

TRAINING NOTES



MOUNTAIN LEADER ADVANCED RIFLE MARKSMANSHIP COURSE

Helping the Army, 10th Mountain Div Meet the Demands of Transformation

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Sergeant Jose Castro, a squad leader in C Company, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry, prepared to assault a building in Afghanistan housing three suspected Taliban leaders. During his platoon's earlier rehearsal, he ensured that his Soldiers used the marksmanship and short range battle tactics, techniques, and procedures that his instructors taught him during the Mountain Leader Advanced Rifle Marksmanship (MLARM) course at Fort Drum, New York. His squad also rehearsed the proper techniques to subdue, restrain, and search prisoners that might be captured during the mission – additional skills taught to SGT Castro in the MLARM course. As his squad conducted the assault, SGT Castro observed with great satisfaction how accurate his Soldiers shot and how aggressively they applied the combatives techniques he taught them. Their skills resulted in the safe capture of the three suspected Taliban leaders. SGT Castro, like many other 10th Mountain Division (Light) NCOs, attributes their success to the advanced marksmanship and SRB techniques taught at Fort Drum's MLARM course.

In America's Army, the Soldier's ability to hit what he shoots at remains one of the most significant factors that make our Army the most lethal



Specialist C. Elijah Spencer

An MLARM instructor coaches a student during an MTT in Afghanistan.

force in the world. This is especially true in urban environments where short range marksmanship is essential. In this environment, most battlefield actions begin to culminate when there are effective fires on critical targets. For the individual Soldier and fire team, their marksmanship often determines if they survive and win. Our nation depends on them to win, and in the 10th Mountain Division (LI) we are training them to win by developing master trainers using our Light Fighter School.

The Chief of Staff of the Army has stated that "every Soldier is a Warrior." In the 10th Mountain Division, every Warrior is also a rifleman, but success on today's battlefield requires more than just marksmanship skills. Our experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq show that in order for our Soldiers to survive, succeed, and dominate in urban environments they require a mastery of short range battle (SRB) skills that include combatives, breaching, and short range marksmanship.



Photo courtesy of the Light Fighter School, Fort Drum, NY

The combatives taught during the MLARM course focus on proper ways to subdue enemy combatants while operating with full body gear and organic equipment.

The 10th Mountain Division Light Fighter School teaches all of these vital skills using a three-week program of instruction conducted by top quality instructors under realistic conditions – the Mountain Leader Advanced Rifle Marksmanship (MLARM) course.

The 10th Mountain Division captured this new requirement for advanced, multi-unit marksmanship and SRB training in “The Way Ahead,” its vision for the division’s transformation. “The Way Ahead” establishes six goals, each with a set of supporting objectives that ensure the 10th Mountain Division’s successful transformation into modular, capabilities-based formations capable of executing full spectrum operations as part of an integrated joint force. Two of the supporting objectives in this document are directly tied to meeting the marksmanship and SRB demands placed on every Soldier in the division: “Train all Soldiers to employ small arms with a high level of precision, lethality, and confidence” and also to “serve as the Army’s proponent for advanced marksmanship and conventional urban operations, develop associated equipment requirements, and promulgate the TTPs

across the Army” in these areas.

Our MLARM course is the primary means for achieving these two transformation objectives. The course provides 10th Mountain Soldiers and leaders the skill sets necessary for success on today’s battlefield, and similar training needs to be available to all units across the Army to fully prepare them to defeat the adaptive enemy we face in the war on terrorism. The current course evolved from the Mountain Leaders Close Combat Course, which had existed since 1999, to meet the demands of the evolving war on terrorism. In March 2003, the Light Fighter School implemented the MLARM course that provides additional focus on training leaders and developing master trainers in the areas of advanced marksmanship and SRB, while incorporating the conditions our Soldiers and leaders face in the war on terrorism.

The result is a 21-day, live-fire intensive, train-the-trainer course designed for squad leaders through platoon leaders. Specifically, the course focuses on TTPs for advanced rifle marksmanship (ARM) and Urban Operations. The ultimate goal of the course is for the graduates to return to

their units and perform duties as subject matter experts for team, squad, and platoon level training in these areas. Each platoon in the 10th Mountain Division is required to have a MLARM certified NCO who is responsible for teaching the TTPs to the other Soldiers in his platoon. This has rapidly increased the lethality and survivability of all our formations in every type of 10th Mountain Division unit.

