

TRAINING NOTES



Immediate Action is Action Taken Immediately

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS JAMES B. COUCH

“In 1607, the Wapenhandlinghe of Jacob de Gheyn was published. This beautifully illustrated drill manual showed each stage of loading a musket and readying a pike. It was soon translated into Danish, German, French, and English, and across Europe troops began to be systematically drilled... Gustavus Adolphus trained his troops so well that he was able to reduce the number of ranks to three (one kneeling, the second crouching, the third standing) and yet still maintain a continuous fire of volleys.”

— **Professor Johann P. Sommerville**,
University of Wisconsin-Madison
(<http://history.wisc.edu/sommerville>)

The handling of weapons (Wapenhandlinghe) is a Soldier skill that we need to train and reinforce to a greater degree than we are now doing. Without proficiency in these skills, our focus on marksmanship, especially short range marksmanship (SRM), is handicapped from the start. Like attempting to build a house without first pouring the foundation, we’re doomed to failure the first time the ground gets a little wet. Nowhere is our collective lack of skill more apparent than when watching a new Soldier deal with a malfunctioning weapon.

No matter what the authors of Field Manual 3-22.9 (*Rifle Marksmanship M16A1, M16A2/3, M16A4 and M4 Carbine*) tell us, SPORTS (slap, pull, observe, release, tap, squeeze) is not immediate action. The procedure has flaws in its training and execution and needs to be replaced. These flaws include:

- SPORTS take too long;
- It is likely to cause as many

problems as it corrects;

- It is impossible to perform correctly in the dark; and

- It will probably be performed incorrectly under stress such as in combat.

The biggest problem with SPORTS is that it has Soldiers attempting to diagnose (observe) the problem during immediate action. There is a big difference between looking and seeing. It is difficult a Soldier will be able to “observe” anything in a gunfight. Even if we assume that we can condition our Soldiers so well that they can perform SPORTS perfectly every time, they can’t see into the chamber to “observe” at night. It is unlikely that a Soldier whose weapon malfunctions in the dark will either pull out a flashlight or refocus his night vision device (NVD) to perform SPORTS. By teaching this procedure, we have placed the Soldier in a situation for which has not been trained every time the sun goes down.

There are other problems with the mechanics of SPORTS, but the fundamental issue is that it is something that you cannot just “do.” It requires you to make a decision — “observe for ejection of a live round or expended cartridge” then decide what to do. This flaw isn’t obvious to those of us currently serving because of the way that we were trained and evaluated right from the beginning of our Army careers. Inevitably, SPORTS is trained initially with an empty weapon in a classroom and reinforced in the barracks during basic training. This introduces the fallacy that SPORTS is immediate action. The reason that no decision is required after “observing” is because there’s never anything to observe (double feed, stovepipe, round stuck in chamber, whatever). Same thing for the EIB test – the Soldier knows

that he’s going to get five rounds, one of which is a dummy. This too makes it seem like SPORTS is immediate action. In the event that SPORTS doesn’t work, the explanation of remedial action in FM 3-22.9 para3b is not helpful. The order is incorrect, and there’s a good chance that if the Soldier follows the instructions as written in the manual, he will make a bad situation worse. The CTT (common task training) manual’s explanation of remedial action is even worse than the FM’s, as I will discuss later.

What needs to be trained is true immediate action and continuation of the drill through remedial action. If a malfunction occurs, perform IMMEDIATE action. Period. Do not attempt to diagnose the problem, just do it. Soldiers must be able to do it blindfolded, in the dark, with chemical protective gloves on. If immediate action does not fix the problem, perform remedial action, for which there need to be definite and well thought out steps. The method I have been retraining my Soldiers to perform is TPRRRS (pronounced “tapers”).

Before going into detail about a possible replacement, let’s take a closer look at the problems with SPORTS.

