from the division located a streetcar barn, loaded a number of the streetcars with TNT, rolled them on their tracks down hill, and exploded them in the German positions. Excellent research material on street fighting can also be found in the many accounts of the British at Arnhem. Charles Macdonald's book *A Time for Trumpets* has several excellent and factual accounts of village fighting.

In sum, present MOUT doctrine isn't all that bad except that it seems to lead to finesse and the exclusion of some kinds of firepower such as tanks and artillery. I am a firm believer in banging away with everything at hand, and the closer the range the better. I know that tanks can be used right up front and at the cutting edge if the proper techniques are used. In a really stubborn situation, add helicopter gunships and TAC air. Don't hesitate to use every available weapon system. I also know from experience that the more violence you throw at the enemy the better your chances of winning and winning quickly, which in turn will save casualties.

Therefore, I suggest that in our doctrine we try to get in more of the how to do it, which is even more important than the what to do and what not to do.

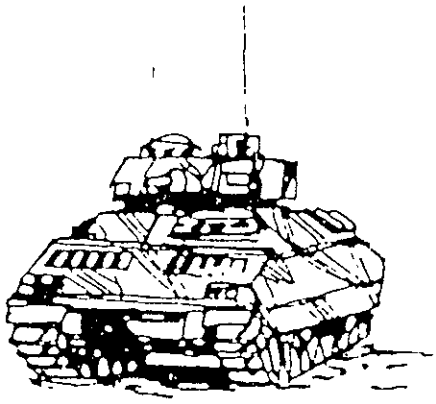
Lieutenant General William R. Desobry, United States Army Retired, commanded both the 54th and the 20th Armored Infantry Battalions in the 10th Armored Division in Europe during World War II. Following the war, his key assignments included command of a combat command in the 2nd Armored Division, service as Deputy and then Senior Advisor to the ARVN IV Corps in South Vietnam, command of the 1st Armored Division, command of the Armor Center and School; president of the XM1 tank task force, and command of the V Corps in Europe. He also served on the Department of the Army Staff and on the faculties of the Command and General Staff College and the Army War College.

A Battle Book
For the BFV Platoon Leader

LIEUTENANT ROBERT L. DUNAWAY

Located in a wadi on The Shelf at the NTC is a Bradley Fighting Vehicle platoon preparing for a mission. After four days of "force on force," the platoon has been tasked to lead its company on a movement to contact through OP1 and OP2 and on to the vicinity of the Whale Gap. Pretty simple, except that the platoon leader has gone without sleep for 48 hours, his platoon has just now been reconstituted, and he has only a few hours until the line of departure (LD) time. This scene is all too familiar today, whether at the NTC, in Europe, or elsewhere.

This platoon's success can hinge on two factors—how well the unit reacts to particular situations and how well organized the platoon's planning process is. With proper battlefield planning, the first factor is merely a matter of drills and SOPs. As for the platoon's plan—because of time limitations, the platoon leader's inexperience, and simple fatigue—it often receives only lip service. It will help a lot if the platoon leader has prepared a "battle book." Such a book clearly and concisely organizes the planning process into step by step guidelines that are easy to use, even at 2300 hours on a dark night before an 0300 LD.



What is a battle book? An SOP or an FM? Yes and no. A battle book is a working notebook that contains quick reference materials, SOPs, blank order formats, and key documents such as sector sketch formats.

But how do you, as a platoon leader, go about developing a battle book?

First, to be useable, your book must be kept simple enough so that anyone in your unit can pick it up and use it, with little training. The more "user friendly" the book is, the more likely it will become a working document, instead of a coaster for your coffee mug.

The actual size of the book depends upon what you find convenient. I prefer to use three-ring binders, as they are inexpensive and allow for pages to be added or removed. All of the paperwork is encased in standard document protectors, which serve to protect the papers and also allow me to write on them with transparency markers. For light infantry leaders, standard size sheets can be reduced for pocket-sized books, but be careful not to reduce your books too much or they will be hard to read, especially by tired eyes.

The system that has been the most successful for me is to divide the book into two binders. One binder contains

MOVE CHECKLISTS
- Road March/Movement
- Quartering Party
- Assembly Areas
- Pre-combat Checks
- Consolidation/Reorganization

DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS CHECKLISTS
- General Planning Considerations
- Hasty Defense
- Deliberate Defense
- Local Security/Patrolling
- Obstacle Kit (Squad)
- Flank Coordination

OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS CHECKLISTS
- General Planning Considerations
- Passage of Lines
- Movement to Contact/Hasty Attack
- Deliberate Attack
- Limited Visibility Attack
- Breaching Kit (Squad)

Figure 1. Reference Binder

reference checklists, while the other serves as a working file. Figures 1 and 2 give the organization of these books.

