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CRITICAL COMBAT PERFORMANCES,
KNOWLEDGES, AND SKILLS REQUIRED OF THE
INFANTRY RIFLE PLATOON LEADER

Mission, Organization, and General Operation
of the Rifle Platoon

by

Frank L. Brown and Henry E. Kelly

24 July 1968

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The Human Resources Research Office is a nongovernmental agency of The George Washington University. HumRRO's mission in work performed for the Department of the Army (DA Contract 11-188-ARO-2) is to conduct research in the fields of training, motivation, and leadership.

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Work Unit LEAD: Work Sub-Unit I

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HumRRO Division No. 4
(Infantry)

The George Washington University
HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH OFFICE
operating under contract with
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

FOREWORD

Work Unit LEAD has as its objective the improvement of officer training in the critical skills required for effective combat leadership in small infantry platoons, and is being conducted by the Human Resources Research Office at Fort Benning, Georgia, under the sponsorship of the U.S. Continental Army Command.

In Sub-Unit I, performances, knowledges, and skills required of the leader of an infantry rifle platoon are being identified and categorized according to 41 comprehensive subject areas. This document details the requirements in the area of mission, organization, and general operation of the rifle platoon.

The LEAD research is being performed at HumRRO Division No. 4 (Infantry), Fort Benning, Georgia. The present Director of Research of the Division is Dr. T. O. Jacobs, who is also the Work Unit Leader. Dr. Carl J. Lange was the Director of Research when the research was begun.

Military support for the study was provided by the U.S. Army Infantry Human Research Unit, Fort Benning, Georgia. LTC Chester I. Christie, Jr. is the present Unit Chief.

HumRRO research is conducted under Army Contract DA 44-188-ARO-2 and under Army Project 2J024701A712 01, Training, Motivation, and Leadership Research.

Meredith P. Crawford
Director
Human Resources Research Office

MISSION, ORGANIZATION, AND GENERAL OPERATION OF THE RIFLE PLATOON

General Considerations

Introduction

The Infantry Rifle Platoon Leader (IRPL) must command and lead his platoon as the basic tactical element of the rifle company. He is continuously responsible for his platoon's discipline, training, welfare, control, and tactical employment. He must maintain an effective organization and accomplish his assigned missions despite casualties and losses due to rotation. He must plan, lead, and supervise the execution of each platoon operation and, through training and supervision, ensure the success of semi-independent operations executed by the small units within the platoon. He must maintain the health and stamina of his men and the effectiveness of his weapons and equipment at a level that will ensure success in combat in nuclear and non-nuclear warfare in all types of terrain and weather and under all conditions of visibility.

Scope

This paper covers the platoon mission, organization, and major duties of platoon members; troop-leading procedure; estimate of the situation; operation order; fundamentals of employment; effects of nuclear weapons; tactical operations in nuclear warfare; chemical and biological operations; action against enemy aircraft; use of assembly areas; intelligence; communication; fire support available from higher echelons; and the critique of combat operations. The contents of this paper relate directly to all other LEAD I papers.

Materiel

All TOE equipment normally available to the rifle platoon in Infantry, Mechanized, Airborne, and Airmobile units.

Special weapons, clothing, and equipment provided to fulfill demands of a specific combat environment.

Battlefield Cues

Orders, information and guidance from higher echelons of command, including maps and overlays.

Information of the enemy, weather, terrain, and the indigenous population observed and collected by the platoon or provided by adjacent or higher headquarters.

Enemy targets, including surface vehicles and aircraft, suitable for engagement with organic or supporting fires.

Receipt of enemy fire or threat of contact with the enemy, including guerrillas.

Fields of fire and observation, concealment and cover, obstacles, key terrain, and avenues of approach noted during personal reconnaissance or during operations.

Discovery of significant differences in observed terrain as compared to the impressions gained during map study.

Use or indications of use of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons by the enemy.

Forewarnings of friendly intent to use chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons.

Requirement for a defensible position for use during a halt preparatory to further action.

Failure of one or more means of communications.

Receipt of any mission wherein use of supporting fires will reduce exposure time, speed the accomplishment of the mission, and limit friendly casualties.

Battlefield failures or successes by enemy or friendly troops that are worthy of mention during critique of combat operations.

Performances, Knowledges, and Skills

1. UPON ASSUMING COMMAND OF A PLATOON, THE IRPL MUST DETERMINE THE IDENTITIES, QUALIFICATIONS, AND ORGANIZATION OF HIS MEN AND INVENTORY THE WEAPONS, EQUIPMENT, CLOTHING, AND SUPPLIES ALLOTTED TO THE MEMBERS OF HIS UNIT TO ENSURE ADEQUACY, SERVICEABILITY, DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO THE DEMANDS OF THE MISSION, AND EFFICIENT USE AND MAINTENANCE. HE WILL ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A PLATOON ORGANIZATION AND STANDARDS OF INDIVIDUAL, TEAM, AND UNIT PERFORMANCE THAT WILL ENSURE SUCCESSFUL COMBAT OPERATIONS.

