

TDGs

Solutions to TDG #04-7

Tactical Decision Game #04-7, "Rahadnak Valley Search," was presented in *MCG*, Jul04 and is reprinted here.

You are the Commanding Officer, Company G, Battalion Landing Team 2d Battalion, 2d Marines—the mechanized rifle company currently deployed with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (26th MEU(SOC)). Recently, the MEU was sent to the country of Ghanifstan in order to reinforce coalition units searching for Nadel nib Amaso and remnants of his Nabilat forces and needihajum freedom fighters believed to be operating in the southeastern part of the country. Throughout the winter months Rahadnak and the surrounding provinces have been relatively quiet with no armed conflict in this region. However, with the arrival of the spring thaw and warming temperatures, organized guerrilla groups reignited an active campaign against coalition forces and inflamed tribal unrest throughout the region.

Your mechanized company, embarked aboard 14 assault amphibious vehicles, is reinforced with elements from its organic weapons platoon, including three machinegun squads and six assault teams evenly dispersed between the platoons and a 60mm mortar section. While traveling east along a main road in the Rahadnak Valley during a routine mechanized patrol, your unit is tasked to search a village suspected of harboring Nabilat and needihajum fighters. Speed is essential as the enemy is prone to resupplying its forces and then quickly fading into the rugged and mountainous countryside. A section of AH-1W Cobras that can reinforce your unit within

15 minutes remains on call to provide close air support.

In order to maximize the "shock and awe" and speed of your mechanized unit, you decide on a simple, though previously effective, scheme of maneuver that calls for two platoons to encircle the village—one from the north and the other from the south—one platoon to advance along the main avenue of approach to seal the entry point and a dismounted mortar section to isolate the objective area with calls for fire as needed. The section of Cobras can be used to further isolate the objective area or provide supporting fires if required.

As your lead elements enter the village area, 1st Platoon immediately begins taking machinegun fire from the vicinity of Hill 2. As the platoon commander begins to take immediate action, mortars begin impacting around him. One of his vehicles has sustained a mobility kill. What now, Captain?

Solution A

by Maj Kenneth R. Kassner
(Author)

Company Commander's Frag Order

To all: "1st Platoon is taking machinegun and mortar fire from Hills 2 and 3. Enemy activity from inside the village remains unknown."

To the mortar section: "Immediately suppress Hill 2 in order to relieve pressure on 1st Platoon. On order shift fires to Hill 3."

To 1st Platoon: "Move to the closest covered and concealed position and begin suppressing enemy positions on Hills 2 and 3. Isolate the objective from the west and be prepared to support the company's attack."

To 2d Platoon: "You are the lead element; move south of Hill 4 and continue to advance to the east. Be prepared to attack to clear the village from the south. 3d Platoon will follow in trace of you and will maneuver to your left during the attack to the village. Dismount your machinegun squad near the east end of Hill 4. Have it establish a support by fire and overwatch position."

To 3d Platoon: "Follow in trace of 2d platoon as it advances to the east. Dismount your machinegun squad and section leader near the east end of Hill 4 to link up with 2d Platoon's machineguns and establish a support by fire position. Be prepared to attack and clear the village. 2d Platoon will maneuver on your right."

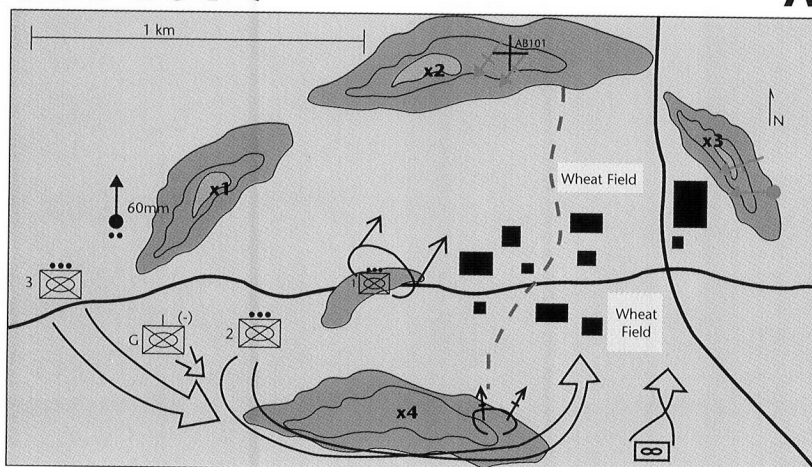
To the forward air controller: "I want Cobras to ingress from the southeast and suppress targets on Hill 3 then isolate the objective area from the east. I want to know if any enemy reinforcements are coming from that direction."

To all: "I will follow 3d Platoon. The executive officer will remain with the mortar section."

