



THE FIRST
100
DAYS of

**PLATOON
LEADERSHIP**

2nd Edition

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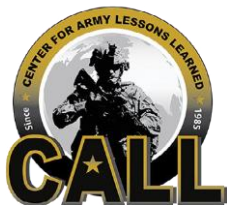
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Foreword

As the U.S. Army continues to evolve and adapt to the complexities of modern warfare, the importance of effective platoon leadership remains unwavering. The platoon leader and platoon sergeant remain the cornerstone of our military's success, serving as the embodiment of leadership excellence on and off the battlefield. Their ability to work in tandem, leveraging their unique skills and strengths, is the catalyst for achieving tactical superiority and ensuring the readiness of our unit formations.

In the years since the initial publication of this handbook, the operational environment has continued to shift, presenting new challenges and opportunities for our platoon leaders and sergeants. The rise of near-peer competitors, the increasing complexity of urban warfare, and the evolving nature of hybrid threats all demand that our leaders be more agile, more innovative, and more adept at solving complex problems.

This second edition of the handbook is designed to address these emerging challenges, providing new and seasoned leaders with the guidance and best practices necessary to succeed in this dynamic environment. By focusing on the timeless principles of leadership, while also incorporating lessons learned from recent operations and exercises, this handbook aims to empower platoon leaders and sergeants to build high-performing teams, make informed decisions, and drive success in the most demanding situations.

COL Scott Allen
Director
Center for Army Lessons Learned

Introduction

There are a few relationships you will remember for the rest of your life: your first sergeant, your command sergeant major, and most importantly, your platoon sergeant.

— Former division commander

Purpose

Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System (NCOPDS)/Officer Education System (OES) schools have neither the time nor ability to cover every scenario a new platoon leader (PL) or platoon sergeant (PSG) may face after assuming duties. The Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), in conjunction with serving and former PLs and PSGs, has compiled lessons learned and best practices for PLs and PSGs and those who aspire to these positions to improve themselves and their units. The purpose of this handbook is to provide these lessons learned and best practices to PLs and PSGs to help enable their success in their first 100 days in position and beyond.

For Platoon Leaders

To earn your commission, you have undergone extensive training and are better trained and more prepared to be a PL than you know. In addition to basic combat skills, the Army trained and tested you to lead leaders, manage organizations, and integrate combined arms to defeat the enemy.

This handbook will educate you on how to build on your training and work with noncommissioned officers (NCOs). Never forget you are responsible for Soldiers' lives, the most precious resource in the Army, and must make tough decisions. Also, never forget you have an NCO support chain.

For Platoon Sergeants

You have been a Soldier, team leader, squad leader, and earned a wealth of experience. This knowledge will inform and prepare you to be a PSG. This handbook will educate you on how to build on current experience and work with your partner, the PL, something team and squad leaders do not have to do. Never forget you are responsible for Soldiers' lives, the most precious resource in the Army, and must prepare them for the mission. Also, never forget you are part of a leadership team. You and your PL sink or swim together.

About This Handbook

This handbook consists of five chapters and two appendices:

Chapter 1, Leadership, discusses leadership at the platoon level for PLs and PSGs. It includes information on how to empower squad leaders, counsel subordinates, and how PLs and PSGs manage their noncommissioned officer (NCO)/officer relationships and duties.

Chapter 2, Platoon Training, discusses platoon training such as how to train and prepare Soldiers for collective training and the planning and resourcing of platoon training events.

Chapter 3, Knowledge, outlines knowledge a PL and PSG need to prepare their unit for success. It discusses how to maintain platoon equipment, manage property, build cohesion, deal with discipline, and contribute to a company's family readiness program.

Chapter 4, Execution, discusses the platoon's actions during execution. It includes how to plan using troop-leading procedures, leading a patrol, integrating enablers, and leveraging after action reviews to improve the platoon.

Chapter 5, Vignettes, consists of platoon vignettes that discuss situations encountered by leaders. They are designed for use as part of leader development discussions. Young leaders may deal with these situations during their first 100 days.

Note: Throughout this handbook is a series of color-coded boxes containing lessons learned and best practices.

For Platoon Leaders

The blue boxes contain lessons learned and best practices, specifically for PLs.

For Platoon Sergeants

The yellow boxes contain lessons learned and best practices, specifically for PSGs.

For Platoon Leaders and Platoon Sergeants

The green boxes contain lessons learned and best practices for both PLs and PSGs.

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Chapter 1

Leadership

Platoon leader's (PL's) and platoon sergeant's (PSG's) primary jobs are to inspire and influence the platoon to accomplish the mission. They do this by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.¹ PLs and PSGs are responsible for all missions their platoon accomplishes or fails at. This responsibility comes with the position, but they are only successful because of character, presence, and intellect.

This chapter discusses assumption of the first platoon-level leadership role, building a team, effective versus ineffective leadership, PL and PSG duties, using squad leaders efficiently, effective counseling at the platoon level, engaged leadership, time and task management for a platoon, and insights on mission command.

Assumption of the First Platoon-level Leadership Role

During my first 100 days, a variation of competencies in junior leaders and difficulty in understanding my commander's priorities and guidance surprised me. People really need to be prepared to take control of an organization on day one and soak everything in.

— Former Infantry PL

¹ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership*, 6 February 2025.

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A Soldier's first impression of a leader has a lasting impact throughout his time as a leader. This is especially true at the platoon level. Leaders who take charge and stay organized make a lasting impression on Soldiers, regardless of whether an effective relief-in-place process took place or not. When assuming a platoon, leaders need to take charge and assess their manning, equipment, and training status to determine their expectations, learn the strengths and weaknesses of subordinates, and communicate their expectations for their unit.

PLs and PSGs run platoons. This may be the first time the PL or PSG is in a leadership position at the platoon level, which may cause feelings of inexperience or doubt. Army leaders can rely on the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage as a guide to take charge. New leaders should immediately be responsible to their higher headquarters and listen to subordinate leaders. New PLs and PSGs should also trust their instinct. As leaders, they are duty bound to look deeper into an issue they do not feel is correct. Leaders should identify areas for improvement, especially during their first 100 days and unless a situation is unsafe, illegal, or immoral they work with their platoon to develop an action plan that drives change over time.

The most important thing I learned is that Soldiers watch what leaders do. You can give them classes and lecture them forever, but it is your personal example they will follow.

— General Colin Powell²

² Military Times Book Excerpt: "The Ever-Shrinking Fighting Force,." Last modified July 11, 2021, <https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/commentary/2021/07/11/book-excerpt-the-ever-shrinking-fighting-force/>.

It is the duty of PLs and PSGs to maintain the readiness of platoons. When assuming command of platoons, leaders must understand where their platoon stands from their partner (PL/PSG) and make their own assessment. PSGs typically determine manning at the platoon level, but the PL and PSG should do a Soldier-by-Soldier review to see strengths or gaps. Leaders can use their initial accountability inventory of their equipment to assess discipline, equipment maintenance, and readiness of a platoon. Leaders should involve themselves immediately in supervising sergeant's time and individual training to assess their element's readiness. New leaders should not assume their platoon is at the walk stage just because they are new. Leaders need to accurately assess where their platoon is and plan for appropriate training.

For Platoon Leaders

As a PL, your expectations come from both your company and battalion commanders. They may come in the form of formal counseling or informal direction. You receive guidance from higher leaders and translate this guidance to your platoon. Spend the time on clarifying expectations, provide backbriefs, and understand how your platoon fits into the company and battalion's bigger picture as you assume command of your platoon.

For Platoon Sergeants

As a PSG, your expectations come from your commander, PL, command sergeant major, and first sergeant. Normally these people speak with one voice, but if they do not, you and the PL must coordinate to determine what they expect of your platoon. This is a spot where PLs and PSGs get into trouble. You both may have a different understanding of higher leadership's expectations. Communication is the key. As the senior noncommissioned officer (NCO) and mentor, take time with your PL and, as a team, determine and record the expectations of your platoon for standards, training, and mission execution. This common understanding will build your individual relationship and your platoon's ability to focus on what is most important.

PLs and PSGs rely on squad leaders. Spending time to review each subordinate leader's strengths and weaknesses is key. Who is better at administrative functions and who is better in the field? Which leader requires less guidance to execute a task and who needs additional direction and supervision? This assessment will help build a team and ensure you give the right people the right tasks to accomplish.

Finally, leaders need to lay out expectations for their platoon and what their platoon can expect from their leaders. This should happen formally through the counseling process and informally by example. PLs and PSGs must walk the walk and talk the talk, showing both integrity and technical knowledge to their Soldiers. Ideally, this should come from both the PL and PSG, showing unity of command.

A leader's first 100 days can make or break their leadership experience. Many leaders who make a poor impression are never able to overcome their Soldiers' loss of confidence in them. Build up leadership equity at the start by communicating and enforcing standards early and often. In addition to the technical and tactical knowledge expected of Army leaders, Soldiers expect you to model and enforce the Army values. PLs and PSGs must take charge, communicate, and continuously assess their platoon's readiness, expectations from higher, the strengths and weaknesses of their platoon, and set baseline expectations and standards for their platoon.

Building the Team

In my experience, shared hardship is the most effective way to obtain team cohesion. Once a group conquers a shared hardship through teamwork, its members develop mutual trust and confidence in one another.

— Former Security Forces Assistance Team Lieutenant³

A functional platoon requires a cohesive team. Exercising mission command and empowering junior leaders require teams built through mutual trust. Platoon-level leaders gain this mutual trust through building a team based on shared experiences, enforcing standards, creating a platoon identity, building trust in training environments, and having a welcome program. A platoon where leaders do not share hardships may not function as well.

³ Safer, Scott, "Building a Cohesive Team. in Company Command," April 2013, available online at [https://juniorofficer.army.mil/pubs/armymagazine/docs/2013/CC_ARMY_\(Apr2013\)_Cohesive_Team.pdf](https://juniorofficer.army.mil/pubs/armymagazine/docs/2013/CC_ARMY_(Apr2013)_Cohesive_Team.pdf).

For Platoon Leaders and Platoon Sergeants

Building your platoon team starts with your relationship. In a platoon where the PL and PSG have interpersonal issues or a lack of trust, the platoon's cohesion and ability to operate will degrade. Soldiers often choose sides, hindering your ability to lead. Consider discussing this during your initial counseling. Soldiers who can detect a rift between the platoon team will be quick to exploit it and undermine the PL and PSG.

One proven method of building a platoon team is through shared experiences. Tough physical training and field exercises require a platoon to work together to be successful. As Soldiers feel they reach their individual limits, they often look for motivation from those around them. As they see members of their platoon persevere, Soldiers gain confidence in their team and can usually push themselves further. Executing combat-focused physical training with ruck marches, litter and buddy carries, and other events bring Soldiers in a platoon closer together. In the field, Soldiers in the platoon who plan and execute tough collective training, gain confidence in each other's abilities and form a closer team.

A great resource for platoons is the local Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) program. High-rope courses, paintball, or other MWR excursions are beneficial opportunities that create shared hardships and team building. Most companies have access to MWR funds to supplement the cost of morale and team-building events.

Another method of team building is consistently high standards. Soldiers in a cohesive team have ownership of and buy into their platoon.

Creating and enforcing High Physical, Tactical, and Discipline Standards motivates

Soldiers can make themselves feel like an elite unit able to achieve more than their sister platoons. Some platoons develop a qualification program, mixing physical and tactical tasks. These programs are effective at establishing high standards and esprit de corps. However, programs must be achievable and must not exclude Soldiers, which may lead to hazing. Externally, inter-platoon competition has its benefits, but taken to extremes, it can become unhealthy. Unhealthy competition results in the loss of cohesion (e.g., when winning by any means leads to unethical decisions or when it separates a platoon as a non-team player from the company, adversely affecting company cohesion).

As the platoon starts to work together and gain confidence as a team, a platoon's identity and culture will grow. This culture is a direct reflection of the PL and PSG. Platoon leadership that models the Army values, works hard, maintains open communication, and does not accept bullying, harassment, and hazing will build a positive culture. Often, units build their identity around a common symbol or motto. New leaders often try to put their own influence on the platoon to reflect their vision. Leaders should be wary of making immediate identity changes as they assume their position. It sounds simple to change a symbol, call sign, or motto, but these symbols help build identity and cohesion. By changing them, new leaders may show a lack of interest in the platoon's identity. Of course, if there is already a cohesion problem or these symbols have a negative impact, new PLs and PSGs must swiftly and decisively change them to start the culture shift.

CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED

Cohesive teams prepare for execution by building trust in training environments. PLs and PSGs should empower squad and team leaders to lead during training. Challenging junior leaders in training enables platoon-level leaders to mentor and train them to execute tasks independently when needed. Leaders take advantage of sergeant's training time (STT), (some units call it leader's training time [LTT]), and field exercises to provide Soldiers the opportunity to learn but to also demonstrate their skills, gaining the trust of their peers.

Most companies have a sponsorship and welcome program run by the 1SG. Platoon-level leaders should support the company program and expand it at the platoon level. The PL or PSG should sit down with each incoming Soldier, provide them with standards and expectations and get to know them. Learning an incoming Soldier's hobbies, professional and personal background, family members, and habits builds rapport between Soldiers and their leaders. This rapport allows leaders to know their Soldiers and welcome them to the platoon. It will also enable a leader to spot when there is something wrong with a Soldier. It is often difficult to do this due to competing priorities, but if either the PL or PSG cannot do this immediately, they should follow up as soon as possible.

For Platoon Sergeants

The platoon onboarding program is usually run by the PSG. You are often the first leader a Soldier meets and interacts with. How you welcome and incorporate new Soldiers into your platoon will have a lasting impact on the culture of your platoon and company. Take time to talk with your PL about the culture the platoon wants to project to new Soldiers and how you will achieve that. Record your plan either as a memorandum for record or on a counseling form. Being proactive will identify and prevent issues down the road.

A platoon is a team built on experience and trust. Platoon-level leaders who recognize this will build trust through shared experiences, high standards, creating a platoon identity, empowering Soldiers in training environments, and having an effective welcoming program. Building and maintaining a team allows platoons to accomplish their mission during training and execution.

Effective Versus Ineffective Leadership

Sir, you know how to plan. It doesn't matter what your orders are. We are here to execute. Most importantly though, you must give [those orders] confidently.

— PSG to a new PL

Platoon leadership needs to work as a team to be effective. There are multiple types and styles of leadership, but there are key elements of effective and ineffective leadership. The following are examples of both effective and ineffective leadership experienced by previous PLs and PSGs.

Effective Leadership

Take Charge

After arriving at my first duty station, my executive officer (XO) drove me out to the field and dropped me off with the battalion's support platoon. I had never met the PSG or any of the Soldiers before. Within the first day, one of my Soldiers lost his night vision goggles (NVGs) because he didn't tie them down. My PSG was a young staff sergeant and I had to step up. First, I inspected the platoon's tie downs and then worked out a plan for turning the platoon out searching for the equipment. Second, I went and reported to the commander that we had lost a pair of NVGs. Eventually, we located the equipment and I ended up having the Soldier re-tie the entire platoon's NVG tie downs. When we came out of the field, the platoon knew I was in charge and expected nothing but the best from them. My commander knew he could trust me to keep him informed and take responsibility for my platoon's actions.

I learned a lot from that first field problem and I've used what I learned from that experience for the rest of my career.

— Current Company Commander

Build the Team

I have always been a gym rat as a Soldier. Once I became a PSG, I was a bit overwhelmed, so I changed my schedule to hit the gym before company physical training. Looking back, this was one of the best actions I took. My squad and team leaders started joining me for my pre-physical training sessions. During this time, just as a platoon, my junior leaders could relax and get to know each other in ways you just can't during the duty day. When the brigade went to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), I knew I could trust each of my team and squad leaders to get the mission done.

