

1st INFANTRY DIVISION – 1-63 ARMOR

USAREUR LIVE FIRE

*Overcoming USAREUR training area restrictions
To improve gunnery exercises at Grafenwoehr*

Black 6, this is White 6. Contact, three tanks, east near TRP 1, over.

White 6, Black 6, roger. Hold your fire and continue to observe and report, out.

Black 6, this is Red 6. Contact, multiple tanks to the north of White's contact, over.

Red 6, this is Black 6. Roger, hold your fire, break...

Guidons, Guidons, this is Black 6. Contact, tanks, east. Frontal, at my command, tophat, tophat, out.

Black 6, White set.

Black 6, Blue set.

Black 6, Green set.

Guidons, Guidons, this is Black 6. Fire!

This is not a fire command given often by tank company commanders in Europe. Although it may occasionally be given during a company defense at the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC), it is always given to MILES (Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System) equipped subordinates. USAREUR tank company commanders simply do not have the opportunity at the current time to experience maneuver training combined with the live firing of main gun and small arms ammunition as their comrades in the Continental United States (CONUS) do. The 7th Army Training Command (7ATC) and the Operations Group, CMTC, are attempting to change that by developing and implementing a live-fire exercise to train task forces and companies at the Grafenwoehr Training Area (GTA). The headquarters, B Company, D Company, Scout Platoon, and Mortar Platoon of the 1st Battalion, 63rd Armor Regiment, task organized with two pla-

toons from D Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment all were tasked with proofing and validating the proposed offensive and defensive scenarios.

The opportunities to train as a company are limited in the United States Army Europe (USAREUR), given problems of restrictive local training areas, low OP-TEMPO allowances, and requirements to support ongoing contingency and peace support operations theater-wide. Most units rely upon the "standardized" USAREUR training cycle — a gunnery density at the Grafenwoehr Training Area, followed by a rotation through the CMTC at Hohenfels — augmented by a few exercises in their Local Training Areas, Maneuver Rights Areas, and/or simulation centers to train companies. The CMTC live fire scenarios — a hasty attack followed by a defense — would be added onto the end of the GTA gunnery density, before the unit rail-loaded for Parsberg and Hohenfels.

At the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, mechanized units conduct both offensive and defensive missions with live main gun and small arms ammunition. This forces unit commanders to take extra precaution in their tactical planning processes and maintain tighter control over their subordinate units during the actual maneuver to prevent real fratricide. Bold maneuvers by subordinate leaders exercising their initiative that were acceptable when firing MILES lasers suddenly become completely unacceptable when they cross the gun-to-target lines of tanks firing real APFSDS rounds with their associated sabot petals. Successfully completing a live-fire mission and the After Action Review (AAR) are both professionally rewarding and eye-opening experiences for the commanders and subordinates alike.

The CMTC is trying to emulate this by combining some ranges and training areas at the GTA into one "open" range. Ranges 201 and 301, and the intervening areas became the Task Force 1-63 Armor maneuver area. It was an area in which the two companies of the task force could maneuver with some degree of freedom. There were relatively few maneuver restrictions: no maneuvering or firing south of Range 201's southern boundary, no maneuvering or firing north of Range 301's northern boundary, no entering of GTA's Impact Area A, and no entering of areas marked off by "Seibert" stakes. All terrain management within the boundaries was handled by the task force's S3.

To provide top-notch observations and feedback through AARs, a new Observer/Controller (O/C) team was being established at Grafenwoehr by the CMTC. Although they were not fully established for the scenario validation, the "Warhogs" (as they are known) will be organized similarly to the O/C teams at Hohenfels and would provide the same ability to observe maneuver units down to the platoon level and relevant BOS managers (Fire Support Officer, Engineers, Air Defenders, etc...). The quality and content of the AARs will also be very similar to those provided by the O/C teams at the CMTC.

In addition to the pre-existing target lifters on Ranges 201 and 301, separate "Saab" target lifters were also employed. This allowed the CMTC Operations Group to emplace targets in realistic positions and not be tied to pre-existing target locations. For example, "in-play" CSOPs were emplaced on the north side of Range 301 and in between the two ranges, out of either ranges' normal impact areas. The targets would also be presented in a "depleting band" manner

— meaning progressive target presentations would reflect battle damage from previous engagements and would be presented at closer ranges to simulate movement.

The tanks of the two companies were fitted with the Tank Gunnery Precision In-Bore Device (TPGID), a 35-mm sub-caliber training device, to allow for economical main gun engagements without wasting 120-mm main gun ammunition on unproven scenarios. All tanks also were uploaded with live 7.62-mm and .50-caliber machine gun ammunition. The two team commanders' tanks were additionally equipped with Through-Sight Video units to record the attack and defense to provide feedback to the Operations Group on the target presentations.

Task Force I-63 Armor was tasked to validate both offensive and defensive scenarios in January 1998. Two company teams, B and D — both task organized with two tank platoons and one mechanized infantry platoon — would execute the scenarios. Additionally, the battalion deployed its scout and mortar platoons for the exercise.

