

ISSUE:

Light artillery batteries do not properly integrate their organic weapon systems into their battery defensive plan at the National Training Center. Battery commander's understand the principles of the defense as outlined in Chapter 3 of the FM 6-50, but do not develop a detailed plan to defend their battery position against a ground attack.

DISCUSSION:

Batteries can be detected through the study of our doctrine and the processing of signals intelligence, imagery intelligence, and human intelligence. Upon confirmation of a unit location, the battery can expect to be attacked and destroyed by counterfire, air attack, or ground forces.

It is the responsibility of the battery commander for the general planning, coordinating and the execution of the battery defensive plan. The commander must analyze the S2s IPB and develop his overall defensive plan based off the IPB. Most importantly, with the understanding of the tactical situation and the enemy threat/capabilities, the battery commander must then develop his own engagement area(s) where he intends to kill the enemy. With this completed, the 1SG can then determine the position of LP/OPs, fighting positions, direct fire targets, target reference points, and range markers to direct the firepower of the battery.

However, this is only half the battle. Batteries must then establish priorities of work to accomplish all assigned tasks. FM 6-50, Chapter 3, paragraph 3-2 provides a framework for the tasks battery personnel need to accomplish. Additionally, Table 3-1 in Chapter 3 outlines the capabilities of battery defensive resources and the Unit Defensive Checklist can be found in Appendix H.

If we use these resources as our guide, we will find ourselves highly prepared to defend the battery from attack. But, we must rehearse our plan. If not rehearsed, we will not effectively control our fires. The end result is a very disorganized battery defense during execution.

Many artillery units come to the National Training Center very proficient in direct fire howitzer crew drills, constructing fighting positions, completing range cards to standard, and constructing battery defense diagrams. What is overlooked is the understanding of how complex it can be to command and control the battery in a direct fire fight. We have not clearly established control measures to initiate direct fire weapon systems, we are not controlling our M240/240B fires, or our tank killer teams are not familiar with the AT-4 to name a few. Often we are taking it for granted that all of our soldiers will "do the right

thing”. However, we cannot expect them to react appropriately if they are untrained in this complex task.

RECOMMENDATION:

A solution is to conduct a battery defensive live fire at home station in order to train the individual and collective tasks necessary to execute a proper battery defense.

“A WAY”

Take the time to develop a scenario that will incorporate all of your organic weapon systems. Additionally, you may find yourself developing an enemy set based off of range requirements (where are the targets positioned on the range?, am I limited on where my .50 cal can be positioned?, will my M119A1 direct fire range fan dictate howitzer positions?). It may be that you cannot position your battery assets in the most tactically sound positions. But what we are trying to achieve here is developing sound command and control TTPs for controlling our fires. More importantly, we are raising the confidence level in our soldiers by demonstrating to them our doctrine is sound, their equipment is functional, and that they know how to correctly operate it.

Controlling the fires is crucial to a successful execution. During the planning phase, or the writing of our operations order, the battery commander must visualize his fight. When enemy forces come into my engagement area how will the battery react? Will we initiate fires with all of our weapons systems at once, or will we effectively control our fight? If we don't have a plan that is simple to execute and understood by all, then we will be disorganized and nobody will be controlling the battery. We will not fight the enemy on our terms; we will fight it on his.

A way to successfully control our fires is to break our fight into different phases. Each phase dictates which of our weapon systems is firing and at what (enemy situation). This will facilitate positive control of the battery's actions. Let us say that our “enemy” will be a motorized rifle platoon. As he comes into our engagement area, we will initiate with the M119A1 in the direct fire mode and our .50 cal. As he continues to advance on our position he comes within our AT-4 range. We then signal our tank killer teams to move forward and employ the AT-4 (Phase 1). As he continues to advance, troops begin to dismount and use defilade as they advance on the battery. The battery continues to employ the

M119A1 and .50cal, but now they employ the MK-19 against troops in defilade (Phase 2). As the dismounted infantry continues to advance, we begin to employ our M240/240B and M4/M16A2 and M203s (Phase 3). As they begin to breach our position area, we initiate our claymores and continue with our M4/M16 and M240/240B fires (Phase 4). At this point, we have defeated the enemy and he begins to withdraw forces and the battery initiates all of its organic weapons (Phase 5). This is a simple plan to execute, it is easily understood, and it facilitates command and control of fires within the battery.

The matrix below can be used as a guide to better illustrate the controlling of fires.

Phase/Trigger	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Enemy Action	MRP in EA Light	Infantry dismounts	Dismounted Infantry Advances	Breach force reduces battery wire	MRP withdraws
Battery Action	Positive vehicle ID, M119A1, .50cal initiates, visual signal initiates tank killer teams.	Visual signal initiates MK-19, continue M119A1 direct fire and .50 cal fires.	Visual signal ceases M119A1 direct fire, .50 cal fire. Initiates M240/240B, M4/M16 fires, M203 fires, and MK-19 fires continue.	Visual signal ceases MK-19 fires. Initiates claymore and continues M240/240B, M4/M16 fires.	Visual signal initiates M119A1 direct fires and all individual and crew served weapons, reconsolidate, Exercise BOC reporting, Casevac

There are many more tasks that need to be completed to conduct this training event. However, it is a training event light batteries typically do not conduct. It will validate our direct fire crew drills, our soldier's skills with the unit's weapons and our battery TTPs for battery defense. In the end, it is a great event and worth the time and effort needed to conduct.