— Former PSG

Set the Standard

When I was in Kuwait, my battalion was on recall, but we often had a lot of downtime. When we were off, I tended to take my Soldiers to the gym or focus on planning our next training event. There were some PLs who spent a lot of time playing video games in their bunks. Soldiers would see them playing during their downtime and when we were training you could see those PLs struggle leading their platoon. I learned that Soldiers are always watching leaders and you need to always maintain a high personal standard.

— PL
Returning from Kuwait

Back Each Other Up

As a new PL, I took charge of my platoon during my deployment in Afghanistan. After a couple days on patrol, I received a change of mission from the battalion, moving us to a hotter area where we had taken contact the week prior. When I gave a warning order (WARNORD) over the radio, one of my team leaders came back questioning the wisdom of my order over the platoon net. At first, I wasn't sure what to do. My PSG came on the net and backed me up, telling the team leader to back down and listen for the rest of the WARNORD. After that, I knew my PSG would always back me up and he built confidence in me as a leader.

— Former PL

Knowing About Their Soldiers

When new Soldiers arrived at the platoon, I would always counsel them. I wanted to know as much about my men as possible (where they live, what their personal life was like, and what their hobbies were) so we could build a relationship. One afternoon before the National Training Center (NTC), one of my Soldiers gave me a call and wanted to talk. His wife was leaving with the kids. It took me about 30 seconds to determine how he was thinking about hurting himself from how he was talking and I knew he had a weapon in the house.

My PSG and I linked up and headed to his house to meet him and we spent all night with the Soldier talking about his family. I believe to this day that if I was not as engaged with my Soldier, if we didn't build trust, and if I did not take the time to answer that phone call, I would have spent the next couple of weeks planning a memorial service instead of visiting my Soldier in the hospital.

— Current PL

Build a Relationship

My first PSG, a combat veteran, told me that I needed to counsel him. As a second lieutenant (2LT) how could I counsel a veteran with multiple deployments? So, I asked him what questions he had for me. He said he had only one as to whether I wanted him to work for me or with me. Being the naive 2LT, I asked him what did it mean to work for me? He said he would follow my orders and accomplish any mission given to him to the best of his ability to make our platoon combat ready. I thought that sounded pretty good, so I asked him what it means to work with me? He said he would follow my orders and accomplish any mission given to him to the best of his ability and do anything else he thought necessary based on his experience to make our platoon combat ready. Of course, I thought that sounded better.

Obviously, he was asking for me to empower him and to learn from him without directly stating that. I have kept that lesson (multiple lessons) with me to this day.

— Former Special Forces Commander

Ineffective Leadership

Unwilling to Listen

When planning our first small-arms range as officer in charge (OIC)/noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC), my PL and I went over the plan multiple times. I recommend we work a chow/water plan into the range, making space in the timeline for chow and having a water buffalo on the site. My PL, just out of ranger school, wanted the platoon to eat on the move and carry water. He briefed his plan during the training meeting, despite me telling him the commander would not go for it. The commander came down on him. Luckily, I was able to support my PL by telling the commander, “We would rotate Soldiers off the line for chow and that I had planned to take water cans out with us.” After our first range, we started working better together, but it was difficult to overcome his lack of trust in me.

— Military Police PSG

Trust but Verify

I remember one of my first high-profile ranges. We were executing a mine-clearing line charge (MICLIC) breach that required special platoon equipment. In the rush to get out to the range, I overlooked precombat inspections (PCIs) trusting my squad leaders to handle equipment. Once out on the ground, I quickly realized the platoon did not have what it needed and was not prepared for the mission. Luckily, this was training, but I learned that a PL needs to be involved during PCIs for key equipment.

— Combat Arms PL

Disagreement Between the PL and PSG

I got a new PL when we were in Afghanistan before I went on mid-tour leave. When I came back, my 1SG was frustrated that my platoon could not go on mission. I asked why and the 1SG replied that my PL told the commander the platoon was untrained and not prepared for combat missions. We had already been in the country for six months and had been executing daily patrols. How my PL assessed us as untrained is still a mystery to me. I sat down with the commander and went through our platoon's readiness and status and he lifted the restriction on us. That PL and I started off on a rough foot. I wish he and I would have talked before he gave his assessment to the commander. We ended up having issues working together as a team for the rest of deployment.

— Former PSG

Vague Orders

When I took over as PL, my battalion was on a red cycle downtime, and we had Soldiers supporting multiple taskings from the platoon. It was hard to get all the squad leaders together daily for meetings. I decided to start sending out updates and taskings by text so we could all share information in real time. This worked for a couple days until I sent out that I needed two vehicles dispatched Tuesday by 0900 to support a company preparing a defense in training area (TA) 16. My squad leaders dispatched two interim high-mobility engineer excavators (IHMEEs). These are great for digging individual fighting positions, but the company wanted vehicle fighting positions. After getting chewed out, I started a 1600 meeting with all squad leaders and team leaders. At times, not everyone was there, but the time spent face-to-face with my NCOs really helped us communicate better.

— Engineer PL

Platoon Leader and Platoon Sergeant Duties

PL/PSG relationships are essential, yet complicated. On the one hand, you must immediately lead and establish a professional relationship. On the other hand, it is your job to learn about your Soldiers' lives (especially the senior NCOs). Build trust with them, and their respect will come later through the decisions you make daily and in the field. The goal is to establish a mutual trust that is present in garrison, the field, and in a combat zone.

— PL During a Deployment

PLs and PSGs are a team. They work together to execute their platoon's mission and success will depend on mutual trust and knowing their partner will do what they need to do. Listed below are ways to delegate tasks, although duties may change based on personalities.

Platoon Leader Duties

- Responsible for what the platoon does or fails to do
- Are the points of contact between the company commander and the platoon to receive mission for the platoon and communicate needs to the commander
- Communicate with higher headquarters for reporting and receipt of mission
- Lead planning exercises
- Develop the concept of the operation
- Lead rehearsals
- Responsible for property
- Develop junior leaders
- Plan training with company leadership

Platoon Sergeant Duties

- Advise PLs
- Are the senior mentors to the platoon
- Track personnel and platoon readiness
- Lead Soldier counseling
- Plan physical training
- Contribute to planning
- Develop maintenance, medical, and supply plans
- Communicate through the XO and 1SG
- Plan packing lists
- Set the standard for equipment and discipline
- Are the lead trainers for the platoon
- Responsible for platoon manning
- Mentor NCOs for career development

Using Squad Leaders

Always listen to your NCOs; however, in the end, you will be the one who makes the overall decision. Be confident in your final choice. If you constantly go back and forth on standards or during decision points, your Soldiers will lose trust in you and your ability to lead.

— Former Cavalry PL

Whether operating centralized or distributed as a platoon, platoon leadership relies on squad leaders for mission execution. Squad leaders assist in planning, executing rehearsals, performing precombat checks (PCCs), interacting daily with Soldiers, and effectively training individual Soldiers. They are integral to a high-performing platoon. Successful PLs and PSGs influence squad leaders to get the job done.

Squad leaders are critical during planning. Oftentimes, PLs plan in a vacuum and bring in their NCOs either too late in the process or not at all. This type of planning overlooks the collective years of experience that NCOs have. Planning should be a team effort where squad leaders provide input to the PL based on their experience. After given a task and purpose, having squad leaders backbrief their aspect of the operation or actions on the objective can allow valuable bottom-up refinement during planning.

The PL leads and is responsible for planning. PLs should delegate what they can but need to make the final decision. Platoon-level leaders must be confident in their decisions and not flexible on standards or at a decision point. Indecisiveness and flexible standards undermine platoon leadership and make PLs and PSGs ineffective.

While PLs and PSGs hold and supervise rehearsals for actions on the objective and other key parts of an operation, they should also save time for squad leaders to rehearse with their squads. Special teams, actions on contact for the lead squad, or even radio procedures are important for squad leaders to review with their squad before a platoon-level rehearsal.

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In addition to rehearsals before mission, squad leaders perform PCCs. Having a squad leader backbrief on the key squad equipment and status will allow PLs to focus on key platoon equipment during their precombat inspection. Successful platoon leadership empowers squad leaders to hold rehearsals and execute internal PCCs. PLs and PSGs cannot be negligent in their responsibilities and must trust but verify their squad leaders, ensuring they conduct rehearsals and PCCs to standard. Building expectations of thoroughness in garrison will help PLs during time-constrained situations in the field or when deployed.

PLs and PSGs should know the amount of time it takes to accomplish specific tasks for the platoon. This allows them to check on their squads without micromanaging. Overly checking on subordinates wastes time and focus. This matters in garrison and in the field. Asking for status updates every few minutes directs the squad leader's focus to reporting and not on the mission. In addition, knowing how long it takes to accomplish specific tasks allows platoon-level leaders to keep the company informed without bothering squads.

Both in garrison and in the field, squad leaders are the daily face of the platoon to the Soldiers. Platoon leadership uses morning huddles and afternoon backbriefs to synchronize the platoon. Platoon leadership should empower squad leaders with some training and minor discipline issues; however, they also need a system to remain informed. "I do not know if SGT Hobb's has it," is not an acceptable answer when a commander or 1SG talk to a PL or PSG.⁴ Leadership is expected to know the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the platoon. However, PLs and PSGs cannot expect to always know every detail. Sometimes the answer is, "Let me get an update and I will report back."

⁴ Young, Brock 1LT, "What NOT to Do as a Platoon Leader, in Company Command," December 2013, available online at [https://juniorofficer.army.mil/pubs/armymagazine/docs/2013/CC_ARMY_\(Dec2013\)_What_NOT_to_do.pdf](https://juniorofficer.army.mil/pubs/armymagazine/docs/2013/CC_ARMY_(Dec2013)_What_NOT_to_do.pdf).

To stay informed, PLs and PSGs should learn what the company and battalion expect and then maintain more detailed knowledge of what is important. Also, requiring squad leaders to build and maintain leader books on their Soldiers and then frequently inspect them is a way for platoon leadership to stay informed on individual Soldier issues. Leader books should be practical and up to date. A cumbersome binder that a squad leader uses does not keep leaders informed.

From coaching Soldiers one-on-one at the range to opportunity training and teaching classes, squad leaders execute individual training. A key part of the training management process is certifying leaders. Platoon leadership should know what its subordinates are able to train on and need to develop those leaders who are not to standard. Empowering and enabling squad leaders to be masters of their trade will build a technically and tactically proficient platoon.

Platoon leadership works through squad leaders to be effective. Leadership relies on squad leaders to assist in planning, executing rehearsals, performing PCCs, interfacing daily with Soldiers, and effectively training the platoon.

Platoon leadership must run an effective counseling program where they coach and mentor squad leaders and live by trust but verify.

Effective Counseling at the Platoon Level

Get to know and understand your Soldiers. You must be a leader who can have a positive impact with your Soldiers. Take the time when you are conducting their initial counseling. Explain to the Soldiers what you expect from them and what they will expect from you.

— Current Field Artillery PSG

PLs and PSGs use counseling as a tool to coach and mentor their subordinates. Formal and informal counseling is important, but documentation of sessions is key to maintaining a common operational picture. PLs and PSGs that have successful platoon

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counseling programs track performance over time, are timely, leverage both PLs and PSGs, and are documented with the counseling session.

Counseling is a tool that allows leaders to track a subordinate's growth and performance over time. Regular counseling allows leaders to track positive and negative performance, building an evaluation over the year. Prerecording talking points in Department of Army (DA) Form 4856, Developmental Counseling Form, makes it easier to stick to talking points especially if they are on negative performance. Having a 1SG review negative counseling beforehand ensures company-level buy in and support and keeps leadership informed of subordinate's actions.

PLs and PSGs use a combination of formal and informal counseling to ensure direction is timely. Leaders use informal counseling by pulling a squad leader off the line during a down period to discuss employment of obscuration at the breach during a squad live-fire exercise to improve a squad's performance on the next iteration. Leaders use formal counseling by reviewing a squad leader's performance at the JRTC to document performance over time on the counseling form after returning to home station. A combination of formal and informal counseling allows impactful counseling that creates growth in a platoon.

For Platoon Leaders

As a PL, you are critical in the counseling process because you are senior in the squad leader's rating chain. It can be difficult to counsel a Soldier who is older or has more experience and time in service than you. Before your session, discuss your thoughts with your PSG and prepare your points on a counseling form as well as an NCO support form. Engage your junior leaders to develop plans of action for them. Finally, allow your Soldiers to contribute to the success of the platoon, let them input how they would improve the platoon. Having a plan and empowering and engaging your leaders can help ease a difficult counseling session.

For Platoon Sergeants

As a PSG, you will run your platoon's counseling program. Speak with the 1SG and understand his expectations and requirements. Successful platoons run disciplined, timely, and documented counseling programs. You should review and provide input into each counseling packet as needed. Your PL will need mentoring in his requirements and expectations for counseling. Spend the time and effort here to get this right, it will pay dividends throughout your platoon.

The Platoon Leader and Platoon Sergeant Counseling Session

This counseling session can be the most difficult and most important session on the platoon. Use this opportunity to honestly discuss how to improve the platoon. Setting joint goals and a plan of action to achieve them builds buy in. Neither the PL nor the PSG can go into this counseling session with directives. Both need to come with thoughts and expectations. Remember you either succeed or fail as a team and you need each other.

A Platoon Leader on Counseling a Platoon Sergeant

Set a counselling date and time that is good for both of you, either in your office or over a meal. Make the counseling a conversation rather than you reading topics to him. Do not make the mistake of having other NCOs or Soldiers present for a counseling between the PL and PSG. It is fine to have notes or a counseling form but try to make the conversation personal and record the topics and plan of action later. Use this time to get to know your PSG's experiences and work out your team vision for the platoon.

— Former Cavalry PL

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It is important to document counseling on DA Form 4856, Counseling Form, or a memorandum as soon as possible after the event. Informal counseling benefits from a written document after the event to amplify and clarify the points. The document also serves as an input to the evaluation and the awards process, making it easier to take care of Soldiers.

Counseling is an important tool for leaders. PLs and PSGs counsel to track performance timely to events while leveraging each other using documentation. Counseling sets a base for a platoon, so no matter the operational tempo or the competing priorities, effective leaders do not overlook this requirement.

Engaged Leadership

Successful junior officers and NCOs can train, take care of people, and maintain equipment equally well. You cannot be the best if you cannot do one or more of these.

— Former Brigade Commander

Junior officers' and NCOs' training and experience prepares them to train their platoon and maintain their equipment. Just as important to platoon success is taking care of people. PLs and PSGs engage Soldiers through discussion and by taking the time to identify stressors, understand the readiness implications, become aware of their actions, and get Soldiers the help they need when they need it.

For Platoon Leaders and Platoon Sergeants

As a leader, Soldiers expect your help with any issues that affect readiness. This will put you into Soldiers' professional and personal lives. PLs and PSGs have expressed surprise and have been unprepared for some of the situations listed below. As a leader, you will become a life coach to your Soldiers because personal problems directly impact readiness. If you encounter an issue you are unprepared for as a team, use your 1SG, XO, and commander for guidance. Another source of support includes peer PLs and PSGs. Do not be afraid to learn from those who served before you.

