

Staff Department
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

STUDENT MONOGRAPH
Advanced Infantry Officers Course
Class Nr. 2
1955-56

TITLE
RETROGRADE ACTION IN
MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN

Capt Arthur H. Lindeman, Jr
Roster Nr 107

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE.....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	3
DISCUSSION.....	5
CONCLUSIONS.....	16
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	17
ANNEX A.....	18

PREFACE

18 January 1956

1a. Credit is given to Captain Lawrence J. Ogden, Advanced Infantry Officers Course Nr. 1, 1955-1956, who was a platoon leader of G Company, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division during September 1950. See Annex A for interview.

b. The term night withdrawal is used synonymously with the term voluntary withdrawal in this monograph.

c. The author participated in two night withdrawals in mountainous terrain while serving as a platoon leader of G Company, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division during September 1950 in Korea.

2. The point of view expressed in this paper is that of the author-not necessarily that of The Infantry School or the Department of the Army.

Arthur W. Lindeman Jr

INTRODUCTION

1. "A retrograde movement is any movement of a command to the rear, or away from the enemy. It may be forced by the enemy or made voluntarily. It may be classified as a withdrawal from action, a retirement, or a delaying action."

(1:1) "A withdrawal from action is an operation by which all or part of a deployed force disengages from the enemy in order to position itself to initiate some other action." (1:3)

The scope of this monograph consists of a discussion augmented by combat examples covering the careful coordination and secrecy required for a successful night withdrawal by a reinforced rifle company in mountainous terrain. Its purpose is to provide the factors necessary for planning the coordination and secrecy of a night withdrawal by a reinforced rifle company in mountainous terrain. The author intends to prove that careful coordination and secrecy are the keys to a successful withdrawal of this type.

2. In future wars, as has been indicated by Korea and World War II, the enemy will hold little value for human life. Mass attacks by the enemy will require our troops to withdraw in certain situations. The principles and techniques discussed here will be of value to those future commanders who may be required to execute a night withdrawal in mountainous terrain.

3. A limitation in the research for this monograph is that units are not prone to discuss a withdrawal in detail. It is against the American soldier's offensive spirit to move backwards whether such action is voluntary or due to enemy pressure. The individual is not proud of it, and it does

not add to the prestige of his unit. Therefore, in searching for detailed combat examples of night withdrawals little was found.

DISCUSSION

Before the secrecy and coordination required for a withdrawal can be accomplished, the commanders and subordinate leaders must have the maximum amount of time available to do their planning. The planning time available will be dependent upon the friendly and enemy situation. An excellent example of sufficient planning time prior to the actual withdrawal is the example of the 26th Cavalry Regiment covering the withdrawal of the American and Philippine units into the Bataan Peninsula, Philippine Islands during the period December 1941-January 1942. The plan of withdrawal was well known to the friendly forces. Maneuvers had been previously conducted in this area. After the Japanese forces had landed at Lingayen Bay, they continued their advance southward to Manila. Units of the 26th Cavalry Regiment fought delaying actions against the Japanese and then withdrew before becoming overly committed. These actions were repeated successfully until all units had withdrawn into the Bataan Peninsula. (9:59) The success of this voluntary withdrawal can be attributed to the fact that the units had sufficient time to plan the necessary coordination and secrecy required.

Factors to be considered in the careful coordination of a night withdrawal by a reinforced rifle company in mountainous terrain are as follows:

1. Well informed troops. A night withdrawal is a very ticklish operation. Each man will have to be at his best to make it a success. All the information that is known about the situation should be told to the men. All key personnel

down to and including squad leaders will have to know their duties and what is expected from them. The late General George S. Patton stated: "There is a very great danger in making a retrograde movement at night even when these movements are a continuation of the tactical offensive, because troops not involved hear or see them and become worried to the extent of panic. If a unit must be withdrawn see that all soldiers along the line of withdrawal are informed why it is taking place and when it will occur," (7:26)

2. Actions of the detachment left in contact. In mountainous terrain, the size of the detachment left in contact to simulate the normal defensive actions should be held to a minimum. By equipping these personnel with a preponderance of automatic weapons this fact can be accomplished. Their size should be no larger than a reinforced platoon. Their time of withdrawal has to be closely coordinated in order that the remainder of the company will have sufficient time to complete its withdrawal. With the possibility of being cut off and/or surrounded by the enemy, the detachment left in contact must be prepared to escape and evade the enemy to the point of fighting their way through the enemy to the rear.