He will : know, and ensure that each member of his platoon knows or learns, the Infantry mission, i.e., To close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver in order to destroy or capture him, or to repel his assault by fire, close combat, and counterattack. 1

: habitually keep the Infantry mission foremost in all of his thinking and planning so that all available time and energy is directed toward the preparation and supervision of his men and materiel toward fulfillment of the mission and recognize that the welfare of his men is secondary only to the mission. 2

He must : know the organization and equipment of the company, the 3
command channels within the company, and the functions of
the key members of the company from whom he and his men re-
ceive orders, instructions, guidance, and tactical and
logistical support, e.g., diagram the company organization
to show all sub-organizations and command lines; name the
key personnel, and briefly and accurately describe their
duties and responsibilities; and know the major weapons
and major items of materiel available to each sub-unit to
support the operations of the company as a whole.

He will : know the organization and equipment of his platoon as 4
set forth in the appropriate TOE or as modified for duty
in a specific combat environment, i.e., diagram the platoon
organization to show the platoon headquarters, all sub-units,
and normal attachments; cite the job title, MOS, authorized
grade/rating, and briefly and accurately describe individual
duties and responsibilities for each personnel slot; and
show the quantity, type, and distribution of all weapons and
equipment authorized by the appropriate TOE and/or authorized
for issue in a particular combat environment.

: commencing with key leaders, learn the identities, duty 5
assignments, and qualifications of all assigned and attached
personnel.

: fix specific individual responsibility for the operational 6
use, safeguarding, and maintenance of each weapon and item of
equipment allotted to the platoon as a vital act toward the
accomplishment of the unit mission.

He must : know and ensure that his men know that an effectively 7
trained, equipped, and supplied rifle platoon is capable of:

- (1) Closing with the enemy by means of fire and/or
maneuver to destroy or capture him.
- (2) Repelling enemy assault by fire, close combat, and
counterattack.
- (3) Maneuvering and fighting in all types of terrain and
climate, under all conditions of visibility, and under
widely varying degrees of nuclear, biological, and
chemical weapons availability and use by friendly
forces and aggressors.
- (4) Seizing and holding terrain.
- (5) Capitalizing on all forms of mobility.

- (6) Providing a platoon-strength base-of-fire element or a similar maneuver element during operations as an integral part of the parent unit or when attached to a similar unit.
- (7) Conducting fire and maneuver and/or fire and movement within the platoon and within rifle squads in coordination with other combat platoons and during semi-independent and independent operations.
- (8) Conducting semi-independent reconnaissance and combat patrols, including raids and ambushes.
- (9) Operating with armor.
- (10) Conducting airborne, airmobile, air-landed, amphibious, mechanized, and riverine operations as part of a larger unit or in a semi-independent role when specifically trained to utilize the required means of mobility.
- (11) Conducting independent operations for limited periods when suitably reinforced and provided with logistical support.
- (12) Participating in internal defense and internal development in a counterinsurgency operational environment.

He will : ensure through questions, informal and formal inspections, and direct observation on a continuing basis that the unit and attached personnel are organized, equipped, clothed, and maintained to perform adequately in combat in the extremes of climate and terrain exemplified by the combat environment. 8

: recognize that the establishment and maintenance of a specific organization with fixed channels for command and communication is essential to the control of men and fires and vital to obtaining effective support for small units and individuals in combat. 9

: establish (if necessary) and maintain a chain of command that includes all assigned and attached personnel; delegate sufficient authority to subordinate leaders and potential leaders to permit their use of individual intelligence and initiative in accomplishing the tasks for which they and their subordinates are responsible; require routine adherence to the chain of command to maintain an efficient span of control; and establish policy to ensure that any individual member of the unit desiring personal guidance or redress receives adequate attention at the appropriate command level. 10

He must : know the current grade/rating and MOS of each individual and the authorized grade/rating and MOS for the duty assignment involved as a basis for initial and subsequent duty assignments, recommendations for promotions or reductions, and as a basis for requesting replacements. 11

He will : recognize the difference between command and leadership, i.e., command is the authority a military commander lawfully exercises over individuals in his unit by virtue of his assignment, while leadership is the art of influencing and directing men in such a way as to obtain their loyal cooperation in order to accomplish the mission; seek habitually and deliberately to display the highest possible standards of leadership as an example for his men; and demand a like performance by his subordinate leaders. 12

(Additional material pertinent to leadership as it affects the welfare of the individual soldier is presented in Human Maintenance Under Campaign Conditions.)

: recognize each soldier as an individual team member with a personality and capabilities and limitations that are to a degree unique; seek to provide the best possible individual and unit training and practice; and accept no less than the best each soldier is capable of contributing toward the accomplishment of the mission in training and in combat. 13

: habitually connect the individual with his small unit, the platoon, and the company as often as possible; emphasize the interdependence of the individuals and small units; and make it explicitly clear that each soldier must meet his responsibilities to his fellow soldiers and to the unit. 14

: bestow favorable recognition, praise, and awards deservedly; recommend punishment, admonish, and make corrections promptly and always without impatience, personal malice, or vindictiveness; and encourage individual and unit accomplishments that will develop self-esteem and increase unit esprit in each member of the unit. 15

He must : train a minimum of two replacements for each key leader in the platoon to ensure against the disintegration of small units when casualties occur among key personnel and to replace leaders who rotate upon completion of a combat tour of duty, e.g., train the PSG and the senior squad leader to command and lead the platoon. 16

: particularly when inexperienced replacements are assigned, emphasize that a major role of each small-unit leader is that of instructor; seek to gain time for the realistic practice of the critical performances, knowledges, and skills required to accomplish Infantry combat missions successfully; and remain acutely aware that the majority of replacements received by his platoon will be soldiers only recently drafted into the Army whose training must continue in combat. 17

