



mishap

LESSONS LEARNED

MISHAP SUMMARY

Mishap

Live-fire shooting

Damage

N/A

Injury

One (1) Fatality

Operation

Infantry Platoon Conducting Live Fire and Manuever (LFAM) at night

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Gunshot Fatality in Training

BACKGROUND

While conducting OCONUS training, an infantry Company made last-minute plans to conduct a platoon LFAM range at night. The mishap platoon crossed the line of deployment and executed an echelon left formation while their support by fire position (comprised of machine guns, snipers, and notional mortars) engaged targets. Seventy meters into the attack, "contact" was called and the mishap platoon opened fire and began to buddy rush toward the objective. During the second bounding movement, the squad automatic weapon (SAW) gunner to the left of the mishap victim (MV) fired a 6-8 round burst while getting into the prone position, striking the MV in the back and leg. "Cease fire" was called and medical treatment was administered while the CASEVAC plan was activated. The CASEVAC helicopter transported the MV to the expeditionary medical facility (EMF) within 30 minutes of injury.

DISCUSSION

- **Inadequate planning:** The unit's scheduled training changed at the last minute, which resulted in a decision to conduct white space

training. A solid plan was not developed prior to execution. Last minute details of formations changed prior to the execution of the range.

- **Overconfidence:** Mishap unit did not conduct a platoon rehearsal (dry run) prior to conducting their night LFAM. Omission of a rehearsal was to induce realism and uncertainty into the training evolution.
- **Insufficient preparation:** The unit had not conducted a night LFAM in over seven months and attempted to conduct a complex, non-illuminated nighttime live fire attack utilizing an echelon left formation without a rehearsal.
- **Unfamiliar Range:** This was an unfamiliar range; a Leader's recon was not conducted to identify any hazards.



A student with Company D, Infantry Training Battalion – East lies in the prone position while firing the M27 Infantry Automatic Weapon aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune Jan. 9. Students had the chance to fire the weapon in the prone, kneeling and standing positions, and they fired the IAR both on semi-automatic and fully automatic. Photo By: Lance Cpl. Scott W. Whiting

- **No established surface danger zones (SDZ):** The Battalion did not provide SDZ overlays to the Company, and the Company did not develop their own SDZs prior to the execution of the range.
- **Inadequate range safety brief:** The range safety brief for this evolution was confusing and contradictory. Marines were confused about the location and marking of the targets, the platoon's scheme of maneuver, and the formation used for the attack.
- **Position Safety Officers (PSO):** The PSOs were not afforded the opportunity to walk the range and were not given a detailed brief on the scheme of maneuver. They were simply told to show up for the safety brief and then to supervise the execution of the range.
- **Command Climate:** During the investigation, several Marines made statements such as "my platoon is varsity," and that the training evolution was an "easy attack through an open space." The training area was also described as the "Wild West." Collectively, this attitude was pervasive throughout the unit and reinforced an attitude of overconfidence.
- **Casualty Evacuation:** The casualty evacuation procedures executed by the unit were superb and are an example of what all units should strive to maintain during live fire training so that injured personnel have every

LESSONS LEARNED

Since 2005, nine Marines and a Corpsman have died due to personnel not adhering to the four weapons safety rules.

Utilize the crawl-walk-run approach for training. Rehearsals are critical to ensure hazards are identified and mitigated, especially when extended periods of time elapse between training evolutions and live fire ranges.

Marines must ensure proper weapons firing procedures are adhered to. Marines must be proficient with their T/O weapon in order to be effective in combat. If the Marine is not proficient, then leaders must ensure proper remediation training is conducted.

Range Procedures must be followed without deviation.

Safety is not paramount. Precise execution of orders is paramount, and safety is contained in the precise execution of those orders.

Risk Management saves lives, especially in the tactical environment. The level of complexity commanders elect to incorporate into live-fire events must be balanced with a calculated assessment of hazards, a means to mitigate those hazards, and adequate supervision from all levels.

When training on unfamiliar ranges and training areas with unknown SDZ's, units must establish SDZ's themselves utilizing the expertise of Marine Gunners.