

# Section 11

## INTRODUCTION TO PRE-COMBAT CHECKS AND INSPECTIONS

### Key Points

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- 1 The Purpose of Checks and Inspections
- 2 Types of Inspection
- 3 Conducting Inspections
- 4 Inspecting Equipment

During World War II, the homeland was safe from major attacks. While there was a threat of sabotage, the Axis powers could neither project a major force to North America nor strike it from the air. Today's security environment is different. . . . Today's enemies include nonstate organizations. Their members and power sources are hard to find and defeat. New enemies may appear with little warning. This situation makes it impossible to determine when the War on Terrorism will end. It places a premium on operational flexibility and adaptability—attributes of Army forces with balanced capabilities. It requires Army forces to sustain a consistently high readiness level. There will be no time to “ramp up” to meet a crisis.

From Field Manual 1, *The Army*

## Introduction

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When your Soldiers are preparing for a mission of any type, you must be certain that everyone is ready and everything is in order. If a weapon isn't working, if a radio's batteries are dead, if you don't have enough water or rations, the success of your mission and the safety of your platoon are threatened. As a platoon leader, it will be your job, and that of your NCOs, to ensure that your Soldiers have all the necessary clothing and equipment, that the equipment is in working order, that sanitary conditions are met, and that the platoon can operate effectively when called on. You do this through pre-combat checks and inspections. Such inspections build unit cohesiveness and prevent boredom and complacency, as CPT William Clark understood when he prepared his Soldiers for the Lewis and Clark "Corps of Discovery" expedition.

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### Lewis and Clark Prepare the Troops

Although the [Corps of Discovery] expedition had successfully traversed the distance between Pittsburgh and St. Louis by 11 December 1803, Captain Meriwether Lewis knew the most challenging part of the journey was yet to come. Accordingly, Lewis planned to fully utilize the winter of 1803–1804 to make the final necessary arrangements, refine and test load plans for the expedition's three watercraft, and to mold the officers and men into a cohesive group capable of withstanding great hardships.

Rather than spend the winter at one of the nearby frontier forts, Captain Lewis tasked his co-commander, Captain William Clark, to have the men build their own camp. Lewis viewed the project as an opportunity to gain valuable experience that would later serve the expedition well. Additionally, the project would allow him to judge which men were most proficient with woodworking tools and masonry; skills that would prove too useful when the expedition began living off the land after it departed Missouri. In accordance with Lewis' instructions, Captain William Clark took the party upriver about eighteen miles to the mouth of the Wood River, a small stream that flowed into the Mississippi River directly across from the mouth of the Missouri River. Here, Clark and the men constructed Camp River Dubois, which was finished by Christmas Eve 1803.

Once their winter camp was completed, Captain Clark shifted his emphasis to carrying out a rigorous program of individual and unit training. . . . Throughout the winter months, Clark molded the men into a smoothly functioning team employing a daily regimen of close order drill, school of the Soldier, equipment inspections, and marksmanship training. The latter skill was especially important since the expedition would depend on hunting for food to supplement the rations they brought along. In order to develop a competitive spirit, Captain Clark held occasional contests among the volunteers (and against local traders) to determine who was the best shot. . . .

Discipline was tough as Captain Clark focused on ensuring his Soldiers knew by heart how to perform critical mission-related tasks on both river and land.

Daily inspections by the non-commissioned officers kept the camp clean, neat, and orderly, and ensured that the men took proper care of themselves, their weapons, and their assigned equipment. Captain Clark dealt firmly with any form of insubordination or misbehavior. At the same time he rewarded the winners of marksmanship contests and those who distinguished themselves on their work details. Clark's approach to unit discipline proved effective, as the expedition recorded only five minor infractions during its two-and-a-half-year trek to the Pacific Ocean, a record unmatched by any other Army unit of the time.

