

Tactical Decision Game #04-8, "Battle Damage Assessment," was presented in *MCG*, Aug04 and is reprinted here.

You are the platoon commander of 3d Platoon, Company C, Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable). Your platoon is tasked with conducting a battle damage assessment (BDA) of an AV-8B Harrier strike that was carried out on a terrorist training camp. You are to helo into Landing Zone (LZ) Talon with your platoon, reinforced by a squad of machineguns (two M240Gs) and an assault squad (two shoulder-launched multipurpose assault weapon rocket launchers). Also attached to your platoon are a two-man intelligence team, a combat camera team, and a human intelligence team. Your platoon carries a full combat load of ammunition to include grenades (fragmentary and smoke), M203 high-explosive rounds, and signal flares, and each squad has one AT-4 antitank rocket and one claymore antipersonnel mine. In support of your mission is a section of AH-1W Cobras providing aerial fires, but due to the flight having to take a circuitous route to avoid an unexpected ice storm, they are almost out of fuel and must return immediately to amphibious shipping to refuel. The S-2 (intelligence) briefed that current imagery shows the area is secure, with all remaining terrorists having fled to the mountains.

You have been inserted into the LZ without problems, and the CH-46s have left to refuel aboard the ships; they will not be able to extract the platoon for 45 minutes. As you prepare to conduct the BDA, the Cobra flight leader suddenly reports to you that there is an enemy platoon (reinforced)-sized convoy moving toward the objective. The enemy is traveling west on the road and is estimated to arrive in 20 to 30 minutes. They were driving six to seven technical vehicles (pickup trucks) that appear to be mounted with either 12.7mm or 14.5mm machineguns. Each vehicle contains about six terrorists. The Cobras have made one gun run on the convoy, destroying or damaging two to three vehicles, but are now critical-

ly low on fuel and have to return to the ship, so they cannot provide further close air support. It appears as if the remainder of the convoy (4 to 5 vehicles totaling 25 to 30 enemy personnel) is still proceeding in your direction. Time has priority, and you have 45 minutes on the ground to gather the BDA and return to LZ Talon for extract.

Task your squad and attachments to accomplish this mission. This is a daylight operation for photographic purposes, and all personnel in the area are declared hostile.

Solution A
by Sgt Richard A. Bell
(Author)

Platoon Commander's Frag Order

To 3d Platoon: "1st Squad will provide security for the human exploitation team, intelligence team, and combat camera team and accompany them to the objective to accomplish the mission. Once you arrive at the objective, sweep it first, and then set up 360-degree security while the attachments go to work.

"The rest of the platoon and weapons platoon attachments will

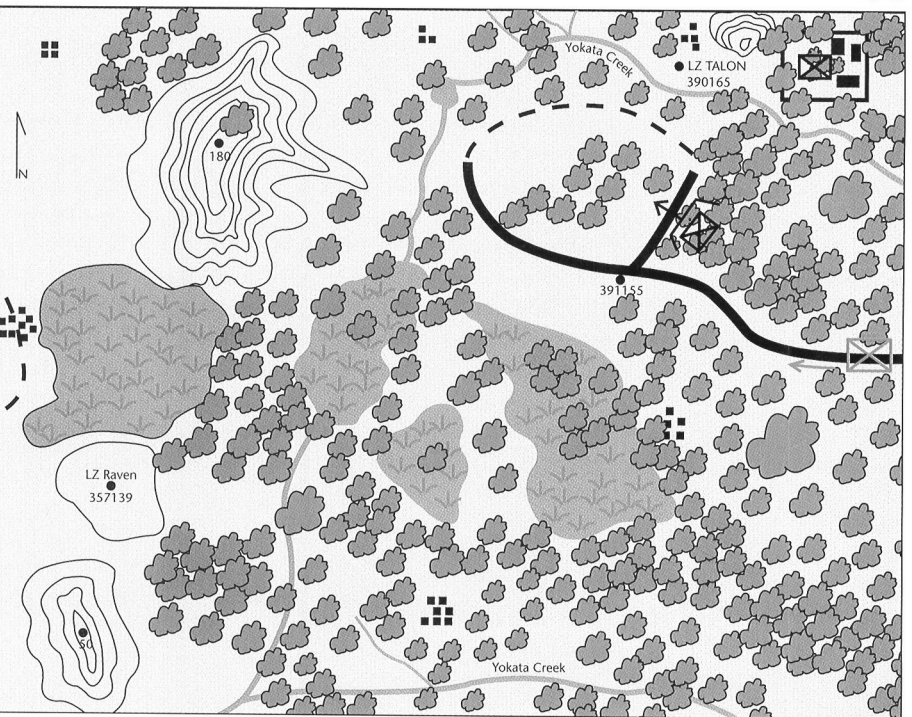
set in an L-shaped ambush with 2d Squad, machineguns, and shoulder-launched multipurpose assault weapons (SMAWs) forming the long axis on the east side of the road that travels from northeast to southwest. Your direction of fire should be to the northwest in order to prevent you from causing friendly casualties on the objective. This also prevents enemy return fire aimed at us from hitting friendly personnel on the objective.