SLAP

“Slap” is intended to correct a weapon’s failure to feed. As long as the magazine is not damaged (bent feed lips/weak spring/spot welds on back broken), the main cause of a failure to feed is that the magazine is not fully seated. The shooter either incorrectly inserted the magazine on the load/reload, or the magazine release button was inadvertently pressed. Making sure that the magazine is seated is a good starting



Staff Sergeant Charles B. Johnson

point for immediate action. The problem is not the step, but how it is trained. What the FM says and how it is being trained to be done are two different things. The way it's taught to some Soldiers is to vigorously pound on the bottom of the magazine, usually two or three times. The problems with this technique are twofold. First, the Soldier is wasting time by slapping it more than once. Most firefights are two-way affairs. Adding extra motion means adding extra time — time during which the enemy's weapon is probably working just fine. Second, and more importantly, by "slapping-the-heck-out-of" the magazine, there's a pretty good chance that if the bolt is back for whatever reason, extra rounds will be forced out of the magazine. This will actually cause a double feed (or triple if the original malfunction was a double). Paragraph 3-1a of FM 3-22.9 says, "Slap gently upward on the magazine to ensure it is fully seated, and the magazine follower is not jammed (see note)." The note, which is at the bottom of the paragraph, reads "When slapping up on the magazine, be careful not to knock a round out of the magazine into the line of the bolt carrier, causing more problems. Slap only hard enough to ensure the magazine is fully seated. Ensure that the magazine is locked into place by quickly pulling down on the magazine."

Why is it that this is rarely done? For starters, the old FM 23-9 mentioned nothing about gently slapping or pulling down on the magazine. Admit it, how many of us actually read the new 3-22.9 when it showed up in our training library? The second reason why Soldiers are not pulling down on the magazine is how ammunition management is trained. At no point in the Army's formal school system is anyone trained to do anything other than "run the gun dry," i.e. shoot until the bolt locks to the rear on an empty magazine. This, combined with both the way that ranges are conducted (bolt locked to rear until told to load by the tower) and the steps of the CTT task "load M16 series rifle" means that

Soldiers are never trained/evaluated putting a fully loaded magazine into their weapon with the bolt closed. With the bolt to the rear, magazines insert very easily. With an unloaded magazine and the bolt forward, magazines insert very easily. Loading a magazine with 28 rounds in it and the bolt forward — not so easy. It's even tougher with 30. Even though it's never trained, many Soldiers are smart enough to reload before they actually run out of ammunition. Performing this type of reload (with the bolt closed on a live round in chamber) is when they really need to pull down on the magazine to make sure that it is fully seated, preventing one of the major causes of failures to feed.

PULL

Pulling the charging handle to the rear is similar to "slap", but the problem lies in how it is being trained. Manually working the action to get a new round into the chamber is required if the problem was that the magazine was not fully seated. Manually working the action to get rid of a bad round is required if the problem was a failure to fire. Manually working the action is required to get rid of a round if the bolt failed to unlock or extract the case because of a lack of gas pressure (fouled/damaged gas tube or loose carrier key). Or maybe the action "short stroked" from the above-mentioned lack of pressure or from holding the weapon too loosely (limp wristing).

Pulling the charging handle to the rear is indicated in all of the above scenarios. The issue is that there is absolutely no reason for the shooter to take his firing hand off the pistol grip or the butt stock out of his shoulder to accomplish this! SPORTS is almost universally taught with the firing hand manipulating the charging handle while the non-firing hand supports the weight of the rifle. Neither the M4 nor the M16 (even with an M203 attached) weighs so much that a reasonably conditioned Soldier cannot be expected to hold the weight up with the firing hand on the pistol grip. This keeps it where it needs to be to actually shoot the enemy after clearing the malfunction. Adding the extra movement and switching hands is flat out wrong. If your weapon is malfunctioning, it means that you were trying to shoot somebody with it, and it reasonable to assume that he is probably trying to do the same to you. As noted firearms trainer Clint Smith will be glad to tell you, "Take all the time you need, you've got the rest of your life to fix your problem. How long you live depends on how well you do it."

Weapon manipulation needs to be done as efficiently as possible. Adding extra motion equals adding extra time, and getting back into the fight one or two seconds quicker might be the difference between first and second place; and second place in a gunfight generally involves long stays in the hospital or worse.