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Death of a Soldier | • Loss of a car (unable to get to work) |
| • Fire in a Soldier's home | • Suicidal ideation |
| • Injury of a Soldier in training | • Suicide (Soldier or family member) |
| • Death of a Soldier's family member | • Drug/alcohol issues |
| • Unplanned pregnancy | • Financial issues |
| • Helping a Soldier or spouse gain citizenship | • Sexual assault of a Soldier |
| • Extramarital affair | • Theft of Army property |
| • Bullying/hazing (Soldiers/peers/leaders) | • NCO misconduct |
| • Domestic abuse | • Marital problems |
| | • Premarital counseling |

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PLs and PSGs should constantly be aware of Soldiers and any stressors they may have. Soldiers often share information about themselves through counseling, peers, and their actions. Just because someone has been serving a long time does not mean that they do not have personal or discipline issues. Watch NCOs for these and get them the help they need. In addition, as an Army leader, pay attention to your partner (PL/PSG), peers, and even superiors who may require support. Leaders who are more engaged can better pick out a cry for help from a Soldier. The best practice is for leaders to engage Soldiers on their off time by having a physical presence in the barracks. Soldiers tend to share more during their off time.

Military and Life Stressors

At one point, all soldiers go through one or more of the stressors listed below. It is the job of an engaged leader to know Soldiers, what stressors may be affecting them, and how to support them. Leaders, review this amended list from Army Regulation (AR) 600-85, *The Army Substance Abuse Program* (ASAP), 4 October 2024.⁵ This list is not all inclusive, but is a starting point:

- Recent family death: spouse, child, mother, or father
- Accidents: military or civilian vehicle
- Injuries: on or off the job, long-term physical disability, medical readiness boards (Soldier or family member)
- Military standards: failure on the Army Fitness Test (AFT), difficulties with medical standards, or inability to meet uniform standards
- Suicide attempts: actual or ideation, Soldier or family
- Drug offenses: positive urinalysis, indicators of drug use in barracks
- Alcohol offenses: underage, excessive, or public intoxication, driving under the influence (DUI), or enrollment in ASAP

⁵ Army Regulation (AR) 600-85, *The Army Substance Abuse Program*, 4 October 2024.

- Traffic violations: excessive speeding or multiple tickets
- Criminal action: arrest on or off the post
- Spouse or child abuse: Soldier on spouse/child or spouse on Soldier/child
- Financial problems: frequent Army Emergency Relief (AER) loans or issues with credit
- Chapter elimination: pending or actively in the process
- Disciplinary actions: pending Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), bar to reenlistment, or extra duty
- Major life changes: marriage, divorce, new child, or recent permanent change of station
- Deployment: pending or returning

Leaders often overlook taking care of Soldiers' families and issues. This may seem to work in the short term but eventually will fail. Again, successful platoons take care of people and maintain equipment equally well. If the chain of command overlooks a Soldier's issue or concern, trust can break a relationship and destroy platoon cohesion. The Soldier who needs to leave the field to take care of a family issue or who does not have a plan for a non-driving spouse to get to the commissary during a unit rotation at a combat training center, for example, detracts from the platoon's readiness. The PL's and PSG's job as a link to the company is critical to ensuring Soldiers and families are prepared for their jobs. Leaders who are involved in welcoming and counseling their Soldiers can often identify issues before they become problems.

Once a leader identifies what is going on with a Soldier, PLs and PSGs need to be aware of how their actions affect the Soldier. Leaders who ignore problems, belittle problems, or are overly aggressive with discipline can put Soldiers into a downward spiral (e.g., PL and PSG flippant during a suicide awareness class). Later, one of their Soldiers, who is going through a divorce after testing positive on a drug test, arrives late to formation and is chewed out in front of his peers. If the Soldier was contemplating suicide because of drug and family issues, he

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now knows his leaders do not care and are not there to support him. He now has an additional stressor created by leadership. Contrast this with a PL and PSG who actively engage during a suicide awareness class and, when the Soldier is late, take the Soldier aside and ask what is going on during counseling. The second Soldier knows his leadership is there to support him, in turn, helps him build resiliency. Some of the hardest leadership involves bringing a lost cause back as a productive member of the platoon.

After identifying issues and understanding how their actions affect Soldiers, engaged leaders help Soldiers get the help they need. The Army has multiple programs to help Soldiers:

- The battalion chaplain (one-on-one help)
- Brigade-embedded behavioral health (post-traumatic stress disorder or suicidal ideations)
- Army Community Services (multiple programs)
- The Soldier and Family Advocacy Program (spouse and child abuse)
- Substance Use Disorder Clinical Care (drug and alcohol issues),
- Military family life counselors (one-on-one counseling and financial help).

A platoon-level leader may not know of all these programs but should use the company chain of command. Chapter 3, Knowledge, discusses additional programs along with family resiliency.

A platoon-level leader will need to take care of Soldiers. Engaged leaders are part of the solution for the platoon and not an additional source of stress. Engaged leaders know how to identify stressors, understand how stressors affect readiness, are aware of Soldiers' actions, and know how and where to get help Soldiers need. No one is immune to stress and leaders can either build or destroy their platoon through their actions.

Time and Task Management for a Platoon

I have seen platoon leaders who operate in chaos. They are everywhere at once, try to do it all themselves, provide no clear guidance, and do not know their own end state. These guys cannot get their eyes off the 50-meter target and never get to the important stuff.

— Current Armor PSG

PLs and PSGs manage their platoon's time and tasks. A leader will have to prioritize tasks, provide guidance, delegate duties, and communicate up the chain of command. Often, platoons are asked to do more than they feel they can do. Proper time and task management allows platoons to complete the mission.

When in the field, platoon-level leaders organize their tasks using the priorities of work. In garrison, there is no such model, but leaders should build one based on their commander's requirements and priorities. A way to prioritize daily tasks is through "go-home" criteria and frequent backbriefs. The leader identifies what they need to do that day versus what can wait until the next day. At the end of the day, the leader can confirm with his squad leaders the status of tasks through a backbrief and push a situation report (SITREP) to his company leadership as needed.

PLs and PSGs receive guidance and orders from their company command team, battalion staff, and other sources. Leaders should take time to understand their mission, ask clarifying questions as needed, and confirm guidance with a backbrief. Do not be afraid to ask questions. A shared understanding now will prevent conflict in the future. When platoon-level leaders brief, they should be precise and to the point, encourage questions from the platoon, and require a backbrief from squad leaders.

Platoon-level leaders manage and delegate tasks to their squad leaders for execution. In the field, PLs and PSGs task-organize squads to give them task and purpose. In garrison, you should treat squads the same. Knowing junior leaders' abilities allows

platoon leadership to delegate the right task to the right junior leader. For delegated tasks, PLs and PSGs should include time for squad-level planning, PCIs, and backbriefs. At a minimum, use the same one-third/two-third rule during troop-leading procedures (TLPs) in the field and in garrison.

As the point of connection to the company, platoon-level leadership must understand how to communicate up and down the chain of command. A key component of effective communication is providing senior leaders with situational understanding to make decisions. A leader who has a thorough understanding of priorities and risk can speak in terms of options. Providing options in terms of priorities, such as, “The platoon can stay at the qualification range and increase the number of experts but we would be unable to make the company family readiness group meeting tonight or risk drivers being tired coming off their first mission. Delaying our next mission, and giving them six hours of sleep, will prevent accidents.” enables a senior leader to make an educated decision.

The Company Training Calendar

One way a company manages time is through the company training calendar. Once the battalion commander signs and posts a training calendar, it is used to identify when platoons are supporting and executing company and higher events and when they have time to execute platoon internal duties and training. Platoons that plan to support their company’s training calendar have an easier time prioritizing tasks. Ensuring Soldiers understand the training calendar and what they will be doing keeps morale high by providing predictability.

Time and task management are difficult for platoons. Platoon-level leaders can make their jobs easier through prioritizing tasks, providing clear guidance, delegating duties, and communicating properly to the commander. By keeping on top of the platoon’s tasks, leaders gain more time to build their team, train, and have downtime with their platoon to raise the platoon’s readiness and morale.

Notes on Mission Command

Leadership time is high strung, but you need to be patient with yourself and with your subordinates. Make sure that any direction/guidance you provide is clear and unambiguous. If the result is not what you had hoped for, write it off as an honest mistake. There is no reason to lose patience and become irrational. People respect confidence and patience because it makes you a rational logical thinker.

— Former Engineer PL

Mission command is the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders.⁶ Simply put, it is the process of leading through trust. Company commanders issue orders and trust their platoons to execute them with the commander's intent. PLs and PSGs must demonstrate understanding of this intent and a shared understanding of the environment. Mission command baseline involves cohesive teams with trust, understanding, and initiative.

Leaders cultivate trust up and down the chain of command. Backbriefs, proper reporting, and executing within the commander's intent in garrison and training builds the trust needed between command teams and platoon leadership at the company level. Platoons build trust in the same way. In garrison and training, platoons that empower junior leaders with intent and check them through backbriefs and reporting, build internal trust and can operate more efficiently during combat. Leaders who are approachable and get to know their Soldiers in garrison can empower their Soldiers more in combat.

During execution, platoons need to create shared understanding at their level and with their headquarters. Providing reports to higher headquarters in accordance with the tactical standard operating procedure(s) (TACSOP) and requiring junior leaders to

⁶ Army doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command*, 31 July 2019.

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keep platoon leadership updated creates understanding of how the battlefield looks. In addition to seeing the battlefield in the same way, mission orders that are clear and unambiguous along with backbriefs give leaders a shared understanding of what actions a unit will take and how they will take them. This understanding of tasks and purposes gives leaders the ability to synchronize across their units.

Looking at squad leaders, PLs and PSGs must be comfortable being uncomfortable and not having 100 percent situational awareness. Radio issues, communication issues, and confusion reign on the battlefield and leaders at all levels need to be comfortable executing with what they know, not with what they want to know.

Initiative and risk go hand in hand. Empower your leaders to take initiative but with a knowledge of risk in their actions. In combat, PLs and PSGs may be the senior leaders on the ground and may have to take initiative outside their assigned task to meet the commander's intent. They execute this with discipline, remaining within the intent, and report to higher on the platoon's action. Leaders who fail to remain within the intent or keep their higher headquarters informed risk breaking trust within the unit and may cause unintended effects at higher levels.

The Army's concept of mission command can cause friction and each leader approaches it differently. Plainly, mission command is the process of leading through trust. In today's operational environment, a platoon may find itself operating independently from its company and will find that a cohesive team (discussed earlier) enabled with trust, shared understanding, initiative, and a knowledge of risk allows it to operate within the mission command concept.

Chapter 2

Platoon Training

Platoon leaders (PLs) and platoon sergeants (PSGs) train Soldiers on individual tasks to support their company's collective tasks and mission essential task list (METL). After deciding what to train on, leaders develop training plans for Soldiers to master their individual tasks. Successful PLs and PSGs know what resources are available and leverage them to enhance unit training.

This chapter discusses training management at the platoon level of what to train on as well as opportunity training, sergeant's training time (STT)/leader's training time (LTT), preparing your first range, and training resources available.

Training Management at the Platoon Level

The platoon would have benefited if my PSG and I had built the standard for what products were needed for the training schedule. We would build these products for week T+12 for the first three months when I was platoon leader. However, as T+13 came in and the commander gave his guidance, the squad leaders and team leaders should be involved in building those training schedules/products.

This would have elicited the squads' buying in (since the products were included in the planning effort) and they would have training products for reference (including what information the products need to meet the standard).

— Former Combat Arms PL

Training management at the platoon level focuses on training individual Soldiers to support higher-level collective tasks. PLs and PSGs must use their knowledge and experience to look at the company training calendar, identify what tasks support company events as well as what tasks the platoon is deficient in, and design a training path to prepare Soldiers.

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Companies plan and execute training using the T-week concept. The T-week concept is a 13-week calendar that ensures companies properly plan, resource, prepare for, and execute training. Company commanders require platoons to support the company plans and brief them within the T-week calendar. PLs and PSGs should use the less formal 8-step training model to plan and resource individual training within their commander's training calendar. Companies and platoons use troop-leading procedures (TLPs) to plan training events. In addition to the TLPs, platoons and squads use the 8-step training model to identify and take critical steps needed to plan and prepare for training events. The 8-step training model provides a way to continually improve from planning to preparing, executing, assessing, and then planning for the next event (see Figure 2-1).

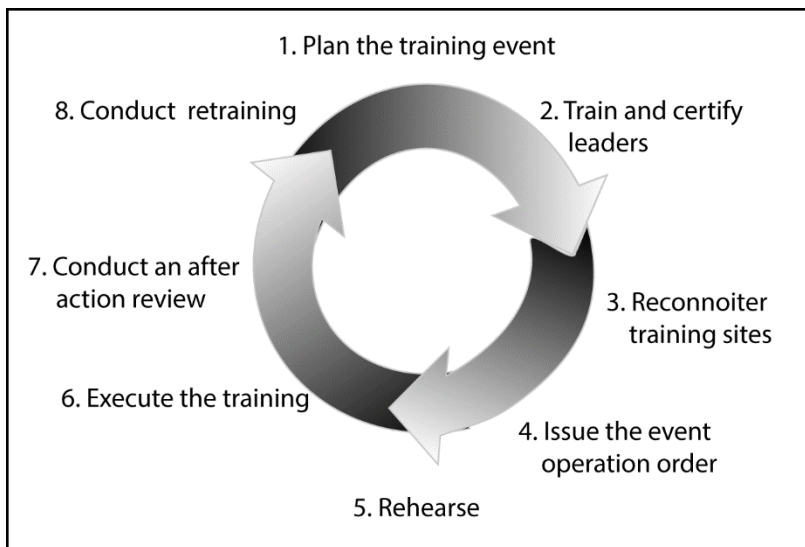


Figure 2-1. 8-step training model⁷

The company uses the weekly training meeting to plan and assess training. Platoons input the current training status and plans

⁷ Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) 17-08, *Home Station Training Handbook*.

based on the T-week concept. This is the focal point of the training calendar. It gives PLs and PSGs a chance to brief their training and ensure it nests with the company training path.

Platoon-level leaders track their training individually by team and squad using a platoon training tracker or Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (see Table 2-1). Tracking Soldiers through events keeps leaders on the pulse of their unit and will help determine training needs. Keeping this information also feeds the company when the commander needs data for higher briefings and meetings. This data should be in a leader's smartbook (see Appendix A, Platoon Smartbook).

Table 2-1. Example platoon training tracker

Name	AFT	AFT Date	12 Mile	Individual Weapon Qualification	CLS	Driver's License
SSG C.	564	22 JUN	11 AUG	M4 (11/19)	APR	Yes
SGT S.	547	10 AUG	22 JUL	M4 (11/19)	APR	Yes
PV2 R.	511	29 APR	4 SEP	M4 (7/9)	APR	Yes
PVT R.	599	11 MAY	15 MAR	M4 (11/19)		No
SPC G.	563	4 AUG	24 NOV	M249 (8/11)	APR	Yes
Legend						
AFT	Army Fitness Test			SGT	sergeant	
CLS	combat life saver			SPC	specialist	
PVT	private			SSG	staff sergeant	
PV2	private 2nd class					

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After seeing how the platoon fits into the company training calendar, platoon leadership identifies white space on the company calendar and develops training plans to prepare Soldiers individually and collectively for higher-level training. They brief these plans to the company commander for approval at the weekly company training meeting.

Platoons manage training at the platoon level by understanding how training management works. They provide input during the company training meeting, track the platoon, and develop training that supports higher-level collective tasks. They do this through dialogue between the platoon and company leadership.

Training

I just spent all day reviewing Army Training Network (ATN) and teaching my platoon leaders how to do a METL crosswalk to identify training tasks. Last week when I visited my platoons in the field, I found them training on what they did during a deployment to Afghanistan. That's great, but we go to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) in a couple months, so I had to reorient my platoons from stability operations to decisive action.

— Current Company Commander talking to a Peer

The first step for training at the platoon level is to determine training needs. Competing priorities such as taskings, mandatory training, maintenance, as well as other requirements can limit the time available to train. To make the most efficient use of training time, platoons should research their company's METL, identify individual and collective tasks that input into the METL at the platoon level, decide what to train on, and then prepare training plans to meet that mission essential task (MET).

