

# Is It Time to Change Our Scoring System?

by Staff Sergeant Michael C. Tierney

Current gunnery scoring doctrine is based on a threat's ability to initiate a killing burst/shot at a BLUEFOR vehicle. This standard was adopted for tank crews in the early 1980s and for Bradley crews in 1994. It provides a like standard to score gunnery in the form of Point Calculation Worksheets (PCWs). This methodology proved to be an invaluable tool in training crews to defeat a threat, since it was based on estimates of a threat crew's ability to fully utilize its equipment. At the time it was devised, it was the most realistic way to score gunnery.

Since the standard's introduction, however, the U.S. Army has developed equipment and training methods that are far superior to that of the threat. With our vast array of simulation training, improved optics, and near-term digitization of the battlefield, which will provide near-real-time situational awareness, maybe it is time to look again at how we score gunnery.

This new methodology would be based on our equipment and our crews' ability to fully utilize the Abrams and Bradley platforms.

Since we have the best trained soldiers and best equipment in the world, it is time to see how we measure up. In order to level the playing field (scoring), we must include several factors for analysis.

We must eliminate what is known to master gunners as the "Bowling Alley Effect" or "Stacking Engagements." A prime example of the bowling alley effect occurs on Range 117 at Grafenwoehr. An example of stacking would be placing targets at minimum allowable ranges and with minimal lateral dispersion.

The data used for this analysis would come from 900 qualifying tank and Bradley engagement times for each of the ten tasks on the current Abrams and Bradley Table VIII. The sample could contain data from the major armor installations: 100 each from Korea, Fort Stewart, and Fort Carson; 300 from Fort

Hood; 150 from USAREUR; and 50 each from Forts Riley, Lewis, and Benning. This size sample would take into account average current qualifying engagement times for each task found on Table VIII, thus maintaining the ability to defeat the threat as a minimal acceptable standard.

The 100 fastest engagement times would be eliminated from our sample of times. This will reduce the effect of unrealistic acquisition times caused by stacking presentations, i.e., targets presented directly in front of a crew, or the bowling alley effect. The current threat-based 70-point line would be used as the base of the scoring pyramid.

The remainder of the times would be placed into five groups (similar to a Physical Training Test). Each group would have a value of 5 points; this would establish a 95 point line based on actual crew performance. Under this system the most points a crew could earn for "pure" gunnery would be 95 points.

The final part of this system would be points awarded to crews that have achieved a minimum of 70 points on an engagement for properly performing the following:

- One point for crew duties, or safety violations.
- One point using proper engagement techniques (most dangerous first, Z-pattern on machine gun engagements, etc.).
- Three points for adhering to conditions of the firing task.

A crew could thus earn a maximum of 100 points for a flawless gunnery performance, which is the same as the current gunnery scoring system. The distinguished, superior, and qualified rating system for crews would remain unchanged.

The theory behind the current scoring system is to be able to defeat the threat. Currently, a crew can earn 70 points for killing the threat within the time standard, but could fail the engagement by using an improper fire command

and being assessed a 5 point crew cut. The crew would have a resulting failing score of 65. On the battlefield, the crew would have won; on the range, it would lose. The crew might have to fire the engagement again if it is necessary to obtain qualification. This results in additional range time and ammunition expenditure. Soldiers can be trained on fire commands in the UCOFT, a classroom, or another simulation or training event.

The Army has to train smart. The proposed scoring system would allow the Army to train soldiers to:

- Defeat the threat
- Concentrate on battle focus (steel on target) vs. crew duties
- Give commanders a tool to evaluate their crews against the top crews in the Army.

This system will not administratively fail a crew on an engagement, and will allow a higher percentage of crews to qualify Q1, while maintaining our current standard, and while still evaluating all gunnery areas. As an added benefit, we could realize a cost savings on ammunition, range operations, and OPTEMPO.

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