OBSERVE

Observing the ejection port is contraindicated by the fact that this is immediate action, and we're not trying to figure out what the problem is. Beyond that, there are some issues with the act itself that should be addressed. The first is what exactly are we looking for? There are some discrepancies in the literature. FM

3-22.9 says: “Observes for the ejection of a live round or expended cartridge. (If the weapon fails to eject a cartridge, perform remedial action.)” (para3-1a).

On the other hand, the Soldier’s Manual (STP7-11BC1-SMTG Task 071-311-2029) states: “Observe the ejection of the case or cartridge. Look into the chamber and check for obstructions.”

The version out of the FM makes little sense. If the malfunction was a failure to feed, then there will be no old cartridge to eject. Proceeding on to remedial action at this point will discover—and yield—nothing. All that needs to happen to get back into the fight (thereby greatly increasing our odds of killing the enemy before he kills us) is to release the charging handle, aim, and put a bullet through the adversary’s center of mass. The CTT method makes a little more sense. The big problem is that in order to “look into the chamber and check for obstructions,” (assuming that there’s enough visibility) one has to roll the weapon onto its left side — ejection port up. The law of gravity is one of those things that applies even to the armed forces. If there is anything floating around in there, it’s going nowhere until we flip the weapon over, adding more steps that don’t need to be taken. Again, the big problem with this whole step is that to quote the definition of immediate action from FM 3.22-9: “Immediate action involves quickly applying a possible correction to reduce a stoppage without performing troubleshooting procedures to determine the actual cause.” Observing fixes nothing. It’s not a “possible correction.” If we’re not trying to determine the actual cause, we don’t need to observe anything during immediate action.

RELEASE

Release the charging handle. This step gets no arguments from me.

TAP

Tap the forward assist. The intent of this step is to correct a failure to lock. Unfortunately, what it actually ends up accomplishing is something completely different. The forward assist was not present on the original M16, but was added on the M16E1 to enable a manual way to correct failures to lock. Why would the weapon fail to lock? Either the action spring didn’t drive the bolt carrier hard enough, or something is physically preventing the bolt from rotating. If the problem was caused by the accumulation of fouling causing a short stroke, the “pull charging handle to the rear and release” steps will have already solved the problem. The only times I have ever seen an M16 series weapon consistently fail to lock from carbon fouling is from blanks. On the other hand, I have witnessed on many, many occasions Soldiers ramming on the forward assist when the problem is a physical obstruction in the chamber, usually a double feed. If they were performing SPORTS by the book, they never would have gotten to this point, since they should have caught the problem on the “observe.” All that pounding on the forward assist is going to do is jam the bolt and carrier harder into whatever the obstruction is. We’ve all had or witnessed bolt-over malfunctions. How did that cartridge get up there and wedged in so tight? There’s a darn good chance that the shooter did it by performing SPORTS. Whamming on the forward assist is more likely to make any

“Immediate action involves quickly applying a possible correction to reduce a stoppage without performing troubleshooting procedures to determine the actual cause.”

— FM 3.22-9

problem worse than it is to fix anything. Beyond its dubious (at best) ability to fix a failure to lock, the extra motion adds at least a second to performing immediate action; forcing a right-handed shooter to take his firing hand off of the pistol grip. I again point out that avoiding being shot becomes more difficult when performing extra motions during immediate action. At best “tap” is a waste of motion and time, and at worst — will cause irreparable damage to the weapon (for example bending a gas tube where it fits into the bolt carrier key). Like “observe,” this step needs to be completely removed from immediate action.

SQUEEZE

Squeeze the trigger. I’m all for squeezing the trigger, but only after you’ve aimed at the target. In the law enforcement firearms training community, the final step of immediate action has been changed to “assess the threat.” The point is that after clearing a malfunction, getting back into the fight shouldn’t involve shooting by reflex as a last step of immediate action, but by determining if shooting is still justified. Soldiers don’t need to worry so much about lawsuits, but we really should at least imply that you should only fire your weapon if there is a need to.