Leaders should know and use ATN (online at <https://atn.army.mil> (authorized users only, common access card [CAC] login required) to identify what to train on. Once on ATN, the Combined Arms Training Strategies (CATS) allows users to look up their company's METs and supporting collective and individual tasks (see Figure 2-2).

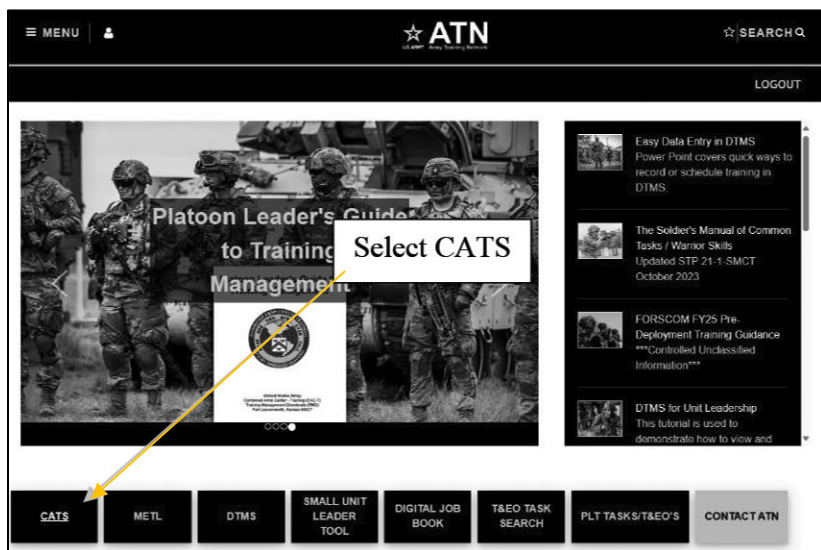


Figure 2-2. Combined Arms Training Strategies Tool Site through the Army Training Network

For example, if an infantry brigade combat team (BCT) rifle company is planning a situational training exercise (STX) involving a gap crossing, after inputting your proponent and unit identifier code (UIC), a quick search through CATS reveals your listed METL and unit task list (UTL). By clicking on the tab labeled UTL, you can explore approved METLs along with drills, individual tasks, and collective tasks. Scrolling through, you see a collective task focused on conducting a gap crossing (see Figure 2-3). Clicking on this collective task shows the training and evaluation outline (T&EO) that is now a printable and workable document to plan and evaluate your team. At the bottom of the T&EO is a list of supporting individual tasks which includes, “conduct actions in a danger area.” Searching for

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that individual task will then give leaders a summary of performance steps and “go/no go” performance measures.

07217K100 - RIFLE COMPANY, INFANTRY BATTALION (IBCT) (ABN)

METL Focused Component: Active

View CATS Knowledge Base. Home/Search CATS

View CATS EXSUM

CATS OverviewMETLUTLTraining Events MatrixEvent ListReports

The Unit Task List (UTL) is the proponent-approved list of collective tasks required for mission accomplishment based on the mission and core capabilities for this unit.

HCDA Approved METL

Print	Echelon	Number	Name	Task Usage	Last Scheduled Training	Assessment	Evaluation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-1028	Conduct an Area Defense - Rifle Company (IBCT)	1	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-1072	Conduct a Movement to Contact - Rifle Company (IBCT)	1	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-1092	Conduct an Attack - Rifle Company (IBCT)	1	No Record	N/A	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-1272	Conduct Area Security - Company	1	No Record		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	55-CO-4630	Conduct Expeditionary Deployment Operations	1	No Record		

Print DA METL

Unit Task List

Filter Tasks: Collective Tasks

Print Task	Echelon	Number	Name	Task Usage
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	03-CO-0071	React to a Chemical Attack	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	03-CO-9201	Implement CBRN Protective Measures	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	03-CO-9224	Conduct Operational Decontamination	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-0320	Conduct an Infiltration - Rifle Company	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-0332	Conduct a Gap Crossing - Rifle Company (IBCT)	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-1036	Conduct a Delay - Rifle Company (IBCT)	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-1063	Conduct a Linkup - Company	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-1081	Conduct a Rearward Passage of Lines - Company	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-1082	Conduct a Forward Passage of Lines - Company	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company	07-CO-1099	Conduct a Raid - Rifle Company (IBCT)	1

Page 1 of 1610Items per page1 - 10 of 155 items

PRINTEDPRINT UTL

Gap Crossing

Figure 2-3. Combined Arms Training Strategies
Collective Tasks

Leaders must understand their commander’s intent when deciding what tasks to train on. For this example, there are also collective tasks for conducting operational decontamination. If the intent of the company STX is to validate the ability of a platoon to conduct a gap crossing, then focusing on chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) measures at this time may not lead to the culminating company event even though it is within the same MET. Knowing the commander’s training path and intent will allow leaders to complement it.

For Platoon Leaders

As a PL, it is your job to decide what to train on and training to plan for. You are also the point of contact between your platoon and company leadership through the training meeting. Backbrief your commander after you identify white space on the calendar and decide (with your PSG) on the platoon's training needs. Maintaining an open and constant line of communication is key for PLs.

Identifying what to train on is a critical step of the training process. Leaders who do not take time here will plan and execute non-relevant training or waste Soldiers' time. To execute properly, platoon-level leaders must research their company's METL, identify which individual and collective tasks support METs, decide on training, and then prepare training plans to meet the METs. After identifying what to train on, platoon-level leaders can use STT/LTT and opportunity training to prepare their units for the mission.

Opportunity Training

Opportunity training is key. Following the program of instruction is good, but providing more training outside of the prescribed calendar pays huge dividends.

— Outgoing PL

Opportunity or hip-pocket training focuses on the individual level. It is training a unit can use when it experiences inactive periods during scheduled training. Ideally, opportunity training should take 15-30 minutes, giving leaders flexibility to insert it when needed.⁸ Opportunity training maximizes training time and prevents lost training opportunities.

⁸ Field Manual (FM) 7-0, *Training*, 14 June 2021.

Opportunity training should focus on the basics and nest with the platoon's training path. This should be a collaborative discussion with the squad leaders to decide the tasks on which to train. Each squad may be different. Radio operations, individual- and small-unit movement techniques, communications, or fire control measures are all examples of tasks that may nest within a platoon's training for a STX lane.

When selecting what to train on, leaders should look at collective tasks in ATN and identify individual tasks. Using T&EOs from ATN provides leaders with tasks, conditions, and standards for training and helps leaders identify the required training resources. Certifying leaders remains a key step in the planning process to ensure quality training. Another key resource is Soldier Training Publication (STP) 21-1-SMCT, *Warrior Skills Level 1*, 16 October 2023, which lays out the Army's key individual tasks by shoot, move, communicate, and survive. List opportunity training tasks on the training schedule to remind leaders what tasks they agreed to train on so they can prepare to execute.

Some platoons have difficulty finding time for opportunity training, but there is often time available that leaders tend to overlook. For example, why does the post services road march have to be an administrative move? You can easily turn this into a tactical move where the platoon can practice coils, herringbones, react to contact, and recovery drills. This would allow the platoon to not only test its equipment but also improve its tactical skills without using any additional time.

Opportunity training is key to ensuring units sustain training and are prepared for collective tasks. Platoon-level leaders should develop a training plan that nests their training, focuses on the basics, and uses the 8-step training model to plan. Platoon-level leaders should then backbrief their company leadership to get buy in from their leaders. Having squad leaders prepare and maintain smartbooks with tasks, conditions, standards, and equipment needed enables platoons to execute and track training.

Sergeant's Time Training/Leader's Time Training

An effective STT/LTT program is not a dog and pony show. If your junior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) must be concerned with things like laminated butcher block paper, a welcome committee for visitors, and risk assessment worksheets, they will spend more time focusing on those items than the task for which they are training.

— Former Battalion CSM

STT (or LTT) is a battle-rhythm event that platoon-LEVEL and below plan and execute where NCOs train key individual and collective tasks. Deliberately select and plan each STT/LTT task with each having a task, condition, and standard.

Squad leaders are the key to a strong STT/LTT program. Direction in what to train on may come from the company or platoon level, but squad leaders will take that direction and turn it into training plans and instruction. As junior leaders build their training plans and back-brief platoon leadership, they will gain confidence in their training. This confidence will result in squad leaders who are sure of their skills in leading their squads and platoon leadership that knows how its subordinates will act in certain situations.

For Platoon Sergeants

As the senior NCO, it is tempting for you to take personal charge and run with STT/LTT. This will hurt your platoon for two reasons. First, as a PSG you now have additional responsibilities to the company that will drag you away from training. You do not have time in the day to do both. Second, it is your responsibility to build your junior leaders. Developing your junior leaders will help them and the Army.

Commanders use STT/LTT to protect training time for subordinate leaders to train Soldiers. Isolating STT/LTT protects it from training distractions such as reports, taskings, or medical appointments. PLs and PSGs should ensure the STT/LTT training site is away from the company area. This reduces the number of distractions that disrupt your training.

STT/LTT allows leaders to cross train their units. STT/LTT tasks should nest with the company's METs, but you should give junior leaders some flexibility to identify and train other tasks as needed. For example, unit training for a route clearance mission may plan an STT/LTT on recovery tasks with a wrecker. Although not specifically related to route clearance, having more Soldiers in the platoon knowledgeable on recovery will make the platoon more effective.

Preparing Your First Range

Our PLs have a difficult time planning training. Most cannot seem to wrap their heads around how to identify what to train, find land, figure out what ammunition they need, and plan a range. They expect everything to be top down and set up for them based on gunnery and external requirements. Our leaders need to be proactive, planning from the bottom up to be successful.

— Armor Company Commander

PLs and PSGs often act as the officer in charge (OIC)/noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) or range safety officer (RSO) during platoon and company training. This job may be the first time a platoon-level leader plans and executes a training event, which can be a source of confusion and struggle for new leaders. Leaders may be expected to brief based on the T-week model during company training meetings. Platoon-level leaders use the 8-step training model and TLPs to plan their event. Below is a way to plan a range using TLPs.

Plan a Range

1. Receive the Mission

There are multiple ways to receive a mission to plan and execute a range. Critical during this step is to determine the training audience and the commander's intent and end state for the event. Platoon-level leaders should confirm what they know using a backbrief to their commander, showing a thorough understanding of the mission before starting to plan. The company executive officer (XO) is a key resource during this phase. The XO can often provide historical data, expectations, templates, and other assistance needed during the planning phases.

2. Issue the Warning Order (WARNORD)

Planning is a collaborative event. The OIC will lead, but needs to assemble his NCOIC, RSO, and other key leaders as soon as possible and provide them with a WARNORD. The range's date and time should be on the company training calendar and distributed to junior leaders to allow them to start planning in parallel.

3. Make a Tentative Plan

Making a tentative plan begins step one of the 8-step training model. Before determining the details, leaders should gather the tools needed to plan. OICs and NCOICs need to determine which field manual contains the qualification standards for the weapon system to be trained on. Access the U.S. Army's Standards in Training Commission (STRAC) on the Army Training Support Center's (TSC's) website (authorized users only, CAC login required) to determine the authorized ammunition, review the unit standard operating procedure (SOP), collect information from the local range branch, print any relevant T&EOs, and gather any other applicable documents. After gathering their tools, the OIC, NCOIC, and RSO develop a tentative plan in collaboration with each other, squad leaders, and any other relevant stakeholders.

4. Initiate Movement

As the OIC, NCOIC, and RSO build their plan, empower your junior leaders to begin preparations. Squad leaders can do layouts of key equipment or lead preliminary marksmanship instruction (PMI) as part of STT/LTT.

Critical during the initiate movement step is step two of the 8-step training model. This is to train and certify leaders. This should be a briefing event during the company training meeting that ensures trainers are ready to lead training.

5. Conduct Reconnaissance

Step three of the 8-step training model is to reconnoiter training sites. It is invaluable to get on the ground during mission planning. You can confirm things such as the number and type of lanes for firing, location of the ammunition point, water point, casualty collection point, concurrent training site, etc., when you can see it on the ground. Oftentimes, you must coordinate with range control prior to a reconnaissance, so plan this early. This not only allows permission to be on the range, but it also gives leadership the opportunity to see the full capabilities of the training site.

6. Complete the Plan

Complete the plan ends step one of the 8-step training model. Here, confirm or modify the plan based on the reconnaissance. The RSO builds risk assessment with input from the OIC and NCOIC. Do not just duplicate the risk assessment from previous ranges. During this step, OICs brief their company and battalion commanders to obtain their approval and sign off on the risk assessment.

Part of completing the plan is submitting it to range control in accordance with the local SOP. Oftentimes, a concept of operations brief and a signed risk assessment are due to range control at a set time before the range can lock in land. Be aware of timelines out of the control of the company.

7. Issue the Order

During this step, the order is issued to subordinates who will facilitate the range but also to any other platoons or companies who may attend. The preferred method to issuing the order is through a 5-paragraph operations order (OPORD) that communicates all aspects of the range. The OIC may have already built a concept of operations brief for the company and battalion commanders which they can use to enhance the OPORD while issuing the order.

8. Supervise

During the supervise step, leaders execute steps five through eight of the 8-step training model:

- Rehearse
- Execute the training
- Conduct an after-action report (AAR)
- Conduct retraining

Range execution starts with rehearsals and precombat inspections (PCIs) and moves through occupation of the range and firing. Leaders can execute multiple types of rehearsals, but getting key leaders on the range, if possible, is preferable. Rehearsing the casualty evacuation (CASEVAC)/medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) plan using the actual personnel, medics, and vehicles along the full route from the range to the hospital allows the OIC, NCOIC, and RSO to confirm their ability in executing a CASEVAC if needed. PCIs should include any key platoon equipment needed for the range.

During execution, the OIC and RSO should keep a copy of the risk assessment with them to continue assessing risks and implementing controls as needed. The OIC and NCOIC may need to send situation reports (SITREPs) and other reports to higher headquarters during execution.

CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED

After the training event is complete, conduct a thorough AAR of the non-tactical administration of the range and of any tactical tasks evaluated using a T&EO. The administrative AAR allows the OIC, NCOIC, and RSO to improve their planning and execution for the next range. The tactical AAR will help junior leaders determine training needs for STT and future ranges. Submit written AARs to the battalion through the chain of command to share lessons learned and best practices throughout the unit.

A Story of Two Ranges

Alpha Company

PVT Parker sat down on the bleachers. All he could think about was the Call of Modern Warfare game he and his roommate were going to play that night. It already felt like a long day. His platoon skipped physical training, drew weapons from the arms room from 0800 to 0900, loaded up on buses at 0930, and arrived at the range around 1000. After a quick safety brief, he had zeroed his rifle quickly but had some issues on the qualification range. He was sent to retraining and SSG Hernandez reprimanded him about not taking the PMI seriously. PVT Parker did not understand. It was not his fault that he and the rest of A Company spent Monday in the motor pool after completing PMI.

It was 1400 now and PVT Parker qualified on the second time through. As he sat on the bleachers, he dug into his meal, ready-to-eat (MRE) and took out his phone. It would be another couple of hours before the bus came at 1600 to pick up his platoon.

Bravo Company

SPC Babin of 2nd Platoon took a knee as the platoon halted the tactical foot march one kilometer from the range. It looked as if the platoon was starting to conduct a linear danger-area crossing of the road ahead to enter the wood line near the rifle range and go into patrol base operations. He shifted the weight on his rucksack onto his hips to relieve pressure on his shoulders. It was 1200 and it already felt like the platoon had been moving all day.

