

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING DIVISION
GENERAL INSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT
THE ARMORED SCHOOL
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ADVANCED OFFICERS CLASS #1

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MILITARY MONOGRAPH

TITLE: Jungle Tactics

SCOPE: Jungle fighting is characterized by small unit actions in which control is difficult and initiative upon the part of small unit leaders of great importance. Team work and training of a battle drill similar to the plays of a football team. Each man must know his job and be able to perform it without orders. In such a situation prior training and practice have no substitutes. We must always be prepared. To once again send American troops into battle less ready, less well trained, less better equipped than the enemy, is something that no Commanding Officer should ever want, or permit. It can be prevented. I don't want it on my conscience, do you?

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Prepared by:

(Name) JOHN L. NICHOLS, 0496317

Captain, Cavalry

(Rank)

25 February 1947

JUNGLE TACTICS, (Based on Operations of 1st Cavalry Division)

1. The past war, fought as it was in two completely removed and distant theatres, under entirely dissimilar conditions of terrain and weather against two totally different enemies, produced two vastly different types of warfare. Tactics, materiel, technique, weapons, that were suitable admirally to one theatre would be useless and even detrimental in the other. At the start of this war we, who had little experience in jungle and amphibious warfare found ourselves suddenly pitted against a foe who had trained and prepared meticulously for just this sort of combat and in terrain of his own choosing. We were forced to devise such tactics and techniques as were necessary under the most difficult and expensive of conditions, combat itself. The record of the first few months of the war is fought with examples of unnecessary losses, and reverses that could have been avoided had we been prepared. It is imperative that we avoid a recurrence of this dangerous and tragic situation. Only through foresight and training is this possible.

2. Throughout the last few months during our course here at the Armored School our entire course has been based upon tactics and European Theatre Operation techniques developed in and applicable only to the ETO. The war in the pacific with its specialized and different aspects has been wholly overlooked. I believe, therefore, that it will be both of great interest and value to the students to present a discussion and summary of jungle fighting as it was developed by the large number of American troops committed to that important and neglected theatre, the

pacific, with particular emphasis given to the operations of the FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION, the organization about which I feel best qualified to speak. The basic principles that I am about to present are deduced from and based upon the actual battle experiences of the junior officers of the First Cavalry Division throughout their campaigns in the asiatic theatre.

3. The first Cavalry as you know, although it operated during the entire war as infantry was unique in that it possessed an organization entirely different from that of any other division that saw action. Its organization was based upon that of the cavalry and was square in general makeup, as opposed to the triangular principle used throughout the rest of the army. Before we can understand or intelligently discuss the tactics of a unit we must get clearly in mind the makeup of that unit and the tools and weapons with which we have to work. That is what I now propose to do.

4. The cavalry division as opposed to the infantry division with its 3 RCT consisted of two brigades of two cavalry regiments, the 5th, 7th, in the first brigade, and the 7th and 8th in the other. For this reason the 1st Cavalry Division became renowned through the Pacific Theatre as the only division in the army where a brigadier General really felt at home. The artillery consisted of four battalions. It was SOP for a battalion to be attached to a regiment at the start of an operation and to remain with regiment during the entire operation. To go below the level of the regiment, each regiment contained only two squadrons instead of the three Battalions of the infantry, thus keeping the total number of

weapons and personnell in the division approximately the same as that of the Infantry Division. This organization with extended chains of command which would have been rather unweildy and clumsy in the extended distances and fast moving situations of the European Theatre of Operations proved well adapted to the jungle where control is difficult, maps are innacurate, and the situation often confused and obscure, control and supervision by one of more than two subordinate units often proved an almost impossible task and one that could not at best be executed efficiently. The squadrons similar to the infantry battalion three rifle companies, called troops, and a heavy weapons troop. These troops were of course similar to the corresponding companies of the infantry, containing platoons and squads of approximately equal size and composition.

5. The terrain encountered in the jungle was vastly different from any to be found in the US. Because of the heat and the amount of rain the vegetation was unbelievably dense. Except upon a few ridges and hill-tops, visibility was limited to, at the most, thirty yards, with the average much closer to five or ten. At a short distance a man standing was invisible and with the luxuriant undergrowth to lie down was to be concealed. Movement was confined to narrow and tortous jungle trails. Once off these it was necessary to cut one's way with a machette. To do this silently was impossible. The majority of the terrain was mountainous and such level stretches as existed together with many of the hill sides were because of the frequent rain continously sticky mud. In very few places could any means of travel or movement be used except walking. The majority of our supplies were brought to the front either upon our own backs or by requisitioned natives. The jungle interferred with radio communication

and telephone lines had to be laid laboriously by hand. Even then they were often cut by infiltrating enemy. Visual signals were dangerous because of the ever present ^{POSSIBILITY} ~~possibility~~ that enemy troops were concealed in the immediate vicinity. Maintenance of equipment was a constant task because of the heat and persistent dampness which also effected the health and efficiency of the troops. Air Reconnaissance was almost useless, Maps were seldom available and such maps that we had were rendered almost useless because of the difficulty of observation and the lack of readily evident land marks.