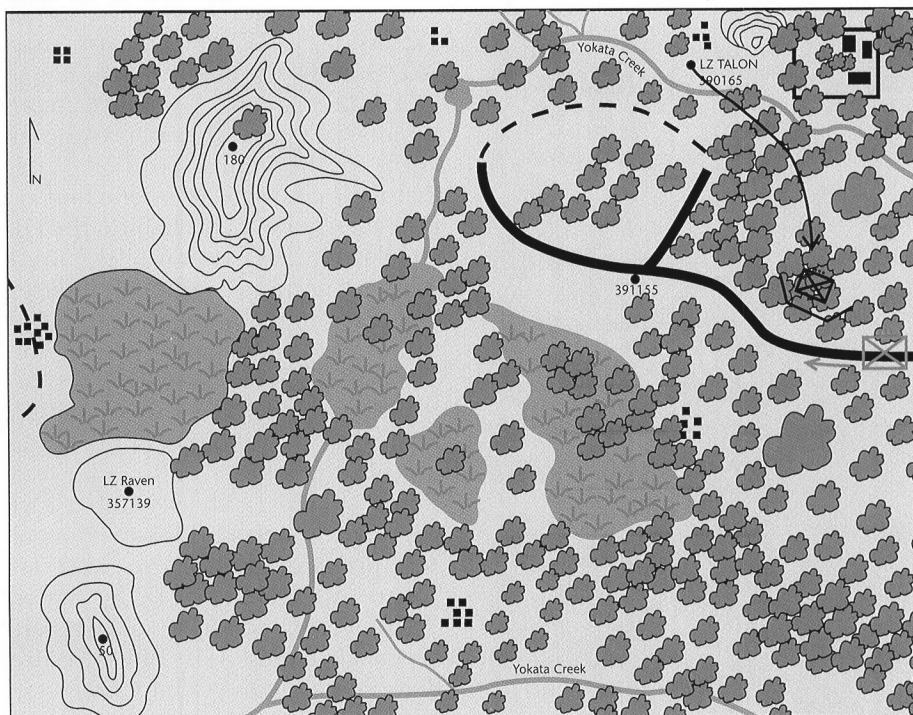
"While setting in, emplace the claymores (yours and 3d Squad's) oriented to the northwest along the flank of the road. Make sure that 3d Squad is out of the danger area for the mines!

"3d Squad, you will form the short end of the L, running from northwest to southeast. You will fire on the long axis of the convoy. Your primary task will be to disable/destroy the lead vehicle and prevent the convoy from driving out of the kill zone toward the objective. Make sure your fires do not impact on the east side of the road, as 2d Squad will be there.

"I will be with 2d Squad and will initiate the ambush with the detona-

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tors (clackers) of the two claymores. If the claymores fail, I will have the AT-4 gunner next to me, and he will fire at the lead vehicle.

"The enemy heavy machineguns are very formidable and must not be allowed to engage the platoon. Overwhelming initial fire superiority with the rockets (SMAW and AT-4) as well as machineguns and M203s is the way to achieve this.