Bravo Company (continued)

Earlier that morning, his team leader inspected his kit, they drew weapons, and the entire company departed the company area at 0700 and walked 12 kilometers to the range. The 1st Platoon began movement first as they were tasked with running the range. The 2nd Platoon would qualify first, while 3rd Platoon conducted patrol base operations and local patrolling. The platoons would then rotate duties so they all trained on running a range, qualifying with weapons, and patrolling operations.

Once 2nd Platoon got to the patrol base, SPC Babin's platoon established security and sectors of fire. When the PL and PSG were satisfied with the patrol base, the platoon conducted a combat patrol to the company command post to receive a range orientation and safety brief. SPC Babin could see his roommate, the commander's driver, inside the command post taking notes on a whiteboard and updating the locations of the platoons on a map. The radio/telephone operator (RTO) in the command post sent a message over frequency modulation (FM) to the battalion staff that Bravo Company had arrived at the training area.

The previous 2nd Platoon leader, now the XO, and the supply sergeant arrived with hot chow for lunch. While the Soldiers ate, the nuclear, biological, chemical NCO gave a quick class to the leaders on field sanitation. Following the meal, 2nd Platoon moved back across the road to an adjacent training area. The previous day, during the OPORD brief, SPC Babin's platoon leader talked about setting up a patrol base and how there would be a night vision goggle (NVG) class that night. They would then go back into the company bay in the morning under limited visibility using their NVGs. SPC Babin was excited. He loved being out in the night and the feeling it gave him of being a Soldier in defense of the nation. This was why he joined the Army.

After lunch, SPC Babin's team was third in the order for zeroing weapons and qualification and SGT Smith, his team leader, had pulled them in to go over some additional PMI during the wait.

Bravo Company (continued)

It paid off. With SGT Smith behind him coaching, SPC Babin had qualified expert for the first time. The company commander and first sergeant had directed that while 1st Platoon had responsibility to run the range, it was the responsibility of a platoon's leadership to ensure individual Soldiers received coaching from their team leaders during marksmanship training.

The next morning during weapons recovery, the company hosted an AAR. In the AAR, the company master driver recommended that at the next range or large-company training event, Bravo Company should incorporate tactical vehicles. The company could start off with driver training, transport the company to a tactical vehicle dismount location, and patrol the rest of the way to the range. This would add maintenance, driver training, load planning, and route planning and reconnaissance to the training.

Which range do you want to run? It is your mission to prepare your platoon for combat, take every opportunity you must do so.

Training Resources

PLs and PSGs should know the resources that exist to support training. There are multiple types of simulations and training aids that can enhance platoon training. Below are some key training enablers:

- **TSC.** The TSC on each post provides training aids, devices, simulations, and simulators (TADSS) for training. Normally, PSGs are on the company's signature card and can sign out training aids for use. Using TADSS helps provide realistic training for the platoon.

- **Home-station Instrumentation Training System (HITS).** HITS works with the Instrumentable Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (IMILES). When combined, HITS gives units a powerful tool to collect data from live training events to include location, real-time audio/video, and the effect of simulated battlefield effects. Units should use HITS when training force-on-force during STXs/field training exercises (FTXs). TSCs support HITS.
- **Range control.** Range control is a resource for leaders planning ranges. They can often share previous range packets and help refine static or live-fire range plans to make sure they are realistic, safe, and will get approved. When assigned a range, the first place a leader should check is with range control.
- **Engagement Skills Trainer (EST).** EST is a training platform that provides simulated weapons and virtual feedback on a screen. EST should be part of every PMI to give Soldiers virtual repetitions before executing the range.
- **Virtual Battle Space (VBS).** VBS is a digital video game-based training platform that provides a way for platoons to execute training virtually without needing land, vehicles, or equipment. Like EST, use VBS to give the platoon virtual repetitions at a task before executing the task live.
- **Mission Training Complex (MTC).** Each installation's MTC provides an array of training opportunities. Using the MTC staff can help train and certify leaders on key radio and mission command systems. The MTC also provides command post and digital exercises to stress headquarters functions.

- **The Improvised Explosive Device Effects Simulator (IEDES).** The IEDES kit provides an extensive kit of equipment to use together in a scalable fashion for explosive hazard defeat (EHD) training. This allows units to safely create simulated battlefield cues, signatures, and effects that promote effective learning for EHD. The system allows Soldiers to train against counter-personnel and counter-material improvised explosive device (IED) threats.
- **Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL).** CALL provides multiple handbooks on trends and best practices throughout the Army. Soldiers can leverage the CALL website at <https://www.army.mil/call> (authorized users only, CAC logon required) to research trends at the combat training centers, read lessons from deployed units and order hard copies of publications at no cost. If unsure where to start, use the request for information section to engage directly with analysts.
- **Army Training Network (ATN).** Use ATN in planning training at <https://atn.army.mil> (authorized users only, CAC logon required) allowing identification of tasks on the METL and providing digital training to junior leaders on planning and executing a training event.

Chapter 3

Knowledge

Platoon leaders (PLs) and platoon sergeants (PSGs) are often the most trained, experienced, and educated Soldiers in the platoon. They are responsible for training and educating their Soldiers on tactical tasks and Army programs such as the Command Supply Discipline Program (CSDP). Leaders often rely on what they learn in leadership courses and Noncommissioned officer (NCO) Professional Development System schools. This is a solid base. However, successful leaders continue to educate themselves to keep abreast of changes throughout their career.

This chapter discusses command supply discipline, the company maintenance system, platoon cohesion and discipline, and family readiness programs.

Command Supply Discipline

My first experience with property was as an assistant S-2. I had to sign for a piece of equipment that I did not know what it was nor what it did. I never got out the fielding documents or technical manual (TM) to verify that all the subcomponents were present when I conducted my lackluster inspection when signing for the equipment. When I was on my way out, the next individual signed for the equipment the same way. To this day I do not know if all the parts were present or not. After day one as a platoon leader, I knew I would not make the same mistake twice.

— Current Military Intelligence Company PL

Property accountability is a hallmark of a disciplined platoon. Most PLs sign for thousands of dollars of equipment they need to execute their mission. Platoons with effective property accountability support the company CSDP, execute inventories, sign equipment to the user level, maintain accountability in garrison and the field, and maintain a detailed property book. Failure to properly account for equipment can be a costly or even career-ending failure.

For Platoon Sergeants

Many of the requirements for property accountability fall onto your PL because of regulation. That said, your PL will need help and guidance from you to be successful. Be there during inventories to show them how to do them right. This will also give you an opportunity to check equipment for serviceability and see how organized your squad leaders are. Hold your squad leaders accountable to their support of your PL's program during counseling. Finally, own your platoon's sensitive items when in the field.

Have a correct master authorization list (MAL) and ensure squad leaders check and report their status based on the battle rhythm. An active PSG helps share the load and ensures your platoon maintains a disciplined property accountability program.

A platoon CSDP reflects a company CSDP. Company commanders have various requirements from the brigade property book officer (PBO) for signing their property book and cyclic sensitive-item and command inventories. The company's requirements will drive how the commander develops and executes his CSDP. A platoon should stand ready to support the company's program with layouts for inventories and records of basic issue item shortages. Inventories and layouts should be on the company training calendar to protect them from unscheduled events. Most commanders ask PLs to review and sign their property book monthly and notify the supply sergeant and executive officer (XO) of any discrepancies in a timely manner.

Platoons lay out equipment for multiple types of inventories such as change of command, cyclic, and pre- and post-field exercises. Execute equipment layout using the most recent TM. You can find the TMs on the electronic technical manuals feature on the Army Publishing Directorate website at

<https://armypubs.army.mil/> (authorized users only, requires common access card [CAC] login). Inspect all items that are alike at the same time and all sub-hand receipt holders should be available. This prevents sub-hand receipt holders from sharing

equipment. Compare any deficiencies to the last component hand receipts and annotate and report discrepancies to company leadership. During the first layout, ensure Soldiers mark all platoon equipment with a stencil or paint marker denoting the platoon.

A Platoon Leader's First Inventory

A PL's first inventory is one of the first opportunities for a PL and PSG to work together. As you work to plan and execute the inventory, discuss standards and expectations you have of each other. Ensure you have the documents you need, equipment is laid out by the TM, and sub-hand-receipt holders are available to sign for and properly mark the equipment.

I remember building my component hand receipt before inventory and placing each of the hand receipts in its own plastic sheet in a huge binder. Terrible mistake. The inventories were in the middle of the winter, we were outside, and taking each hand receipt out of the plastic sheet became a mess. Sheets flew everywhere, and they didn't match the TM. It is best to have an updated TM for each individual end item and go down the list, marking what is there and what is not. The binder was a good final copy of what I wanted my hand receipt to look like, not a good working copy. The TMs would have been a good working copy, where I would update the hand receipt later in the office.

— Former PL

When signing for your platoon equipment, lay out the equipment by TM. Check the equipment present (reality) versus equipment reflected on the component listing (ideal). Mark all platoon equipment with a paint marker, stencil, etc. Platoons can be mixed up like equipment with sister platoons. Properly issue sub-hand receipts down to your NCOs.

— Outgoing PL to an Incoming PL

CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED

Platoon-level leaders are responsible for signing all equipment down to the user level. This creates accountability (I am responsible for my stuff) and ownership (this stuff is mine). Signing equipment down to the user is critical because it prevents a leader from having to pay for equipment. Also, the physical act of signing has more impact than a verbal order. PLs maintain both sub- and component-hand receipts for their equipment down to the user level. A way to further emphasize this is to add it to squad leader counseling to ensure junior leaders understand their responsibilities as property owners.

Property accountability is a garrison and field requirement. Leaders should inventory property prior to going to the field to assess serviceability. The same applies as a platoon comes out of the field. Precombat inspections (PCIs) can accomplish this, ensuring the platoon has the needed equipment to execute its mission.

A critical aspect of field property accountability is sensitive-items accountability. Platoon-level leaders maintain a correct MAL of weapons, night vision goggles, radios, etc. and require your squad leaders to do the same.

Leaders maintain a property book to keep accountability of their equipment. At a minimum, it should include relevant TMs, sub- and component-hand receipts, and shortage annexes. Be sure to include any turn-in documents or long-term hand receipts to other units. At times, leaders include pictures of hard to identify items. PLs should require squad leaders to do the same. Inspect your squad leaders' books for completeness often.

Maintaining a solid property accountability program at the platoon level will prevent PLs and squad leaders from paying for lost equipment, keeps their equipment ready for combat, and allows platoon-level leaders to focus more on training.

For Platoon Leaders

One of your first duties as the new PL is to take inventory of and sign for your equipment. The way you conduct the inventory tells others what type of leader you are:

- Are you prepared?
- Do you hold people accountable?
- Are you organized?
- Do you do the hard things right or do you take shortcuts?
- Do you adhere to standards?

Getting it right sets you up for success during your leadership time. The bottom line is, this can cost you money or get fired:

- Only sign for what you can see and touch.
- Sign all equipment down to the user and ensure it is properly sub-hand receipted.
- During your first inventory, take pictures of hard-to-identify items and ensure Soldiers mark pilferable items with a stencil or paint marker.
- Execute proper inventories
- Maintain a solid property book for platoon equipment with relevant TMs, sub- and component-hand receipts, and shortage annexes.
- Do not make short cuts.

Platoon-Level Maintenance

The biggest thing that I expect from a platoon leader and sergeant is knowing the status of all their equipment. A spreadsheet that lists every vehicle and anything associated with it works well. When something goes down, leaders should be able to say why it was down and what the expected outcome will be (replace or repair) and when the part will come in.

— A Current Forward Support Company Commander

CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED

Platoons execute multiple types of missions, sometimes on a short timeline. It is important that a platoon maintains equipment readiness of their weapons, radios, vehicles, and other equipment. This is as important as personnel/training readiness.

Platoon-level leaders should complete a Department of Army (DA) Form 5988-E, Equipment Maintenance and Inspection Worksheet. They should plan for and supervise maintenance and maintain equipment in the field. Leaders can track maintenance and repairs on DA Form 5988-E at the platoon level. Use the Global Combat Support System-Army (GCSS-A) to print the forms. The ability to read and understand a DA Form 5988-E is critical to a leader's ability to execute platoon maintenance. A properly completed DA Form 5988-E gives leaders the ability to understand equipment status during repairs.

When reviewing DA Form 5988-E, a leader should first review the administrative data. The upper portion of the form lays out the equipment type, bumper number, national stock number (NSN), serial number, and the current mileage reading for the equipment. DA Form 5988-E also includes the relevant publication numbers for technical manuals needed for preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS). After confirming the administrative data, leaders should review the equipment's service due data, which lays out the next service date. The date should be on the training calendar and deconflicted with any training (see Figure 3-1).

DA Form 5988e		Page 1 of 2													
Equipment Maintenance & Inspection Worksheet															
Date	: 4/24/2018														
UIC	: WAA4AA 2-14 AR COA														
Address	: FORT BLISS, BLDG A115 ALLEN STREET, TX, US														
Admin No	: A65														
Model	: M1A2														
Equip Number	: 1021851502														
Equip Noun	: TANK CBT 120MM M1A2														
Serial Number	: LA12345														
Registration	: DB1375														
Equip NSN	: 2350013285964														
Current Reading	: 5000 MI														
Current Reading	: _____														
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PubNumber	PubDate (YYMM)	PubChgNo													
TM 9-2350-288-10-1	0406	12													
TM 9-2350-288-10-2	0406	12													
TM 9-2350-388-10-1	1604	07													
Inspector Lic #: _____ Time: _____ Signature: _____ Time: _____															
Service Due Data															
Description: AAF-SEMIANNUAL		Date: 06/21/2018													

Figure 3-1. Administrative Data on a DA Form 5988-E¹

The historical faults and parts requested section allows leaders to assess the status of their equipment (see Figure 3-2). This section is where you can review any faults and the technical status. Operators cannot dispatch deadlined equipment without a commander's exception. Equipment with shortcomings is an important thing to note, as it may limit a platoon's operation. Notify company XO of any differences between the actual status and the Equipment Maintenance and Inspection Worksheet status.







EQUIPMENT TECHNICAL STATUS	
	- X Deadlined
	- Circle X - Approved by CDR for Limited Operations
	- Dash - Inspection
	- Diagonal - Shortcoming (Notification)
	- Administrative Deadline
	- Equipment Status Changed

Figure 3-2. 5988-E equipment Status Symbols²

¹ Department of the Army (DA) Form 5988-E, Equipment Maintenance and Inspection Worksheet.

² Army Plant Maintenance Smart Book, page 16.

CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED

Faults should have a workorder number, and a relevant work code attached, meaning maintenance personnel verified the fault.

Platoon leadership should work closely with the XO and motor sergeant to validate and update faults. The following work codes show the status of the repair work:³

- 0 – Begin non-mission capable (NMC) time
- 1 – Awaiting deadlining NMC parts
- 5 – Scheduled services
- 6 – Re-inspection
- 8 – Rework, return to shop
- 9 – Begin in-transit time
- A – Awaiting initial inspection
- B – In shop
- C – Awaiting shop
- I – In shop awaiting non-NMC parts
- J – In shop awaiting NMC parts
- K – Awaiting NMC parts
- R – Awaiting pickup
- S – Closed/completed by the maintenance activity
- U – Picked up (must be closed first)

After ordering parts against a fault, track status using DA Form 5988-E by NSN and the date of request. Leaders need to be aware of the priority code (02 – five-day turnaround, 05 – eight-day turnaround, and 12-30-day turnaround) and request a change to the priority through the XO as needed.

³ Ibid., page 21.

After reviewing the current fault section, operators complete the PMCS and fill in the back with any additional faults. Operators list faults by line item from the technical manual and include a / for shortcomings or an X for deadline fault per manual. Most units require a mechanic to confirm a fault before placing onto DA Form 5988-E. PLs and PSGs need to confirm and validate any faults with the motor sergeant so they can input them into the system.

