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Should Aggressor, The Training Aid System, Be Changed
To Improve Tactical Training At Small Unit Level?

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PREFACE

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The Author served with the 3rd Battalion, 505th Airborne Infantry Regiment from July 1953 until December 1956. During this period he was assigned as a rifle company commander and executive officer for 10 months, battalion staff officer for 15 months, and heavy weapons company commander for 16 months.

He participated in three major maneuvers as an Aggressor: Exercise Falcon (Fall 1953), Exercise Flashburn (Spring 1954), and Exercise Sagebrush (Fall 1955). He was directly involved with training while on the battalion staff for an 8 month period serving as assistant S3 and as S3.

The Battalion also participated in numerous CONARC directed tests to include testing the Mobile Forces type organizations during May and June 1956.

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

INTRODUCTION

"A football coach preparing his team for a new season does not concern himself merely with thoroughly training the members of his team in the special plays he considers the most effective, but he also has his team practice defensive measures against plays which his future opponents are likely to employ. For this reason, the coach orders his first team to play against his second stringers who must employ the special football tactics of his team's future opponents.

In many ways, an army can be compared to a football team. The aim of both organizations is to defeat their adversaries, and for this purpose, their members are trained in tactics which are designed to overcome the fighting methods of their opponents. In order to accomplish this training goal, the realization of one factor is all-important: the opponents tactics will differ from those of the home team. It is for this reason that the United States Army has created the armed force of an imaginary enemy- Aggressor, whose fighting methods are different from United States Army tactics." (2:1) This excerpt from a United States Third Army Intelligence Bulletin published in 1952 gives a good indication of the way higher commanders feel with regard to the importance of utilizing Aggressor as a training aid. The Intelligence Bulletin further sums up the idea.. "To reach this final goal, intensive small unit tactical training will play a most important role. It is the effective utilization of Aggressor which will greatly contribute to the success of this training." (2:1)

The purpose of this discussion is to examine Aggressor as it stands today to determine if it is accomplishing its assigned missions within the scope of small unit tactical training. The missions of Aggressor are many and the concepts, literature, and training media available to accomplish these missions are varied. They will be examined to ascertain the degree of success attained in past actions, possible success which could have been attained using existing systems or techniques which might improve training on a small unit level, and possible changes to existing systems.

The scope of the discussion will be limited to tactical training with the lowest tactical units. It will be assumed that the intelligence phase of the mission of Aggressor as pertains to the training of the intelligence sections per se, is adequately performed. It will be mentioned only as it pertains to the smaller rifle elements. It must also be assumed that all members of the units involved have progressed beyond the Advanced Individual phase of training.

The fact that Field Manual 30-102, Aggressor Tactics, is a classified manual and cannot be discussed in this analysis has to be considered. As Aggressor tactics on an atomic battlefield apply only superficially to small units (no great changes in frontages or depths for small units in contact is contemplated), they will not be considered at this time. (7:46)

DISCUSSION

A basic need for an aggressor type system of training aids for the United States Army existed for a long time. This was evident during the training of Army units during the second World War. The maneuvers were unrealistic and unwieldy. Soldiers were either operating against other soldiers in the same uniform with only the knowledge that they were in the "Red" army or the "Blue" army to distinguish them, or they were called upon to use tremendous amounts of imagination to see enemy soldiers, guns, and artillery fire where nothing but a flag, an umpire or a piece of paper actually existed. It was difficult for the average soldier to become interested in, or derive much benefit from, training using this approach.

This need for a training aid was recognized by both the Army and the Marine Corps. After the war much thought was given to the subject. Aggressor was conceived in Ft. Riley Kansas, and first tested by a heterogeneous group of Army service units who operated as the opposing force for an Amphibious Operation conducted in California during the late summer of 1947. This test was successful, and in 1948, Lt. Col. C.W. Shuler in an article in the Marine Corps Gazette cited the success that the Army had enjoyed with this type of training aid and pointed out the need that the Marine Corps had for a like system.(8:18)

The missions assigned to the aggressor system as stated in paragraph 3 of Field Manual 30-101 are comprehensive.

"As the enemy or opposing force during the tactical training

of United States troops, Aggressor is designed to accomplish three primary missions-

(1) Provide opportunity for maneuver against a realistic enemy.

(2) Emphasize all phases of intelligence training.

