

# Tactical Decision Game 06-17

## Part IV: "Should I Stay, or Should I Go?"

by the Staff, *Marine Corps Gazette*

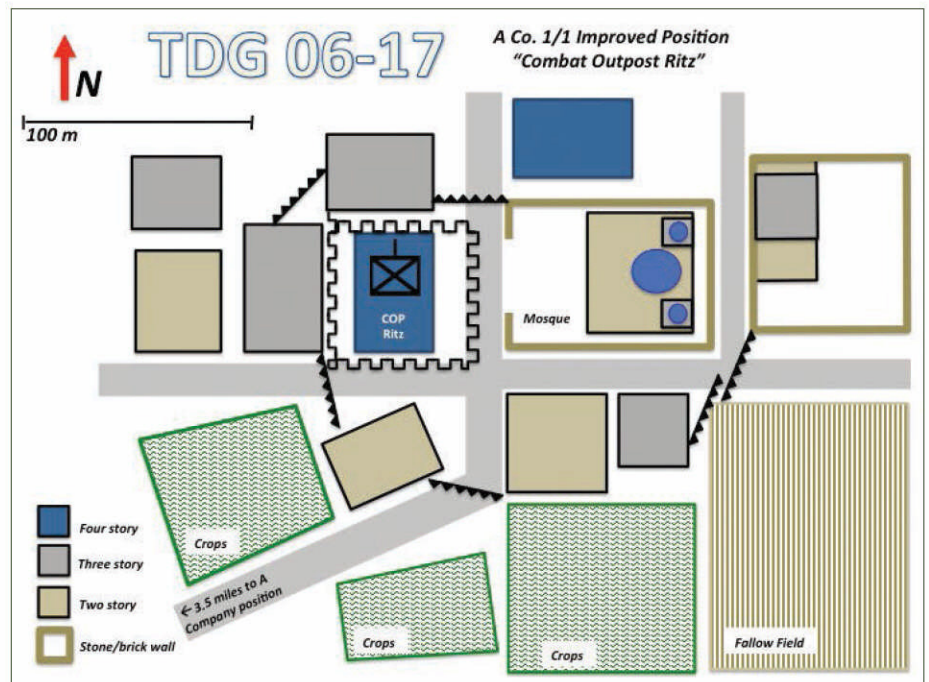
Note: This problem is a continuation of TDG 04-17

### Situation

Your command—A Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, aka "Red Death"—has been occupying and improving a combat outpost in "the Ritz," a four-story building west of the Al Mu-meet Mosque, for six weeks. You are still reinforced with an MUGA Commando Platoon, and both your Marines and the commandos have been regularly rotating between the company's sector of the battalion FOB and the outpost for the last four weeks, spending two weeks in each position. The route between positions is patrolled by elements of the battalion and LAR, and it is under near-continuous observation by rotary-wing aircraft and scout snipers.

Since establishing "COP Ritz," the residents of the mosque area have increased their support for the Marine presence and have provided through your interpreters and the elder of the Al Umm family important information on the local situation. Last week their reports led your Marines to a shallow grave containing the remains of four U.N. aid workers who had gone missing several months ago. Although supportive, the locals have not gone so far as to identify local anti-MUGA fighters from any of the various factions. Moreover, there remain very few men between the ages of 14 and 40 in the area. The locals report that they are all away working in the mines.

The JTF continues operating with degraded communications: limited to unencrypted, frequency static, voice-only radio, wire, and couriers. Commercial satellite telephones are available for emergency and morale calls.



Your attachments and support have not changed:

- 1 Machinegun Section (-) (4x M240B 7.62 machineguns).
- 1 Assault Squad (2x SMAW 83mm rocket launchers).
- 1 Joint Tactical Air Controller (JTAC) Team
- 2 Interpreters
- 1 MUGA Commando Platoon: 40 commandos total, equipped with AK-47 rifles, rifle grenades, and is reinforced with an RPK Machinegun Section (4x RPK 7.62 machineguns)

Fire support is currently limited to the battalion's organic mortars and Marine rotary-wing CAS on alert +15 at the battalion FOB.