Charles White and Mark J. Reardon

## The Purpose of Checks and Inspections

As you learned in Section 6, checks and inspections are part of the steps in the troop leading procedures (TLP). **Pre-combat checks (PCCs)**, **pre-combat inspections (PCIs)**, and **pre-execution checks** ensure that you and your unit are adequately prepared to execute operations and training according to standard. They are the detailed final checks that all units conduct before and during training and combat operations. You must perform checks and inspections before each event or exercise to check personnel, equipment, vehicles, and mission knowledge. By requiring your unit to adhere to standards, you ensure that every individual and every piece of equipment will be combat ready.

Pre-combat checks and inspections are an individual and leader responsibility. It is impossible to overstate their importance. Individual Soldiers are responsible for ensuring through their PCCs that all equipment necessary for the mission is on hand. You, the platoon leader, are responsible for checking during PCIs that the equipment is serviceable and for making corrections. In addition, you conduct pre-execution checks to ensure that all equipment specific to a given mission is prepared and in working order before combat.

You and your NCOs cannot delegate the responsibility for inspections. The rigor with which you conduct them and the standards you set will affect how well your unit performs in combat.

Checks and inspections are your No. 1 tool to combat those twin enemies of unit readiness—apathy and complacency. It's human nature for people to get used to their surroundings and begin to overlook minor problems. By ordering regular inspections, you will be able to correct small problems before they become big problems. Checks and inspections also help you to bond with your Soldiers. They will feel a sense of satisfaction and pride in themselves and their unit as they meet standards for their personal appearance, living quarters, and equipment.

You conduct PCCs and PCIs at the beginning of each training exercise or mission as part of your troop leading procedures. They are a systematic way to ensure that you and your Soldiers can successfully and efficiently execute your assignment.

### pre-combat check (PCC)

*a formal check by an individual Soldier to ensure that he or she is prepared to execute a mission, and that all team and squad equipment is prepared and in working condition*

### pre-combat inspection (PCI)

*formal check conducted by platoon leaders to ensure that Soldiers have conducted their PCCs, and that all equipment necessary for a mission is present and serviceable*

### pre-execution check

*check conducted by leaders to ensure that all equipment for a specific mission is prepared and in working order prior to combat*

## Types of Inspection

You will conduct two types of inspection regarding your Soldiers' personal appearance and equipment. During an **in-ranks inspection**, you will inspect each Soldier individually in a unit formation. You will evaluate both the Soldiers' personal appearance and the condition of their equipment.

You may also conduct **in-quarters inspections** in the Soldiers' barracks to ensure that your Soldiers uphold the standards for personal appearance, individual weapons, and field equipment—as well as those for facility maintenance and sanitation.

Inspection programs at various unit levels in the chain of command help determine the status and mission readiness of the unit and its subunits. These include command inspections, staff inspections, and inspector general inspections. A command inspection takes place at the local command level, including the platoon and company. Staff inspections occur at battalion level and focus on staff organization and operations. Inspector general inspections take place at the division level and include all organization, operations, and maintenance in an individual unit.

One of the most effective methods of correcting a failure to meet standards is an **on-the-spot correction**. Whenever you see a deficiency in training or to a standard, you can immediately address the deficiency with the Soldier and allow the Soldier to correct the problem. This type of correction is usually very effective when a Soldier is unaware of the violation or didn't know about or understand the regulation, policy, or standing operating procedure (SOP).

To be successful, you should determine the problem and correct the Soldier—but scrutinize the behavior, violation, or performance, not the Soldier. Don't dump too many corrections on a Soldier at one time, and once he or she has corrected his or her performance, don't keep bringing up the previous problem. Be certain that you have gone below the surface and found the root of the problem, so you are not just correcting symptoms.

In correcting Soldiers, it is essential that you lead by personal example, as noted by a young lieutenant just back from Afghanistan in May 2005.