(3) Instill awareness that future enemy forces will differ in uniforms, weapons, equipment, tactical doctrine, language, customs, and basic philosophy."(4:2)

How is Aggressor organized to accomplish this all encompassing mission? There are four Field Manuals, 30-101 through 30-104 which are devoted to answering this question. Briefly Field Manual 30-101 deals in the history of the Aggressor Nation, Uniforms, insignia of rank, distinctive markings for branches, vehicles and equipment, and recognition symbols in general. Field Manual 30-102 covers Aggressor tactics. Field Manual 30-103 is the Aggressor order of battle. It is an invaluable aid in the training of the various intelligence sections in the use of information obtained from the various sources, and in the production of combat intelligence. This manual should be consulted before assigning a unit designation to an aggressor force when preparing a training exercise. Field Manual 30-104 is a guide for planning an exercise involving aggressor. It covers aggressor representation in all phases and situations where Aggressor could be used. The manual is applicable to any exercise regardless of size, and outlines methods and techniques for writing the scenario, portraying the order of battle, preparing all

manner of intelligence play, special equipment play, psychological warfare, guerilla warfare, samples of aggressor items of identification and various other types of forms.

In addition to the four basic Field Manuals, there are Intelligence Bulletins and other amplifying documents published by higher headquarters for information and guidance to troop units. For instance, Intelligence Bulletin number 7, Headquarters Third United States Army, dated 11 August 1952 deals exclusively with Aggressor. It is entitled "Aggressor Offensive Tactics for use in Small Unit Tactical Training" and contains instructions regarding employment, additional training aids, and detailed check lists of instructions for Squad Leaders, Platoon Leaders, and Company Commanders who are to be utilized as Aggressor.

Most Army Training Aids Sub-Centers carry aggressor uniforms in stock, and other training aids can be ordered from Fort Riley, Kansas if the need for them arises.

Another way that Aggressor is utilized is in training films. There are many excellent training films in existence today in which Aggressor portrays a realistic enemy.

It should be clearly evident at this point that Aggressor is capable of being any size force that the commander wants it to be and that the only limitation to its use is the limit imposed on it by the minds of the commanders utilizing it.

How has Aggressor fared in actual practice? The first mission of Aggressor, and probably the most important one to the greatest number of people, "To provide opportunity for maneuver against a realistic enemy.", has been performed

adequately on many occasions. Generally the degree of success attained is in direct ratio to the amount of command emphasis placed upon subordinates to provide realism in the problem. As there is always a ponderous amount of command emphasis and supervision placed on planners of large scale maneuvers (division level or higher) to provide realism, there generally is excellent realism provided. Naturally, other factors enter into this. The very idea of maneuvers presupposes opposing forces moving about the landscape attempting to defeat each other tactically; whereas, the training of a rifle platoon in the attack, for instance, may be much more academic in scope, and less enthusiastically received by the troops.

Exercise Falcon, a test conducted by the 82d Airborne Division during the summer-fall of 1953, utilized aggressor forces to good advantage. The 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment was the test unit, testing a proposed change to the, then current, Table of Organization and Equipment. Tests were conducted from squad level to Regimental level, with Aggressor Forces used in practically every phase.

In the final phase of the test, the 325th Airborne Infantry (the test regiment) was compared to the 504th Airborne (current organization) as sister Regiments of the 82d Division. Both Regiments opposed the 505th Airborne Infantry who operated against the Division as Aggressor.

This twelve day tactical exercise provided excellent realistic training for allechelons, from the individual rifleman to the Division Staff. The 505th "Aggressors" became adept at retrograde movements while retreating some

25 miles in 5 days. The members of the 504th and 325th mounted many attacks, maintained constant pressure, received excellent training as tank-infantry teams, (as did the 505th) and engaged in active, interesting patrolling activity.

The enemy was so realistically portrayed and enthusiasm was so high, that patrolling had to be rigidly controlled during the final phases of the test to prevent soldiers on both sides from physically damaging each other.

Small units on each side gained valuable experience in the art of patrolling. One Aggressor platoon size combat patrol under the command of (then) 2d Lt. Jerry Border of Company K 505th Airborne Infantry worked its way, during daylight hours, into an enemy Battalion Headquarters installation, destroyed it by fire and returned to Aggressor lines unscathed. This type of unrestrained action against a live enemy, in a realistic situation that both sides had been living for a number of days, does not often happen in training.

Valuable experience was gained by young soldiers in the art of camouflage and camouflage discipline. A platoon size reconnaissance patrol led by 2d Lt. S. D. Day of company K, 505th Airborne Infantry, in a fluid situation was inadvertently cut off by a company size tank-infantry team from 3d Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry. This tank infantry team then proceeded to use the patrol's position as an assembly area for thirty minutes. By the skillful use of camouflage and camouflage discipline, not a man in the patrol was detected. Unfortunately, this type of train-

ing does not often occur either. Both incidents were examples of realistic training against a live enemy which the individual rifleman participated in, understood, and enjoyed;

Another large scale maneuver which had exceptionally good Aggressor play was "Exercise Sagebrush" conducted during November-December 1955. The 505th Airborne Infantry again participated as "Aggressor", and portrayed an active realistic enemy during the maneuver.

