless of how steep or open the terrain may be or where the enemy may be positioned in relation to that terrain. The effect in the end is a unit that does not reach the objective area early enough to achieve the assigned purpose. Or the soldiers may get to the objective but are not combat effective because they have spent the night climbing up and down mountains along the route. Or worse, they may have been compromised when they blindly stumbled into an enemy position.

Additionally, light data may play an important role in the dismounted element's scheme of maneuver. Obviously, moving under cover of darkness offers some concealment to the dismounted element. The time-distance factors involved in this move, the available darkness, and the mounted element's time-distance factors must all be carefully considered.

Especially important to the dismounted element are the time of moonrise, the percentage of illumination, and the time of BMNT (beginning morning nautical twilight). The dismounted element needs to understand how dark it will be during its movement and especially what the light conditions will be in relation to the time it plans to engage the enemy or could be engaged by the enemy. Careful consid-

eration must be given to the likelihood of premature disclosure to the enemy.

Seeing the enemy. Some company commanders don't use the task force situational template and don't adequately conduct IPBs at their level. Dismounted infantry elements are frequently expected to conduct night movements of more than eight kilometers forward of the battle area without detailed knowledge of the enemy composition, disposition, or strength in the objective area. Essentially, the deliberate attack becomes an unsupported search and attack.

Dismount and remount points along the route must be carefully planned to avoid detection or direct enemy fire in case the dismounted element must remount quickly for some reason. With the exception of the M220 TOW system, all dismounted antiarmor weapons must be employed within the ranges of the enemy tanks and BMPs the dismounted element is trying to find or destroy. Therefore, commanders should consider the avenues of approach they will use to move into the objective area and the positions from which the assault will begin, whether mounted or dismounted.

Many commanders, however, do not consider the likely disposition of enemy forces when planning their units' operations. They simply use the task force S-2's platoon position templates instead of actually trying to template vehicles on the objective in relation to the terrain. Terrain-based computer products from the S-2 may help the company commander in his analysis. Company commanders simply must conduct IPBs at their level and template down to individual vehicles for their companies.

The final step in the IPB process, determining enemy courses of action, is sometimes overlooked as well—in particular, the question of actions the enemy may take if a dismounted attack is launched against his flank early in the morning. If launched too early without the support of the mounted section, even a perfectly executed dismounted attack can easily be repulsed and defeated through an enemy counterattack. Commanders should consider using air and ground-delivered munitions and scatterable mines to tie the enemy's defense

to the restrictive terrain. The dismounted element could be used to confirm or deny the enemy's use of special munitions; at the very least, it should not be surprised by this type of action from the enemy.

Seeing yourself. The infantry's traditional affinity for dismounted operations sometimes leads a commander to believe his unit is at a level of physical conditioning that it has not really reached. As he conducts terrain analysis and route selection, the commander must understand what the dismounted soldiers can realistically accomplish. Otherwise, even a highly motivated element may not make it to the objective.

Also tied to the commander's understanding of a unit's capabilities is the combat loads it can carry and the loads required to achieve a specific purpose. Field Manual (FM) 7-10, *The Infantry*

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Rifle Company, is a good source of information on this subject. Frequently, dismounted infantry elements carry more equipment than they need for their assigned purpose, especially if the link-up with their Bradley fighting vehicles is planned and rehearsed. The extra equipment simply compounds the problems encountered at night and frustrates soldiers who may have started an operation with high motivation. A dismounted patrol with a mission that is tied to the task force reconnaissance and security effort probably does not need all of the antiarmor systems it can carry.

Task organization must be carefully considered. A task force may create a consolidated dismounted element and put it under the leadership of one platoon leader or company team commander who has not previously trained with the unit. Squads from different companies and platoons in the task force are suddenly

thrown together for the first time, and if they are to function properly, their individual standing operating procedures (SOPs) must be merged into one set of procedures.

The problem is then one of time management for the leader of this newly created dismount element. How does he establish one set of procedures for this element while also continuing to plan and prepare it for a combat operation that is to begin that same night? Any task force that would not place a mounted element in this predicament—even if it had been training cross-attached *mounted* elements for months before deployment to the NTC—should not place its precious few dismounts in this situation either. If consolidating the task force elements into one or two elements is the way the task force commander wants to use this force, then he should see that they train together at home station. The problem is compounded if the time and location of link-up for these elements is left to the company team commander. The task force can save precious time for the dismounted element if the task organization is done as early as possible during the planning process, and if the task force dictates the time for the linkup.

