

SLoCTOP:

The FIST-V Crew Drill

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Established Field Artillery (FA) crew drills are absolutely necessary to ensure ease of occupation for crews and continuous fire support for committed forces. The FA community has procedures for a howitzer crew to occupy a position using the TLASBAPP formula—a mnemonic that stands for trails, lay, aiming reference point, site-to-crest, boresight, azimuth markers, prefire checks and position improvement. But we have no published crew drill for the fire support team vehicle (FIST-V).

The closest thing we have to a published crew drill for the FIST-V is Task Number 06-3-02-1500 in ARTEP 6-115-20-Mission Training Plan, "Provide Fire Support Coordination," Pages 5-31 to 5-33. The task addresses some sub-tasks but gives no priority of work or collective time standard.

The 5th Battalion, 1st Field Artillery, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized) Artillery, Fort Polk, Louisiana, developed and tested a FIST-V crew drill. Like the howitzer crew's TLASBAPP, we created

a FIST-V crew's mnemonic of SLoCTOP, which stands for the six phases of the FIST-V occupation: security, location, communication, targeting head, observation and position improvement. The drill significantly reduces position occupation time, requires the FIST to employ all FIST-V capabilities and has improved our ability to provide accurate, responsive fire support.

The purpose of SLoCTOP is to make the occupation of a position a standard procedure. All FIST-V crew members must know what to do and in what order. Additionally, crew members must cross train in each crew position to ensure manning for 24-hour operations.

In this drill, the four crew positions are driver, radio/telephone operator (RATELO), fire support NCO (FSNCO) and track commander (TC). The fire support officer's (FSO's) preferred position will be in either the TC or FSNCO position, based on experience and preference. This crew drill is applicable to combat observation lasing teams (COLTs) when the

RATELO absorbs tasks specified for the FSNCO.

The Crew Drill

Task: Occupy and establish an observation post with a FIST-V.

Conditions: The FIST is conducting combat operations in a tactical environment. Its mission-capable FIST-V was provided survey data and initialized in an assembly area.

Standard: Using the SLoCTOP formula, the FIST will occupy and establish an observation post with a FIST-V. Sub-tasks will be accomplished in 3 minutes and 30 seconds plus the north-seeking gyrocompass (NSG) alignment time. The time starts when the FSNCO guides the FIST-V into position in the Security Phase and stops when the Observation Phase is completed.

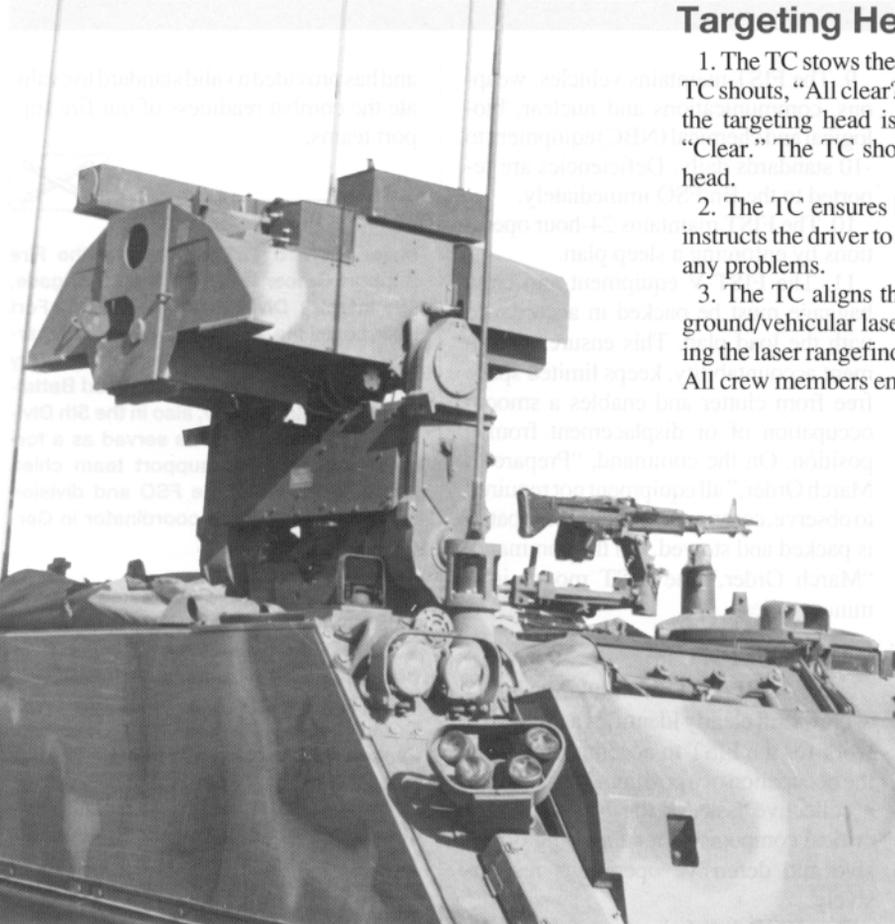
Security Phase

1. The TC directs the FIST-V driver toward a position to observe the battlefield or sector of responsibility. The TC ensures the FIST-V profile is not silhouetted. The FIST-V also must be able to communicate from this position.

