

Spot Reports

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Various sophisticated intelligence-gathering systems are finding their way onto the modern electronic battlefield. But these systems are of little direct value to the battalion commander; he can only hope that the information they generate will be passed down to him when he asks for it. Unfortunately, though, in a fast-moving battle such information will usually arrive too late to be of much use to him in his tactical decision-making.

Today's commander must rely, essentially, on spot reports from the same intelligence-gathering sources his predecessor in World War II had — his front line troops and attachments, his scout platoon, and his fire support officer (FSO) — with some help, perhaps, from some attached ground surveillance radars (GSR) from the division's Combat Electronic Warfare Intelligence (CEWI) battalion.

The most important of these sources to the battalion commander (or the commander at any level), and the most often overlooked, is the front line soldiers. They, better than anyone else, can supply the commander with accurate and timely information on the location and activity of the enemy in all kinds of weather.

These soldiers must be trained to provide accurate, continuous spot reports to the chain of command on

their contact, or lack of contact, with enemy forces during the course of their assigned mission.

Many units teach soldiers the SALUTE format as a basis for sending spot reports — size, activity, location, uniform, time, and equip-



ment. Although this method is well suited for reminding a soldier of the information he should report after a patrol, it is not the best one to use in sending concise radio reports.

A more efficient format, which can be used to supplement SALUTE and to speed the processing of spot reports, is SEAL (size, equipment, activity, and location). A spot report

based on this format conveys the necessary information briefly and in the proper order — for example, “two T62s moving west, vicinity PK 347293.” (Time is not included because at company level the time is immediate, and the battalion S2 can affix the time when he receives the report. The time *is* noted, though, when there is a delay between sighting and reporting the enemy.)

Activity is a very important but often overlooked part of the spot report. It cannot be assumed that if no activity is reported the enemy is doing nothing. To the company commander or the platoon leader, it may be obvious that the enemy tanks are stationary. But to a battalion commander, who may be in another company's sector, or to the S2 in the TOC it will not be. For these reasons, the disposition of the enemy tanks must be noted.

If activity of any kind goes unreported, the information, or lack of it, can easily be misinterpreted. If Company A reports three T62s moving at location X without giving their direction, and Company B reports three T62s at location Y, the S2 may plot two enemy platoons on his map where only one exists.

Above all, spot reports must be sent immediately. When dealing with actions at battalion level, the commander must know immediately what is to his front.

The other important sources of intelligence for a battalion commander are his scout platoon and his FSO. The scout platoon is especially important in an armor battalion where there are no attached infantry units. The platoon is responsible for locating the enemy and for forwarding reports, and it is the only unit in the battalion whose primary function is to gather information.

The battalion FSO is always available to the battalion staff, and he can provide a wealth of information to the S2. Although a company commander may forget to send a spot

report, he will invariably call for fire when he sees the enemy.

The FSO will become even more important as TACFIRE gets to the units. With TACFIRE, the S2 can step into the FSO's M577 and get an accurate printout showing the locations and types of targets that have been fired upon. Such information is invaluable because it shows trends in enemy movement and may fill the gaps in skimpy spot reports.

If the individual soldiers in the front lines are trained to use their eyes and ears properly and to send accurate, complete, and timely spot

reports, this vital information will be available to those who need it.

A commander is not likely to lose a battle because of too much information, but he may lose it because of too little.

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CAMMS

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The Computer Assisted Map Maneuver Simulation (CAMMS) system has proved to be one of the best methods of training battalion and brigade staffs in the Army, especially those in the Reserve Components.

The Army has used map maneuvers in training for some time, but before the advent of computers the work had to be done manually, which took a lot of people and a lot of time. Controllers and reactors were needed to feed canned messages to the unit that was playing; then they had to wait around while the unit went through its staff actions, planned some course of action, and issued its orders. The reactors who represented subordinate units would then respond, usually from a playbook. In some of the high level and more sophisticated map maneuvers, more people had to be employed to derive relative combat

power figures and to roll dice to determine a random number and the outcome of the battle. Often some of these people were eliminated to save money, and then realism was lost.

The introduction of the computer, with its ability to perform complex mathematical operations at high speeds and to store and retrieve data, has reduced the number of people and the amount of time needed to conduct a map maneuver and, at the same time, has increased realism. Usually, a main computer is tied into the training area by telephone lines and remote terminals. The computer has several programs, including some that do mathematical calculations and others that simply update a data base.

The CAMMS system is most effective when used in a multi-battalion exercise. Such an exercise requires a

large room to serve as a control and main battle area, separate rooms for each group of company commanders, and a room for each battalion staff.

In the main control area a large scale map is set up, and unit markers are placed on it to represent enemy and friendly forces. These markers all have a computer code that identifies the type of unit, its organization, and its equipment. These units are moved by table controllers who also serve as platoon leaders. Connected with their company commanders by telephone lines, they report the condition on the map board. The company commanders, in turn, are linked to their battalions by radio, while the battalions are linked to their brigade headquarters, which is usually controlling the exercise, by telephone. The brigade headquarters is best situated next to the map so that the