3. Obstacles to delay the enemy's advance. Due to the terrain, there normally will be a limited trail and road net. Obstacles such as hastily constructed minefields, demolitions, roadblocks, etc., can be sparingly employed, but yet effectively do the job. These obstacles should be preplanned and previously constructed. An easy method to delay the enemy would be to prepare demolitions at a critical point along a key route of withdrawal. Elements of the detachment left in

contact should detonate the charges. An excellent example of an obstacle created at a critical point of the route of withdrawal into the Bataan Peninsula was the blowing of the Calumpit Bridge across the Pampanga River, Luzon Island, Philippine Islands, 1 January 1942. The bridge was blown just after the last of the withdrawing forces sped across it. The friendly forces were using this route as their route of withdrawal; whereas, the Japanese were using it as one of their main avenues of advance. (9:65)

4. Motor movement to expedite the unit's movement.

The normal employment of motor transportation to move forward to meet the withdrawing troops will be limited by the availability of roads. Traffic of higher priority such as evacuation vehicles for the wounded will limit the road space available for the withdrawing troops. If the enemy has air support, he will attempt to destroy the key bridges along the limited road net. Any use of transportation by the withdrawing infantry will be at the best very limited, if at all. In the withdrawal through mountainous terrain, troops will be required to move rapidly by foot to disengage from the enemy and be in the retirement phase before transportation will be available for their use.

5. Control of civilians clogging the route of withdrawal.

The presence of civilians clogging the limited road and trail nets will hamper the movement of the friendly foot troops and vehicles. This fact alone presented many problems in previous wars to both sides. The South Korean National Police were a great assistance in control of civilians during the Korean action. Before the withdrawal commences, higher head-

quarters should plan the control of civilians, particularly at critical points such as bridges and key crossroads. In some instances, units from the rear will have to be assigned the mission of controlling them.

6. Sufficient supplies and equipment. In occupying defensive positions in mountainous terrain, the tendency to stockpile supplies and equipment on position is increased. If time permits, surplus materials should be removed from positions and sent to the rear. If the unit will be withdrawing over a great distance, caches of food and ammunition should be placed along the route. The remaining equipment that can not be hand carried will have to be destroyed on position. The detachment left in contact should destroy it before they depart the position. The method should be preplanned and coordinated throughout the battalion. Much equipment was left to the advancing Communists during the Korean action by withdrawing United Nations' forces failing to destroy it as they moved to the rear. Much of this equipment was used later against the United Nations' forces.

7. Evacuation of the wounded. The evacuation of the wounded should be preplanned similar to the removal of supplies. If only limited transportation is available for some of the casualties to be evacuated, first remove the litter cases. Litter evacuation at night through mountainous terrain is extremely difficult, time consuming, and physically exhausting. Helicopters and $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton ambulances should be placed at prepositioned locations along the route to the rear to assist in the rapid evacuation of personnel becoming wounded or injured during the movement.

8. Assistance of artillery and aircraft. "Artillery and aircraft should concentrate their fire and bombardments on points where the enemy must pass through narrow gaps or over obstacles." (3:22) It is unlikely that the artillery forward observer will remain with the detachment left in contact. However, the detachment commander should know the location of the preplanned concentrations and barrages, know how to call for these fires, and have the necessary communication. Artillery was excellently used to assist the 5th Regimental Combat Team and the 1st Republic of Korea Division in the Chongchon withdrawal during the night of 29-30 November 1950 after the Chinese intervention in Korea. "That night saw the most carefully planned concentration and interdiction fires laid down by the (10th) group during the entire campaign.

----- The need for the fires, of course, was obvious: we had to discourage the enemy from launching his all-out attack; possibly we could make him believe we were about to launch an attack of our own. This was to be accomplished while our infantry withdrew, with nothing but patrols between us and the enemy. ----- The artillery fires began shortly after dark, coincident with the withdrawal of the infantry, and continued throughout the night." (2:20) An example of the lack of coordination between the infantry and artillery took place on the night of 6-7 September 1950. G Company, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division was participating in a battalion withdrawal near Pyong-po, Korea. As the company was moving in single file down a steep, shale gorge from HILL 465, three volleys of friendly artillery fire landed in the gorge. The concussion blasted everybody to the ground.

Fortunately only one man became a casualty. However, the confusion caused was distressing to the situation. (4:42) Commanders should take advantage of supporting weapons and their fires when disengaging from the enemy.