2. The RATELO and FSNCO dismount to conduct a security sweep of the immediate area (50 to 75 meters), and the TC provides overwatch with the M-60 machinegun. The dismounted sweep is mission, enemy, terrain, troops and time available (METT-T)-dependent. If the position was recently occupied by friendly forces and the enemy ground threat is low, then a visual sweep by the driver and TC may be all that's necessary.

Before dismounting for the security sweep, the RATELO ensures the TC and driver can monitor all voice nets. The TC must monitor company/team command net, (Co CMD) and maneuver battalion/task force fire support net (Bn FSN).

3. Once the position is secure, the FSNCO guides the FIST-V to the optimum overwatch position. The TC directs the driver to stop when he estimates that only the targeting head is visible to the target area. The FSNCO and RATELO return to the FIST-V, and the RATELO monitors the assigned radio nets.



Targeting Head Phase

1. The TC stows the M-60 while the driver closes his hatch. The TC shouts, "All clear?" The FSNCO, driver and RATELO ensure the targeting head is free from obstruction and respond with, "Clear." The TC shouts, "Heads Up," and raises the targeting head.

2. The TC ensures he can see the target area. If necessary, he instructs the driver to move either forward or backward to correct any problems.

3. The TC aligns the NSG (3 to 5 minutes) and activates the ground/vehicular laser locator designator (G/VLLD). Before using the laser rangefinder, the TC announces, "Preparing to Lase." All crew members ensure there are no laser safety violations and

respond with, "Clear." The TC then announces, "Lasing," to warn soldiers of laser activation. He verifies his mapspot by resection with the G/VLLD and passes the updated information to the RATELO and FSNCO.

4. The RATELO forwards the corrected observer location (OBCCO) to the Bn FSO, DS FA Bn and 4.2-inch mortars. The FSNCO updates the situation map and supervises the RATELO.

5. The driver continues to observe the target area for any ground and air threat. Wearing laser-safe goggles, he views the area through his periscope or reopens the hatch slightly so as not to interfere with the targeting head.

Time Standard: The Targeting Head Phase time standard is the NSG alignment time (3 to 5 minutes) plus 2 minutes.

Observation Phase

1. The TC scans the target area with the 3 x sight.

2. The FSNCO scans the target area with his periscope.

3. The TC, FSNCO and driver verify the location of targets on the battlefield for which they are responsible. The RATELO monitors the radios and reports target identification, as specified by the TC, to the Bn FSO.

4. The driver hands the TC the terrain sketch. The TC uses the G/VLLD to compute azimuth, distance and vertical angle to targets and trigger points and key terrain features. He also records the turret degree indicator of each.

Time Standard: The Observation Phase time standard is 1 minute, running concurrently with the Targeting Head Phase.

Position Improvement

1. The team erects the AT-984 or OE-254 antenna and camouflage nets, if projected to be in position for 30 minutes or more.

4. Throughout the Security Phase, the TC and driver must be alert and observe the target area for any ground or air threat (using binoculars). The driver also monitors FIST-V instrument gauges.

Location Phase

1. The TC conducts a six-digit mapspot of his location and passes the grid to the FSNCO and RATELO.

2. The TC puts the observed fire (OF) fan on his map oriented to the target area. He orients on assigned targets, orients the driver to those targets and begins terrain association.

3. The driver continues to observe the target area for any ground and air threat and begins a terrain sketch.

4. The FSNCO updates the fire support situation map, orients the periscope to the target area and supervises the RATELO. The RATELO monitors the radio nets and prepares to transmit the FIST-V location.

Time Standard: The Location Phase time standard is 30 seconds.

Communication Phase

1. The RATELO sends the FIST-V location to the battalion FSO (Bn FSO) by

voice on the Bn FSN and digitally on the appropriate direct support FA battalion (DS FA Bn) fire direction (FD) net. He transmits the same message to the task force 4.2-inch mortars on the mortar FD net.