The task force occupied a tactical assembly area on Range 208, in the southwest corner of the GTA. The night prior to the tank teams' LD, the task force scouts conducted a reconnaissance in zone in order to identify the positions of the enemy motorized rifle platoons (MRPs) and any defensive obstacles. Additionally, they attempted to conduct "stealth" breaches on the obstacles they encountered to enhance the mobility of the attacking teams. They were successful in identifying both the obstacles and the MRP defensive positions.

The task force uncoiled in a manner that allowed Team Bulldog to lead and Team Demon to follow. After proceeding north for several kilometers the task force crossed the line of departure near the Hopfenohe Church ruins. Team Bulldog proceeded due east before turning northeast to attack along Range 201; Team Demon continued north and turned to attack due east along Range 301. Both teams engaged targets with tank main gun and small arms; additionally the mechanized infantry platoons' dismounts cleared enemy CSOP and dismount positions. After fighting along their axes of attack, both teams assaulted through and seized their objectives. In the future, it is envisioned that there will be a dismounted defensive position, complete with trenches and bunkers, for dis-

mounted infantry to clear as part of the assault on the objective.

After conducting consolidation and reorganization on the objectives, both teams conducted a slight withdrawal to more defensible terrain and began preparations to defend the newly seized ground. These preparations included establishing a counter-reconnaissance screen by both teams to deny the enemy information on our defensive positions. This was done with the minimum number of vehicles and soldiers (Team Demon used only a reinforced tank platoon) in order to allow some development of the main engagement area and battle positions. After identifying and destroying all elements of the enemy's divisional and regimental reconnaissance assets, both teams were given final instructions to destroy the Combat Reconnaissance Patrols (CRPs) before withdrawing to and occupying the main battle positions. This was completed shortly after sunrise.

After successfully defeating all elements of the enemy's divisional and regimental reconnaissance assets, the battalion headquarters believed that the OPFOR Motorized Rifle Regiment (MRR) would constitute an advanced guard and attack "one up and two back." They also templated that the OPFOR would use the larger of the two mobility corridors, which was the one running due east along Range 301. To prepare for this, Team Demon was reinforced with an additional tank platoon from Team Bulldog, bringing Demon's strength up to three tank platoons and one mechanized infantry platoon. The task force mortars were also positioned so that they could fire live ammunition into the Range 301 high explosive impact areas, thus allowing the leaders to call for and adjust indirect fires.

As expected, the MRR's advance guard attacked along the Range 301 axis. After destroying the Combat Reconnaissance Patrols (CRPs) from its screen-line locations, Team Demon withdrew to its primary battle positions. The team was arrayed three tank platoons forward with the mechanized platoon in reserve. From the primary battle positions the team destroyed the advanced guard's Forward Patrol (FP), Forward Security Element (FSE), and Advance Guard Main Body (AGMB). Following the defeat of the AGMB, the team withdrew to its alternate battle position in preparation for the MRR's main body. Indirect fire was effective in achieving suppressive results; however, the small mortar rounds (4.2") were not successful in achieving any destructive effects.

The MRR main body attacked with one second echelon MRB along each of the Range 301 and Range 201 axes. Since Team Bulldog was reduced to one tank and one mechanized platoon, priorities of fires were shifted to it. Both company teams were able to defeat the attacking MRBs. On Range 301 elements of the MRB were able to get close enough to their immediate objective to "dismount" and "assault." The utility of tanks having a coaxial machine gun, loader's machine gun, and tank commander's machine gun was well justified in the end.

The most obvious lesson learned was the importance of tactical main gun boresighting, and zeroing of the 25-mm autocannon and machine guns. These procedures are often overlooked during "normal" field training exercises; however, thorough and "to standard" procedures are a necessity if our weapon systems are to achieve their full lethality. Commanders must think through and have a plan for boresighting and zeroing all of their systems' sights, including the thermals, in a combat environment.

Secondly, this exercise stressed the importance of commanders to clear any calls for fire that would impact in their sector. This point is driven home to all when they witness the effects of indirect rounds impacting less than one kilometer away. The final major lesson learned from this exercise is ammunition management, particularly onboard the M1A1 tank. It was very easy for our tanks to fire their combat loads of ammunition when faced with two attacking MRBs. Commanders must pay close attention, not only to the total expenditure of rounds, but also to the expenditure of rounds by ammunition type. The potential lethality of the M1A1 tank is never fully achieved if it does not have any main gun ammunition to fire, or if it only has HEAT rounds to fire at assaulting tanks.

A fully resourced tactical live fire exercise, against a thinking and reactive OPFOR (target panels controlled by dedicated O/Cs), is one of the few chances for a tank company commander to "put it all together." It places stress upon the commander and forces him to plan, resource, coordinate, execute, and lead like few other training exercises can. Short of going to war, this sort of exercise will pay the greatest dividends to maneuver commanders. CONUS-based commanders can learn their lessons first-hand at the National Training Center; this opportunity will shortly come to those of us based in USAREUR.