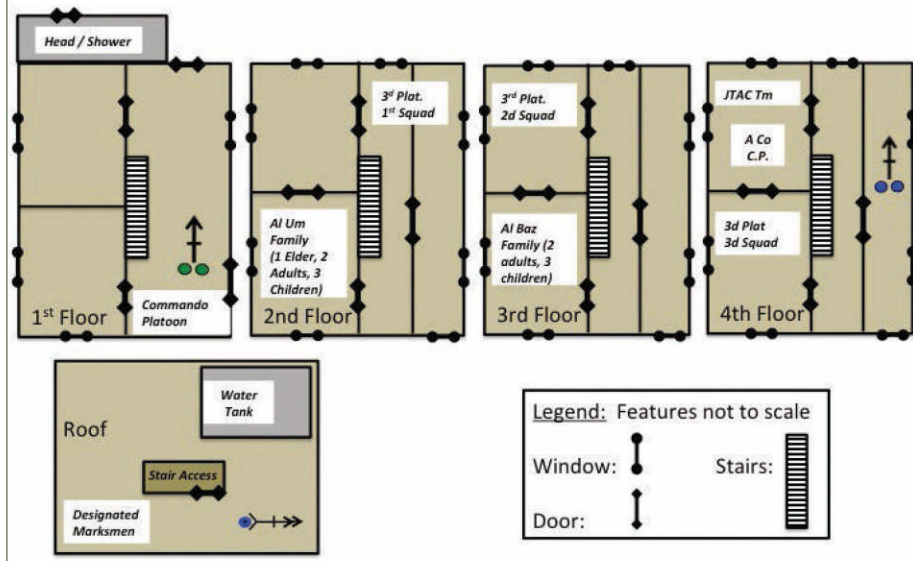
The battalion's alert +5 section of Medevac helicopters has a dedicated radio net. Response time is less than 10 minutes, and the JTF Level III treatment facility is 45 minutes flight time.

Your Marines and the commandos have built a rapport with the two families of squatters inside COP Ritz—your men respect the privacy of the families, especially the women and girls, and a visit from one of the battalion's female engagement teams (two female Marines, a female corpsman, and woman from USAID fluent in the local dialect) was very well received by both families.

Yesterday, the Al Umm elder informed you that two of his cousins would be visiting from the mines, and the two younger men spent several hours having

# TDG 06-17

Basic Floor Plan of A Company's Position



tea with the old man yesterday evening. The two cousins were respectful and in clean local dress with “knock-off” athletic shoes dusty from the road. You and your interpreters could only catch parts of the conversation discussing the weather and family matters. During the visit, the women and girls all gathered in a separate room and kept their long,

black, “Saudi-style” *abayas* on the entire time. After the cousins left, you asked the elder why the women did not mix with their family. He replied that they were shy and the daughters might one day be promised in marriage to the men. This morning, after your pre-dawn “walking the lines” of COP Ritz’s fighting positions, you notice the women

and girls of both families leaving the COP with their belongings. The elder and the other men of the squatter families were collecting the heavier property and preparing to leave as well. Through your interpreter, the elder explains that his cousins offered the family a safe place to stay closer to the mines. He seemed sorry to leave and blessed you and your men profusely before quickly departing.

What do you think is going to happen and how soon?

### Requirements:

1. What is your assessment of the situation?
2. What are your orders to your Marines and the commandos?
3. What is your report to your battalion commander?
4. What, if any, additional support do you request and why?

Include an overlay sketch and provide a brief discussion of your rationale. Submit your solutions by email at [gazette@mca-marines.org](mailto:gazette@mca-marines.org) or to the *Marine Corps Gazette*, TDG 05-17, Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134. The *Gazette* will publish solutions in an upcoming issue.



## Solution to TDG #05-17

by Jiting Shen

According to the description, only half of the assault element is on the ground. They have no heavy weapons and are being engaged. Enemy reinforcements, composed of 7 to 9 technical vehicles, are approaching rapidly from the canyon, and my wingman and I can't stay long enough to support the troops. I could stay until my fuel runs out, but that would mean losing the third wave of reinforcement, and it's not worth it since I don't really have that much firepower on board.

It's clear that we have three priorities:

1. *Deter enemy reinforcement.* According to the description, enemy reinforcements are arriving in 10 minutes. Considering the situation, it is not reasonable to expect our ground element to eliminate all resistance and get in position to face enemy reinforcements, not

to mention that they don't have enough people or any heavy weapons. If we allow enemy reinforcements to arrive on time, the assault element will be overrun.

2. *Get the third wave there as soon as possible.* We may hold the enemy reinforcements off for a while, but we do not have the resources to eliminate them at this moment; we need to reinforce the assault element.

3. *Do not create any mess.* We are in enough trouble already—no reason to create even more, such as having my wingman shot down and surrounded/captured by enemy.

Considering all the priorities above, my responses are the followings:

1. Deny the airstrike.
2. Both my wingman and I will move north and drop as much ordinance as

needed to destroy the bridge. The salty river is about 1 km wide and there is no other crossing nearby—destroying the bridge will hold enemy reinforcements off for a while.

3. Immediately after deterring enemy forces, I will RTB (return to base), refuel, and bring in the third wave. My wingman is to stay overhead and provide support. If he has to land, he will pick somewhere safe and close to the assault element and rendezvous with them ASAP. The RQ-7 is to move further north and see if there are bigger enemy elements approaching.

Once the resistance is eliminated, the assault element is to take up defensive positions while the MV-22s are to be prepared to pull the Marines out if the RQ-7 spots larger enemy elements approaching.

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