



U.S. Army Stryker M1128 Mobile Gun System assigned to 8th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment fires a canister round as part of Table VI gunnery qualification at Yakima Training Center, Yakima, Washington, Nov. 18, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Alex Windmiller)

What I Wish I Knew as an MGS Commander

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This article serves as a basic guide for U.S. Army noncommissioned officers (NCO) assigned to a weapons troop within a Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) operating the M1128 Mobile Gun System (MGS), a highly mobile and lethal platform. Due to its specialized nature, MGS commanders have limited resources, therefore, it is important to share experience regarding this platform and develop capabilities beyond doctrine.

Background

The MGS is an eight-wheel, medium-armored Stryker platform. The SBCT weapons troop contains three MGS platoons and each platoon contains four MGS for a troop total of twelve. The MGS platoon

provides mounted, precision, and direct fire support to SBCT rifle companies and cavalry troops. An MGS platoon synchronizes its firepower and maneuver to increase a rifle company or cavalry troop's lethality (Department of the Army, 2017).

The MGS does not have a specific dedicated Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) for mechanics and is instead assigned a 91S Stryker Systems Maintainer (overall Stryker mechanic) trained in all Stryker variants, but does not necessarily specialize in the MGS. This means that mechanics need to learn all they can from the civilian contractors responsible for higher echelon maintenance. As good leaders, MGS commanders should do the same as they take ownership of their vehicles and their crew.

Capabilities

The MGS is armed with an M2 Heavy Barrel .50 caliber machine gun, M240 Coaxial machine gun, and the 105 mm cannon. It can fire four types of ammunition, high explosive anti-tank (HEAT) rounds, sabot rounds, high explosive plastic (HEP-T) rounds, and canister rounds (Department of the Army, 2017).

MGS commanders must understand each munition and its effects because MGS platoons are routinely attached to different companies and troops and should be subject matter experts to properly support those units. This includes advising units on MGS strengths, limitations, and capabilities, as well as courses of action to support different kinds of missions.

Effectively Employing the MGS

An MGS platoon can be organized and employed in several ways but the three most common are MGS platoon pure, Hybrid Plus (+), and Hybrid Minus (-) formations. The pure formation means the platoon leader maneuvers the

MGS platoon either under the weapons troop commander or attached to another company. The weapons troops Hybrid Plus (+) and Hybrid Minus (-) formations incorporate the Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) Stryker into the platoon. The ATGM platform is capable of firing the Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-Guided (TOW) weapon system 2A, 2B and "bunker buster" (BB) missiles. The 2A missiles serve best against armor in urban environments or where overhead fires are expected, 2B are useful against heavy armor, and bunker busters are used against fortified positions (Department of the Army, 2017).

MGS platoons will find themselves in the (+) or (-) formations often. This means that in the (+) formation you and one other MGS will work with two ATGM and fall under either your platoon leader or the ATGM platoon leader. In the (-) formation you and one other MGS will work with one ATGM under either your platoon leader or the ATGM platoon leader.

Misconceptions

Many commanders do not understand MGS capabilities and try to employ it like a tank. Doctrine clearly states

that the MGS is not a tank and should not be used as one (Department of the Army, 2017). The MGS is more comparable to an assault gun, designed to provide direct fire support for ground units against enemy infantry and fortified positions. This type of support is specifically described in doctrine and provides Stryker cavalry squadrons the necessary firepower to accomplish reconnaissance and security missions (Department of the Army, 2016a).

The MGS should be used similar to a Bradley Fighting Vehicle without dismounts. It allows units to advance to an objective by directing large-caliber, direct-fire precision producing scalable effects (Department of the Army, 2017). A rifle company then secures the objective and the MGS mounts a hasty defense, defeating maneuvering forces at extended ranges.

Be Involved

MGS platoons may find themselves attached to cavalry troops. Cavalry troop commanders are specifically tasked with integrating enablers such as the MGS

(Department of the Army, 2016b). Leaders who conduct a Combined Training Center rotation understand unit commanders are incredibly busy and may not always know how to fully integrate the hybrid platoon into the formation. For this reason it is important for MGS commanders to be involved in Troop Leading Procedures because they have the best troop capability knowledge. A

cavalry troop commander may develop an outstanding scheme of maneuver, but it means nothing if the MGS platoon cannot support it. Most unit commanders prefer MGS commanders to speak up during planning rather than call on the radio explaining why they failed to successfully maneuver at the allotted time.

Final Tips

Tips are from my personal experience as an MGS commander:

1. After zeroing the platform it is imperative to conduct boresight procedures twice daily to ensure each round is employed effectively and accurately.



A U.S. Army Soldier with 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division pulls security during a training exercise at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, Jan. 10, 2017. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Michael Spandau)

2. The MGS has comparable mobility to other Stryker variants; however, it is top-heavy and more susceptible to rollovers.
3. Flat tires on this platform are common and can take anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour to replace.
4. The MGS lacks a designated space to stow spare tires, requiring another vehicle for supply.

Conclusion

The MGS is a fascinating vehicle and a great op-

portunity for NCOs to broaden their leadership skills and combat effectiveness. This assignment requires NCOs to grow and mature quickly because they are considered subject matter experts. Unit commanders expect competence and confidence and rely on MGS commanders to effectively integrate with other units to successfully complete the mission.

***Note: The U.S. Army plans to upgrade Stryker Brigades with the new Medium Caliber Weapon System, a 30mm, unmanned, turreted auto-cannon, by 2023 (U.S. Army Public Affairs, 2021)**

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