2. The FSNCO supervises the RATELO, updates the situation map and orients the periscope to the target area.

3. The TC, on the Co CMD net, sends a message to the commander that the FIST is in an overwatch position.

4. If the FIST can't communicate, the TC moves the FIST-V a short distance and establishes communications. If this doesn't solve the problem, the FSNCO and RATELO erect the OE-254 or AT-984 antenna. In any case, the FIST doesn't remain in a position where it can't communicate.

5. The TC and driver continue to observe the target area for any ground and air threat.

Time Standard: The Communication Phase time standard is 1 minute. The crew must communicate (by voice or digital) with the fire direction center (FDC) on the DS FA Bn FD net and the 4.2-inch mortar net. It must be able to monitor the Co CMD and Bn FSN nets.

2. The TC maintains observation of the target area and completes the terrain sketch.

3. The FSNCO, driver and RATELO rotate through the TC station to become familiar with the target area and to verify the terrain sketch.

4. The team digs foxholes (METT-T dependent). There are two foxholes per track. Each is 5 to 7 meters in front of the FIST-V at 45-degree angles oriented to the enemy dismounted avenue of approach. The laser rangefinder isn't activated when soldiers occupy these foxholes.

5. The TC draws an M-60 machinegun range card. In the defense, the driver, supervised by the FSNCO, dismounts from the M-60 to one of the foxholes and prepares the range card. The team rotates through this foxhole and knows the left and right limits and final protective fire (FPF) assignment.

6. The TC coordinates engineer support to dig-in the FIST-V.

7. The TC coordinates survey support for the FIST-V. The NSG is initialized with updated survey information.

8. The TC boresights the G/VLLD and night sight twice a day at a minimum (twilight and dusk).

9. The FIST maintains vehicles, weapons, communications and nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) equipment to -10 standards daily. Deficiencies are reported to the Bn FSO immediately.

10. The FIST maintains 24-hour operations by enforcing a sleep plan.

11. The FIST-V equipment and crew baggage must be packed in accordance with the load plan. This ensures equipment accountability, keeps limited space free from clutter and enables a smooth occupation of or displacement from a position. On the command, "Prepare to March Order," all equipment not required to observe, communicate or fight the battle is packed and stowed. On the command, "March Order," the FIST moves in 1 minute or less.

Conclusion

Using the SLoCTOP formula, the FIST-V crew drill clearly identifies a priority of work for the FIST to accomplish during the occupation of a position. It establishes a collective task for the FIST and is a critical component for supporting offensive and defensive operations responsively.

SLoCTOP has helped us focus individual training to support team training

and has provided a valid standard to evaluate the combat readiness of our fire support teams.



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RIGHT BY PIECE

NOTES FROM UNITS

The Senior Fire Support NCO Conference

Why Keep "Reinventing the Wheel"?

Within the course of a year, the 101st Airborne Division Artillery (Air Assault) reached several milestones—deployment to and combat in the Persian Gulf, numerous field exercises, including a brigade rotation to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, and the fielding of the light tactical fire direction system (LTACFIRE). In addition, in the wake of the Gulf War and ongoing defense cuts, the Div Arty has seen a large flux in personnel assignments and reassignments. In order to capture and retain all of the valuable lessons learned during the past year, incorporate the use of newly-fielded equipment, and make this information easily available to incoming fire

support personnel, it became necessary to establish a standing operating procedure (SOP) for the division's fire support community. That way, new fire supporters assigned to the Screaming Eagles Div Arty wouldn't have to "reinvent the wheel."

The Standing Operating Procedure

What makes for a good SOP? First, it should include those tried and true methods that develop out of actual experience. Second, it should complement doctrinal procedures with techniques not necessarily mandated by Army policy or suggested in field publications. Third, it should provide the user with good information that he can use to accomplish his mission more efficiently. Finally, the SOP be should be simple to follow and be tailored

to the unit's specific mission, equipment, and personnel.

In order to have an SOP meet all of these requirements, it should be written by, or at least derive its content from, the senior noncommissioned officers of the unit. The senior NCO is generally the one soldier in a unit who knows more about how that unit operates than anyone. His expertise reaches across a broad spectrum that ranges from the individual soldier skill level to the senior command and staff level. Having served in the same duty position for several years and often in the same unit, the senior NCO knows from firsthand experience what works and what does not. Most importantly, however, he is the leader who will be charged with enforcing the standards established in the SOP. The senior fire support NCOs (FSNCOs) of the division artillery were therefore selected as the ideal authors of the Div Arty's fire support standards.