
ducted either an escape and evasion course or a foot march of moderate length—4 to 10 miles. The difference between the Omega methodology and the Magundai was the Omega's focus on exacting execution. Although the amount of physical duress was at the medium level, mistakes were not taken lightly.

Another great leadership training program was established by the 7th Infantry Division, which mandated that all soldiers in the ranks of noncommissioned officers and above attend a leader's course before assuming any leadership position. The Combat Leadership Course and the Light Fighters Infantryman Course were excellent programs that established a division standard for its leaders. The courses reacquainted them with the hardship and stress that their soldiers endure. These programs should be Army-wide. Magundai, Omega, or Light Fighter programs that challenge soldiers produce more-satisfied soldiers than those who

answer to politically sensitive issues. The best demonstration of a commander's concern for his soldiers is in the quality of their training. The best force protection method is better training.

Leaders must constantly practice their art. For emerging doctrine and technology to succeed on the new battlefield, we have to focus on leadership development by encouraging free thinking outside the boundaries of the absurd. Commanders need to seize every opportunity to develop subordinates, teaching them *how* to think instead of *what* to think. For example, as a commander receives brief backs from subordinates, he should use the process to add mental rigor, forcing these junior leaders to address unforeseen problems. This not only addresses the individual problems, but also teaches the leader how to mentally wargame a plan.

The Army does not get to choose its missions, but it is expected to defeat an enemy in battle or conduct peacekeep-

ing humanitarian operations. It should, however, be able to develop leaders who can meet those challenges—and guide our soldiers through them. The soldiers remain the ultimate guarantors of American interests. The infantryman cannot be a policeman one minute and locked in mortar combat the next, unless we bear the cost of preparing him. Only effective leadership can offset that cost. Soldiers are not pawns; they are America's sons and daughters. Mentally and physically rigorous training will help bring them home. Diamonds are made from the application of intense pressure over long periods of time, and so are effective combat leaders.

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The Cadre Platoon

Turning a Challenge Into an Opportunity

LIEUTENANT DANIEL SCHEERINGA

The Army, at its core, is a group of people with a job to do. Everyone's job gets harder when the Army doesn't have enough people to do all the work. During the past several years, the Army, both active and reserve components, has struggled with the challenges caused by low recruiting and retention.

Company B, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry of the Illinois National Guard was no exception. Recruiting was suffering. A booming economy with numerous job opportunities made the monthly drill check seem less attractive. Retention was also difficult. While high school graduates joined the National Guard for the attractive educational benefits, relatively few stayed

after their initial enlistments. All of this left the unit with a shortage of privates and with serious turnover at corpo-

Many capable, motivated young soldiers worked for years to become team leaders, only to find themselves with no teams to lead.

ral/specialist and sergeant levels.

Many junior NCOs decided not to pursue military careers after their initial enlistments. Many more, who did not want to be career NCOs, left when faced with the frustration of having no troops to lead. Many capable, moti-

vated young soldiers worked for years to become team leaders, only to find themselves with no teams to lead. Young squad leaders would look to their left and see only a fire team's worth of troops.

It was part of the company's command philosophy to delegate as much responsibility as possible to these junior NCOs, including training. But there were still limits to what they could do. These corporals/specialists and sergeants were well prepared to train soldiers on battle drills and other tasks. Squad leaders and platoon sergeants still needed to prepare and conduct this training. Senior NCOs needed to take great responsibility for training and for

overseeing the training conducted by these junior NCOs. They faced serious overwork as these training responsibilities combined with the already heavy responsibility of caring for their troops.

Another challenge, no doubt familiar to many readers, was the unrealistic tactical training that resulted from low strength. Company B often deployed to the field with rifle squads of four or five men and fire teams of one or two. During our Annual Training periods, the company often had to consolidate into one platoon. While this may often reflect real-world conditions, junior leader training suffered as squad leaders led fire teams and platoon leaders led over-strength squads. Lack of strength also hurt training through an insufficient or sometimes nonexistent opposing force (OPFOR). Without OPFOR, what should have been realistic combat training began to seem like pointless walks in the woods. A true infantry soldier wants nothing more than to take the field and engage the enemy. When he is unable to do this, morale and retention will suffer.

To sum all this up, Company B had a wealth of experienced NCOs and a core of motivated enlisted men, but it didn't have enough soldiers to man three rifle platoons.

The Solution

With authorization from battalion, Company B's leaders tried an experimental solution. They looked for a way to make maximum use of their strengths (experienced NCOs) and minimize their weaknesses (lack of enlisted men and underutilized junior NCOs).

The company consolidated its three rifle platoons into two. This consolidation formed two platoons at or near authorized MTOE levels. This, of course, meant the elimination of some leadership positions. The small group of NCOs left out of leadership positions became the company's full-time trainers. Company B took some of its best NCOs—many with active duty experience—and put them under an experienced platoon sergeant. Under his leadership, they became the unit's schoolteachers.

It is important to note here that these trainers were carefully selected for their new jobs. They were not the losers of a bureaucratic game of musical chairs, nor were they rejects whom no one wanted leading troops. They were some of the company's finest noncommissioned officers. This cadre platoon consisted not only of more senior staff sergeants but promising corporal/specialists and sergeants as well.

In the new 3rd platoon (cadre), these junior NCOs gain valuable teaching experience before they rotate back to the line platoons for their next level of responsibility. 3rd platoon is by no means a permanent resting place. Instead, it is an assignment where capable NCOs can teach and learn before going back out to lead troops. This teaching experience serves them well, both in their formal professional education and

The freedom to concentrate solely on training gives 3rd platoon the time to research and prepare training for tasks the company has rarely or never trained on before.

in the line platoons.