### in-ranks inspection

*inspection of personnel and equipment in a unit formation*

### in-quarters inspection

*inspection in the barracks to include personal appearance, individual weapons, field equipment, display, maintenance, and sanitary conditions*

### on-the-spot correction

*method of making quick corrections when Soldiers do not meet standards*

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### *How did you enforce standards as a new LT?*

**The first way for a new LT to enforce standards is to uphold them. Hypocrisy will instantly kill a command climate. Just like in physical training, a new LT must lead from the front in all that he does, which includes any type of military standard. If the leader and disciplining authority does not uphold a given standard, then how can you ever expect to punish a Soldier for not meeting that same standard?**

1LT Tom Grywalski

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*ROTC platoon ready for inspection*

## Conducting Inspections

It's essential that you schedule time for inspections and allocate adequate time for backbriefs during the inspection to ensure that all Soldiers understand the mission at hand. You must also allow time for corrections as needed.

When working under the troop leading procedures, squad leaders should conduct initial inspections shortly after you issue your warning order (WARNO). Your platoon sergeant performs spot checks throughout the platoon's preparation for combat. You as the platoon leader and the platoon sergeant make the final inspection. You should inspect:

- weapons and ammunition
- uniforms and equipment
- mission-essential equipment
- Soldiers' understanding of the mission and of their specific responsibilities
- communications
- rations and water
- camouflage
- deficiencies noted during earlier inspections.

By making these inspections a regular activity, you will help reinforce standards and instill discipline. The following checklist will help you conduct PCIs.

**TABLE 11.1a****Pre-Combat Inspection Checklist Example****ALL SOLDIERS**

- Uniform serviceable (no holes, rips, tears), badges, patches, US Army and nametape sewn/rank (pin-on or sewn)
- Boots blackened
- Glasses (military issue) as required
- 2 ID tags (long and short chain), medical and allergy tags as required
- ID card (waterproofed in upper left breast pocket)
- Notebook w/pen or pencil
- Camouflage stick
- Verified Pace count (day and night)

**LEADERS**

- Map waterproofed w/protractor
- Watch
- Flashlight (red lens)
- SOP/Leaders Book
- Sensitive items listing
- Alcohol pens and alcohol eraser
- Chem lights assortment
- Whistle on lanyard
- Portion of VS-17 panel

**RADIO TELEPHONE OPERATOR (RTO)**

- SINCGARS pocket reference
- RTO cheat sheet
- Black electrical tape
- Gerber or leatherman tool
- VS-17 panel
- Communication wire
- Extra batteries
- Map waterproofed w/protractor

**COMBAT LIFESAVER (CLS)**

- CLS bag complete
- Extra casualty witness and casualty feeder cards
- 2 blue chem lights

**KEVLAR HELMET**

- Camouflage band, name on front and centered/2 cat eyes on rear "Torriss" securing band to helmet
- Battle roster number written on tape over left ear

TABLE 11.1b

## Pre-Combat Inspection Checklist Example, continued

- VS-17 cloth portion (2 x 2) w/safety pin folded inside of helmet
- Chinstrap and sweatband serviceable
- EPW and document tags and flexcuff inside kevlar
- LOAD BEARING VEST (LBV)**
- Luminous tape/nametape sewn IAW SOP
- 2 canteens IAW (in accord with) SOP, canteen cup clean
- Bayonet and scabbard dummy corded to pistol belt
- TA-50 attaching clips secured w/550 cord
- First aid pouch on left front w/first aid packet 2 DA Form 1155s/156s w/basic data complete (inside Ziploc bag)/MILES casualty card (inside Ziploc bag)
- Compass and case on right front pistol belt (tied off)
- Magazines IAW SOP
- Loose straps folded and taped
- Buttpack IAW SOP
- LBV properly fitted/worn, noise discipline test
- RUCKSACK**
- Frame/rivets inspected for serviceability
- Shoulder pads serviceable/properly installed/stitching intact
- Frame straps secured/excess folded and taped
- Kidney pad/waist belt complete with restraining strap taped
- Nametape and luminous tape IAW SOP
- Platoon markings on frame IAW SOP
- Entrenching tool and carrier serviceable and IAW SOP
- 2 quart canteen, cover and strap IAW SOP
- Poncho packed in center outside pocket
- MILES**
- Cardboard spacer secured between transmitter and weapon barrel
- Transmitter tied to front sight post of weapon w/550 cord and taped
- 550 cord gut looped through yellow key eyelet and secured to front sight post
- God guns or green keys dummy corded to individual
- Helmet Halo secured to Kevlar with 550 cord left and right side
- Name written on 100 mph tape and affixed to transmitter, halo, and torso box
- Serial numbers recorded by key leaders
- Fresh batteries placed in MILES as needed
- Confirm zero as applicable