He will : recognize that to divert Infantry soldiers, materiel, and combat training time to non-essential administrative functions, useless formations, and the production of "eye-wash" will result in the needless and senseless loss of men as casualties in combat and may result in mission failure, particularly at small-unit level. 18

: habitually encourage the use of initiative by his subordinates and recognize that the boldness and aggressiveness essential to the successful accomplishment of the Infantry mission must stem from sound tactical and technical knowledge, realistic training and intensive practice, and mutual trust based upon inspirational leadership at all levels of command. 19

2. THE IRPL WILL DELIBERATELY FOLLOW LOGICAL, FLEXIBLE TROOP-LEADING PROCEDURE TO CONSERVE AND EXPLOIT AVAILABLE TIME AND RESOURCES DURING THE PLANNING, PREPARATION, AND EXECUTION OF SMALL-UNIT COMBAT OPERATIONS. HE MUST TRAIN HIS SUBORDINATE LEADERS AND POTENTIAL LEADERS TO FOLLOW LOGICAL AND FLEXIBLE TROOP-LEADING PROCEDURE BY INSTRUCTION, EXAMPLE, AND SUPERVISION.

He will : know that troop-leading procedure is a logical sequence of actions followed to make the best use of his men, materiel, time, space, and available information of the enemy, weather, terrain, and the indigenous population in the area of operations. 20

: recognize that troop-leading procedure is both deliberate and flexible, i.e., it is deliberate in that it is a conscious mental process used habitually and in that all steps are considered; it is flexible in that all steps may not be required or possible because of time limitations and the sequence of steps may be modified. 21

He must : know that an estimate of the situation is a logical process of reasoning (problem-solving) by which a commander considers all of the known circumstances affecting a military situation as applicable to a specific mission and arrives at a decision as to a course of action to be taken toward accomplishment of the mission. 22

: recognize that the estimate of the situation is continually revised during planning, preparation, and execution as additional information is gained and as circumstances bearing on the accomplishment of the mission develop, and that the current estimate provides the basis for decisions as action progresses toward the accomplishment of the mission, i.e., the maintenance of the estimate of the situation, particularly at small-unit level, is an ongoing mental process vital to the adequate control and employment of troops and fires. 23

: know (memorize) the sequence of the elements of the estimate of the situation and habitually follow the sequence to gain a sound basis for decisions: 24

- (1) Mission.
- (2) Situation and courses of action.
 - (a) Factors affecting possible courses of action.
 1. Characteristics of area of operations (weather and terrain).
 2. Enemy situation and friendly situation.
 - (b) Enemy capabilities and probable courses of actions.
 - (c) Own courses of action.
- (3) Analysis of opposing courses of action.
- (4) Comparison of own courses of action.
- (5) Decision.

He will : begin planning upon receipt of the order by analyzing the mission as the initial step in making an estimate of the situation. 25

: determine the specified and implied task(s) to be performed by his unit and unhesitatingly seek clarification from the commander who assigned the mission if necessary, i.e., fix the specific requirements of the mission firmly in mind and keep the mission foremost during planning, preparation, and execution. 26

: to the degree feasible, effect necessary coordination with the key leaders present when the higher commander issues his order. 27

: fix the critical time requirements, e.g., time for crossing the LD, departure and return times for a patrol, loading time and H-hour for an airmobile operation; determine the time available for preparation and planning; and budget the use of time, including the allotment of time for use by subordinate leaders and men. 28

: continue the estimate by making a terrain analysis on a map or map substitute to determine the observation and fields of fire, concealment and cover, obstacles, key terrain features, and avenues of approach in his area of operation and in adjacent areas. 29

- : study the enemy situation as it affects his mission, analyzing the enemy strength, locations, dispositions, and capabilities, with due consideration to the probable effect of any unfriendly segment of the indigenous population in the area of operations. 30
- : in the light of available information, develop tentative courses of action and analyze and compare them to select the one offering the best chance of success. 31
- : on the basis of the initial estimate, make a tentative plan of action; use the tentative plan as a basis for further planning; and announce it in a warning order to subordinate leaders (and attached personnel) as guidance for planning, preparation, and the formulation of recommendations. 32
- : seek habitually to issue instructions to subordinate leaders as early as possible, in fragmentary form, to facilitate concurrent planning and preparation by leaders and men alike, particularly when special equipment or unusual quantities of ammunition or supplies must be drawn, checked, and issued, e.g., for a raid mission. 33
- : habitually seek to make maximum use of available daylight for preparation and reconnaissance. 34
- : plan and arrange for the timely movement of the unit, particularly if the unit must move under a subordinate leader while he (IRPL) conducts reconnaissance; provide explicit instructions as to location, route, order of march, time of arrival, and disposition at the new location to ensure control and the maintenance of security; and arrange for guides if necessary. 35
- : plan and conduct reconnaissance, preferably with subordinate leaders conducting concurrent reconnaissance; make specific reconnaissance assignments to subordinates to save time when feasible; and habitually limit reconnaissance as directed by the higher commander to maintain security. 36
- : know that the urgency of the mission, distances involved, or a need to avoid compromising the operation may prohibit terrain reconnaissance, e.g., an airmobile reaction force may be limited to a map reconnaissance prior to loading and to the limited aerial reconnaissance possible during approach to the LZ on the assault. 37
- : recognize that the best possible use must be made of maps and map substitutes, including hastily made terrain models, and that much of the concealment and cover and many useful avenues of approach will not be apparent on a 1:50,000 map. 38