Rationale

The simplicity of the original scheme of maneuver allows for quick responsiveness and flexibility. As the mortar section is suppressing Hill 2 and

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then shifting to Hill 3, 1st Platoon will move to a covered position and begin to engage targets. It has now assumed a supporting effort of the company's attack from the southeast of Hill 4. Both the mortar section and 1st Platoon maintain excellent battlefield geometry relative to the company's assault from the southeast. The remainder of the company will maneuver behind Hill 4, parallel to the original axis of advance. This new route provides natural cover for the maneuver element. Two machinegun squads will dismount near the east end of Hill 4 to establish a support by fire and overwatch position. The time it takes to dismount the squads is negligible, and any pause in movement will enable the fire support team and company commander to work fire support packages and refine the estimate of the situation. Finally, a section of Co-

Historical Reference*

A motorized rifle company from the former Soviet Army experienced a similar tactical scenario while serving in Afghanistan. After successfully searching the village, however, the company received overwhelmingly heavy enemy fire from the surrounding high ground. Attempts to maneuver against these enemy machinegun positions failed, and the company was eventually forced to withdraw. Studies of this particular engagement noted that the company commander failed to conduct an adequate reconnaissance of the village area before entering it, that the company commander failed to employ any support by fire or overwatch positions to cover his maneuvering elements, that neither the officers nor soldiers were familiar with enemy tactics, and that the company commander and element leaders failed to control the dominant terrain in the village area.

* For an excellent review of combat tactics on a contemporary battlefield, read the vignettes from Lester W. Grau's *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan*, National Defense University Press, Washington, DC, 1996.

bras—15 minutes away—will maneuver from the southeast, suppress and destroy targets on Hill 3, and help isolate the objective area from the east, thereby preventing enemy forces from escaping or reinforcing from that direction.

Solution B

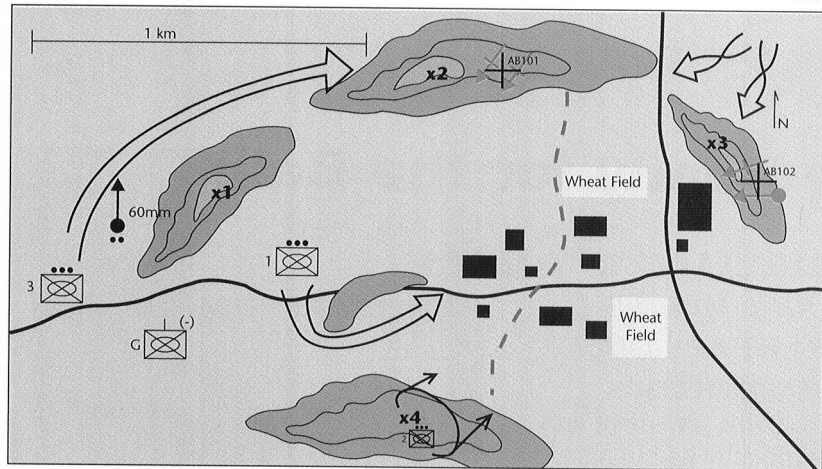
by Andrew H. Hershey

Company Commander's Frag Order

To my command: "The enemy is on to our scheme of maneuver. I believe the enemy is trying to take the

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B



fight to us here, not to resupply and run. 3d Platoon is the main effort and will assault Hill 2 by skirting the west side of Hill 1 and then attacking Hill 2 from the west. 2d Platoon will take Hill 4 and provide a base of fire against enemy strongpoints. 1st Platoon will move south and then into the village. Headquarters will be in trace of 2d Platoon."

To 3d Platoon: "Move fast along the west side of Hill 1 and drive off or kill the enemy on Hill 2. Establish a battle position to provide fire against Hill 3 and fleeing enemy. I will assign the mortars to you after a hasty fire mission against Hills 2 and 3."

To 2d Platoon: "Move fast to the summit of Hill 4 and provide a base of fire against Hills 2 and 3."

To mortar section: "Eight round hasty fire mission of high explosives and white phosphorous against Hill 2 first and then Hill 3, grids 123456 and 789012 respectively. Thereafter, contact 3d Platoon for call for fire."

To 1st Platoon: "Pop smoke and recover your men as best you can. Move south using the knoll to your east as cover and then into the village. Look to secure the village as best you can."

To the forward air controller (FAC): "Get the Cobras up as soon as possible and have them approach from the northeast to block the enemy's escape routes. When 2 minutes out vector them onto the enemy strongpoints still holding out."

To headquarters: "Strong enemy resistance with three heavy machineguns and mortars in Rahadnak. Be-

lieve the enemy intent is not to resupply and run but stand and engage me. Have one track down, no casualties yet. Have Cobras en route 15 minutes out; is any other air support available sooner? I believe I have the chance to inflict serious damage to enemy."

Rationale

I believe the enemy has learned from our prior scheme of maneuver and is using that against us here. However, by remaining to fight, I believe I have the opportunity to inflict some damage against him. I'm dispatching 3d Platoon on a concealed route of advance to attack Hill 2 masked by smoke and fires from the mortars. By taking Hill 4, 2d Platoon will provide a base of fire and observation point for the FAC. With the swift arrival of the Cobras or other air support I can trap the enemy between my force in the west, south, and village and the air elements in the east and north.

USMC

**Tactical Decision
Game Contest.
See p. 81 for
rules. Contest
ends 31 October.**