

Train As You Fight

Light cavalry gunnery in the 82d Airborne Division

by Staff Sergeant Jack Tripp and Sergeant First Class Leo Clark

Troop A, 1-17th Cavalry, the 82nd Airborne Division's ground cavalry troop, is a unique cavalry organization. The troop trains its gunnery program in accordance with *FM 17-12-8, Light Cavalry Gunnery*, but for the last two years, the troop has made numerous adjustments to its gunnery training. These adjustments have helped this training become more battle-focused while still providing the evaluation required by the current manual.

Anyone who has spent time in both heavy and light cavalry assignments recognizes that the current manual is adapted from current Bradley and Abrams gunnery manuals. While this is fine for evaluation purposes, it does not provide the light scout platoon realistic battle-focused training. The changes that were developed by Troop A's platoon sergeants and master gunner improve the marksmanship training of its crews and the combat focus of its gunnery.

Troop A is unique in the variety of its night vision equipment. The troop is equipped with the AN/PVS-7D, the AN/PVS-14, the TOW ITAS with 2nd-generation FLIR, the AN/PVS-4, the AN/TVS-5, and the AN/TAS-4B thermal sight. The troop's gunners also utilize the AN/PAQ-4C for target lay and the M145 Machine Gun Optic for daytime firing of the M240B machine gun. The troop's gunnery program does not require the gunner to utilize any specific item of equipment. The troop's leadership feels that when the bullets are flying the crews will utilize the equipment with which they are comfortable. For example, some M2HB gunners utilize the AN/TVS-5 on their MG; however, others choose to utilize the PAQ-4C and their AN-PVS-14 with an image intensifier.

Troop A has also made several equipment modifications to improve its warfighting ability. For instance, all its TOW ITAS vehicles are equipped with an M240B, mounted to the left side of the turret, independent from the TOW system. It allows the crew to defend itself in the kind of close-in fight that is so frequent in the light-fighter's operat-

Troop A was one of the first units in the Army to receive the TOW ITAS (Improved Target Acquisition System). The TV image presented by the gunner's sight can be remoted to the vehicle commander for greater fire control supervision.

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ing environment. We have also manufactured a secondary mount on the MK19 HMMWVs to give these crews the same ability.

Troop A was the first unit in the Army equipped with the TOW ITAS (Improved Target Acquisition System), which gives the scout platoons some unique capabilities. The ITAS gunner's sight is a video image. This has allowed the crews to tap into the system and pipe a video feed to a small monitor located in the truck commander's position, which allows the commander to confirm targets prior to his execution command. It also aids the vehicle commander in training a new gunner on thermal images.

Another training tool for the TOW ITAS is the Training Monitor Unit (TMU), a VHS-C recorder and monitor that can tape crews when they conduct either live fire or tracking exercises. A Troop videotapes all firing crews during gunnery exercises to provide after-action feedback on target engagements. Many a boastful crew has been humbled when they viewed themselves during debrief.

Current doctrine of *FM 17-98, Scout Platoon* calls for the crew of a HMMWV to occupy battle positions with the rear of the vehicle, or back hatch, facing the threat. Troop A has

adjusted its gunnery program to reflect this. The troop no longer does berm drills while firing in the defense. When a crew occupies its BP, it is exposed to the enemy. This does away with the defilade time of *FM 17-12-8*. In other words, as soon as the target or targets are presented, target engagement time begins, as the crew is already exposed. This forces the crew to improve target acquisition skills and to be quick with manipulation of the traversing and elevation unit of their respective weapon system.

The troop has also added commander's engagements for all primary weapon systems, and we also qualify all personnel on TOW tracking and both TOW Gunnery Skills Testing (GST) and machine gun GST. The troop qualifies alternate crews whenever possible. Due to Troop A's mission of forced entry, the troop could be air-dropped anywhere in the world with very little notice, and this cross-training addresses this. When the troop conducts an airborne assault and their vehicles are airdropped into an objective, the troop's personnel assemble on the vehicles. As soon as three troopers reach a vehicle, they begin derigging it. These three become the crew of that vehicle, regardless of rank or duty position. They will fight that vehicle onto its primary objective until the troop has

time to consolidate and reorganize. By training all personnel on as many weapon systems as possible, troopers have the confidence to fight all available weapons, not just the ones they are assigned.

In addition to qualifying TOW tracking, Troop A's gunners also qualify modified machine gun tables. Essentially, the TOW crews fire their M240Bs and are graded on the same tables as the M2HB crews, only modifying the tables when ranges to targets are too great. Troop A also fires Table I in a different manner than called for in the FM. Rather than firing from the tripod, the troop fires Table I, which is 10M paster targets, from the top of the truck. The troop feels that this is more combat-focused; we will not generally shoot from the ground-mounted tripod. This exercise also allows the Mk19 crews to fire their secondary weapon system. One of the biggest problems new gunners have is manipulating the traversing and elevation mechanism. Troop A has designed a training tool to aid in improving this performance, a T&E manipulation board. This is a

plywood board on which scale targets are painted. The targets are 1:30 and 1:60 scale depicting frontal and flank target exposures. Then a laser borelight device is mounted on the weapon system. The borelight device allows the vehicle commander to see where the gunner is laying the weapon for initial target burst. The vehicle commander can then issue the gunner a correction and ensure the gunner makes the proper adjustment.

During the entire exercise, the gunner is gaining hands-on experience with the T&E. The vehicle commander can also have the gunner "engage" multiple targets to train him in target transition. During all this training the gunner is concentrating on his sights and only turns on the laser borelight device when he has laid on the target. Also on the board is a "worm track," used by TOW gunners to manipulate their system along an uneven track. All of the targets on the board, to include the worm track, are visible in thermal mode.

In conclusion, Troop A has taken *FM 17-12-8* and modified its training to

make it more battle-focused while better preparing the troopers of Troop A for their wartime mission.

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