- : habitually emphasize to his subordinate leaders and men the necessity to continually conduct battlefield reconnaissance, to report promptly as each situation develops, and to anticipate changes in the platoon order and necessity to modify their own plans as a result of battlefield reconnaissance. 39
- : as early as possible, inform subordinates and all attachments when, where, and to whom the order will be issued; orient leaders from a vantage point overlooking the area of operations when visibility, the terrain, and the situation will permit. 40
- : when the circumstances permit, plan to issue the order to the assembled platoon and attachments to ensure the maximum understanding of requirements, to ensure coordination between and among small units, and to enhance cohesion 41
- : as the estimate and planning progresses, make a mental note of each need to coordinate with adjacent unit leaders, with leaders of supporting units, units in contact, or other units from whom support, coordination, or cooperation is required; effect coordination on a timely basis. 42
- : conduct ground or aerial reconnaissance and continue the estimate to select the course of action which will successfully accomplish the assigned mission with minimum casualties and plan maximum use of organic and supporting fires to reduce the exposure time of his men. 43
- : adopt, alter, or reject appropriate portions of the tentative plan as dictated by reconnaissance; select or confirm, as necessary, objectives, phase lines, LD, defense areas, LZ, routes, checkpoints, weapons position areas, sectors of fire, and targets, including targets for on-call indirect fire or engagement by armed helicopters. 44
- : coordinate with adjacent and supporting leaders as necessary and according to plan during reconnaissance 45
- : on completion of reconnaissance, provide information gained during reconnaissance to leaders denied opportunity to reconnoiter; obtain necessary recommendations; revise the estimate on the basis of personal reconnaissance and the recommendations of subordinates as necessary; complete the plan of action; and prepare notes, sketches, and table effects, etc., to be used in issuing his order. 46
- : know that an operation order sets forth the organization for combat (e.g., Infantry-tank team), the situation, the mission, the commander's (leaders at squad level) decision and plan of action, and the details of execution needed to ensure coordinated action by the unit and attached and supporting individuals and units. 47

: know that a warning order contains advance information and instruction pertinent to future operations to permit timely preparation and concurrent planning; habitually issue timely warning orders; and supervise or designate a supervisor, e.g., PSG, to ensure that maximum advantage is taken of warning orders by subordinates. 48

: know that fragmentary orders contain only the necessary information and instructions required for one or more units to accomplish a mission and frequently are used at small-unit level to make rapid adjustments and direct action as an obscure situation is developed by a continuing estimate of the situation, e.g., during an attack or upon contact. 49

: know that warning orders, operation orders, and fragmentary orders habitually are issued orally and informally at company and lower levels and make maximum use of vantage points, maps, and map substitutes, including sand table effects when issuing oral orders. 50

: know (memorize) the sequence of the elements of the operation order and habitually follow the sequence when issuing a complete order to his platoon for a tactical operation: 51

(1) Situation.

(a) Enemy forces.

(b) Friendly forces.

1. Mission of next higher unit.

2. Mission and location of adjacent units.

3. Supporting units.

(c) Attachments and detachments.

(2) Mission.

(3) Execution.

(a) Concept of operation.

(b) 1st Squad.

(c) 2d Squad.

(d) 3d Squad.

(e) Weapons Squad.

- (f) Coordinating instructions.
- (4) Administration and Logistics.
 - (a) Supply and services.
 - (b) Medical evacuation.
- (5) Command and Signal.
 - (a) Signal.
 - (b) Command.

: at the designated time and place, meet his subordinate leaders and attached personnel (e.g., mortar FO, medical corpsman) or assemble the platoon if in a safe area; issue the platoon order using the standard operation order format and available maps or map substitutes; invite questions and provide any pertinent information required; and ensure through questioning or the monitoring of subordinates' orders that all details are understood. 52

: with the assistance of his subordinate leaders, actively supervise his unit and attached personnel to ensure that the order is carried out, i.e., take immediate corrective action if he notes a deficiency, a misunderstanding, or a need to adjust or change plans to accomplish the mission; and keep the higher commander informed of the platoon's situation and progress. 53

He must : know that standing operating procedure (SOP) is a set of instructions covering those features of operations which lend themselves to a definite or standardized procedure without loss of effectiveness; that each procedure applies unless prescribed otherwise in a particular case to retain flexibility in special situations. 54

: recognize that an effective SOP will save significant amounts of time during the planning, preparation, and execution of small-unit operations and, once learned by all members of the platoon, will provide a sense of unity and direction to small units that is vital to successful performance under combat stress, particularly when key leaders become ineffective casualties. 55

: learn the existent SOP established by higher units that is in effect in his platoon and, with the aid of his subordinate leaders and potential leaders, continually add to (and revise, if necessary), disseminate, and enforce SOP in accordance with tactical demands and experience. 56

He will : habitually keep abreast of the current situation; anticipate mission changes; and keep his men, weapons, ammunition, equipment, and supplies in the best possible state of readiness to react to a mission change and to limit the time and effort required to plan and prepare for a different mission, e.g., in a quiet defensive position it is logical to anticipate an attack order or a patrol order, to make mental plans and decisions, and to ensure readiness of men and materiel without detracting from the current mission or causing over-involvement of his men. 57

3. THE IRPL WILL KNOW AND ADHERE TO THE BASIC FUNDAMENTALS GOVERNING INFANTRY COMBAT OPERATIONS DURING THE PLANNING, PREPARATION FOR, AND EXECUTION OF ALL TACTICAL MISSIONS. HE WILL INSTRUCT HIS SUBORDINATES IN THE APPLICATION OF THE BASIC FUNDAMENTALS OF INFANTRY COMBAT BY PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE.