Platoon-level leaders incorporate maintenance into their planning. Maintenance time should be on the company training calendar and usually designated for motor pool Mondays. However, this time is not enough as maintenance is a daily requirement. Leaders and operators must follow up on faults identified on Monday. Operators must install parts arriving to repair broken equipment within the week. PLs and PSGs should protect this time to allow Soldiers to focus on their vehicles and equipment. In addition to protecting time, platoon leadership must ensure DA Form 5988-E and technical manuals are on hand to allow Soldiers time to properly execute maintenance.

PLs and PSGs should lead maintenance. There are multiple competing demands for PL's and PSG's time, but a leader's presence speaks to the platoon's priorities. Leadership presence creates a culture of maintenance within the platoon.

Maintenance must happen in the field. Before, during, and after PMCS give operators the ability to ensure the readiness of their vehicles. Plan for vehicle and weapons maintenance after any patrol. Performing after-use PMCS of vehicles in a vehicle patrol base is as critical as daily weapons maintenance in a dismounted patrol base and should be part of the platoon's priorities of work.

Platoon Cohesion and Discipline

Being a leader of troops is a privilege, and leaders must take full advantage of the opportunity. Leaders must always maintain good order themselves so that they may lead by example the Soldiers they oversee. Leaders must also be consistent on all Army standards throughout the formation. Maintaining good order and discipline and being fair and impartial when recommending rewards and punishment for their Soldiers builds trust and maintains morale in a platoon.

— A Field Artillery 1SG

Part of building cohesion and discipline within a platoon is creating and enforcing high standards. High standards help create platoon cohesion by focusing Soldiers on success. To be effective, leaders must enforce standards through counseling, corrective training, and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

High standards focus a platoon on success and create goals for individuals and teams to achieve. This helps build a team by creating a sense of ownership and pride in the platoon.

PLs and PSGs must always be on the lookout for issues regarding hazing and sexual assault. Hazing and sexual assault destroy trust and the cohesion of teams. Leaders who create and enforce a zero-tolerance policy on hazing supporting their commander's policies can help create a positive atmosphere in their platoon. Care must be taken when building rite-of-passage programs into the platoon to ensure they do not cross into hazing.

Well-disciplined platoons follow Army standards and brigade, battalion, and company policy letters. New leaders should read and understand unit policies and make subordinates do the same:

- When a Soldier is arrested for driving under the influence, who needs to know?
- What happens when a positive drug test is returned?
- What about an underage drinking issue in barracks?

Leaders who do not know the standards cannot enforce them.

For Platoon Leaders

Be involved in all levels of reward, corrective actions, and punishment at the platoon level. Punishment is reserved for the commander through the UCMJ process. Be very careful of punishment disguised as corrective training. This can lead to indiscipline in the platoon. Successful PSGs and squad leaders keep the PL informed of all corrective actions and rewards. If junior leaders are found punishing Soldiers outside of their authority, it must be stopped. Listen to your NCOs. NCOs have more interaction with the Soldier in question and knowledge of the situation. Working together and keeping company leadership informed will prevent issues with hazing and harassment.

PLs should be kept informed of everything that is going on within their platoon. Granted, they can let the NCOs handle the smaller discipline issues, but the PL still needs to know there are discipline issues and what those issues are.

— Former PL⁴

Platoon-level leaders have multiple tools at their disposal to enforce discipline. PLs and PSGs counsel, give corrective training, and recommend UCMJ actions to the commander.

Leaders often take counseling as the first step and include a detailed plan of action for the Soldier to improve performance. Leaders conduct counseling as a two-way conversation, even for negative performance. At most times, Soldiers will hint at family or personal issues affecting their work and leaders listen and get them the help they need as discussed in the family readiness section. Leaders use proactive counseling to stop small issues before they become major issues and require more drastic

⁴ Young, Brock 1LT, “What NOT to Do as a Platoon Leader, in Company Command,” December 2013, available online at [https://juniorofficer.army.mil/pubs/armymagazine/docs/2013/CC_ARMY_\(Dec2013\)_What_NOT_to_do.pdf](https://juniorofficer.army.mil/pubs/armymagazine/docs/2013/CC_ARMY_(Dec2013)_What_NOT_to_do.pdf).

measures. Leaders find it challenging to assess and counsel a close coworker, such as a squad leader or PSG, on their deficiencies. Leaders give their Soldiers and NCOs honest feedback to help them improve because they owe it to them. PLs and PSGs write honest and accurate assessments of their subordinates to ensure that they promote the right people to higher levels of leadership. Leaders use corrective actions and training as effective tools to fix training deficiencies, either on the spot or longer in time. When a Soldier attempts to back up a vehicle without a ground guide, leaders stop them and provide an immediate demonstration on how to safely back up a vehicle, taking corrective action on the spot. Leaders also provide extra preliminary marksmanship instruction (PMI) to Soldiers who struggle to qualify on their assigned weapon, applying corrective training over time. Leaders must take care to ensure that their corrective actions and training do not become oppressive. Do not single out individual Soldiers and directly address the specific training deficiency. Leaders should discontinue corrective actions and training once the deficiency is overcome. To prevent training from becoming hazing or harassment. Leaders document corrective actions and training on a counseling statement and keep the company command team informed.

The following definitions are from:

U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Regulation 350-6, *Enlisted Initial Entry Training Policies and Administration*:⁵

Corrective training. Corrective training is for trainees/soldiers who have demonstrated that they need and would benefit from additional instruction or practice in a particular skill. Corrective training should be directly related to the military skill that the trainee/soldier is deficient in and assist him/her in meeting the standard.

⁵ U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Regulation 350-6, *Enlisted Initial Entry Training Policies and Administration*, 8 December 2022.

Corrective action. Nonpunitive actions are used as a motivational tool by authorized cadre members to immediately address deficiencies in performance or conduct and to reinforce required standards. By virtue of administering corrective action, there is recognition that the misconduct did not result from intentional or gross failure to comply with standards of military conduct. Corrective action is inappropriate for situations requiring additional training to master a specific level of skill proficiency, or in matters where punishment is administered because of UCMJ action.

Leaders consider recommending UCMJ to the commander as a last step for most Soldier issues. Company commanders execute bars to reenlist, chapters for separation, summary Article 15 and company-grade Article 15 actions. However, company commanders recommend field-grade Article 15s and court martial to the battalion commander. Platoon-level leaders work closely with company leadership to assemble counseling statements and other necessary documents to thoroughly document the event. Commanders design and implement their discipline programs in various ways. Leaders prioritize open and honest communication to ensure that platoon-level leaders understand how to support their commander's program effectively.

For Platoon Sergeants

You have seen negative counseling, corrective training, and UCMJ. Your PL has not. Help him through this. It is often difficult for a young leader to work through. Also, work in conjunction with the 1SG. Your 1SG has a direct line to the commander and can help review counseling, develop corrective training programs, and decide whether to recommend UCMJ.

Ten percent of my Soldiers take up 90 percent of my time. Dealing with family issues and taking care of Soldiers is just what PSGs do. When I am in a company with a family readiness program, I know I can focus on training because there is someone there that families can go to before trying to contact their Soldier.

— Infantry PSG

Family Readiness Programs

Supporting a company's Soldier and Family Readiness Group (SFRG) program is a critical part of maintaining readiness and PLs and PSGs play a vital role in this. PLs and PSGs communicate directly with the families of Soldiers through the commander's forum. They serve as the spouse's link to company leadership. To promote participation and support the company's SFRG, PLs and PSGs encourage their platoon's involvement, plan and attend meetings, and establish a strong connection with their Soldier's families. They adjust schedules and find time for Soldiers and their families. When planning training, leaders consider the impact of events on families and the company SFRG. PLs and PSGs track SFRG meetings as company training on the training calendar. They work closely with the company SFRG leader, who brings insight to the table. The action officer takes responsibility for detailed planning, using troop-leading procedures (TLPs) to guide efforts. Some commanders leverage social media, company newsletters, Zoom meetings, and other platforms to communicate directly with families.

Dealing with Soldiers' families can be a challenging process, but platoon leaders can proactively identify possible issues by engaging with SFRG to pinpoint high-risk Soldiers and provide targeted support. PLs can leverage the battalion chaplain as a first line of defense, as chaplains have access to programs and training that help Soldiers navigate difficult times.

Platoon leaders can also utilize Army Community Services (ACS) which offers a range of programs such as Army Emergency Relief loans, relocation assistance, employment readiness for spouses, financial training, budgeting classes, and other initiatives. ACS staff can refer Soldiers and families to other Army resources. Additionally, leaders can link Soldiers and families to the Army's support structure through Military One Source, an online resource available at <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/>. Furthermore, platoon leaders can tap into the expertise of their unit's military family life counselor to provide support to their Soldiers and their families.

Chapter 4

Execution

Unfortunately, platoon leaders (PLs) and platoon sergeants (PSGs) have limited time in a platoon. They typically culminate their time in a platoon during intense training events, such as situational training exercises, live-fire exercises (LFXs), combat training center (CTC) rotations, or deployments. To prepare for these challenges, PLs and PSGs must thoroughly understand how to receive a mission, prepare a mission brief, and execute that mission with their platoon. As leaders, they must recognize that while platoons are tasked with a variety of missions, they all share common basic requirements that are essential to success.

In this chapter, we will discuss the critical skills that PLs and PSGs need to master to include troop-leading procedures (TLPs), patrolling, integrating enablers, and conducting after-action reports (AARs). By focusing on these key areas, PLs and PSGs can develop the expertise needed to lead their platoons effectively and achieve mission success.

Troop-leading Procedures

Being a PL is not like in movies. No one hangs on your every word and you cannot do it all yourself. Your PSG is right 90 percent of the time and you need to use your whole team to plan, rehearse, and execute if you want to be successful.

— PL on his Return from Iraq

Platoon-level leaders use TLPs to plan and issue orders, focusing their thoughts and ensuring that they execute planning to standard. Leaders apply TLPs to drive timely, collaborative, and detailed planning, and they brief their subordinates properly to prepare the platoon for its mission. By actively using TLPs, leaders can ensure that their planning is thorough, effective, and well-executed, ultimately preparing their platoon to succeed in its mission (see Figure 4-1).

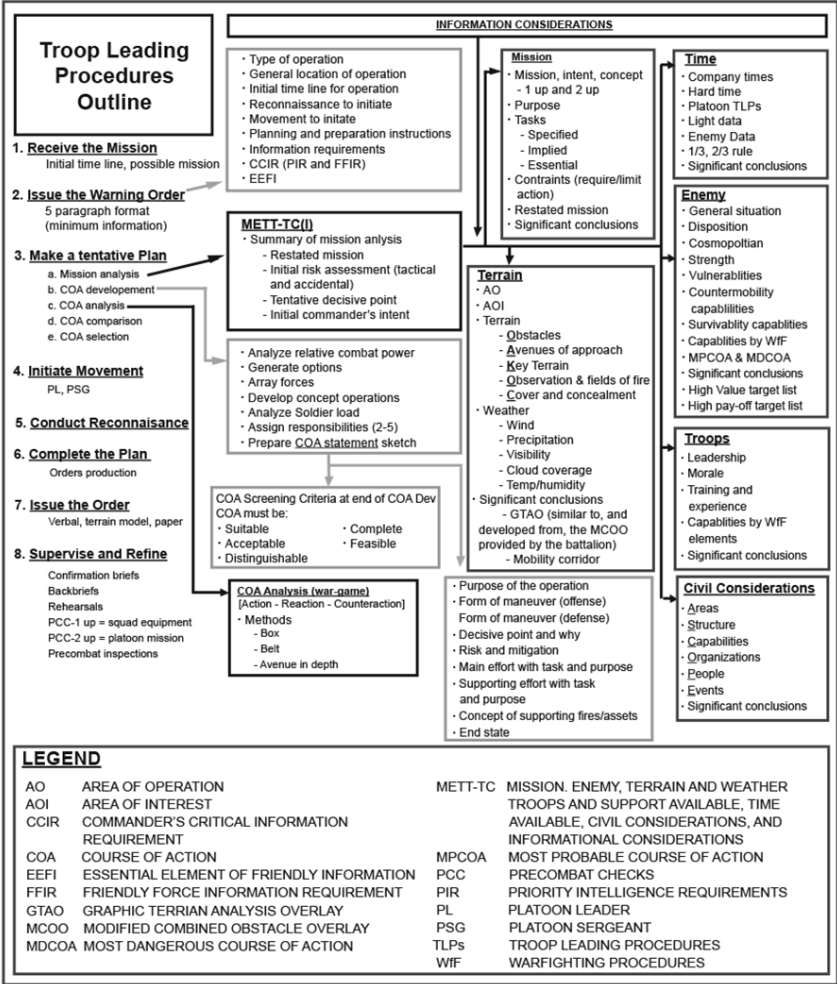


Figure 4-1. Troop-leading Procedures Outline¹

PLs and PSGs must understand the importance of time management during TLP planning. During troop-leading procedures steps 1 and 2, for example, PLs and PSGs actively consider who needs to know and take deliberate action to provide

¹ Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-21.8, *Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*, 11 January 2024.

the initial warning order (WARNORD) to the right Soldiers in a timely manner. By doing so, they enable junior leaders to plan for the mission as in task organizing and preparing their squads or ensuring attached engineers have necessary equipment to breach obstacles.

Leaders use the one-third/two-thirds rule as a guiding principle, where they issue orders using a third of the available planning time and allocate two thirds of the time for junior leaders to plan and conduct rehearsals. To achieve this, senior leaders proactively use preformatted operations orders (OPORDs) to identify information gaps in the plan and rapidly develop the platoon OPORD. By taking a proactive and efficient approach to planning, leaders can ensure that their teams are well-prepared and equipped to execute the mission successfully.

When applying the principle of who needs to know to planning, leaders extend their focus beyond issuing orders to include collaborative planning, where the PSG plays a critical role. PLs actively involve their PSGs in the planning process, recognizing that PSGs bring valuable experience and expertise to the table. While PLs focus on the mission and actions on the objective, they also actively seek input from PSGs on logistical and medical concerns, leveraging their strengths to refine the plan.

By working together, PLs and PSGs use the TLPs to create a collaborative planning event that harnesses the strengths of the entire team, including squad leaders, technical experts within the platoon, and attached enablers. Leaders proactively engage these stakeholders to ensure that everyone is informed and invested in the plan, ultimately helping the platoon to accomplish its mission. By embracing a collaborative approach to planning, leaders can tap into the collective expertise and experience of their team, leading to more effective and successful mission execution.

For Platoon Leaders

PLs lead and are responsible for the platoon's planning process. This can create a stressful situation where PLs feel they must accomplish everything alone. This is untrue and is a failure for many inexperienced PLs.

After assuming a leadership position, sit down with your PSG and squad leaders and decide how your platoon will plan. Setting expectations and building standard operating procedures (SOPs) now will prepare your platoon for success while deployed or at a LFX or CTC. That said, not all PSGs are created equal. You have a company executive officer (XO) and first sergeant (1SG) for mentorship while you build your team and prepare your platoon.

For Platoon Sergeants

You are the most experienced member of your platoon. Your knowledge is needed in all aspects of planning to refine your PL's plan. That said, not all PLs are created equal. Provide input during steps one through six of the TLPs. When your PL issues his order, you realize that any disagreements during planning need to be forgotten during supervision and your platoon's execution. Your squad leaders will look up to you. Any disagreement or resentment between you and your platoon leader will create an atmosphere that will destroy your platoon's cohesion.