TABLE 11.1c

## Pre-Combat Inspection Checklist Example, continued

**M4/M16 RIFLE**

- Cleaning kit
  - Cleaning pouch
  - Bore brush
  - 3 rod sections w/handle
  - Chamber brush
  - 25 patches
  - 2-oz bottle of CLP
  - Toothbrush
  - Rag
  - Barber's brush
- Blank firing adapter (BFA) painted black or OD green w/tightening ring
- Sling properly fitted and taped

**M203 GRENADE LAUNCHER (All required inspections/equipment for M4/M16 are applicable)**

- Quadrant sight
- M203 vest
- 40 mm bore brush w/thong

**M249 SAW**

- Sling w/hook and snap assembly
- Spare barrel tied to spare barrel carrying case
- Heat shield assembly
- BFA
- Scraper tool
- 2 each 100 round assault clips
- 2 each 200 round carrying pouches
- PVS-4 mounting bracket w/mounting block tied IAW SOP
- PAQ-4 tied IAW SOP

**M240 MG**

- Sling w/hook and snap assembly
- Spare barrel tied to spare barrel carrying case
- BFA w/discriminator
- Tripod w/Flex Mount and T & E mechanism
- Cleaning kit
  - Combination tool
  - Cleaning rod handle
  - Cleaning rod sections
  - Bore brush
  - Chamber brush
  - Eyelet
- 2 laminated range cards
- Grease pencils or alcohol markers

**AN/PVS-7 (B or D)**

- Soft case tied to pistol belt IAW SOP
- NODs dummy corded and secured to case (when not worn)
- Batteries
- Lens cap present
- Eyecups serviceable

TABLE 11.1d

## Pre-Combat Inspection Checklist Example, continued

**AN/PVS-14**

- Soft case tied to pistol belt IAW SOP
- NODs dummy corded and secured to case (when not worn)
- Batteries
- Lens cap present
- Eyecup serviceable

**AN/PAQ-4**

- Mounting screw
- Shroud
- Spacer
- Spacer adapter
- Batteries

**ICOM**

- 2 batteries
- Filled IAW commo chart
- Waterproofed

**EPW KIT**

- 1 gag
- 1 sandbag
- 2 flex cuffs or prussic handcuffs
- Extra EPW/document tags

**DEMOLITION KIT**

- 1 block C4
- Demolition knife
- Crimpers
- 1 block TNT
- Roll electrical tape
- Fuse igniter
- Detonation cord
- Time fuse

**BREACH KIT**

- 1 bolt cutters
- 1 grappling hook w/25 feet rope
- 20 feet of engineer tape
- 4 chem lights (same color)
- Leather work gloves

## Inspecting Equipment

Soldiers should maintain a neat appearance and remove their equipment only for sleeping, eating, or personal hygiene, or when ordered. Soldiers should obey rules detailing how to maintain their equipment and how to configure various pieces of gear. Below are examples of general guidelines that you may be required to follow at your unit.

