

TADSS Rides to the Rescue As Training Funds Disappear

by Colonel Ted Carmony, Commanding

The 37th Armored Brigade is the largest combat arms organization in the Ohio Army National Guard. It is the heavy brigade for the 38th Infantry Division (M), whose subordinate commands are located across three states. The brigade maintains four maneuver elements; two armor battalions (1-107th CAV and 1-147th AR), one mechanized infantry battalion (1-148th IN), and the divisional cavalry squadron (2-107th DIV CAV). These battalion elements are equipped with the M1 and M1IP Abrams main battle tank. The brigade accesses the fire support elements of the 1-134th Field Artillery Battalion (equipped with the M109A4) and combat service support from the 237th Forward Support Battalion. The brigade's manning employs 3,939 soldiers. The brigade's MTOE configuration is standard across the force; however, during Training Year 1998, our opportunity to execute standard gunnery and tactical training was dramatically reduced. Early in calendar year 1997, we received notice that our OPTEMPO funds were reduced to 13%, so the armored brigade would not have the opportunity to train in a traditional event cycle.

Fortunately, our command maintains a steady presence at the annual U.S. Army Armor Conference, the annual Master Gunner Video Tele-Conference, and readily communicates with the Crew Gunnery Doctrine team. They charted a course to utilize even more heavily existing Training Aids, Devices, Simulators, and Simulations (TADSS). We would NETT new simulators whenever the opportunity presented itself, and adapt the local training areas (LTA's) to facilitate the new gunnery standards in FM 17-12-1. A key would be to disperse simulation centers to centralized battalion locations and culminate these events with a Fort Knox SIMNET and multiple combined arms Lanes Training Exercises.

We were able to receive a commitment from STRICOM to NET the Thru-Sight Video (TSV) and the Tank Weapons

Gunnery Simulation System (TWGSS). STRICOM and Gowen Field's Armor Team committed five A-FIST training systems and a NET. Fort Knox scheduled nine consecutive days of SIMNET, and our State Training Office initiated the reconfiguration and enhancement of three separate LTA's to support preparatory gunnery simulation training. After some revision of the training events, all of the necessary tools for us execute our Yearly Training Guidance and yearly Training Calendar seemed to be available.

TADSS allowed us to spend our austere funding for electric bills rather than Class III, V, and IX. Preparing for gunnery on simulation devices afforded us additional time to review and rehearse tactical training at the platoon level. Some very positive by-products came out of this chain of events: the leadership validation process was initiated on the specifics of the newly fielded Abrams gunnery standards; tactical SOPs were revised and validated at the platoon, company, and battalion level; combat service support elements "crawled, walked, and ran" through exacting lanes training exercises; and the battle staffs planned and rehearsed for participation in an end of the training year BCST.

Our first new gunnery Table VIII will be on Yano MPRC (Fort Knox) in TY99. TWGSS will be the standard for the conduct of Table IV. A-FIST and TSV TCPC will be the mode for full crew interaction. The MCOFT hones and refines tank commander and gunner synchronization, and finally, logical and progressive mounted gunnery becomes less costly, while appreciably more effective. What's next? Battle staffs and company-level tactical leadership fully embracing SIMNET, Janus, while the brigade continues its cycle of Division Warfighter exercises. All of these tools and events are constantly being reviewed to find just the right mix of simulation and effective field endeavors.