On 17 November, approximately an hour before dark, the Regiment, less 2d Battalion, parachuted behind enemy lines. On the night of 18 November, more than one hundred supply vehicles loaded with POL and Rations were captured by one roadblock manned by personnel from Company I. United States Forces had a very real problem until the umpires forced the release of the supplies.

During the last stages of Exercise Sagebrush, 3rd Battalion 505th Airborne Infantry (motorized) with a tank company attached, penetrated thirty miles into enemy territory, captured a key road junction, captured over ninety supply vehicles and stalled the advance of an armored column for 7 hours, causing it to deploy at night and maneuver against them.

On a smaller scale, the use of Aggressor is even more easily accomplished and just as important. In March of 1954, Company K, 505th Airborne Infantry provided a reinforced platoon of 54 men for a night raid mission with subsequent night rendezvous with C-122 aircraft on an unimproved landing zone. Company L of the same battalion provided a thirty man Aggressor force motorized on 1/4 and 3/4 ton trucks.

The object of the exercise was to parachute after dark 8000

meters from the objective, attack and destroy the objective with demolitions, (the objective was a mock up of a guided missile launching site) move 15,000 meters eluding all Aggressor patrols in the area, and rendezvous with the C-122 aircraft on the landing zone the following night. In this problem the Aggressor occupied the objective area and had to be driven off. The raiding party destroyed the objective with live demolitions and then eluded active Aggressor patrols for 18 hours. Aggressor was a very real opponent for the raiding party, and their aggressive patrolling activity added immeasurably to the excellent training results achieved.

It should be apparent that in all the preceding examples, when an opportunity was provided for maneuver against a realistic enemy, this realistic enemy or Aggressor detail had practically the same opportunity for maneuver. For all practical purposes, there is no such thing as personnel lost to training because they are on an aggressor detail. Especially on maneuver type details does Aggressor learn his lessons well.

One reason for this is the interest that is generated in the soldier when he is placed on an Aggressor detail. There are several reasons why most soldiers like to be on the Aggressor detail. A major reason is that Aggressor is shorter in strength and must act with speed and audacity to offset his lack of numbers. This also makes Aggressor the underdog and all Americans are sympathetic to underdogs.

Anything out of the ordinary humdrum of everyday existence appeals to the soldier.

Even on a more rigidly controlled type problem, Aggressor learns basic principles of attack, defense, retrograde movements and the like, and with frequent discussions held by the senior members of the aggressor detail, faults in both aggressor and enemy performance can be brought to their attention. Since the aggressor detail is functioning as a training aid, it should be well informed on the conduct of the problem, and by knowing what to expect and when to expect it, the detail will be able to pick up many of the errors as they are committed, and be more receptive to the teaching points brought out at the critiques. Judicious use of short critiques of the aggressor detail is an invaluable aid to training. For example, when the Mobile Forces concept was tested at Ft. Bragg, N.C. during May and June of 1956, Aggressor activities were closely controlled for test purposes. When Aggressor was supposed to attack at a certain time and place he did so; but, he still followed basic troop leading procedure. He was given an attack order, moved from an assembly area to an attack position, crossed a well defined line of departure, and made an assault. When he defended on successive positions, he gained valuable experience in organizing terrain, establishing crew served weapons positions, use of camouflage, fire control and discipline, and in general, learned to operate as a team.

All of the preceding examples have been of the unusual condition as opposed to the ordinary daily grind of normal

Army Training Program cycle training. All of the examples had this in common: they were special mission type problems or maneuvers, one shot affairs which demanded maximum effort from the unit, and support from all echelons of command. Now, as opposed to the unusual type of training ordered by CONARC, Army, Corps, or the like, examine the daily training which confronts the soldier and the unit. There are many problems which confront the unit conducting the training. In the first place, this is daily training and constantly grinds into the soldier's consciousness as a thing which happens as inevitably as death and taxes. He naturally has a tendency to become bored with it all, and does not muster the interest for it that he does for special missions, tests, maneuvers and the like. The training is further hampered in many instances by inadequate space in which to train realistically, and in too many cases, by the unit being over committed to the extent that the unit is too busy cutting grass, pulling targets, preparing a demonstration, practicing football or some other equally unimportant job, to turn out enough people to train as a team.

Couple this with inadequate time to prepare good instruction and a lack of imagination on the part of some instructors, and the training will collapse of its own accord. In most cases the personnel in charge of preparing the training are young and interested, but they are effectively hamstrung in their efforts to provide interesting training by a lack of interest on the part of higher headquarters. This takes many forms, such as area beautification, all manner of special duty, Pest details, demonstrations, all of which seem

to have a higher priority than training.

