

DRIVER'S SEAT

Cavalry Focus Week:

Training Capstone

Also Sustains Cadre's Critical Skills



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Drill sergeants and instructors, leaders in 1ATB and 16th Cavalry, serve at the home of Armor for at least four years performing a critical mission: they create the tankers, scouts, and armored leaders of the future. This is a necessary part of their self-development, and will be noted by centralized promotion boards, but there are too few resources devoted to sustaining their critical warfighting skills. Innovative leaders are now creating methods for sustaining these skills while training new soldiers and leaders. Our best-developed initiative is Cavalry Focus Week in 5th Squadron, 16th Cavalry, which conducts 19D OSUT.

LTC Gary Whitehead and CSM Bill Brooks have instructed their staff and subordinate commanders to accomplish three missions during each training cycle: conduct gunnery and maneuver training with focus on 19D SL10 tasks; provide a "Rite of Passage" event for graduating cavalry scouts; and sustain the critical combat skills of the 19D30/40 NCOs who serve as CFV/HMMWV crew instructors and as drill sergeants.

Cavalry Focus Week is the end-of-cycle training event for a 19D OSUT troop. It provides the scenario to train individual skills in a collective skills environment. Collective training is layered onto the individual training tasks, also enabling 19D30 and 40-level skills practice. The focus of the training must be the initial entry private, but the drill sergeants and instructors serve as platoon sergeants and section sergeants.

The "week" lasts eight days, and is based on a squadron operations order. This order provides a screening mission against an enemy MRR, followed by se-

curity missions which protect other friendly ground forces preparing for a counterattack. This provides the basis for each range or STX-lane order. The four STX lanes are: CFV, HMMWV, dismounted patrol, and security/base operations. Each lane prepares an order to be given to the privates as part of their lane training. The order is briefed by the cadre-platoon sergeant and follows the five-paragraph format, scaled down to the level of the privates. The process reinforces the importance of a correct OPOD to these soldiers.

The exercise begins with four days of gunnery, with the focus on CFV firing techniques with the 25mm and M240. The culmination of the range training is a modified Bradley Table VI A/B. The squadron OPOD drives the engagement scenario, a screening mission. The target array reflects the targets that a CFV section should engage while performing a screen. The CFVs are positioned to reflect a scout section, and they fire by section. In the tower, the troop master gunner or the troop 1SG acts as the platoon leader and gives the section a tactical prompt to begin the engagement. The section leader will issue the section fire command upon target presentation. Targets are set on "bob." M2 machine gun firing is done from a HMMWV.

As HMMWV scout sections would rarely engage as sections, .50 cal gunnery is familiarization fire. There are no section fire commands, but cadre conducts the individual engagement as a tactical engagement. An AAR of section fire commands and reporting procedures is conducted for each section leader, but away from the privates.

On transition day, a tactical road march of CFVs and HMMWVs moves to occupy a TOC/troop assembly area. From this day, continuous operations begin, and over the next four days, each platoon rotates through four STX lanes. Again, prior to each lane, the PSG and section sergeants give an operation order based on the troop OPOD. Warning Orders and FRAGOS are issued throughout the lanes, as part of change-of-mission. Each platoon is led by the PSG, assisted by the section sergeants. The company commander, XO, or 1SG observe and control each lane. Emphasis is on critical individual tasks for the privates, and on critical tactical and leadership tasks for the cadre.

The CFV lane begins with tactical driving instruction. It transitions into a zone recon mission. Situations along the zone recon include: clear a restricted area, recon an obstacle, react to indirect fire, actions on contact. The next phase is a night screen. The soldiers man their OPs and detect the OPFOR moving into zone. The OPFOR is from the dismounted patrol lane.

During the HMMWV lane, the privates and cadre exercise the TTP for conducting a route recon as a HMMWV-equipped scout platoon. Situations along the route recon include obstacle/restriction recon, actions on contact, call for and adjust indirect fire, and cross danger area. Night training brings two options: night screen or night route recon. Night screen sees the soldiers manning OPs and detecting OPFOR. Night route recon simulates reconning and marking the

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route for a tank battalion's tactical road-march into a tactical AA.

The dismounted lane will consist of a day and a night patrol. The night patrol moves to an NAI behind the CFV screen line. After completion of the night patrol, soldiers return to the TOC/troop AA and conduct security, tactical sleeping, and stand-to on a portion of the defensive perimeter securing the TOC.

If there are four platoons, the support lane will include tasks that support the security of the troop AA/TOC: TOC operations, NBC skills, and prepare defensive positions. Security tasks include stand-to, TOC security, and roving patrols of the AA. OPFOR will attempt to penetrate the TOC perimeter. At the end

of the eight exercise days, a day is spent preparing for the end-of-course test (Cavalry Stakes), and the unit conducts a dismounted road march into the cantonment area. The next day is Cav Stakes, followed by the rite of passage ceremony.

As I said, this is our best cadre sustainment program. The NCOs sustain such tasks as: direct engagements from the BFV commander's position, control scout platoon fires, perform pre-combat checks, establish LP/OP, plan a zone recon, conduct a screening mission, conduct a PCI, plan/conduct dismounted patrol, perform a passage of lines, and reconnoiter an obstacle. They are more confident as they return to TOE units.

The Armor Center is responsible for allocating resources for more robust cadre sustainment training and for conducting such courses as the Tank Commander Certification Course, which "reblues" officers and NCOs as they depart the Center (We need a Scout Commanders Certification Course!). Each Armor Center unit must be innovative when using existing resources to set their sergeants up for success as they depart Fort Knox.

Each of our sergeants is responsible for taking the best advantage of the opportunities for self-development on Fort Knox. They will return to the force, and they must be competent and confident.

"SERGEANT, TAKE THE LEAD"