Some task force and company team commanders are almost totally removed from the planning and preparation of the dismounted mission—in some cases leaving new second lieutenants to plan and prepare on their own. The task force dismounted effort must be given the same attention as any other effort.

Limiting tasks and specifying purposes. Task forces tend to assign too many tasks to the dismounted element, and then fail to link those tasks to a specific purpose the task force commander wants that element to achieve. It is not unusual for a dismount element of 20 to 30 soldiers to receive tasks such as *Clear a route*, *Reduce an obstacle*, *Destroy a combat security outpost*, and *Conduct detailed reconnaissance* for the task force—all during one mission over a wide geographic area in five to eight hours. The result is usually a dismounted element that does not know which task to focus on or lacks a clear understanding of the result it is to achieve.

The task force commander must ask himself what it would cost the task force to lose all or part of its few dismounts. Is the potential gain from using the dismounts worth the risk of their loss, or is there a place on the battlefield where their use may be more critical later on? If the task force commander decides that the use of the dismounted element is important enough that he is willing to risk its loss forward of the task force, then the element should be properly focused on a clearly defined and achievable purpose. The dismounted element's purpose should be linked to the task force main effort and the accomplishment of the task force purpose at the decisive point.

Coordinating attacks. Units rarely consider a coordinated attack in which the dismounted element attacks an objective along with the mounted force, or in which the dismounted element clears a route along a flank of an enemy position to guide or help the mounted element get into the position of advantage. Too often, however, the dismounted element conducts an attack forward of the task force, hours before the mounted forces leave the line of departure (LD). Even if it is successful, this attack gives the opposing force ample time to reposition.

An approach more in keeping with General Patton's idea of using the infantry to get the heavy weapons into a position to kill is to have the dismounted element begin its attack on the enemy's flank at the same time the mounted forces are making contact with the enemy. If the dismounted element leaves the LD early enough the night before the attack, the element can see an assailable flank along the dismounted avenue of approach and conduct a thorough reconnaissance, and the attack can begin while it is still dark enough to protect the dismounted force. The end result can be an attack conducted on one enemy force using converging routes or a dismounted attack supported by the mounted element, which forces the enemy to fight in two directions at once.

Another technique is to use the dismounted element as a reconnaissance force with the mission of guiding the mounted elements into attack-by-fire or support-by-fire positions. Having reconnoitered these positions, the element has

determined that they provide protection for the mounted force and the best fields of fire onto the enemy vehicle positions. If at all possible, these positions would be established along the enemy's assailable flank with covered routes as close to the positions as possible.

In this situation, even if the dismounted force cannot identify a clear route for the mounted force, the confirmation of the enemy template can tell the task force commander whether or not that is a viable flank against which to begin his mounted attack.

Clearing defiles. Some units intended for the conduct of offensive operations do not plan for and conduct defile drills. Generally, the fundamentals of the drill are understood, but the commanders at task force and company team level do not give the dismounted element enough time

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to properly clear a defile. As a force begins to clear the defile with the dismounted element on the ground, the commanders involved lose patience and order the mounted force to move through the defile. The result is usually the loss of all or most of the company team.

Detailed rehearsals of this drill will give commanders at all levels a good idea of the amount of time it takes. A key to success in all of these operations is the ability of the dismounted element to remain uncompromised until the fires of both the mounted and dismounted forces can be brought to bear against an enemy if the need arises.

Planning fire support. Some task force fire support officers (FSOs) tend to concentrate on planning fires for the mounted elements only. But if the task force commander has decided to use the dismounted element forward of the mounted line of departure, this element

certainly warrants the planning of indirect fires that support its scheme of maneuver.

The company team FSO must fully understand the dismounted element's scheme of maneuver in order to plan and refine targets, and he must carefully consider his role in the dismounted mission as well. If he is to travel with the dismounted section, he must not neglect the planning of fires for the company's mounted elements to support their assigned mission, nor can the observation plan be overlooked for the company fire support team traveling with the mounted element.