He will : know (memorize) the principles of war, i.e., The Objective, The Offensive, Simplicity, Unity of Command, Mass, Economy of Force, Maneuver, Surprise, and Security, and recognize that the principles of war govern the conduct of all military operations at all levels of command. 58

: define and briefly and accurately explain the meaning of each of the principles of war in language selected to be easily understood by his subordinates and cite specific examples of application at small-unit level. 59

: apply the principles of war in planning and when meeting specific situations at small-unit level. 60

: seek continually to learn and to aid his subordinates to learn when to emphasize one principle of war at the expense of others; and recognize that a deliberate decision not to apply a given principle must be justified by success in combat. 61

He must : know and adhere to the fundamentals which apply generally to all types of combat operations (see Par. 21-31, FM 7-11, April 1965), i.e.: 62

(1) Employ fully the capabilities of the individual soldier.

(2) Make careful, detailed plans and execute the plans to accomplish the mission in the shortest possible time with minimum casualties.

(3) Use the environment to best advantage.

(4) Use combined arms and mutually supporting forces.

(5) Enhance flexibility.

- (6) Exploit mobility.
- (7) Reduce vulnerability.
- (8) Generate maximum combat power.
- (9) Execute continuous reconnaissance.
- (10) Provide for adequate combat service support.

: habitually, as time permits in combat and in training, stress adherence to basic fundamentals by his subordinate leaders and potential leaders to increase their professional competence as Infantry soldiers and leaders. 63

4. THE IRPL MUST ANTICIPATE ENEMY AND FRIENDLY EMPLOYMENT OF NUCLEAR, CHEMICAL, AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS; TRAIN AND INDOCTRINATE HIS MEN TO FIGHT EFFECTIVELY WITH AND AGAINST SUCH WEAPONS; REQUIRE IMMEDIATE REPORT OF ANY INDICATIONS OF ENEMY USE OF NUCLEAR, CHEMICAL, OR BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS; AND PROVIDE SPECIFIC FOREWARNING PRIOR TO FRIENDLY USE OF SUCH WEAPONS.

He will : know, and ensure that his men know, that nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons are available to friend and foe alike and anticipate that any use of such weapons, either singly or in combination, by an aggressor may result in retaliatory use by friendly forces. 64

: know that obstacles, mass casualties, the isolation of units, and the psychological aspects of CBR warfare demand the highest level of training and continual indoctrination to ensure tactical success in the face of enemy CBR operations. 65

: anticipate the passage of long periods of time under the threat of CBR use without incident; recognize that regular review and practice of the knowledges, skills, and performances requisite to adequate protection and continued operation are vital to avoid surprise and panic; and regularly train and practice his men accordingly. 66

(See Protection Against CBR Warfare and Nuclear Explosions.)

: recognize and exploit the fact that intensive training and practice of all combat performances, knowledges, and skills, maintenance of a high level of discipline, and habitual emphasis on the necessity to accomplish the mission successfully despite personal hazards will transfer directly to situations wherein the threat of CBR attack becomes a reality. 67

He must : accept tactical nuclear fire support and employ it effectively when it is made available at his level of command and exploit the effect of tactical nuclear support planned and provided by higher echelons. 68

: habitually forewarn friendly troops on a timely basis 69
when tactical nuclear fires are to be employed in support of
an operation.

: require all personnel to report promptly any indications of 70
enemy employment of CBR weapons and pass the information to
his commander immediately.

5. THE IRPL WILL HABITUALLY REQUIRE ALL MEMBERS OF HIS PLATOON TO TAKE EFFEC-
TIVE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE MEASURES TO AVOID DETECTION AND ENGAGEMENT BY
ENEMY AIRCRAFT; HE WILL DIRECT AND SUPERVISE THE DELIVERY OF ALL AVAILABLE
SMALL ARMS FIRE AGAINST POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED ENEMY AIRCRAFT IN THE
ABSENCE OF ORDERS TO THE CONTRARY.

He must : develop the highest possible level of aircraft recognition 71
and identification among all members of his platoon; designate
air guards to cover assigned sectors in search of aircraft
during tactical movement; and establish SOP reactions to warn-
ings against enemy or unidentified aircraft.

: within the limits imposed by the mission, select covered/ 72
concealed routes as protection against all types of fire and
observation, including observation and fire from fixed-wing
aircraft and armed helicopters.

: habitually require all personnel to assume that any un- 73
identified aircraft is an enemy aircraft insofar as warnings
and the implementation of passive measures are concerned.

(Details pertinent to passive measures against enemy obser-
vation and fire are adequately covered in the paper on
Cover, Concealment, and Camouflage and are not repeated herein.)

