

APPENDIX A

MORTAR TRAINING STRATEGY

This appendix provides a comprehensive unit training strategy for training mortarmen. Leaders have the means to develop a program for training their mortar units to full mission proficiency. This training strategy applies to ALL mortars in ALL organizations of the US Army. Although not prescriptive in nature, it must adapt to a unit's mission, local training resources, commander's guidance, and unit training status.

A-1. GENERAL

The examination includes situations similar to combat. The gunner is required to be proficient in mechanical drill and FDC when computing the fire mission from the forward observer. This training strategy helps the mortar crew become proficient and effective on the battlefield.

A-2. TRAINING EVALUATION

Evaluation cannot be separated from effective training. It occurs during the top-down analysis when planners develop the training plan. Planners use various sources of information to assess their unit's individual and collective training status. Evaluation is continuous during training. Soldiers receive feedback through coaching and AARs. Leaders also assess their own training plan and the instructional skills of their subordinate leaders.

After training, leaders evaluate by sampling training or reviewing AARs. Much of this evaluation is conducted informally. Formal evaluations occur under the Individual Training and Evaluation Program (ITEP) and the Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) to assess individual and collective training respectively.

a. Individual Training.

(1) *Commander's evaluation.* This is routinely conducted in units. Commanders select and evaluate individual tasks that support their unit mission and contribute to unit proficiency. This may be performed through local tests or assessments of soldier proficiency on crucial MOS tasks or common tasks. The commander's evaluation is based on year-round, constant evaluation by the chain of command and supported by the MOS 11C soldier's manuals, trainer's guides, and job books.

(2) *Gunner's examination.* The gunner's examination is a continuation of the mortar-based drills in which a mortarman's proficiency as a gunner is established. The examination is contained FM 23-90, Chapter 9. It includes tasks, conditions, standards, and administrative procedures. It focuses on the individual qualification of the soldier in the role of a gunner. However, the gunner's success also depends on the collective performance of his assistants. Within these limitations, evaluators should try to standardize the examination.

STRAC specify that the squad leader, gunner, and assistant gunner should pass the gunner's exam semiannually. All gunners should have a current qualification before an LFX (whether using service or subcaliber ammunition).

(3) *FDC certification.* This provides commanders a means to verify that their FDC mortarmen have the knowledge and skills for their positions: squad leader, FDC computer, section sergeant, platoon sergeant, and platoon leader. Certification helps ensure that

ammunition is wisely expended and that training is conducted safely and effectively. Mortarmen are certified when they receive a passing score of 90 percent and 70 percent on the two-part examination. (See Appendix D.)

b. Collective Training.

(1) *External evaluation.* The commander formally determines the status of his collective training through external evaluation. The external evaluation gives the commander an objective appraisal of this status by using mortar expertise found outside the normal chain of command. The external evaluation is not a test in which a unit passes or fails; it is a diagnostic tool for identifying training strengths and weaknesses. It must be emphasized that an external evaluation is not a specific training event but a means to evaluate a training event. Mortar units undergo external evaluations during an LFX, FTX, or a combination thereof. The unit may be evaluated alone, as part of its parent unit, or with other mortar units. The MTP provides guidance on planning, preparing, and conducting an external evaluation.

(2) *Evaluation of forward observer.* The mortars can be no more effective than the FOs. It is critical that FIST FOs are present and evaluated during an externally evaluated mortar live-fire exercise. If an FO fails to meet his performance standards, the mortars should not be penalized. However, only as a last resort should the fire mission be deleted from the evaluation. The mortars should be given the opportunity to successfully complete the fire mission. This can be accomplished in the following:

(a) Start the fire mission over. However, ammunition constraints during live-fire may not permit this. The task may need to be repeated using devices or, less preferably, dry fire.

(b) Correct the call for fire or correction. The mortars should not have to use wrong firing data if the FO has made an incorrect call for fire or correction. This also wastes valuable training ammunition. The FO evaluator at the observation point can change the call for fire or correction to reflect proper procedures.