Coordinating locations. All task force units and applicable brigade elements—the task force security company, scouts, brigade combat observation laser teams, air defense, and electronic warfare assets—that are positioned forward must be aware that there are friendly dismounted elements in the area and know where they are. At the same time, the dismounted element must understand the locations of these other friendly elements that may be in its zone of attack.

Restricted-fire and no-fire areas must be established and the information disseminated. The direct-fire plan specific to the dismounted unit and the supporting mounted company team must be understood. If the mounted element is to work in support of the dismounted element, measures for controlling fires must be established. Care must be taken to ensure that the dismounted element avoids the sabot arc of both the Bradleys and the supporting tanks. Link-up and remount points must be planned, and detailed rehearsals conducted. The most critical rehearsal is probably the direct-fire fight of the dismounted and mounted elements and the way they position and orient their fires into the objective area with respect to each other. The rehearsals must be true rehearsals, not simply coordination meetings or a place where fragmentary orders are issued.

If dismounted infantrymen are to be inserted into the area by air—especially if their unit SOPs lack information on air assault-airmobile operations—leaders should refer to the air mission briefing and air assault operations order formats

in FM 90-4, *Air Assault Operations*.

Planning communications. Means of communication between the dismounted element and the company or task force must be planned in detail. The task force signal officer must be a part of the planning process and must predict the element's ability to communicate, given its scheme of maneuver and the terrain. Then he must offer solutions to any potential communications problems. A task force retransmission or a company relay may be the technique to use in order to ensure effective communications. If the plan calls for the relay of dismounted radio traffic through a company team, the company command post must be prepared to execute this mission. The commander, executive officer, or first sergeant must be able to operate on the net to provide clear command and control.

Planning casualty evacuation. Detailed planning concerning the treatment and evacuation of casualties from the dismounted element helps reduce the died-of-wounds rate for this element. Units must plan for the use of company wheeled vehicles positioned forward to help the evacuation of dismounted casualties or the use of the company's attached M113 ambulance or the first sergeant's M113, if so equipped. If the company

does not use the ambulance forward, the task force medical platoon leader should plan to support the company's mounted element and request support through the forward support battalion's medical company. The dismounted element should include as many combat lifesavers as possible, along with properly stocked lifesaver bags.

At the NTC, some units have had the task force physician's assistant move as part of the dismounted element. This choice should be carefully considered, however, in light of the limited amount of Class VIII supplies he could physically carry with him as well as the effect his loss would have on the task force.

Predictions of potential casualties for the operation should include the number that would make it impossible for the dismounted element to achieve its purpose. The dismounted soldiers must understand at what point they should go to ground and conduct casualty evacuation instead of continuing with the assigned mission.

Inadequate planning, preparation, and home-station training for employment hampers the dismounted infantrymen's ability to accomplish their assigned task and purpose. Commanders must focus their training efforts on the ability of the dismounted soldiers to move and fight at

night and also on the ability of the task force staff and the company team commanders to plan adequately for their employment.

Specifically, the training must include conducting an IPB, planning direct and indirect fires, conducting unit coordination, and giving the element a clear and achievable task and purpose. Units should task organize and conduct consolidated dismounted operations as early as possible during train-up for an NTC rotation. One set of SOPs for the entire element should be developed if the intent will be to consolidate squads "on the fly." A clear chain of command for the element must be established.

This kind of focus on the precious few dismounted infantrymen in the heavy task force will set them on the path toward accomplishing their assigned task and purpose.

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Bradley Gunnery Tips

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We in the Army have always had to manage our training resources carefully, but now it is imperative that we make every training round and every vehicle mile count. With tighter budgets and higher personnel turnover rates, it is increasingly difficult to develop and sustain combat-ready Bradley crews.

To win the first engagement of the next

war, wherever and whenever that may be, our crews and units must be lethal, and we must be able to protect our force—two key elements of combat power. Meeting these challenges will require both determined leadership and innovative gunnery training techniques.

The updated Field Manual (FM) 23-1, *Bradley Fighting Vehicle Gunnery*, offers

several excellent techniques for training in today's resource-constrained environment. These include the unit conduct of fire trainer (U-COFT), the Bradley Gunnery Skills Test, the Bradley Crew Proficiency Course, and turret manipulation boards (worm/snake boards). All of these are essential before a gunnery density. But the manual does not address in ad-