He will : in the absence of orders to the contrary, require his men 74
to engage positively identified enemy aircraft using the
"pattern of fire" technique for fast aircraft, aimed fire as
appropriate for slow aircraft, and tracer observation techni-
ques for directing machinegun fire when suitable mounts are
available, e.g., APC mounts.

: habitually notify higher headquarters of enemy air intru- 75
sion to include the number and type of aircraft and the
direction of flight.

6. THE IRPL WILL HABITUALLY DISPOSE HIS PLATOON TO PROVIDE SECURITY
AND DEFENSE DURING HALTS PREPARATORY TO FURTHER ACTION.

He will : know, and ensure that every man in his unit knows, that 76
every unit, regardless of its size, is responsible for its
own security and defense at all times.

: know that an assembly area is a defensible position within 77
which a command is assembled preparatory to further action.

: when operating as an integral part of his company, occupy, secure, prepare for defense, and use a platoon assembly area assigned by the parent unit. 78

(Action in the assembly area prior to an attack is covered in detail in the paper, Offensive Operations, and is not repeated herein.)

He must : during semi-independent missions, anticipate requirements for halts for human (or vehicular) maintenance, to receive re-supply, to evacuate casualties, to link-up with other elements of his parent unit, and to facilitate movement by helicopter from isolated positions in the field. 79

: anticipate the need for defensible positions, preferably with a minimum of one useful helicopter landing point within the perimeter; mentally mark the locations of such positions during map, ground, and aerial reconnaissance, and habitually select a defensible position for necessary halts in preparation for further action. 80

: upon selecting a useful position, deploy the platoon to provide all-around defense and secure the position throughout the period of occupancy, i.e.: 81

- (1) Post security against air and ground attack.
- (2) Report the location of the position to the parent unit and coordinate the use of available supporting fires.
- (3) Position antitank weapons against any possible armor attack.
- (4) Require all personnel to make maximum use of cover, concealment, and camouflage, and enforce noise discipline (and light discipline during darkness).
- (5) Require fighting positions to be dug at prolonged (over 30 minutes) halts or when contact is deemed likely.
- (6) Consider patrolling the perimeter if halt is prolonged, with particular attention to approaches.
- (7) Provide time for human maintenance within the limits of the demands of the mission. (This may be the primary purpose of the halt.)
- (8) If a link-up is planned with a cooperating unit, e.g., to form a perimeter defense for the night, forewarn security personnel to avoid mistake fire delivery; conduct a reconnaissance; and be prepared to recommend use of an adjoining area that will provide a coordinated defense.

- (9) Assign tasks to subordinates and supervise to ensure that the purpose of the halt is fulfilled and that alert security is maintained.
- (10) Prior to departure, designate a formation to facilitate accomplishment of the mission with deliberate emphasis on reconnaissance and security to detect any enemy ambush which may have been set on the departure route.
- (11) Require all small-unit leaders to check their positions to ensure against the abandonment of intelligence information or materiel likely to be recovered by the enemy.
- (12) Notify the controlling headquarters of time of departure from the area.

He will : ensure through instruction and personal supervision that all small units, e.g., ambush patrols, habitually establish all-around defense and maintain the best possible security when separated from the parent unit. 82

: continually emphasize the importance of alert watchfulness on the part of each man charged with manning a security position in protection of any unit. 83

7. THE IRPL MUST PLAN AND SUPERVISE THE COLLECTION, EVALUATION, INTERPRETATION, USE, AND DISSEMINATION OF MILITARY INFORMATION PERTINENT TO THE ENEMY, WEATHER, TERRAIN, AND THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION WITHIN HIS PLATOON'S AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY; MAKE TIMELY AND ACCURATE REPORTS OF SIGNIFICANT MILITARY INFORMATION TO ADJACENT AND HIGHER UNITS; AND USE AND DISSEMINATE INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION RECEIVED BY HIS PLATOON FROM HIGHER AND ADJACENT UNITS. HE WILL CONTINUALLY EMPHASIZE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL SOLDIER TO RECOGNIZE AND REPORT USEFUL MILITARY INFORMATION.

He must : recognize that specific and accurate information of the enemy, the weather, the terrain, and the indigenous population in the area of operations is vital to making and maintaining a sound estimate of the situation and that a lack of information of the enemy, in particular, invites surprise attack, e.g., ambush. 84

: indoctrinate his platoon as a group and as individuals to actively and positively seek information pertinent to the location, strength, and disposition of the enemy in contact; the location of automatic weapons, tanks, mortars or other supporting weapons; movement routes likely to be used by the enemy; the location of minefields, boobytraps, or similar obstacles; weather changes (e.g., formation of ground fog or haze that limits visibility); the receipt of enemy fire, e.g., indirect fire providing a basis for shellreps; and unusual movement by members of the indigenous population who may be guerrillas or guerrilla supporters. (Additional 85

explicit detail on protective measures pertinent to mines and boobytraps is contained in the paper, Protection Against Mines, Boobytraps, and Warning and Illuminating Devices. Further information on the use of mines and obstacles is presented in the paper, Emplacements, Shelters, Obstacles, and Fields of Fire.)

: require subordinate leaders to brief men on local security, 86
listening posts, outposts, and all forward positions; visit security positions at irregular times, particularly during limited visibility, to promote alert watchfulness; and ensure the availability of communications equipment to facilitate prompt reporting and early warning.