TPRRRS

Now that I’ve told you what I don’t like about SPORTS, here’s my answer: TPRRRS – tap, pull, rack, roll, release, shoot. It’s quite a mouthful, but it leaves nothing for misinterpretation by CTT/EIB testers, drill sergeants, or truck drivers assigned to maintenance companies. The short version is familiar to anyone who shoots action pistol: tap, rack, bang. My longer version leaves nothing to interpretation; no “see note” as the current explanation of SPORTS does. Once a Soldier learns it, he can literally fall back on tap, rack, bang and get the 90-percent solution.

Tap the bottom of the magazine to seat it.

Pull on the magazine to ensure that it is seated.

Rack the charging handle to the rear with your non-firing hand.

Roll the weapon onto its right side (ejection port down) to allow any obstructions to fall out.

Release the charging handle to chamber a new round.

Shoot the other guy before he shoots you.

This technique will fix anything that SPORTS does but takes half (or less) as much time. It works in the dark. It doesn’t require the shooter to take his eyes off of the target, his firing hand off of the pistol grip, or the butt stock from his shoulder. Most importantly it requires no thought or decision-making skills in the middle of a firefight. Just execute. Admittedly, it will not fix

a double feed, but neither will SPORTS. SPORTS will, if there is enough light to see, identify a double feed, but doesn't actually do anything to fix it. Since the shooter is neither pounding on the magazine or the forward assist, he won't be making a double feed into something worse.

TAP

Notice that by using "tap," "gently" doesn't need to be added. Calling the first step "slap" implies that it is delivered with some force. By renaming the first step "tap," we'll hopefully discourage our new Soldiers from slapping the heck out of the magazine and causing more problems.

PULL

Pull the magazine down. If it's seated, it won't come out. Again, I'm simply taking the actions 3-22.9 calls for in the "note" and adding it to what is actually taught. It should literally be done in the same gross motion as "tap" since the shooter's hand is already on the magazine. He simply closes his hand around it and gives it a tug. If it comes out, put it back in and try again.

RACK

I've replaced the "pull" of SPORTS with "rack." It means the same thing, but I didn't want two "pulls" in a row for two separate actions. You can say pull again as long as it's done with the non-firing hand!

ROLL

Roll the weapon onto its right side. This step is done at the same time that the charging handle is being pulled and momentarily held to the rear. This allows anything that's stuck in the ejection port to fall out once we release the action spring tension (by racking the action to the rear) and letting gravity do its thing.

RELEASE

I added this only to emphasize that we don't release the charging handle until AFTER rolling the weapon onto its right side.

SHOOT

Shooting implies finding a target and aiming, not just squeezing the trigger to

find out if the weapon is really working.

DOUBLE FEED

Great, you say. But what about the dreaded double feed? We've all had them, and we've all corrected them, but how long did it take? How long would it take for one of your Soldiers fresh out of Benning? The manuals are all pretty vague on how to correct a double feed and require quite a bit of thinking, something not easily accomplished in the middle of a firefight. Despite the contradictory information between both paragraphs in the FM and the CTT task, it's really not that difficult. The most efficient and quickest way to fix double feeds is easily taught to Soldiers in about five minutes and becomes almost as quick as immediate action with a reasonable amount of practice.

What makes a weapon double feed? Either the previous round didn't extract or eject, so that it was still in the way when the next round tried to chamber, or multiple rounds came out of the magazine. Unless the shooter was slapping the heck out of the magazine with the bolt to the rear, the only reason a magazine would fail like this is if it is worn out or broken, feed lips bent, welds broken, etc. Failures to extract/eject are a bit more difficult to diagnose, but a major culprit is the extractor spring. Now having said that, let's try to define what we want to do by performing "remedial action". The steps outlined in the CTT task and the FM are not helpful. Let's take a look at what the CTT task says to do with our hypothetical double feed.

2. Perform remedial action.

Note: If your rifle still fails to fire after performing steps 1a through 1f, check again for a jammed cartridge case in the chamber. If a cartridge case is in the chamber, tap it out with a cleaning rod. *Note:* If your rifle still fails to fire, you may have a mechanical failure.