6. Because of these difficulties the situation was always obscure. Previous information of the enemy was lacking or at best sketchy and unreliably. For this reason every action of advance was almost always preceded by as extensive patrolling as possible. Once sufficient information was obtained to make a logical decision the attacking force seldom more than a troop reenforced was started forward. The approach march, was usually made by trail. When the enemy was encountered the situation was developed as fully as possible and the attack launched. Because of the difficulty of movement and the need for caution and ^{POSSIBILITY} ~~possibility~~ of ambush this was necessarily a slow and time consuming process. We had none of the sweeping advances of the E.T.O. In the jungle a mile a day was rapid. The terrain made control difficult. After the initial attack order, contact was often lost. The majority of the fighting was done on Platoon or lower level with small unit commanders acting upon their own Initiative. The situation and mission as well as the chain of command had there-fore to go down as far as the last rifleman. When the attack was completed the unit immediately assumed an all-around defensive. If success-

fully upon the objective, if not just short of it. Counter-attacks were usually immediate and fierce. If no enemy was encountered the unit would halt about one hour before sun-down and set up a perimeter for the night. We have now given the sequence of a typical jungle operation, patrolling, approach, development, attack, and consolidation or defense. We will now discuss each of these in detail.

7. In the jungle there was little or no difference between Reconnaissance or combat patrols. In an area where movement is canalized to trails it is easy for the enemy to predict with great certainty the movements of the enemy. At first small recon patrols were used as would be in open terrain, but since these were restricted to trails they were continually being ambushed and destroyed. This resulted in little or no information being received. It was decided that in the jungle the only effective patrol would necessarily be one of sufficient strength to force its way past any initial resistance and still continue upon its mission. These patrols were usually of platoon strength, reinforced by a machine gun squad and a 60 mm Mortar carried without baseplate or sight. The use of this mortar was restricted in that it could be fired only when a clearing was discovered. To fire it through trees resulted in premature bursts over the heads of the crew. These patrols proceeded down the trails in column of troopers. It was found that the intense nervous strain under which the lead element or lead scout was obligated to function made it necessary to rotate at least every hour, in spite of the fact that the Japs habitually let the first part of a column pass by and attacked it toward the flank or rear. In the dense Jungle it was possible to pass

within a few feet of the enemy without discovering their presence. At this point a discussion of tactical Standard Operating Procedure is necessary.

8. As can be seen from the discussion of the terrain is a previous paragraph, control is difficult. Often, at the moment when fire was opened by the enemy, a good part of the patrol would be out of sight of the leader, and because of the firing out of hearing. Consequently it was necessary to establish an SOP that could be carried out without order at the moment of receiving fire. The most effective procedure was this. At the first shot all men would take cover. They would then proceed to establish a perimeter defense. This was necessary not merely as a precautionary measure. The Japs, as soon as a patrol was ambushed, started riflemen, often supported by machine guns around to one or both flanks in an effort to surround and annihilate our troops. In this perimeter each man had a set and definite place and job, determined beforehand and practiced. He knew his position and that of his squad leader and platoon leader. He knew exactly who would be upon his right and left, and what his sector of fire was. This plan, in a larger form was carried out through all units.

9. The plan of the defense was simple. The leading squad took up a position perpendicular to the trail. The other squads took their places to the right or left rear as the case might be. The shape of the perimeter was roughly triangular, with the platoon leader in the center and that of the squad leader directly in rear of their squads. Since the direction from which fire was delivered often could not be at once determined, the supporting weapons went to the center of the triangle. As soon as the

position of the enemy automatic weapons, or their approximate position was discovered, the automatic weapons were sent to that side of the triangle facing them. They were set at the corners. From this position they could deliver cross fire upon the enemy or, if necessary, set up a final protective line in case of a banzai attack. Two men were started forward toward the enemy automatic weapons, covered by one another and by the machine guns. When sufficiently close they neutralized the enemy with grenades, The patrol then attacked the enemy and proceeded upon its mission.

10. When the area to be reconordered was reached, such information as could be obtained was collected, and the patrol returned to its starting point. This brings us to the second phase.