1. **General:** All equipment when grounded will be dressed and neat. Equipment is removed only for sleeping, eating, personal hygiene, AARs (after action reviews), or as directed by the PSG (platoon sergeant). Uniformity will generally be maintained; e.g., if one Soldier wears wet weather gear, everyone must wear wet weather gear.
2. **Sewing:** Only machine sewing of rank, luminous tape, nametags, etc., on items of equipment is authorized. Hand sewing isn't acceptable except when you are making emergency repairs in a field environment and a sewing machine is not available.
3. **Tape:** Only olive-drab green tape is authorized when taping up weapons or equipment. Black electrical or silver duct tape isn't an acceptable replacement. Tape down any loose or excess straps on equipment.
4. **Weapons:** Weapons will always be within arm's reach when not carried in the field. M240s will move with a 25-round feeder belt. M249s will move with a 100-round assault pouch attached. Weapons are carried at the ready. Until engaging a target, finger is not on the trigger; rather, hand is wrapped around the pistol grip. Weapon slings are taped to prevent them from coming off and to ensure noise discipline is maintained. Magazines will be taped and have a loop of 550 cord inserted in the end to allow for easier access from the LBV pouches. Magazines will be up when empty and down when loaded.
5. **Tie-downs:** All sensitive items will be tied down using 550 cord. The 550 cord will not be gutted (the smaller interior cords will not be removed) and the ends of the 550 cord will be burned to prevent fraying.
6. **Bayonets:** Bayonets will be affixed as per OPORD or when directed. When not affixed, the bayonet will be worn and tied off to the LBV (load-bearing vest) on the right side.
7. **Protective mask:** When worn around the waist, the mask carrier flap will be secured.
8. **Kevlar:** The Kevlar is configured in accordance with battalion SOP. Names are embroidered on the Kevlar band. Rank is machine sewn on the cover. "Torris" are placed on the cover band at the first set of holes from the center hole using 550 cord. The locking bar should be seen. Your battle roster number (first two letters of your last name and last four digits of your Social Security number) will be put on the right side of your helmet as you wear it. It will be written on a white label. Each Soldier will carry flex cuffs and two enemy prisoner of war (EPW)/document tags in their helmet. When the helmet is worn, the chinstrap is on chin and fastened.

9. **LBV:** The LBV is configured in accordance with battalion SOP. When worn, the LBV is buckled at all times. Extenders are authorized and encouraged due to the wearing of flak vests and cold weather gear. Team leaders and above will have whistles attached to their LBV.
  - a. All items (canteen covers, ammo pouches, first aid pouch, etc.) are secured to the pistol belt by their metal clips and a single loop of 550 cord tied with square knots that have two half hitches at each end of the knot.
  - b. The canteens are secured with an end-of-the-line bowline with a half hitch tied to produce a slipknot that allows removal of the tie-down cord from the canteen when refilling. The tie-down cord will be long enough to allow for drinking of water from the canteen but not touch the ground when extended from the pistol belt. The canteen cup will be placed in the left canteen pouch and a three-foot piece of engineer tape will also be placed under the canteen cup.
  - c. The compass case may be secured to either end of the front pistol belt and the compass is tied down using the cord through the strap of the hand grenade pouch on the LBV.
  - d. Earplugs in their plastic case will be placed in the pouch of the canteen cover on the right side of the LBV.
  - e. First Aid Pouch: secured to the left end of the pistol belt; contains a first aid dressing. Each Soldier will carry a Ziploc bag containing partially filled out casualty witness cards and casualty feeder reports and a nine-line MEDEVAC card in their first aid pouch.
  - f. Magazines: Each Soldier will carry at least six magazines in their LBV (to include SAW [squad automatic weapons] and machine gunners). These extra magazines can greatly assist during consolidation and reorganization. Magazines will be placed up (so you can see the loading slot) when empty and down when loaded. Magazines will have a 550-cord loop on the bottom to facilitate rapid withdrawal from the vest or pouch and be taped to aid in noise discipline.
10. **Rucksack:** The rucksack will be configured in accordance with battalion SOP. Rucksack will be packed in accordance with the prescribed packing list with zero defects. The rucksack frame will have a strip of luminous tape on the left upper frame to signify the platoon and another strip(s) on the right upper frame to signify the squad. A 3-inch-by-1-inch strip of luminous tape will be placed on the right side of the rucksack crossbar with last name, first initial, and Social Security number printed neatly in black, permanent letters on it. A nametape is machine sewn and centered just above the stitching at the bottom edge of the flap. Two luminous strips depicting company identification markings are machine sewn and centered equidistant from the US and the top of the nametape.
  - a. The E-Tool is secured to the rucksack frame with a bowline tied to the frame and an overhand knot tied to the handle of the folded E-Tool inside the cover. The E-Tool cover is secured with a square knot and two half hitches on the lower right side of the rucksack.
  - b. The two-quart canteen is secured to the small metal ring on its cover with an end-of-the-line bowline with a half hitch tied to produce a slipknot that allows removal of the tie-down cord from the canteen. The two-quart cover is secured to the bottom left horizontal loop of the rucksack with a square knot and two half hitches. The two-quart canteen strap goes around the rucksack between the frame and pack.