OK, how many of us have ever corrected a double feed by doing SPORTS once (the 1a through 1f that it references)? Also



A Soldier demonstrates the rack and roll commands of TPRRRS. Pulling the charging handle to the rear and rolling the weapon onto its right side, allows anything stuck in the ejection port to be released.

notice that we've got a double feed and pull out a cleaning rod? If you have, you're the only one I've ever heard of. Not that you might not have a malfunction that requires removing a case with a cleaning rod, but going for a cleaning kit is most certainly not the next step to take after immediate action. As far as "you may have a mechanical failure," it's not worth the paper that it's printed on. All of the other steps of remedial action from the CTT task have to do with performing maintenance. Here they are, just to keep you from having to look them up:

b. Correct a mechanical malfunction.

- (1) Clear the rifle.
- (2) Disassemble the rifle.
- (3) Inspect for dirty, corroded, missing, or broken parts.
- (4) Clean dirty or corroded parts.
- (5) Replace missing or broken parts.
- (6) Assemble the rifle.
- (7) Perform a function check.
- (8) Load the rifle.
- (9) Fire the rifle.

To say this would not be very useful in the middle of a firefight would be the understatement of the year. None of the steps that are outlined here help a hypothetical private get his weapon back into the fight before it's over. If you've been in the Army more than six months, you've fixed double feeds before without ever pulling out the cleaning rod or disassembling your weapon. How did you do it? Can you name the steps? You did all of the steps that I'm about to outline, but probably in the wrong order, and in

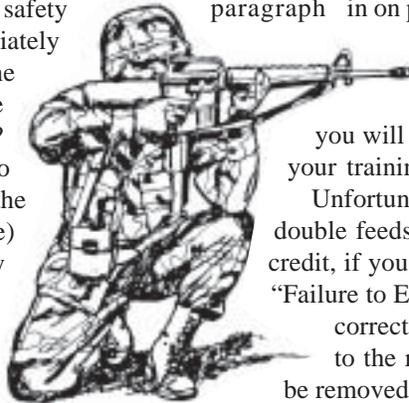
doing so, you (or somebody else that you know) turned a double feed into a bolt over. The wrong way also happens to be the order that the FM says to do it in.

From FM 3-22.9 para 3-1:

b. Remedial Action. Remedial action is the continuing effort to determine the cause for a stoppage or malfunction and to try to clear the stoppage once it has been identified. To apply the corrective steps for remedial action, first try to place the weapon on SAFE, then remove the magazine, lock the bolt to the rear, and place the weapon on safe (if not already done).

Note: A bolt override may not allow the weapon to be placed on SAFE.

Let's think about these steps. First, why try to put the weapon on safe? Why waste the time? You are in a gunfight and your weapon is not working! Someone (or several someones) will be trying to kill you! Don't mess with the safety until later. Getting the weapon working immediately needs to be priority number one. Moving past the silly "put it on safe" issue, what is keeping a double feed from just falling out of the ejection port? What's keeping pressure on the rounds? Two different springs are — the action spring and the spring from the magazine. The two (or more) rounds are being held in place on the bottom by the magazine and spring, the top and left side by the receiver casting and the front either by a non-extracted shell case or simply held against the chamber throat at the wrong angle. The whole mess is being compressed by the action spring.



What we need to do to fix this is:

- o First get rid of the spring pressures that are holding everything in place;
- o Then get the malfunctioning rounds out of the way.