"My intent is to attrite the enemy forces in order to prevent/delay the enemy's arrival to the objective. When our primary mission is complete (the BDA), 1st Squad will move to LZ Talon and secure it for the rest of the platoon to use it as an objective rally point for extract. Reports sent to higher will include the platoon's concept of operations and where the squads are located. This is critical so that if the helicopters arrive back in the area while the firefight is still raging, they know what to look for and the positions of friendlies."

Rationale

I have to consider the significance of time sensitivity in executing my mission. Even though the natural tendency will be to focus on destroying the enemy convoy in detail, I must remain cognizant of the primary mission of a thorough BDA within

the allotted time. Given one extract point and one lift time, the priority must go to completing the BDA, not engaging in a lengthy firefight. Security is a concern, but the approaching enemy will have to be delayed with less than the full platoon.

Surprise and violence of action during the ambush will outweigh the enemy's possible numerical superiority and edge in heavy weapons. The raid mission becomes more frequent in the modern context of asymmetrical threat warfare and terrorism.

Solution B

by John D. Salt

Platoon Commander's Frag Order

To 3d Platoon: "OK, lads, I'm changing the mission. My intent is to destroy the enemy by ambush before continuing with the BDA mission assigned. Our helicopters report a convoy of technicals to the east with heavy machineguns (HMGs) 20 or 30 minutes away from our objective. The helicopters have already hit them and taken out two or three, but there are three to five left. Our mission now is to destroy those technicals and the terrorists in them. They are soft vehicles, and we can take them out easily with any of our weapons. Tell your blokes to get ready for a quick triangular ambush on the road to the east

of the objective. We will then do the BDA on our own kills and the Harriers'. Any questions?"

Report to higher headquarters (HQ): "Zero, this is three three, situation report. We are on the LZ on time with no casualties. Our helos report a convoy of three to five technicals to the east armed with HMGs traveling toward our objective and 20 to 30 minutes away. I intend to conduct an ambush to destroy these vehicles. I will then complete the BDA task. Pickup time will probably be delayed. Will advise when ambush set. Three three out."

Rationale

In a counterterrorist campaign, it is probably not once in a blue moon that a juicy opportunity such as this arises to destroy a large number of the enemy. When it does, it should be seized with both hands. The BDA can be done later. If higher HQ wishes me to stick to the original aim or not to engage for some other reason, then they have the opportunity to revise my intended actions while I make my approach march to the ambush point. However, given the direction in which the enemy is moving, I may not be able to avoid contact with them anyway, and their weapons represent a threat to our own helicopters. Thus, my orders are framed in accordance with the traditional Royal Navy principle, "never 'submit' when you can intend." We will use a nice, simple two-leg approach with most of the route through good thick cover. When we hit the road we will know that the objective is along the road to our right. If it turns out that other factors absolutely require us to get the photos and make the pickup at the pre-planned time, then our route does not take us very far out of the way.