: require subordinate leaders to brief men on the need to 87
report promptly any information of the enemy obtained while manning security positions and to explain the meaning of and emphasize the value of negative reports from these same positions.

: explain to his men that they frequently must interpret 88
military information for their own use, e.g., a reconnaissance patrol may halt in concealment upon hearing noise of movement, but demand accurate, concrete reports of what was sensed in any specific case, and ensure that conjecture and individual interpretations are so labeled.

: promptly report factual intelligence information to 89
higher and adjacent units as a matter of SOP and disseminate intelligence information received from other sources in the same manner.

: require rapid and secure evacuation of enemy prisoners 90
and detained civilian suspects to ensure timely interrogation to gain intelligence information.

: take active and passive counterintelligence measures 91
to limit information collection by the enemy.

(The paper on Observation, Combat Intelligence, and Reporting covers target acquisition and intelligence activities in great detail. Critical counterintelligence measures are set forth in the paper on Counterintelligence.)

8. THE IRPL WILL MAKE MAXIMUM USE OF ALL AVAILABLE MEANS OF COMMUNICATIONS TO CONTROL HIS MEN AND FIRES AND TO OBTAIN TIMELY FIRE SUPPORT, ORDERS, INFORMATION, AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT.

He must : use radio, wire, visual signals, sound signals, and 92
messengers to maintain communication with higher headquarters and to control his men and fires, including supporting fires.

- : know that radio is the primary means employed during offensive operations, including patrolling; that radio is the least secure means in that it may be jammed and/or intercepted; and that radio offers rapid and direct voice contact that usually can be rendered tactically secure through adherence to SOI and SSI. 93
- : know that messengers usually provide the most secure means of transmission, and must be used to transmit maps, overlays, etc., but are vulnerable to enemy fire and cause a loss of fighting strength when used frequently at small-unit level. 94
- : know that wire requires time to install but, when installed within a friendly perimeter, provides a rapid and secure means of communication, particularly in defensive situations. (Wire not located in safe areas may be cut, tapped, or salvaged, particularly when operating in an area infested with guerrillas.) 95
- : know that visual signals (arm-and-hand and flag signals) are useful for controlling small units and combat vehicles during unlimited visibility only, but may draw enemy fire as a result of exposure; that pyrotechnic signals are useful for transmitting specific prearranged signals, e.g., lifting or shifting fires, indicating a location to incoming helicopter support; and that careful adherence to SOI and SSI is vital to avoiding enemy ruses when using prearranged pyrotechnic signals. 96
- : know that sound signals are primarily useful for giving alarm in a general area, e.g., signaling a chemical attack in a defensive area; cannot be used when stealth is necessary, e.g., during patrols in close proximity to the enemy; and may prove useless because of battle noises. 97
- : know that prearranged touch signals are useful within small units for control, particularly during limited visibility and in ambush or reconnaissance patrolling situations where stealth is vital to the accomplishment of the mission. 98
- He will : habitually seek to provide multiple means of communication to ensure control of his men and fires despite failure of one or more means of communication. 99
- : enforce communications security. 100
- : cross-train all personnel in the platoon to install, operate, and perform first-echelon maintenance on all communications equipment available to the unit. 101

: require that essentially the same care be taken of communications equipment during transport, use, and safeguarding as would be accorded a primed demolitions charge; make daily spot checks of communications equipment during use; and require an immediate report if an item of communications equipment is lost, damaged, or fails to function. 102

(Additional, explicit detail on the use of communications is presented in the papers on Radio Communication; Wire Communication; Messenger Communication, and Visual, Sound, and Tactual Communication.)

9. THE IRPL WILL PLAN, USE, AND SUPERVISE THE USE OF ALL AVAILABLE SUPPORTING FIRES TO ASSIST HIS UNIT TO ACCOMPLISH ASSIGNED MISSIONS WITH MINIMUM LOSS OF TIME AND TO LIMIT FRIENDLY CASUALTIES.

He will : anticipate that mortars, artillery, close tactical air support, armed helicopters, and naval gunfire, as available, will provide supporting fires according to plan for all Infantry operations. 103

: for any specific operation, know the sources of supporting fires available, the effects of the fires available, and the channels for requesting and controlling scheduled and on-call fires to support his platoon. 104

He must : anticipate the attachment of a forward observed (FO) party to the platoon from the company mortar section and know that the FO is capable of calling for and adjusting mortar and artillery fires in support of the platoon during all tactical operations. 105

: anticipate the attachment (or location in the platoon's sector or zone in a supporting role) of an antitank squad(s) to cover likely armor approaches and use the attached or supporting weapons to provide close fire support against appropriate targets designated by platoon members. 106

He will : emphasize the necessity for accurate land navigation and the continuous maintenance of effective communications to ensure that the designation of target locations is accurate and that calls for fire and subsequent corrections are transmitted rapidly and effectively to the sources of supporting fires. 107

: ensure through instruction, example, and supervision that all personnel assigned or attached to the platoon can recognize and accurately designate targets suitable for engagement with available supporting fires. 108

: require his men to habitually exploit supporting fires planned to facilitate advances by "leaning into" friendly fires during movement and by closing rapidly on enemy positions with a heavy volume of accurate organic fire as supporting fires are shifted or lifted. 109

: demonstrate his own competence and qualify all subordinate leaders and potential leaders to call for and adjust supporting fires during all levels of visibility. 110

: habitually emphasize the need to use supporting fires immediately upon locating and identifying enemy targets warranting their use to reduce troop exposure time and to limit friendly casualties, i.e., to accomplish the mission as quickly as possible with minimum losses. 111

(Target acquisition, calls for fire and subsequent corrections, and fire planning for mortar and artillery fires are covered in detail in the paper, Use of Indirect Supporting Fires. Similar details covering the use of aerial supporting fires are presented in the paper, Airmobile Operations.)