Unfortunately, the manual tells us to remove the magazine first. What this manages to accomplish is to get rid of the support on the underside without first removing the tension (the action spring); that's trying to get two rounds to occupy the same place at the same time. The magazine is usually keeping the multiple rounds at least pointed generally in the correct direction. If you remove the magazine first (as the manual tells us to), the action spring tends to tilt one or more of the rounds either up or down. If it goes down, it ends up poking down into the magazine well. But if we're unlucky and it goes up and into the track that the bolt carrier key rides in (in the receiver casting), we end up with a bolt over. Removing the magazine first also tends to be quite difficult, as it is generally being held in place by a round that has been incompletely stripped from the magazine, forcing the shooter to use a considerable amount of force to remove the magazine. After the magazine is out, we move on to step three – lock the bolt to rear. Hopefully at this point two rounds will fall out of the magazine. Now what? There's a pretty good chance that there is a round in the chamber. It may even be a non-expended round (which is why the manual says to put it on safe). What is our private supposed to do now? Remember, people are shooting at him, his team leader is screaming; he may in fact have already been shot. Do we (as trainers and leaders) expect him to just

figure the rest out on his own? As you are sitting calmly at a table or desk, feet up, relaxing while reading this article, you may easily see what needs to be done: Make sure that there's not anything in the chamber and/or the action, reload, and get back into the fight. Not so easy to figure out how/what to do in the dark, possibly in a severe amount of pain, and certainly with all sorts of rude people either trying to tell you what to do, or trying to make sure that you never do anything again. If you haven't trained on this enough to have it hammered into your memory, the chances of getting it right in a combat situation will be pure luck. (Doing this wrong can be very bad for your health even if nobody is actually shooting back. If there is an unexpended round in the chamber, and the shooter tries to load another round, there's an OK chance that the tip of the next round will strike the primer of the one in the chamber with enough force to make it discharge. There's a big warning paragraph in on page 3-4 of the FM about how bad this will be.)

TRAINING

Another Clint Smith axiom: Under stress, you will not rise to the occasion, but fall to the level of your training.

Unfortunately, the level of training for how to handle double feeds is inadequate. To give the authors of 3-22.9 credit, if you dig further down into "Corrective Action" for "Failure to Extract" and "Failure to Eject," they do give the correct order: "...the bolt and carrier must be locked to the rear. The magazine and all loose rounds must be removed before clearing the stoppage." The problem is that they give the wrong order to begin with, and that they've managed to bury the correct way to fix this so far down in the chapter that deciphering the correct response to a double feed requires that you know what to do already.

Here's how it should be trained:

Weapon does not fire:

1. Perform immediate action
(see TPRRRS above)

Weapon still does not fire:

2. Perform remedial action
 - a) Lock bolt to rear, relieving action spring tension. (This is the only time that the shooter's firing hand comes off of the pistol grip – and it goes right back after he gets the bolt locked)
 - b) Remove magazine. (This will hopefully cause all of the rounds that were causing our problem to fall out on the ground, but don't attempt to look into the chamber to see – we're training this so that it doesn't matter if you can see or not). (Do not attempt to retain magazine unless you are running very low! If we have a good extractor, there's a good chance that the magazine is what is causing our problems allowing multiple rounds to eject into the path of the bolt.)
 - c) Use non-firing hand to reach up magazine well with at least two fingers and feel for/remove any remaining rounds/brass.

- d) With non-firing hand, work action three times. (This will get rid of any rounds that are in the chamber – three times because sometimes the extractor won't grab the rim on the first try, especially if it's dirty).
- e) Insert new magazine, pulling down to make sure that it is properly seated.
- f) Work action.
- g) Shoot.

Weapon still does not fire:

Note: Do not attempt to move on to step three until out of contact with enemy

3: Perform maintenance:

See Task 071-311-2025, maintain M16 series rifle.

Step 2 can be accomplished in about 10-15 seconds, with a great deal of that time being used to actually get the new magazine from the pouch and loaded. Just like with TPRRRS, performing these steps requires no visibility and keeps the shooter's head up, not staring at his weapon. If the weapon can't be put back into action with these steps (assuming that he reloaded with a good magazine), something is physically broken (extractor, ejector, ruptured case in chamber) or the weapon is so filthy that it's not going to work right no matter what the shooter does. In either case finding another weapon or making himself useful in some other way (buddy aid, ammo redistribution, throwing hand grenades, whatever) would seem to be a better use of the shooter's time than disassembling his weapon in the middle of a firefight.

