

Encounter on the Coast

by Capt Gregory A. Thiele

Situation

Four days ago, the country of Green invaded its southern neighbor, Orange. The army of Orange had little notice of the attack and was quickly overrun. Due to treaty obligations the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (11th MEU(SOC)) was introduced into the country of Orange yesterday in order to stabilize the situation.

You are the company commander of Company B, the light armored reconnaissance company attached to the battalion landing team. Your orders were to push north along the coastal road, establish a screen line north of the capital of Orange, and provide the MEU with time so that it can offload without interference. In the S-2's last briefing before you came ashore you were told that the enemy does not want to fight U.S. forces and will likely halt their attack and use the territory they have gained to this point as a bargaining chip.

You have pushed your company about 50 kilometers (km) north of the capital and established a screen line. Highway 1 is a four-lane, hard-surfaced road that runs along a flat, broad coastal plain. There is another road, Route 16, that runs toward the capital to your west. It is also a hard-surfaced road, but this valley is narrower and off-road movement is more difficult than on the coastal plain. There is only one road that runs between the coastal plain and this valley between your position and the capital. It is about 5km to your left rear.

You take these things into consideration and deploy your company. You direct 2d and 3d Platoon to screen along Highway 1 and the coastal plain and send your 1st Platoon to screen along Route 16. You place your mortar section behind the two platoons on the coast. As you take stock of your fire support assets, you discount the possibility of ar-

tillery support. They won't be off the ship until the morning. You will have a section of AH-1Ws on 10-minute alert off the deck of the USS *Peleliu* if you need them.

After 2 uneventful hours on the screen line, you see and hear your 3d Platoon engage an enemy force. The platoon commander quickly reports that two enemy reconnaissance vehicles fired on his vehicles and that the enemy had been destroyed. Shortly afterward the 1st Platoon commander sends a similar report. His platoon has also engaged an enemy reconnaissance element, but he has taken three casualties, none life-threatening. As you report the situation to higher and request that the Cobras get airborne, the 1st Platoon commander comes over the net and tells you that he can see a sizable force of BMP-1s moving south toward his position about 6km away. He estimates the size of the enemy

force at a company minus. This information is troubling enough, but more bad news comes when he sends an update and tells you that he can see two or three T-55s as well!

What are your orders?

Requirement

In a time limit of 3 minutes issue your orders to your platoon commanders. Provide a fragmentary order, overlay of your scheme of maneuver, and the rationale for your actions. Submit your solution to *Marine Corps Gazette*, TDG #02-12, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, fax 703-630-9147, or e-mail <gazette@mca-marines.org>.



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