Of the factors considered in the careful coordination of the withdrawal, the author does not attempt to determine which is the most important. Many of these can and should be coordinated by higher commanders. During the withdrawal of the American and Philippine troops toward the Bataan Peninsula in December 1941, a meeting of the force commanders was held at a critical place and time. General Wainwright, Commanding General, North Luzon Force and General Jones, Commanding General, South Luzon Force met near the Calumpit Bridge on 31 December 1941 to coordinate their use of this serious bottleneck. By this meeting the commanders were able to retain full control of a serious situation. The bonus effect of such a meeting is the tremendous lift in the morale of the troops when they see their higher commanders in the forward area. (6:62)

To this point, the monograph has only dealt with some of the factors required in the careful coordination of a night movement to the rear. Now its attention will be directed towards the methods and techniques employed to insure secrecy of the night withdrawal by a reinforced rifle company through mountainous terrain. These include the following:

1. Training of the individual and unit. The training of the individual and unit is one of the most important secrecy factors of a night movement to the rear. The men must understand how to move at night with a minimum of noise

and a maximum of speed. The training required is not specialized for night withdrawals. It is the same training as applied to any night movement. Noise made by friendly troops in their rearward movement maybe heard by enemy patrols. These patrols may interfere with the company's withdrawal or relay this movement information to their parent unit where artillery fires or an enemy attack may be initiated. The tendency to mutter, talk, or curse must be curtailed. This is particularly difficult when making the withdrawal in mountainous terrain since the road and trail nets are limited, or nonexistent. Men will lose their footing and consequently their tempers. Care will have to be taken to prevent weapons and equipment from hitting objects or being dropped. Special attention has to be given to the transporting of the heavier crew served weapons which are normally attached to the rifle company when withdrawing. The noise of one rifle falling on a rocky surface may give away the location of the company. Contact must be maintained in the column at all times; this includes during halts also. At the completion of the halt, the presence of all men must be determined. This is to prevent those individuals who have fallen asleep from being left behind. When withdrawing down a slope or stream bed, the company will probably be in a single file. If constant vigilance of contact is not maintained, elements of the company may become separated and lost. G Company, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division in their withdrawal from HILL 465 on the night of 6-7 September 1950 in Korea moved down a gorge in single file. During their movement, one man lost contact with the man in front of him. The company became separated into two parts.

The company commander had intended to complete his withdrawal during darkness. With this separation taking place, he had to wait until daylight to locate his isolated unit before the withdrawal could be completed. (4:42) Proper maintenance of contact in the column would have prevented this delay of several hours. Additional efforts will have to be made to maintain contact and control of the column when allied personnel are mixed in the column. Their lack of ability to speak and understand English will increase the difficulty of the situation. Many times physical contact will have to be maintained to insure the column remains together. If the enemy fires on the column, it is unwise to return their fire unless the unit has to fight its way to the rear. By the unit not returning the fire, the enemy is likely to think that it is another enemy patrol. Troops do not halt voluntarily to resist the enemy. The sound of their weapon fired will give away their location. Its sound characteristics will identify it as an American weapon. Several items of night training have been discussed. If possible, the individuals should be well trained in night movements before the unit attempts a night withdrawal in mountainous terrain.

2. Well informed personnel to guide units to rearward positions. The route of advance of a company into a position will not necessarily be its route of withdrawal. When time permits, appointed guides from the unit withdrawing will reconnoiter the trails to be used in the withdrawal. This effort will decrease the noise and confusion caused by a unit of company size moving over unfamiliar terrain at night time. However, it should be understood that at times this will not

be permitted due to the lack of time prior to the withdrawal itself. In the absence of a physical reconnaissance, a map reconnaissance should be made. The accuracy of the maps available and their scale will limit the value of this type of reconnaissance. If the unit is withdrawing in front of another friendly unit, guides may be obtained from the unit to the rear. After daylight on 7 September 1950, G Company, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division reestablished contact with the element of the company that had become separated during the night in the withdrawal from HILL 465 near Pyong-po, Korea. About this time a patrol led by Captain (then Lieutenant) William Marshlender of A Company, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division was admitted to the company perimeter. The initial withdrawal plan of the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment was to fall back and tie in on the left of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. Marshlender's patrol led elements of G Company to the rear where contact was established with the 1st Battalion of the 7th Cavalry Regiment. (5:1) To improve the secrecy of the withdrawal, every effort should be made to reconnoiter the route to the rear before the movement commences.