Solution C

by MAJ Steven Rehmann, USA

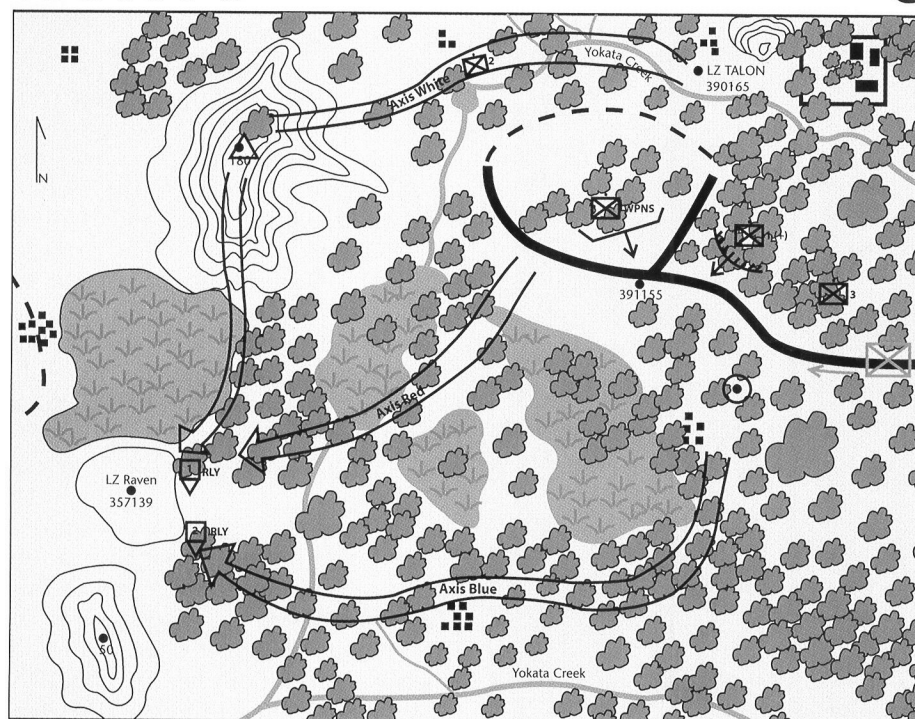
Platoon Commander's Frag Order

To higher headquarters: "Request switch extraction to LZ Raven (357 139)."

To weapons squad: "Establish an attack by fire position in the trees northwest of the intersection (391 155). When I initiate the ambush or before the enemy lead vehicle

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egresses from the kill zone, either west or north, engage with antitank guided grenade and machinegun fires. Priority of engagement will be vehicles, then dismounts. On my red star cluster (primary) or red smoke (alternate) shift fires south with an eastern (left-hand) limit of the intersection to the edge of the tree line as your western (right-hand) limit. On my signal (radio, primary/white star cluster, alternate) lift fires and conduct zone reconnaissance along Axis Red and secure Rally Point 1 in the vicinity of LZ Raven. Observe and report bomb damage along Axis Red and conduct security at Rally Point 1 until the remainder of the platoon closes on LZ Raven."

To 1st Squad (Reinforced): "Fire Team 2, 2d Squad, is attached effective now. Establish an ambush posi-

tion northeast of the intersection (391 155). I will initiate the ambush with claymores (primary) or rifle fire (alternate) when the enemy lead vehicle reaches the intersection. Priority of engagement is personnel then vehicles. On my signal to shift fires (red star cluster or red smoke streamer), assault the kill zone to destroy the surviving enemy. We will consolidate and reorganize in the trees south of the kill zone. When complete, we will move to link up with 3d Squad at the linkup point. After linkup follow and support 3d Squad along Axis Blue."

To 2d Squad (Minus): "Intelligence and combat photographers are attached to 2d Squad, effective now. Conduct zone reconnaissance along Axis White and establish an observation post on Hill 180. Ob-

serve and report bomb damage and move to occupy Rally Point 1 in the vicinity of LZ Raven no later than (NLT) H+35 minutes."

To 3d Squad: "Initially, move rapidly from LZ Talon to provide security for the ambush position on 1st Platoon's east flank. Observe and report the enemy's ingress into the kill zone at the intersection (391 155). I want an accurate count of vehicles and personnel. Do not engage unless compromised. When I initiate the ambush, destroy enemy forces attempting to escape to the east within 50 meters of the road. On the signal to shift fires (red star cluster/red smoke streamer), attack south across the road to secure Linkup Point 1 and prepare for link up with 1st Squad. After linkup with 1st Squad (Reinforced), conduct zone reconnaissance along Axis Blue. Secure Rally Point 2 in the vicinity LZ Raven NLT H+35 minutes."

Rationale

My intent is to seize the initiative by rapidly destroying the reinforced enemy platoon moving into our area of operation (AO) from the east and conduct a zone reconnaissance en route to an alternate LZ to accomplish the mission of assessing bomb damage in the AO. Use of an alternate LZ will maximize available forces since it will obviate the need to secure LZ Talon during the conduct of the mission. I will assume some risk by dispersing the force. Therefore, outside the ambush engagement area I will not engage enemy forces unless our stealth is compromised or I'm unable to bypass. NLT H+45 minutes, we must be consolidated in position posture east of LZ Raven. Time is critical. All persons in the AO are considered hostile.

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