The instructors of the Light Fighter School teach the MLARM course in three successive phases that build upon each other. The course starts with a five-day ARM phase. The skills learned in the first phase establish the most important fundamentals of advanced marksmanship and incorporate the latest advances in equipment, technology, and techniques. It begins with the principles of shooting and covers everything from ballistics to target analysis to the M-68 Close Combat Optic. This phase also includes employing limited visibility aiming systems such as the AN/PEQ 2A Target Pointer Illuminator/Aiming Light and the AN/PAC-4C Laser Aiming Module. Emphasis is placed on shooting, grouping, zeroing, and known distance field fire. On the final day of this phase, the course requires the students to qualify on the known distance qualification course and to take a written exam on all of the ARM material.

The second phase of MLARM focuses on short range marksmanship. Instructors teach students the various quick and reflexive fire techniques that include stationary, moving, and alternate positions. During this phase the student to instructor ratio is one-to-one, helping to reinforce proper technique and develop proper muscle memory. Another important segment of this phase is the 14 hours of MOUT-related combatives. These combatives are different from the basic combatives found in FM 21-150. The combatives taught at MLARM focus on proper ways to subdue enemy combatants while operating with full body gear and organic equipment. The students quickly learn during their force-on-force exercises the repercussions of not using the proper combative techniques they were taught. Furthermore, these combatives are techniques that are relevant to 10th Mountain Soldiers in an urban environment

when deployed in support of the war on terrorism. The second phase ends with a SRM qualification and hands-on performance evaluation.

The final phase of MLARM is the short range battle phase – the most realistic and demanding of all three phases. During this third phase of training, students learn to properly conduct mechanical, shotgun, and demolition breaches. The cadre then form the students into fire teams and begin MOUT offensive operations that include extensive live firing in a single team, multi-room environment as well as a multi-team, multi-room environment. Starting with the basics, instructors teach room clearing, hallways, stairs, and use of verbal and nonverbal commands. Students build on the training at the squad level and on Day 19 they conduct a squad assault with live demolitions and simunitions where the instructors evaluate them in various leadership positions. This phase concludes with a written and hands-on examination.

MLARM's program of instruction is driven by the TTPs of proponent agencies such as the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit and 75th Ranger Regiment. The MLARM instructors receive training on a yearly basis on the most current TTPs these organizations employ to aid them in refining our course. The instructors further refine the POI based on the combat experience the 10th Mountain Division (LI) has from our operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and from their mobile training team

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experiences in theater. For example, during an MTT to Afghanistan in February 2004, the instructors incorporated the effects of altitude on ballistics. They have since added this impact to the course instruction.

All MLARM instructors are graduates of the MLARM course. They range in grade from E6 to E7 and were successful squad leaders and/or platoon sergeants. The student to instructor ratio further strengthens this course as each class size is no more than 24 Soldiers with nine instructors. This provides students the opportunity to receive detailed attention not readily available in other training venues in the Army. However, the student to instructor ratio does not ensure that all students graduate. In fact, roughly 30 percent of each class fails to graduate — most fail the known distance qualification,

which further highlights the importance of meeting the marksmanship standard.

The 10th Mountain Division's MLARM course directly improves the marksmanship and SRB capabilities of the division as it transforms to meet our responsibilities in the war on terrorism. The 10th Mountain Division understands the importance of properly training Soldiers and leaders to succeed on today's battlefield – and MLARM is meeting those requirements. MLARM is providing advanced rifle marksmanship and SRB instruction to leaders using the most current equipment and aiming devices, and at the same time it reminds Soldiers of the importance of the marksmanship fundamentals in and urban environment while fighting an adaptive and versatile enemy. Most importantly, the course is providing this training to leaders from all of our units, not just our infantry units. Although it will take time, the end result will be that every Soldier in the division becomes a more lethal individual and fire team member equipped with the advanced marksmanship and SRB skills necessary to succeed and survive on the battlefield.

Additional information on MLARM and the 10th Mountain Division's Light Fighter School can be found at www.drums.army.mil/lightfitr/LFS-home.htm

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Photo courtesy of the Light Fighter School, Fort Drum, NY

A 10th Mountain Division Soldier subdues another Soldier during training as part of the Light Fighter School's MLARM course.