
APPENDIX M

MORTAR PLATOON STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES

The unit SOP is a set of instructions having the force of orders. It contains areas that lend themselves to standardization with no loss of effectiveness.

M-1. PURPOSE

SOPs facilitate and expedite operations by--

- Reducing the number, length, and frequency of combat orders.
- Simplifying the preparation and transmission of combat orders.
- Establishing priorities in the absence of specific instructions.
- Simplifying training.
- Promoting teamwork and understanding between the leaders and troops.
- Advising new arrivals or newly attached units of procedures followed in the organization.
- Reducing confusion and errors.

M-2. CONTENTS

Higher unit SOPs need not be restated in platoon and squad SOPs unless more detail is needed for actions to be accomplished at those levels. The mortar platoon SOP *must* comply with all parts of the company and battalion SOP. Virtually any item relating to the platoon can become a matter for the unit SOP. Many SOP items are derived from the personnel and equipment available to the organization. Other SOP items are a function of good tactics and techniques. Leaders can establish SOP items based on how they can operate most efficiently and best prepare their unit for combat. SOPs remain in effect unless modified by an order. If certain items continually need modification, they should not be a part of the SOP. Some examples of items to be discussed in the platoon SOP are:

- Higher unit SOPs.
- Uniform and protective equipment.
- Scheduled and unscheduled reports.
- Command and control.
- Procedures for organizing for combat. Chain of command.
- Responsibilities of the duty mortar crew.
- Emergency occupation. (See Appendix F.)

- Air defense and air guards.
- Combat service support, fueling, and feeding.
- Ammunition resupply, storage, and handling.
- Responsibilities of key personnel.
- Communications.
- Nuclear, biological, chemical protective operations.
- Advance party composition and duties.
- Straggler control.
- Handling of enemy prisoners of war.
- Road marches and convoy operations.
- Assembly area procedures.
- Limited visibility operations.
- Priority of work.
- Operation, warning, and fragmentary order formats.
- Occupation of firing positions.
- Stand-to alert procedures.
- Response to countermortar fires.
- Route and contaminated area marking.
- Casualty reporting.
- Safety precautions and hazard reporting.
- First aid and field sanitation.

M-3. FIRE DIRECTION CENTER

A special area of standardization by SOP is in FDC operations and fire commands. The mortar platoon leader and FDC chief must establish a clear and detailed SOP for operations within the FDC and for fire commands. The FDC requires technical proficiency and highly disciplined procedures that emphasize both time and motion efficiency. Wasted motion, unnecessary talking, clutter, and duplication of effort all result in lost time and errors during fire missions. The specific terminology for FDC orders and fire commands found in FM 23-91 must be taught and used during every fire mission. Cross-talk and the free flow of information must be encouraged in the FDC, but ambiguous talk and nonstandard terms detract from combat efficiency. Communications between the FDC and the gun squads, and within the gun squads, must be standardized. This saves time, prevents misunderstanding, and permits efficient personnel cross-leveling within the platoon.