In addition to training the troops in a garrison setting, 3rd platoon also addresses the lack of OPFOR. This platoon has enough personnel to provide a wily and experienced force to challenge both rifle platoons in the field.

The leaders of 3rd platoon can coordinate all elements of training, assigning training modules to individual instructors, then supervising and mentoring these instructors. The freedom to concentrate solely on training gives 3rd platoon the time to research and prepare training for tasks the company has rarely or never trained on before.

In response to changing times, and with authorization from the battalion commander, Company B decided to devote an entire drill weekend to training in military operations in urban terrain (MOUT). Since the company had never trained on this, there was a relatively small base of knowledge to draw upon. It is unlikely that line NCOs

would have had time to do adequate research and preparation for this training. But 3rd platoon was able to take the time to research all areas of MOUT training relevant to an air assault infantry company, searching both official and unofficial publications. (See "Let's Replace Battle Drill 6," by Captain Drew R. Meyerowich, *INFANTRY*, May-August 1998, pages 11-15.)

On the basis of their research, 3rd platoon's trainers planned an entire drill weekend of MOUT training. The 3rd platoon's platoon sergeant personally taught room clearing. The platoon used ponchos to build simulated rooms on the drill floor for room clearing drills. They invited a guest speaker, a member of a nearby police department's SWAT team. The platoon provided OPFOR for the platoon-level MOUT situational training exercise (STX) that capped off the weekend. During the STX, a 3rd platoon trainer videotaped the platoon going through their lanes, to facilitate their after-action reviews. The end result of all this hard work was a weekend of challenging and realistic training that left the troops with a solid base of knowledge the company could build on later.

Another prominent example of 3rd platoon's contribution was in August 2000. The company's leaders had identified land navigation as a key skill deficiency. Since Company B's nearest training facility, Joliet Training Area (JTA), lacked a precision compass course, Company B decided to build one. On the first day of a field drill in JTA, during platoon and squad time, 3rd platoon members designed a compass course from scratch and emplaced its stakes, guided by GPS—an all-day task. This is another example of training preparation that would have been difficult, if not impossible, for conventional line NCOs.

Company B is constantly seeking to improve its company training. In 2000, Company B and 3rd platoon shifted their focus from collective task training to individual skill training. Through the Junior Leaders' Program, 3rd Platoon will work to improve proficiency at Skill Level 1 and 2 tasks at the corporal/specialist and sergeant levels. They

will teach small-unit leadership through battle drills and patrols. The program will also teach young leaders how OPFORs fight, to further enhance their combat effectiveness.

My intent is not to suggest that all units immediately carry out a reorganization such as this one. Instead, I seek to share the insights Company B has

gained from this experiment and offer an option to commanders who face the small challenges of recruitment and retention that our commander faced. The problem of strength is not likely to go away any time soon; meanwhile, commanders must find innovative solutions to keep their troops combat- in spite of this challenge.

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The Basics Keep You Alive

FIRST SERGEANT JASON SILSBY

One of the biggest mistakes leaders and soldiers make when their units rotate to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) is that they forget the little things they were taught as young soldiers. As a young soldier coming into the Army back in the 1980s, I vividly remember my uncle, who had served two tours in Vietnam, telling me, "Stick to the basics and keep your head down because the enemy knows how to shoot, too." I have never forgotten these words. Hopefully, in this article I can tell you about a few things that may help your platoons and squads survive—and learn—at the JRTC.

The opposing force (OPFOR) is made up of soldiers just like you and me. There is no magic in the JRTC's OPFOR; they focus on the same small-unit tactics that your platoons and squads are taught. The OPFOR units work off the commander's intent and use a lot of initiative. This is what makes them so successful. Usually, they move in teams of three to five men, with the senior man being a corporal or sergeant. They live out of caches during the low intensity conflict phase. One piece of equipment they use that you cannot use is the Motorola radio. This is their main means of communicating with their teams. Since these radios are not secure, the OPFOR uses

brevity codes a lot to confuse the rotating units. Every OPFOR soldier knows how to call a basic indirect fire mission and adjust fire. OPFOR soldiers mainly use the roads and villages as boundaries for their control measures. Company commanders searching for the enemy should keep that in mind.

Marksmanship is another thing our Army could do a little better. We have been given extra items to add to our rifles when most of us don't shoot that

One of the biggest contributors I have seen is the M68 sight. I know batteries are a big problem and hope the Army will come up with a way to keep the sight from coming on prematurely.

well even with iron sights. Next time you're on a rifle range back at home station, try doing some training using your iron sights along with all the other attachments. It will pay off.

One of the biggest contributors I have seen is the M68 sight. I know batteries are a big problem and hope the Army will come up with a way to keep the sight from coming on prematurely. Also, do some home station training with soldiers engaging other soldiers

wearing MILES gear and using individual movement techniques. This is what the OPFOR does between rotations. You will be surprised how well soldiers will learn to engage a moving target. At the JRTC you'll see the OPFOR kneeling or standing behind trees most of the time while engaging your troops, because they have learned through trial and error that they don't get as many kills from the prone position. This goes against a lot of things you were taught as a soldier. Getting into a position that allows you to engage a target effectively is also important, but you should understand and exploit the realities of the MILES battlefield just as the OPFOR does.

Pulling security was probably one of the most boring things I did as a young soldier. I now realize it is also one of the most important things. Too many times I have been out there with my counterparts and seen their units surprised by the OPFOR. A lot of times we fail to realize how a good security plan helps us in the long run. When putting out observation posts or conducting reconnaissance and security (R&S) patrols, you have to apply some common sense. Don't finger drill it. Training units have a habit of going in thinking they're going to find the OPFOR at night. Not once have we found