



A Heavy Weapons Platoon's

15 Minutes to Success

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“Terminator-6, this is Warlord-6, FRAGO follows ... move from checkpoint 2 to checkpoint 4 and secure LZ Condor for 2nd Battalion’s air assault. Be there by 2300. Make sure you’re there before the birds are!”

With these words, an anti-tank platoon leader’s mind reels. He turns on his red lens flashlight, unfolds his map, consults his PLGR (precise lightweight GPS receiver), and peruses his graphics. A few minutes later, the platoon leader awakens his driver. The platoon leader net calls his platoon to get ready to move, gives the destination grid, briefs the reason they are moving, and then waits for the platoon vehicles to move out.

Invariably, one of the following events follows: a known minefield strike halts all movement; elements break contact; direct fire contact with “unknown elements” in the darkness impels the platoon to break contact; or impacting mortar rounds disrupt the platoon’s mission.

In the end, the platoon may or may not reach its assigned objective and accomplish its task.

At the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), the above scenario must be the most flexible in the battalion. The platoons’ mobility and lethality continually boost the task force’s agility and flexibility. During sustained operations, hasty missions are the order of the day. To help their platoons in ensuring success, Delta Company commanders should develop a “15-minute”

checklist for the platoons. This checklist should contain mission-critical items for each member of the platoon to execute prior to starting the mission. Sample events are shown in Table 1. These actions are not surprising. They are in everyone’s pre-combat inspection (PCI) checklist. But units must carry compressed checklists and be able to use them effectively in 15 minutes or less. All too often, platoons move out from point A to point B without any real preparations because of higher headquarters’ emphasis on “moving out now!” Subsequently, there is no individual situational awareness, weapon system readiness, or contingencies for making contact.

All drivers must know the route. All Soldiers need to know a frequency and call-sign they can reach if they need indirect fire support. Every vehicle needs to know

updated minefield locations and the locations of friendly forces they may be passing through. Leaders need to know a scheme of maneuver (movement formation, transitioning to bounding overwatch, preplanned indirect fire targets, etc.).

Commanders need to drill their platoons with sample scenarios so that they will be able to respond effectively. The difference between “speed” and “haste” has to be emphasized. When platoon members become proficient at conducting key pre-mission tasks, their success, confidence, and ability to execute aggressively will improve significantly.

At the time this article was written, **Major Perry Beissel** and **Sergeant First Class Marco Garcia** were the anti-tank/heavy weapons company senior observer controllers for Task Force 2 with JRTC Operations Group, Fort Polk, Louisiana.

Table 1 - Sample checklist

PL/PSS	TC:
Develop plan (10 minutes)	PCI commo, ensure freqs loaded (5 min)
- movement techniques	Review map, prepare to copy plan (3 min)
- weapon mixture	Prep NVGs (2 min)
- fire support, C2 frequencies	PCI commo, ensure freqs loaded (5 min)
- minefield locations	
- enemy activity in vicinity	
GUNNER:	DRIVER:
Prep weapon system (7 min)	Check oil/ fuel levels (3 min)
PCI ammo (3 min)	Tighten load plan (5 min)
	Prep NVGs (2 min)
ALL: Disseminate plan (WARNO + :11 thru WARNO +15) via FM or face to face.	