Effective platoon leaders (PLs) use detailed planning that focuses on mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civilian considerations (METT-TC) to drive their TLPs. However, some PLs take a shortcut and fail to conduct their own mission analysis or develop graphic control measures, instead relying solely on the company order. For instance, they often overlook or gloss over critical details such as movement to the objective, which can be as slow as 1 kilometer per hour on foot over uneven terrain.

PLs must actively plan for mounting, dismounting, and gaining accountability to ensure a smooth operation. By neglecting small details like movement, leaders can desynchronize an entire operation.

To integrate mission analysis, course of action development, and analysis during planning, PLs can use multiple approaches. They conduct detailed rehearsals, including minimum movement, actions on contact, actions on the objective, and consolidation/reorganization, to confirm their plan, identify friction points, and visualize their platoon in time and space. Rehearsals can also supplement a brief on operations. In addition to rehearsals, PSGs and squad leaders proactively host precombat checks (PCCs) and precombat inspections (PCIs) to ensure the platoon is fully prepared.

PLs must resist the temptation to abbreviate their OPOORDs and instead provide junior leaders with a comprehensive brief on the patrol. They should invite all enablers and platoon members to attend the brief and use terrain models, concept sketches, and other visual and verbal mediums to facilitate understanding. By allowing junior leaders to brief their relevant portions, PLs empower them to take ownership and demonstrate mastery of their mission tasks. Every platoon member must understand the mission, and the best practice is for PLs to summarize the tactical OPOORD with a clear intent, such as we are going here and then we will defeat the enemy or we are getting Class IV supplies from here to there, so Alpha Company can put in obstacles. This gives the platoon a single focus and enables junior leaders to be flexible while accomplishing the mission.

After issuing the order, the PL actively runs a backbrief to ensure the platoon understands the mission from start to finish. By prioritizing timely, collaborative, detailed, and properly briefed plans, PLs set their platoon up for success. While actions on the objective are crucial, PLs must also focus on planning, rehearsing, and conducting PCCs and PCIs to prepare their platoon for the mission and ultimately accomplish it.

Patrolling

- Don't forget nothing.
- Have your musket clean as a whistle, hatchet scoured, sixty rounds powder and ball, and be ready to march at a minute's warning.
- When we march, we keep moving till dark, to give the enemy the least possible chance at us.
- When we camp, half the party stays awake while the other half sleeps.
- Don't ever march home the same way. Take a different route so you won't be caught in an ambush.
- No matter whether we travel in big parties or little ones, each party must keep a scout 20 yards ahead, 20 yards on each flank, and 20 yards in the rear, so the main body can't be surprised and wiped out.
- Don't sleep beyond dawn. Dawn's when the French and Indians attack.

— Revised from Major Robert
Rangers' 28 Rules of Ranging, circa 1789²

Platoons execute a wide range of tasks, and platoon leaders (PLs) and PSGs actively classify and prioritize these tasks based on the type of platoon, current operation, and other requirements. PLs and PSGs recognize that most tasks involve patrolling, which they define as a detachment sent out by a larger unit to conduct a specific mission that operates semi-independently and returns to

² “75th Ranger Regiment: Robert Rogers’ Standing Orders,” on U.S. Army Web Page at <https://www.usmfac.org/Index/ranger/about-the-rangers/rodgers-orders.html>.

the main body upon completion of the mission.³ They apply this methodology to almost all missions, whether it's a tactical patrol or a funeral detail, and take ownership of the planning and execution process.

To lead effective patrols, PLs and PSGs develop a baseline knowledge of patrolling and organize their platoon accordingly. Typically, the PL takes on the role of patrol leader, while the PSG serves as the assistant patrol leader. When planning and executing each patrol, PLs and PSGs proactively apply the principles of patrolling, which include planning, reconnaissance, security, control, and common sense. By actively using these principles, PLs and PSGs ensure that their patrols are well-planned, safe, and successful.

For Platoon Leaders

As a PL, you are typically the patrol leader when operating as a platoon. As the patrol leader, you are expected to:

- Lead planning in accordance with the TLPs.
- Lead rehearsals.
- Ensure the patrol always maintains security.
- Place yourself where you are most needed to accomplish the mission.
- Execute a leader's reconnaissance to confirm your plan.
- Maneuver squads and integrate and coordinate organic and nonorganic weapon systems in contact.
- Provide accurate and timely reporting on your patrol's status.

³ Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-21.8, *Infantry Platoon and Squad*, 11 January 2024.

For Platoon Sergeants

As a PSG, you are typically the assistant patrol leader when operating as a platoon. As assistant patrol leader, you are expected to:

- Be prepared to assume the patrol leader role if needed.
- Assist the patrol leader as needed.
- Uphold standards and discipline.
- Maintain accountability of equipment and people.
- Establish the casualty collection point and coordinate and execute casualty evacuation.
- Manage the unit's combat load and monitor the patrol's logistical status.

Platoon-level leaders plan and execute patrols as deliberate missions, recognizing that even simple movements between forward operating bases require meticulous planning and rehearsals. They use TLPs to plan their mission, starting with actions on the objective and working backward to departure from friendly lines, forward to reentry to friendly lines,⁴ and actions on contact. Platoon leaders brief their OPORD to the platoon and any attachments using the five-paragraph format and then reinforce the plan with rehearsals.

When time is limited, platoon leaders rely on their effective platoon tactical standard operating procedure (TACSOP), rehearsed battle drills, and the one-third, two-thirds rule to plan quickly. They also use collaborative and parallel planning to accelerate the planning process. By taking an active and proactive approach to planning, platoon leaders can ensure that their patrols are well-prepared and effective.

⁴ Ibid., page 7-15.

Platoon leaders conduct reconnaissance as a critical part of their mission planning, starting with map and route reconnaissance during the planning phase. They coordinate with the S-2 to determine the current threat composition and disposition and use this information to inform their planning. During the mission, platoon leaders use reconnaissance to confirm the threat composition and disposition and adjust their plan accordingly. For example, a patrol leader leading a logistics patrol uses maps and route reconnaissance, combined with intelligence from the S-2, to identify potential improvised explosive devices and ambush locations. They then adjust their movement technique and formation as needed to minimize the risk of engagement.

Platoon leaders prioritize security as a key principle, recognizing that it allows them to conserve combat power until it is needed on the objective. They provide security internally, and may work in conjunction with other platoons, such as in a combined arms route clearance operation. Patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders foster an aggressive posture, deterring enemy action and identifying and reacting quickly to threats. They ensure that Soldiers are actively scanning their sectors, adjusting movement techniques and formation based on the threat, and encouraging crosstalk to pass off targets. By planning and rehearsing security operations during TLPs, platoon leaders identify rally points, en route target reference points, and rehearse actions on contact, ultimately maintaining an aggressive security posture.

Observation

While conducting offensive operations, rotational units have difficulty with maintaining proper security during patrol base activities, short halts, and at rally points. After the first 24 hours of the joint forcible entry as units become tired, their security posture can drop significantly. Over the course of the rotation, many units struggle to enforce security and the priorities of work. For example, Soldiers execute rucksack flops, pull security from their backs, fail to find cover, and fail to always maintain their weapons.

Soldiers cannot be allowed to let their discomfort supersede the main principle of patrolling. Units fail to train endurance and fail to enforce the standards over a long period of time. The drop in security can start with a failure of individual Soldier discipline once Soldiers become tired, hot, and hungry. Security continues to fail because leaders, especially team leaders, do not troop the line to make Soldiers pull security properly.

— Observation by an observer controller at the
Joint Readiness Training Center⁵

Whether a patrol is a combat patrol (raid, ambush, or security patrol), reconnaissance patrol, or escorting fuelers between two locations, platoon leaders ensure that their patrol's mission is to destroy or neutralize the enemy to complete its original mission once contact is made with an enemy force. Platoon leaders brief actions on contact and rehearse them with squad and team leaders, who then know how to react, either by fighting through or neutralizing the enemy and continuing the mission. As soon as possible, platoon leaders submit a spot report using the size,

⁵ Joint Readiness Training Center Operations Group, Center for Army Lessons Learned, *News from the CTC: Attack! Insights and Issues with the Brigade Combat Team Offense in a Decisive Action Training Environment*, 23 January 2018, (Authorized users only, CAC login required).

activity, location, unit, time, and equipment (SALUTE) format to higher headquarters, along with the patrol's actions, to facilitate support and inform follow-on units of the enemy threat.

During contact, patrol leaders actively integrate and coordinate outside elements, such as indirect fires, and control internal elements, such as rates of fire (cyclic, rapid, and sustained) and maneuver. Assistant patrol leaders assist the patrol leader and prepare to execute casualty evacuation as needed, taking proactive steps to ensure the patrol's safety and success.

Following contact, once the enemy has been destroyed or the unit has reached a safe location, patrol leaders actively receive ammunition, casualty, and equipment (ACE) reports to assess their unit and then consolidate them as needed to complete the patrol.

Patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders actively control their platoons throughout patrolling operations by outlining standardized reports, check points, phase lines, and other control measures before the mission. This proactive approach enables them to gain a thorough understanding of the battlefield and their platoon's status, allowing them to adjust the mission as needed during execution. Leaders also exercise control through deliberate planning, conducting PCCs, PCIs, and backbriefs, and supervising their platoon. By doing so, they provide a framework for squad leaders to execute the mission within the commander's intent, empowering them to make decisions and act.

Effective patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders apply common sense and trust their instincts, recognizing that if something does not feel right, it probably is not. They actively use each other as sounding boards, leveraging their unique knowledge and experiences to check and balance each other's decisions. By working together, they ensure that their platoon operates effectively and efficiently.

Patrol leaders and assistant patrol leaders approach each mission as a patrol, whether it involves moving between two locations, conducting a raid, or executing a funeral detail. They deliberately

apply the principles of patrolling, including planning, reconnaissance, security, control, and common sense, to ensure success. For additional guidance on patrolling, leaders can consult Chapter 6 of Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-21.8, *Infantry Platoon and Squad*, 11 January 2024 where they will find detailed information and best practices to inform their decision-making.

Integrating Enablers

I can tell you if a platoon will be successful or not during the first hour. Those PLs and PSGs who don't engage us, listen to our advice, and make us part of their platoon fail. Those that let us brief during the order, integrate us into their movement and planning can get us where we need to be, when we need to be, to open a lane through the obstacle and get the platoon onto the objective.

— A Sapper Team Leader
Briefing his Company Commander

Enablers play a crucial role in combined arms missions, and PLs and PSGs who effectively plan for, integrate, and empower them can turn them into force multipliers. By doing so, they enable their units to mass effects at the decisive point of the battle. Conversely, leaders who fail to plan for and integrate enablers risk being unable to achieve their objectives.

Today's battlefield demands that leaders attach and utilize enablers at the platoon level. Technical experts, such as Sappers, Fire Supporters, and army attack aviation (AAA) crews, can be fully integrated into a patrol or provide supporting fires. Leaders must proactively plan with and for these enablers, involving them in the planning process and briefings. For example, PLs should work closely with Sappers to plan and brief breach actions, including the marking system for the lane. Similarly, they should task AAA crews with high-value and high-payoff targets, providing them with a clear purpose and focus.

Leaders must also develop a comprehensive indirect-fire support

plan, integrating it into their overall patrol plan. They should plan for fires along the route to the objective, on suspected enemy positions, on the objective, and beyond the objective to enable maneuver. By establishing en route target reference points, leaders can quickly adjust fire support as needed. Additionally, they must understand the location and ranges of fire support assets to effectively utilize them. When planning a raid or combat patrol, leaders should carefully plan the echelonment of fires, turning fire support on and off as the platoon approaches the objective to maintain constant pressure on the enemy (see Figure 4-2).

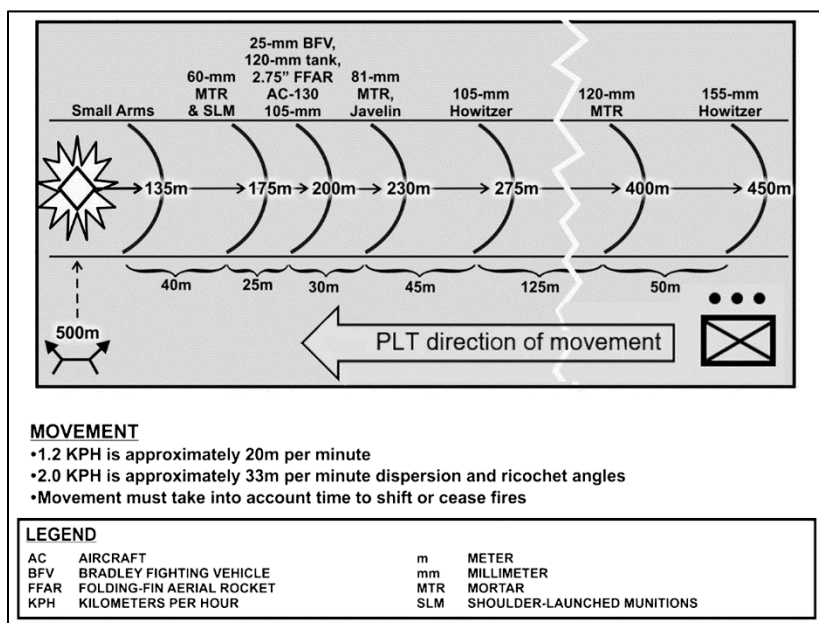


Figure 4-2. Offensive Echelonment of Fires⁶

PLs and PSGs are responsible for planning and executing fire support, even in the absence of a forward observer (FO). They must be prepared to call for fires and adjust their plan

⁶ Revised from Figure B-2 in Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-21.8.3, *Infantry Platoon and Squad*, 11 January 2024.

accordingly. By taking an active and proactive approach to planning and integrating enablers, leaders can maximize their effectiveness and achieve their mission objectives.

For Platoon Leaders

As the lead planner for your platoon, it is important to understand the capabilities and limitations of your enablers to employ them at the decisive point. When a supporting element arrives, your first question should be what do you bring to the fight? The second question should be what support do you need from my platoon? After receiving answers, make sure the supporting element is included during planning and participates in the rehearsals.

Sometimes, due to short timelines, an enabler may not link up with the platoon until at the line of departure. Provide a quick fragmentary order with task and purpose at a minimum. If possible, plan training events at home station with enablers, you may work with at a CTC or during deployment to build interoperability and habitual relationships. SOPs can be built into TACSOPs to streamline this process. Finally, take care of any attached enablers just as well as you do your platoon. This fosters trust and confidence in your leadership.

For Platoon Sergeants

As your PL welcomes attachments and starts planning with them, be sure to link them with your platoon support functions. Their numbers should be added for chow, housing, fuel, and other support functions. Your master authorization list, personnel status report, and patrol trip tickets may also need to be updated with the appropriate information. In addition, an attachment may have special needs (e.g., increased fuel consumption or demolitions and other special ammunition). You and your PL may use the example enabler checklist (see Figure 4-3) to codify a process to receive and integrate enablers into your platoon.

PLs and PSGs integrate enablers and attachments into the platoon as soon as they arrive by following the company TACSOP, which outlines the SOP for attachments and detachments. Leaders provide a clear task and purpose, communicate radios and call signs, and plan for food and billets. They also include attachments in planning and patrol briefs, ensuring that they are properly employed at the decisive point.

Figure 4-3. Checklist

Enabler Checklist		
Date Time Group (DTG): _ Enabler: Unit____ Officer in charge (OIC)____ Noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC)____ Gaining Unit: Unit____ OIC/NCOIC____	Provided From Enabler: By vehicle: Standard name lines, battle roster number, allergies, blood type, sensitive items by serial number, other special equipment By position: Call signs, location, order of march Statuses: Supply Classes I, II, and V and any equipment deadlines or restrictions Special Capabilities: Mission	Provided to Enabler: Expectations OPORD: Task and purpose, rehearsals, etc. communications: call signs; frequencies; primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency (PACE) plan

CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED

Most leaders are experts in their craft, but they may have limited knowledge of the capabilities and restrictions of attached units. To bridge this knowledge gap and empower attached elements, leaders should invite attachments to provide a capabilities brief to the widest possible audience. By doing so, attachments can demonstrate their proficiency, and squad and team leaders can learn how to effectively employ them. Leaders must also include attachments in rehearsals for key actions, such as movement, actions on contact, actions on the objective, consolidation/reorganization, and other critical operations.