All of the above items can be reduced to one factor: lack of command emphasis on realistic training. In all of the examples used above wherein the training was effective, and the realism provided by active aggressor details, command emphasis was present. Realism was demanded, in fact, by the headquarters assigning the special task, be it maneuver or test. In the case where daily training is failing, a shift in command emphasis from police call and special duty to realistic training is necessary.

It takes very little originality to requisition aggressor uniforms, provide a logical scenario for the practical exercise which all effective teaching requires, and provide an aggressor detail to implement the scenario with realistic activity.

There should be no problem in providing an aggressor detail. On the rifle company level, if no detail is forthcoming from battalion, two squads from the reserve platoon under the command of the assistant platoon sergeant could handle the assignment. If the weapons platoon is not training separately, the mortar section could handle the job on occasion. By coordination with the S3 section at battalion, a platoon from another company within the battalion can be assigned the job of furnishing the aggressor detail for the day. Unless command emphasis at all echelons is applied, there will be no realism, no active aggressor in training, and no interest in training.

Another method of providing an aggressor detail has been tried at various installations and found to be generally unsatisfactory. In some training regiments, certain cadre personnel were assigned to an "Aggressor"

platoon, and trained and used exclusively on t his training aid mission. This was unsatisfactory because the platoon either had too many assignments to handle adequately at one time or they had long periods of inactivity. In general, this method of procuring aggressor representation is considered a waste of manpower.

About the only time when there will be no troops available to act as Aggressor will be when there are not enough troops out for training to be trained effectively as a team anyway.

Another part of the overall mission of Aggressor, which combines closely with the mission of providing opportunity for maneuver against a realistic enemy, is the last part: "Instill awareness that future enemy forces will differ in uniforms, weapons, equipment, tactical doctrine, language, customs, and basic philosophy." (4:2) In any training exercise that uses Aggressor as a training aid, a scenario is written which gives background information which covers many of the above listed items. If it is a large scale exercise such as a maneuver, much more time and effort is expended to instill this background information into both United States and Aggressor troops. During Exercise Sagebrush, one of the Aggressor companies which was supposed to be from Spain, grew mustaches to give themselves a foreign look. In all cases, I.D. cards, party membership cards, and other recognition items were prepared to assist the Aggressor detail in psychologically preparing themselves to act as believable Aggressors. These identification items were also used in prisoner of war-play. There are

also literature and poster type training aids available to familiarize the soldier with the differences in uniform, insignia, rank, and branch of service.

The average soldier will not realize that Aggressor has such things as a language, customs, and philosophy of his own unless he is taught it in a class. However, this is a relatively unimportant part of the mission, and in this world of uneasy peace and hot and cold running wars, the average soldier receives enough information from newspapers, magazines, movie newsreels, and troop information lectures to realize just who the possible enemies of the United States are and how they differ in philosophy, languages, customs, weapons and the like.

An important part of this third mission of aggressor, "...differences in tactical doctrine..."(4:2) is more often than not ignored. Intelligence Bulletin number 7 spells out in detail the way these tactics should be used and furnishes check lists for use by squad leader, platoon leader, and company commander; however, these foreign tactics are almost never used. This is one phase of realism which is generally lacking, primarily, because very few people have bothered to look close enough at aggressor to see that they do have different tactics from those of the United States.

Differences in equipment is generally not played either, but this is not nearly as important as the indifference to foreign tactics.

The second part of the overall mission, "Emphasize all phases of intelligence training."(4:2), is very adequately performed at all echelons of intelligence training.

It provides an excellent vehicle for all phases of combat intelligence as it applies to the intelligence section levels, and also furnishes an excellent means of injecting intelligence training into tactical training at the lowest troop level. It is especially good for training the soldier in the procedures for handling prisoners of war, captured documents and equipment, and reporting of enemy activity. If Aggressor is properly used in intelligence roles, troops can become highly sensitive to security and intelligence.

How can this Aggressor training aids system be improved? The first thing that can be done is to orient the thinking of all commanders to the point where they will demand realism in training and deemphasize some of the useless tasks which sap the energy and aggressiveness of junior leaders on the working level. The second thing that can be done is to require all personnel who prepare instruction to become thoroughly familiar with the training aids that they have available to them. The third thing which can be done is constant guidance and supervision of the junior leaders by those leaders responsible for the supervision of training from the lowest level up. These three things, if accomplished can cure most of the realism problems which fall outside of the limits set by troop safety.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that any breakdown in training which is due to lack of realism, can be directly attributed to lack of command emphasis on the part of commanders responsible for supervision of training, rather than any inherent faults in the Aggressor system of training aids.

It is felt that no need exists to cause any changes to be made in the Aggressor training aids system at this time.

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