11. After the attack order was issued, the attacking force was started toward the enemy position. The method of advance was similar to that used by a patrol. When the vicinity of the enemy was reached the situation was developed by small local patrols and the attack launched.

12. The attack was usually made with two platoons abreast and one covering the rear and in support. Within the platoons the arrangement was similar. Movement was made by infiltration, under cover of artillery fire and mortars, It was necessary to follow this fire closely, approximately 35 yards. If the attacking troops lagged any farther behind the japs would move forward to escape the fire. The enemy very seldom withdrew. It was usually necessary to dig each individual man out of his hole with grenades or close range fire. This attack was pressed through the depth of the enemy position. The attack was made more difficult in that by passed individual enemy often hid and fired from the rear. In the confusion

it was ~~frustrating~~^{DIFFICULT} to locate these snipers.

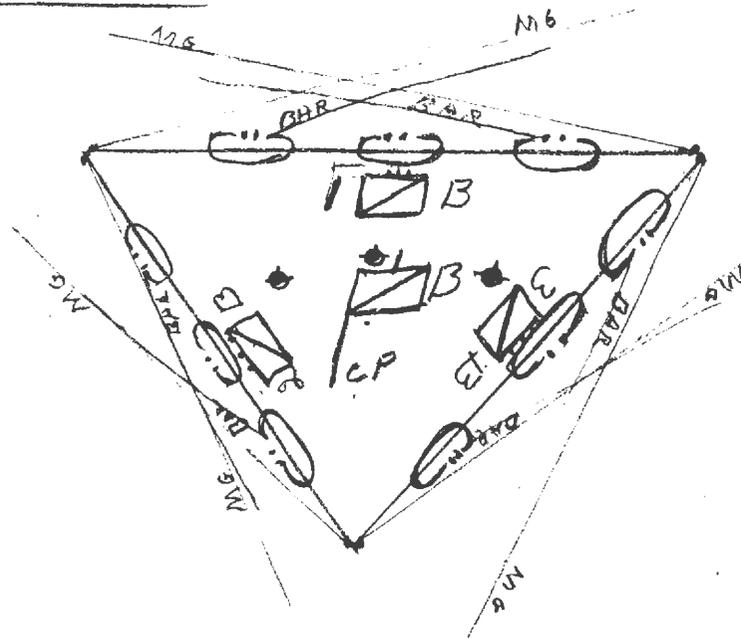
13. As soon as the objective was secured a defense had to be set up, as violent counter attacks always followed. These often included banzai attacks, The scheme of defense was similar to that hasty defense used in an ambush or meeting engagement, except that machine guns were set up at all corners of the perimeter in sufficient number to place crossfire on all sides of the triangle. At this point a mention should be made of night operations.

14. The Americans used very few night attacks in the jungle. Most of our night action was defensive. It was standard that no one left his fox hole after dark. Anyone moving around outside his hole was fair game. At night two men always occupied one hole. This was essential. One man alone would not dare sleep. With two, one could sleep while the other watched. Because after a certain length of time hallucinations are the rule rather than the exception, the watcher, if he saw something would awaken the other. If both concurred, the "Thing" was attacked with grenades. Fire was never opened except upon orders from higher headquarters. As soon as fire was opened the enemy could locate our position and launch an attack. They also knew our practice of placing our machine guns at the corners and could then attack them, accurately. When an attack was launched all weapons would put fire immediately upon their final protective lines and maintain as great a volume as possible. Since in the jungle, even in daytime, volume, quantity, rather than accuracy, quality, of fire was important, many men discarded authorized weapons in favor of such automatic weapons as could be obtained.

15. To summarize, jungle fighting is characterized by small unit actions in which control is difficult and initiative upon the part of small unit leaders of great importance. Team work and training of a battle drill similar to the plays of a football team. Each man must know his job and be able to perform it without orders. In such a situation prior training and practice have no substitutes. We must always be prepared. To once again send American troops into battle less ready, less well trained, less better equipped than the enemy, is something that no Commanding Officer should ever want, or permit. It can be prevented. I don't want it on my conscience, do you?

DEFENSIVE POSITION.

B TROOP



50 yards

REMARKS

BAR'S IN EACH SQUAD WILL DELIVER CROSSFIRE

MG'S ON POINTS WILL DELIVER CROSSFIRE. C.P. IN CENTER OF DEF

60 MM MORTARS LOCATED IN CENTER OF DEF. GIVING SUPPORT TO EITHER FLANK.

" WATER COOLED 30' ATTACHED TO TROOP (ONE PLATOON) TYPING IN WITH TROOPS & MG'S.

PLATOON FRONT = 50 yards (approx)