At the CTCs, leaders have observed that attachments often fail to attend OPORDs and rarely brief on their capabilities and restrictions. To address this issue, platoon-level leaders must take an active role in planning for, integrating and empowering enablers. PLs and PSGs who fail to do so risk being unable to employ and synchronize assets at the decisive point, ultimately compromising the success of the operation. By actively engaging with attachments and including them in the planning and rehearsal process, leaders can ensure that they are able to effectively utilize these assets and achieve their objectives.

After Action Reviews

I have my platoon do an AAR after each training event. The largest pitfall leaders have is talking about something that was going to happen anyway. Leaders need to focus on what they can control within their scope to improve the organization. We should not focus on what we cannot control.

— Infantry PSG

Leaders use AARs as an opportunity to facilitate learning from training events or operations and improve future performance. At the platoon level, leaders conduct AARs to assess team, squad, and platoon performance and provide feedback to company leadership. Leaders must understand the difference between formal and informal AARs, plan and facilitate reviews, and utilize the results of their AARs to drive improvement.

Platoon-level leaders actively use both formal and informal AARs to encourage their platoons to learn and improve. They lead formal AARs, which are planned events facilitated by an external expert, to assess performance and identify areas for improvement after training events. Leaders also use informal AARs to improve performance during training, providing on-the-spot coaching and correcting Soldiers as necessary. As lead trainers, PLs and PSGs take an active role in guiding their platoon's learning and improvement.

Leaders apply the plan, prepare, execute, and assess models to conduct effective AARs. They plan AARs into and after training, ensuring that a facilitator, location, and time are secured for each review. When executing lane training or repetitive training, leaders plan AARs after each iteration to identify what to sustain and what to improve for the next lane, facilitating learning and improvement. Leaders prepare for AARs by collecting relevant training and evaluation outlines (T&EOs) before the training event and gathering observations during the event for further discussion.

Leaders execute both formal and informal AARs in a similar manner. They start by summarizing the event, then identify what to sustain and what to improve, and finally determine how to execute differently. Leaders use a script, such as the one in Figure 4-4, to guide the AAR process. They ensure maximum participation from the unit, opposing force, and observer-coach/trainers, and arrange for discussions to take place on the same training site whenever possible. By soliciting multiple viewpoints, leaders help units identify blind spots and areas for improvement that they may have otherwise missed.

Table 4-1. After-action Review Script

AAR Script	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was supposed to happen, what was the plan? What happened?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why did this occur?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What did we learn from this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What should we change for future operations? What training do we need to conduct to improve?

After the AAR, platoon-level leaders analyze and learn from the results, using them to drive improvement in their units. Leaders who shortcut the AAR process by simply identifying three ups and three downs and then moving on miss a valuable opportunity to learn and grow. Instead, leaders assess their platoon's performance using the plan, prepare, execute, and assess models, and then retrain or revise SOPs as needed. Leaders also share their platoon's lessons and best practices with the company and other PLs and PSGs, promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Furthermore, leaders incorporate action plans into counseling sessions to ensure that their platoon continues to learn and improve over time.

Platoon-level leaders proactively review Field Manual (FM) 7-0, *Training*, 14 June 2021, Appendix K, to gain a deeper understanding of AARs and how to effectively plan and execute them. When planning training events, leaders study the appendix to ensure they understand the differences between formal and informal AARs, how to plan and facilitate a review, and how to learn from the results of their AARs. By taking an active and intentional approach to AARs, leaders can maximize their value and drive meaningful improvement in their units.

Chapter 5

Vignettes

Leaders at all levels best learn through the experience of others. There have been many platoon leaders (PLs) and platoon sergeants (PSGs) who can share their experiences with future PLs and PSGs. Leaders can also do well through a professional reading program aimed at expanding a leader's knowledge, which can introduce them to new situations and develop critical thinking skills. This chapter consists of four vignettes that provide insights into the experiences of Army leaders. These can be used as a discussion with a partner PL or PSG on how each would react. This exercise can build leadership skills as a team.

Vignette 1

1LT Adams, now a seasoned PL, and SFC Sharp are preparing their platoon for a rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). Morale is high but the platoon is struggling to integrate several new Soldiers who arrived after the last deployment. One new Soldier, PFC Jones, is showing potential but struggles to keep up physically during squad training exercises.

During a particularly demanding movement to contact lane, PFC Jones falls behind, delaying the platoon's assault. He arrives at the objective visibly exhausted and struggling to catch his breath. Later, SFC Sharp pulls PFC Jones aside and learns that he's been having difficulty adjusting to the physical demands of the platoon and is embarrassed to ask for help.

How should 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp address PFC Jones' struggles?

How can 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp integrate new Soldiers into the platoon and build unit cohesion?

What resources are available to help PFC Jones improve his physical fitness and meet the platoon's standards?

How can 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp foster an environment where Soldiers feel comfortable seeking help when needed?

Vignette 2

Back at home station, 1LT Adams is tasked with organizing a platoon-level training event focused on developing junior leaders. He wants to create a realistic and challenging scenario that forces his squad leaders to think critically and make decisions under pressure. He also wants to use the opportunity to assess the leadership potential of his team leaders.

SFC Sharp, drawing on his experience, suggests incorporating a simulated casualty evacuation, equipment malfunction, and a sudden change in mission objectives to test the squad leaders' adaptability and problem-solving skills. He also recommends assigning specific observation roles to the platoon sergeant and himself to provide targeted feedback after the exercise.

How can 1LT Adams design the training event to effectively challenge and develop his junior leaders?

What specific leadership attributes and skills should 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp focus on assessing during the training event?

How can 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp provide constructive feedback that encourages growth and development in their junior leaders?

What are some methods for creating realistic and engaging training scenarios that replicate the complexities of real-world operations?

Vignette 3

Following a change of command, CPT Sherman is replaced by CPT Jones. Jones brings a new leadership style and emphasizes different priorities for the company. During his initial address to the company, Jones announces his intent to increase the company's operational tempo with more frequent field training exercises and a greater emphasis on individual Soldier skills.

While 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp understand the importance of maintaining a high level of readiness, they are concerned about the potential impact of the increased demands on their Soldiers' morale and wellbeing. They have also noticed a recent decline in Soldier participation in unit social events and an increase in minor disciplinary issues, suggesting potential signs of stress and burnout.

How should 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp approach CPT Jones to express their concerns about the potential impact of the increased operational tempo on their Soldiers?

How can 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp balance the company's training requirements with the needs of their Soldiers and maintain a positive command climate?

What steps can 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp take to mitigate the risk of burnout and maintain Soldier morale amidst the changing expectations?

How can 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp foster open communication within the platoon to identify and address any issues before they escalate?

Vignette 4

1LT Adams' and SFC Sharp's platoon is operating in a dense urban environment, conducting reconnaissance patrols to locate a high-value target. Intelligence reports indicate the enemy possesses sophisticated surveillance capabilities and employs a network of informants within the city. Maintaining a low profile and employing effective deception measures are crucial for the platoon's survivability and mission success.

While planning their next patrol, 1LT Adams notices a pattern in their recent movements. They have unknowingly established a predictable route and timeframe, potentially exposing them to enemy observation and ambush. He shares his concerns with SFC Sharp, who agree that they need to alter their tactics to become less predictable.

What steps can 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp take to enhance the platoon's survivability by reducing their predictability and signature within the urban environment?

How can 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp incorporate military deception techniques, such as decoys, false insertions, and misinformation, to mislead the enemy about their intentions and location?

How can the platoon utilize the urban terrain to their advantage, leveraging buildings, alleyways, and other features for concealment, cover, and observation?

How can 1LT Adams and SFC Sharp instill a heightened sense of situational awareness and operational security within the platoon to mitigate the risk of enemy surveillance and compromise?

Appendix A

Platoon Smartbook

Throughout their time in leadership, platoon leaders (PLs) and platoon sergeants (PSGs) actively maintain a leader smartbook, which they use to organize and access platoon-specific information. By keeping this smartbook up to date, PLs and PSGs ensure they have easy access to the information they need to lead the platoon effectively. PLs and PSGs combine their leader smartbook with the property book and company and battalion tactical standard operating procedures (TACSOPs), giving them tools and resources needed to accomplish missions. Recommended smartbook items include:

- Personnel roster (including home addresses and contact information)
- Platoon battle roster (see Figure A-1)
- Platoon training tracker (Army Fitness Test [AFT], weapons qualification, drivers training, crew certification, etc.)
- Vehicle tracker (including subsystems and associated weapons)
- Maintenance tracker
- Master authorization list (MAL)
- Training schedule (eight weeks out)
- Preformatted operations order (OPORD) (to receive the mission and facilitate planning)
- Preformatted reports (medical evacuation [MEDEVAC], spot, unexploded ordnance [UXO], etc.)
- Company commander's and battalion commander's priorities and intent
- Platoon property book
- Company TACSOP
- Battalion TACSOP

X PLATOON, X COMPANY, XX BN BATTLE ROSTER												
Call sign	<div><div><div>***</div><div>Blue flag with three white stars</div></div><div><div></div><div>GREEN SOLDIER</div></div></div>		CREW QUALIFICATIONS				TOTAL ASSIGNED				0	
			BATTAL/COMPANY				TOTAL ATTACHED					
			SUPERIOR				TOTAL STRENGTH					
			QUALIFIED				TOTAL DEPLOYABLE					
			UNQUALIFIED				% DEPLOYABLE					
<div><div>NON DEPLOYABLE</div><div>SPECIAL DUTY/BMM</div><div>SCHOOL</div><div>OTHER</div></div>												
MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	
35 DAYS LOSS												
MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	
120 DAYS LOSS												
MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	MOS	RANK/NAME	REMARK	
3rd SQUAD												
2nd SQUAD												
1st SQUAD												
B11		QUALIFIED (APR15)	B12		SUPERIOR (APR15)	B13		QUALIFIED (APR15)	B14		QUALIFIED (APR15)	
3211A PL	11830 BC	11830 AR	11830 BC	11830 AR	11830 AR	11830 BC	11830 AR	11830 AR	11830 AR	11830 AR	11830 AR	
11810 GNR	11810 DVR	11810 DVR	11810 DVR	11810 DVR	11810 DVR	11810 DVR	11810 DVR	11810 DVR	11810 DVR	11810 DVR	11810 DVR	
11810 DVR	11830 SL	11830 TL(A)	11830 SL	11830 TL(A)	11830 SL	11830 TL(A)	11830 SL	11830 TL(A)	11830 SL	11830 TL(A)	11830 TL(A)	
11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	
11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	
11810 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	11820 TL(B)	
11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	11810 AR	
11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	11810 R	
11810 RTO												
LEGEND			GNR			gunner			SL			
AR			GR			gunner			SQUAD			
BC			GR			gunner			SQUAD			
DVR			MOS			military occupational			TL			
									team leader			

Figure A-1. Battle roster

Appendix B

Platoon Resource Library

Platoons should compile a library of relevant information to facilitate learning and accomplishment of their mission. This resource library can be digital; however, platoons can benefit from hard copies when available for use at the range.

Graphic Training Aids (GTAs)

GTAs can be picked up or ordered at an installation training support center (TSC). GTAs can be downloaded and printed from the Army Publishing Directorate (APD) restricted website at <https://armypubs.army.mil> (authorized users only, common access card [CAC] login required).

Technical Manuals (TMs)

TMs can be downloaded and printed from the electronic technical manual (ETM) application on the U.S. Army Logistics Data Analysis Center (LDAC) website at <https://login.aesip.army.mil/portal/> (authorized users only, CAC login required) or see the company publications clerk).

Field Manuals (FMs); Army Doctrine Publications (ADPs); Army Techniques Publications (ATPs); and Training Circulars (TCs)

Download and print from the APD's website at <https://armypubs.army.mil/> or see the publications clerk.

CALL Publications

Download or order hard copies from the CALL website at <https://www.army.mil/call> (authorized users only, CAC login required).

Recommended Publications

ATP 3-21.8, *Infantry Platoon and Squad*, 11 January 2024. This ATP discusses basic troop-leading procedures (TLPs) and patrolling information.

FM 7-0, *Training*, 14 June 2021. This FM details training management.

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TC 3-22.9, *Rifle and Carbine*, 13 May 2016. This TC discusses training.

TC 3-22.249, *Light Machine Gun M249 Series*, 16 May 2017. This TC discusses training and qualification for the M249.

Appendix C

Glossary

AAA	Army attack aviation
AAR	after-action report
ACE	ammunition, casualty, and equipment
AFT	Army Fitness Test
ACS	Army Community Services
AER	Army Emergency Relief
APD	Army Publishing Directorate
AR	Army regulation
ASAP	Army Substance Abuse Program
ATN	Army Training Network
ATP	Army Techniques Publication
BCT	brigade combat team
CAC	common access card
CALL	Center for Army Lessons Learned
CASEVAC	casualty evacuation
CATS	Combined Arms Training Strategies
CBRN	Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear
CLS	combat life saver
CSDP	Command Supply Discipline Program
CTC	combat training center
DA	Department of the Army
DTG	date time group
DUI	driving under the influence
EHD	explosive hazard defeat
EST	engagement skills trainer
ETM	electronic technical manual

CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED

FM	field manual/frequency modulation
FO	forward observer
GCSS-A	Global Combat Support System-Army
HITS	home-station instrumentation training system
IED	improvised explosive device
IEDES	improvised explosive device effects simulator
IMILES	Instrumentable Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System
JRTC	Joint Readiness Training Center
LDAC	U.S. Army Logistics Data Analysis Center
LFX	live-fire exercise
LTT	leader's training time
MAL	master authorization list
MEDEVAC	medical evacuation
MET	mission essential task
METL	mission essential task list
METT-TC	mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civilian considerations
MICLIC	mine-clearing line charge
MRE	meal, ready-to-eat
MTC	mission training complex
MWR	morale, welfare, and recreation
NCO	noncommissioned officer
NCOIC	noncommissioned officer in charge
NCOPDS	Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System
NMC	non-mission capable

THE FIRST 100 DAYS OF PLATOON LEADERSHIP, 2nd EDITION

NSN	national stock number
NVG	night vision goggles
OES	Officer Education System
OIC	officer in charge
OPORD	operations order
PACE	primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency (plan)
PBO	property book officer
PCI	precombat inspection
PCC	precombat check(s)
PL	platoon leader
PMCS	preventive maintenance checks and services
PMI	preliminary marksmanship instruction
PSG	platoon sergeant
RSO	range safety officer
RTO	radio telephone operator
SALUTE	size, activity, location, unit, time, and equipment (report)
SFRG	Soldier and Family Readiness Group
SITREP	situation report
SOP	standard operating procedure(s)
STP	Soldier training publication
STRAC	U.S. Army's Standards in Training Commission
STT	sergeant's training time
STX	situational training exercise
T&EO	training and evaluation outline
TA	training area
TACSOP	tactical standard operating procedures(s)

CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED

TADSS	training aids, devices, simulations, and simulators
TC	training circular
TLP	troop leading procedure(s)
TM	technical manual
TRADOC	U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command
TSC	U.S. Army Training Support Center
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice
UIC	unit identifier code
UTL	unit task list
UXO	unexploded ordnance
VBS	virtual battle space
WARNORD	warning order
XO	executive officer



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