10. THE IRPL WILL, WHEN TIME AND THE SITUATION PERMIT, CONDUCT A GROUP CRITIQUE OF EACH COMBAT OPERATION, I.E., VERBALLY AND GRAPHICALLY RECONSTRUCT THE ACTION WITH THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF HIS MEN, TO IDENTIFY USEFUL PROCEDURES, TECHNIQUES, AND TACTICS TO BE EXPLOITED DURING FUTURE OPERATIONS; TO IDENTIFY AND AVOID ERRORS LIKELY TO CAUSE CASUALTIES OR THREATEN FUTURE MISSIONS; AND TO CREATE A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LEARNING SITUATION FOR HIS MEN AND HIMSELF.

He will : know that any officer or NCO capable of leading men effectively in battle can conduct a profitable group critique of the action and anticipate that men usually will be so sobered by participation in combat that their contributions will be completely frank and straightforward with little need for prompting by the group monitor. 112

He must : announce the policy of conducting group critiques upon assuming command of the platoon; state that the primary purposes of the group critique are to improve the operational proficiency of the unit and to limit casualties by subjecting the performance of all elements of the platoon's combat operations to careful scrutiny and open discussion as soon as possible after each operation. 113

: recognize that the passage of time (delay) between the occurrence of the action and the conduct of the group critique covering the action will result in forgetting and rationalization, and conduct group critiques as soon as practicable after an operation (or training exercise) is completed. 114

- : ensure the security and privacy of the group and seek space within a safe area that will permit all members of the platoon and attached personnel to participate. 115
- : remind all personnel at the outset that the critique is not an official investigation; that it is an informal unit exercise; and that the primary purposes are to limit casualties and increase combat effectiveness. 116
- : use maps, ground sketches, or rough blackboard sketches to graphically show terrain, routes, weapons positions, etc., and seek to have the group members individually reconstruct the action chronologically with an informality that will afford all men present equal opportunity to contribute. 117
- : emphasize that each small-unit action against the enemy in a particular environment is a realistic test of training, leadership, combat techniques, weapons usage, and equipment serviceability; that any need for improvements or modifications must be recognized and met to defeat a particular enemy in a specific environment; and that thoughtful study and discussion by the soldiers most frequently in contact with the enemy can have a valuable and widespread effect upon defeating the enemy. 118
- : know that all soldiers (people) are creatures of habit; that tactics and techniques once embedded by training and practice tend to become repetitive to a predictable degree; and seek during group critiques to identify repetitive enemy practices, i.e., learn to predict the enemy's behavior at small-unit level in order to defeat him. 119
- : focus on friendly tactics, techniques, and individual behavior that resulted in either success or failure, with a definite aim to avoid the repetition of errors, to disseminate knowledges and practice skills that lead to success, and to avoid establishing predictable patterns of behavior that will be recognized and exploited by the enemy. 120
- : make notes, or designate a competent recorder to make notes, during group critiques of combat operations; consolidate the notes when time permits; and submit specific "lessons learned" to the higher commander for wider dissemination in addition to use for training within the parent unit. 121
- : habitually report in writing the consistent failure or breakdown of any item of issue with specific recommendations for modification or replacement of the item to improve usefulness and serviceability under the conditions specific to the operational environment. 122

: summarize each group critique to emphasize the lessons learned, and plan to use the information gained, e.g.:

123

- (1) Where a senior commander's critique or delivery of guidance precedes the group critique, support the important points made by the senior commander as they apply to the platoon.
- (2) Add to, delete from, or revise unit SOP as demanded by pertinent facts brought to light during the group critique.
- (3) Commend the unit and individuals deservedly and constructively point out specific alternative action to overcome recognized weaknesses.
- (4) Emphasize positive change and increased achievement, reinforce desirable behavior, and avoid being overly critical of any individual errors brought to light during the group discussion, particularly where the individual concerned openly recognizes and sets forth his own errors.
- (5) Reserve for private discussion with appropriate leaders any necessity to change duty assignments to increase the efficiency of the platoon, but unhesitatingly make necessary changes in due course and with deliberate fairness.

He will : anticipate that the knowledge that each man must accept responsibility for his combat performance in open group discussions will motivate men to do their best and focus their attention upon their individual needs to learn the skills and procedures that will lead to increasingly successful performance in combat.

124

: anticipate that the verbal and graphic reconstruction of small-unit combat actions will, if monitored objectively, matter-of-factly, and with restraint, have a valuable therapeutic effect upon individuals and the unit as a whole and thus reduce combat stress and enhance group unity and esprit.

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13. ABSTRACT This document is one of a series of research by-products that details the critical skills, knowledges, and performances the infantry rifle platoon leader must possess for effective individual and unit combat performance. The overall goal of the research is to improve officer training in these critical combat skill areas necessary for effective leadership. This document concerns the critical skill requirements in the area of mission, organization, and general operation of the rifle platoon.			

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KEY WORDS

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