11. **Gloves:** Gloves may be worn at the Soldier's discretion. Gloves will be black, and cutoff fingers are not authorized.
12. **Night Observation Devices (NODs):** The AN/PVS-7 B or D will be tied off to the case along with the helmet or head mount and the case is separately tied off. Once in use, the neck cord is not a sufficient tie down. A piece of 550 cord will secure the NODs to the person/LBV. Daylight cover of the AN/PVS-4 will be secured using 550 cord and 100-mph tape.
13. **Flashlights:** Flashlights are used for sensitive item inspections and map checks and during MOUT (military operations in urban terrain) operations. They should be equipped with a red lens and push-button activated.
14. **Gortex jacket:** The Gortex jacket may be worn during inclement weather. A nametape will be machine sewn flush with the bottom of the pocket flap on the upper left sleeve.
15. **Body armor:** Body armor will have a nametape sewn onto the bottom left pocket.
16. **Assault packs:** Assault packs will have a nametape sewn on the outside pocket with upright luminous triangles sewn above the nametape.

## Critical Thinking

What are the positive effects of regular, impartial inspections on Soldiers? Are there negative effects? How do you ensure checks and inspections are not just "make-work"?

In every case where the sergeant stops enforcing fundamental standards and senior leaders do not hold him accountable, the enforcement of standards in other areas begins to slip . . . PCCs are not performed in detail, complacency begins to set in, and sergeants stop making on-the-spot corrections. The importance of the squad and platoon leadership in establishing standards and holding sergeants accountable is critical to the performance of the organization. When you walk into an organization as an outsider and you see everyone in the same uniform, vehicle load plans are organized, basic fundamental drills are performed as routine, you learn a lot about the unit's discipline. You know as an outsider that standards are established, everyone knows the standard, and there is a leader in charge.

Sergeant Major of the Army Kenneth O. Preston  
From K. O. Preston, Remarks Prepared for George C. Marshall ROTC Dinner



# CONCLUSION

Inspections enable leaders to correct small problems before they escalate into larger ones. Pre-combat checks, pre-combat inspections, and pre-execution checks contribute to the overall preparation and readiness of leaders and Soldiers. In addition to helping prepare Soldiers for missions, the inspections and checks demonstrate that you care about your troops, making these checks important tools in maintaining morale and discipline. Your care and diligence in conducting and supervising pre-combat checks and inspections speak volumes about your skill as an Army leader.

## Key Words

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**pre-combat check**  
**pre-combat inspection**  
**pre-execution check**  
**in-ranks inspection**  
**in-quarters inspection**  
**on-the-spot correction**

## Learning Assessment

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1. Explain the purpose of pre-combat checks and inspections.
2. Identify the types of inspections.
3. Explain the proper method for on-the-spot corrections.
4. Explain the differences between pre-combat checks, pre-combat inspections, and pre-execution checks.

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