3. Actions of the detachment left in contact. The skillful accomplishment of their mission is a very important factor in preserving the secrecy of the night withdrawal. "The mission of the detachment left in contact is to protect the withdrawal of the main body by deception and resistance when necessary. ----- The strength usually does not exceed one-third of the rifle strength of the company with skeleton crews for supporting weapons. By their fires and patrolling,

detachments left in contact simulate the normal activities of the unit." (1:3) This unit, normally under the command of the company executive officer, must be a well organized and trained group. It is a difficult task to remain in position while the rest of the company moves to the rear. To simulate the fires of the entire company, they disperse over a large front. When their time comes to withdraw, they may have to fight their way to the rear. Elements of the reserve company will patrol the rear of the front-line companies' positions. Additional duties assigned to this unit will be the destruction of remaining supplies and equipment and the detonating of charges or the setting of obstacles. The mission of the detachment left in contact is very important in retaining the secrecy of the rearward movement.

4. Communications security. All efforts must be made to prevent the enemy from learning of the intended withdrawal. Strict security measures must be taken in the transmission of the withdrawal order. If the battalion commander or his representative meets with the company commanders, not only may the order be issued, but also coordination can be insured. Wire is the second best means of communicating. Radio is the least desirable because of enemy jamming or interception. The enemy may attempt a ruse by coming into the radio net and by giving an order to withdraw. Always challenge and receive an authentication for a withdrawal order. The detachment left in contact maintains normal radio traffic to give the impression of the company in normal defensive actions. They will cut all wire circuits and remove a portion of the wire to prevent its use by the enemy when they withdraw. Every effort must be

made to maintain communication security before, during, and after the withdrawal commences.

5. Special tactical measures. Special tactical measures may be taken by the withdrawing force to confuse and disrupt the enemy. The measures may consist of limited objective attacks, raids, or variations of the fire plan. The Germans during World War II would have adjacent units make a limited attack when a withdrawal was to commence. While their enemy was defending against this attack, the withdrawing units would disengage. (8:115) A small raid can be made early in the evening to place pressure on the enemy. After the raiding party returns to friendly lines, the withdrawal could commence. Elements of the reserve battalion could make the raid. By varying the fire plan, the enemy may be led to believe that the unit is actually going to attack. An example of varying the fire plan plus using a large amount of artillery fire to distract the enemy was discussed previously in the use of artillery in the Chongchon withdrawal 29-30 November 1950. When contemplating what special tactical measures to attempt, consider the enemy's reaction to previous deception efforts.

The commander when planning his withdrawal must consider many items if his plan is to be successful. This monograph expanded some of the factors that should be considered for the successful night withdrawal by a reinforced rifle company in mountainous terrain.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Careful coordination and secrecy are the keys to a successful night withdrawal by a reinforced rifle company in mountainous terrain.

2. The time available for planning the withdrawal will seriously affect the degree of coordination and secrecy obtained during the withdrawal.

3. The training of individuals in night movements will greatly affect the secrecy and success of the night withdrawal.

4. Coordination made by higher commanders will assist the companies in their withdrawal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. "Advance Sheet, Problem 2139-I4, K16" (Fort Benning, Ga.: Tactical Department, The Infantry School, 20 June, 1955).
2. Brown, W.F., "Chongchon Withdrawal", Antiaircraft Journal, pp18-20, March-April, 1951. UF1
.J86
3. FM 70-10, Mountain Operations (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, September, 1947).
4. Gugeler, R.A., Combat Actions in Korea (Washington, D.C.: Combat Forces Press, 1954).
5. Ogden, L.J., Capt, Inf., interviewed at Fort Benning, 14 January 1956, summary attached as Annex A.
6. Palmer, Bruce, "Covering the Withdrawal into Bataan", Infantry School Quarterly, pp42-65, July, 1950. UD7
.U8
7. Patton, G.S., Infantry School Quarterly, pp26, January, 1952. UD7
.U8
8. Skokov, V., "Retrograde Movements of German Divisions and Regiments", Military Review, pp113-117, September, 1944. U1
L4
9. "War with Japan, Part 1" (West Point, N.Y.: Department of Military Art and Engineering, United States Military Academy, 1948).

ANNEX A (Interview of Capt. L.J. Ogden on 14 January 1956)

I was the 3d platoon leader of G Company, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division in Korea during the period of 3-8 September, 1950. On the afternoon of 6 September 1950 I received the order that G Company and the other companies of the battalion were to withdraw to the rear and to tie in on the left of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division to form a new defensive line. I participated in the G Company withdrawal from HILL 465 on the night 6-7 September 1950. On the morning of 7 September 1950 the company headquarters group and the 2d and 3d platoons reestablished contact with the remaining platoons of the company. At this time a patrol from A Company, 7th Cavalry Regiment made contact with us. The patrol was led by Captain (then Lieutenant) William Marshlender. Marshlender's patrol led the 2d and 3d platoons to the rear where they made contact with the 1st Battalion of the 7th Cavalry Regiment.


LAWRENCE J. OGDEN
Capt, Inf