One final thought on training to clear malfunctions. The physical act must be trained with enough repetition to be performed without thinking. Unconscious competence is what this is generally referred to.

Having said that, remember that the decision to perform the task at all must be deliberate. In many circumstances it is better to do something else rather than try to fix a problem that may not be fixable at all. For example, there's always a chance that a Soldier's weapon is going to be hit by a bullet. It is after all right in front of his center of mass, where presumably the enemy is going to be aiming. A battle-damaged M4 with a hole in the receiver isn't going to work very well no matter how good the shooter is at performing immediate action. The Soldier needs to decide instantaneously what to do. What the criteria are for the decision should have nothing to do with what he thinks the problem is with his weapon, but with his own capabilities in the particular situation in which he finds himself.

As a general rule, we need to be training our Soldiers that if they are within contact distance (4-6 feet or so), they shouldn't mess around with a non-functioning weapon at all — take the one or two steps and go for the hand-to-gland combat that he spent all that time learning. Even if he doesn't have a bayonet attached, shoving the flash suppressor through his adversary's front teeth is way better than fooling around with immediate action at point-blank range.

What to do at close quarters battle (CQB) type distances is a little less cut and dried. From about three out to 25 meters the book answer would be to automatically draw a secondary weapon (pistol) and continue to engage the enemy without trying

immediate action. Unfortunately, the traditional infantry's view on pistols leaves most of us without a handgun with which to respond to the enemy in this range. Whether to retreat to cover while performing immediate action, charge the target (hoping the enemy has either such poor marksmanship that he misses, or such good marksmanship that all of his rounds hit our protagonist's SAPI plate) or drop to the ground and hope his teammates are on top of the situation must be decided in a split second. From 25-50 meters performing immediate action is generally called for, but not always. From 50 meters out, the decision is much easier — clear the malfunction and get back into the fight.

Weapon handling needs to be a well thought out and integrated part of marksmanship training and instruction. Modern high capacity autoloading firearms have taken emphasis away from what in the past was recognized to be just as important as the integrated act of firing. Picture Matthew Broderick's character in the film *Glory*, standing behind his Soldiers firing his revolver into the air as his one of his better marksmen attempts to reload his rifle on a training range. For every shot with a muzzle-loading firearm, an extreme amount of manipulation is required. Training on the task of "Load Springfield Rifle" was recognized as being just as important as being able to hit your target on the first shot. Soldiers needed to be able to perform this task under conditions of excruciating stress. An M4's ability to fire 28 rounds without having to manipulate anything other than the trigger has let us ignore what used to be blatantly obvious; that a Soldier's ability to get his weapon ready for a shot is just as important as taking the shot itself. Replacing SPORTS with a standard that can be trained to the level of unconscious competence, that can be performed day or night, and doesn't leave Soldiers hanging when it doesn't work will be a great step in the right direction. Relying on the old way, just because it was the way that we were taught and had hammered into us from repeated CTT and EIB testing is no excuse — leave SPORTS on ESPN where they belong.

Author's Note: *Even though I take full responsibility for the TPRRRS acronym, I cannot lay claim to having come up with the actual steps on my own. I am indebted to a number of great civilian firearm trainers including, but not limited to, Clint Smith, Louis Awerbuck, Pat Rogers, Giles Stock, and Steve Slawson for opening my eyes to the fact that there are better ways to do things.*

At the time of this writing, **Sergeant First Class James Couch** was assigned as the operations sergeant for the Department of Military Science, Southern Oregon University. He is a graduate of multiple "civilian" firearms training classes to include the Basic and Advanced Carbine, Basic Pistol, and Carbine Tactical Problems courses at Gunsite Academy; Urban Rifle from International Training Consultants, and Tactical Shotgun Courses from FAS and InSights Training Center. He shoots competitively in International Defensive Pistol Association (IDPA), U.S. Practical Shooting Association (USPSA), and National Rifle Association (NRA) disciplines. He is an honor graduate of ANCOC and distinguished honor graduate of BNCOC, both at the Henry Caro NCO Academy at Fort Benning, Georgia.