The reference book serves one major purpose—to key the user's mind to any details, sequences, or concepts that may have been lost, for whatever reason. The book should be a guideline to jog memory, it must not stifle imaginative thought. (This list works for me, but you will have to tailor it for your own use.)

The working file book contains continually changing information. This book is where your plans are worked out on paper while staying flexible enough to accept changing information on a regular basis.

ORDERS PROCESS
- Troop Leading Procedures (Leave room next to them for a time schedule that parallels the procedures.)
- FRAGO
- WARNORD (These are fill-in-the-blank forms that are also used by the company commander.)
- OPORD

CHANGING DOCUMENTS
- Bn/Co/Plt Codewords
- A/J Procedures
- Checkpoints/Tiers
- Sector Sketch Forms with Example
- Minefield Records
- Sensitive Items Roster
- Platoon Personnel Roster
- Equipment Status Matrix

Figure 2. Working Files

A brief search will uncover numerous checklists that people have developed in the past. If you are a new platoon leader, though, you may find it difficult to decide which lists are the best. Try the ones that are now in use around your unit. If you can't find any, go to the manuals or other sources that discuss the desired operations and create your own checklists. None of the ones you find are going to be perfect; you will have to modify them to suit your own needs. Avoid taking pages directly from FMs, as they usually contain too much information. Instead keep the information down to one-line blurbs that jog your memory. A sample of this is included in Figure 3, which also organizes the workload between the platoon leader and the platoon sergeant.

The organization of a checklist streamlines its efficiency and can be designed many different ways—as a laundry list, in sequential or chronological order, or by responsibility or duty position. I recommend using a combination of all three techniques.

BREAKDOWN

First, take the laundry list and break it down by duty position—platoon leader, platoon sergeant, squad leader, assistant squad leader, and squad member. This breakdown ensures that the workload is distributed properly and also identifies specific duties for specific soldiers. Next, take each duty position and organize the duties chronologically within that position, and tie the sequence in with the other duty positions. For example, "Squad Leader: Make squad sector sketches *after* range cards are done." Developing the organization of a checklist takes practice, but it does improve efficiency.

Diagrams and charts are beneficial, but they can also be misleading. Make sure everyone understands that diagrams such as those used for fighting positions should not be interpreted literally, as this inhibits imagination. Use diagrams that are simple and uncluttered.

One chart that helps in briefing operations is a piece of posterboard (11"x16") covered with acetate. On this board, operations can be briefed using a freehand terrain sketch with the appropriate graphics superimposed. This chart, or "battle board," spares you the frustration of trying to brief from a map. Another board of the same size can be used for platoon sector sketches to control the actual battle.

CONSOLIDATION—PLATOON LEADER
- Occupy Defensive Positions
- Clear Pockets of Resistance
- Position Forces and Security Elements
- Improve Defensive Positions
- Prepare for Counterattack
- Prepare for Change of Mission (Pre-combat checks)

REORGANIZATION—PLATOON SERGEANT
- Report Losses, Ammunition Expenditures, Fuel Status, and Vehicle Conditions to Team CP
- Redistribute Supplies, Equipment, Ammunition, and Personnel
- Restore Communication to all Elements
- Perform PMCS and Emergency Repairs
- See "End-of-Problem Checklist"

Figure 3. Sample Checklist

A final step that I took to round out my battle book was to put together a kit stocked with all the materials I would need to turn out graphics for my squad leaders. This kit consisted of a plastic file box filled with items such as water and alcohol pens, paper, pre-cut acetate sheets, and any additional references I wanted to include (such as a demolitions card and a Ranger Handbook). My driver maintained the kit; he became the "graphics man" and was responsible for making overlays for the squad leaders to have when the operations order was issued.

Look at your platoon SOP and determine whether you're using it. If you are and it works, great! If not, try the battle book idea, and you will find it will do two big things: It will help you thoroughly plan your operations in a systematic manner, and it will help you get some sleep.

Lieutenant Robert L. Dunaway developed his battle book over a one-year period as leader of a mechanized infantry platoon and then tested it at the NTC. A 1984 graduate of the United States Military Academy, he is now aide to the assistant division commander, 1st Cavalry Division.