

soldier's official SQT score is forwarded to him through the chain of command. This form, the official record of the Active Army soldier's performance, is used for EPMS purposes.

In addition to the ISR, a summary report giving the consolidated results of the SQT task performances within a unit is distributed to unit commanders at division level and below. This report can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a unit's training program and as a basis for improve-

ment in those areas that are identified as being weak.

Attaining and sustaining the proficiency of soldiers in their individual and collective tasks is vital to the combat readiness of a unit. And an effective program through which to evaluate that proficiency is essential to a commander in determining the effectiveness of his unit's training methods and techniques.

ITEP provides the Army and unit commanders with a valuable system of evaluation and feedback that they

can use in effectively managing their training. To use the program properly, commanders, supervisors, and trainers at all levels must fully understand it and promote its use.



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Winning at the NTC: Deliberate Attack

MAJOR VERNON W. HUMPHREY

The Valley of Death at the National Training Center is about 17 kilometers long, running from west to east. (See accompanying map.) The western end of the valley, about two kilometers wide, terminates in an escarpment known as "The Shelf." At its eastern end, the valley opens into a bowl-like depression about 10 kilometers wide. The western two-thirds of the valley is narrow, with Tiefert Mountain in the north and a lower range of hills in the south. Tiefert Mountain is impassable to vehicle traffic, and the southern hills are trafficable only with difficulty through narrow, tortuous passes.

The key terrain features in the western part of the valley are The Shelf, Hill 692, and the passes in the southern hills. In the east the flat, open nature of the ground lends some tactical importance to five seemingly insignificant hills — The Whale, Casey, Tony, Hill 466, and Bone.

Gullies and dry stream beds offer excellent cover, while the width of the

bowl allows attacking forces to bypass the key terrain features without coming within range of the defender's weapons. The prevailing wind is from the northwest.

PLAN

The U.S. task force that took part in this particular operation was ordered to conduct a deliberate attack from an assembly area in the vicinity of The Shelf to seize Tony. (Tony is actually a series of low hills about 10 to 20 meters high that lie astride the main road running through the valley.) The order specified that the task force's units could not move forward of Phase Line Apple (about 1,000 meters west of The Whale) before the specified time. The task force commander did request and receive permission to send patrols east of The Whale. The TF had both helicopter and fixed wing aircraft available for the operation.

The TF commander's scheme of maneuver called for Team Alpha to attack on the right (south) and for Team Bravo to attack on the left (north). These two teams would sweep to the north of the objective where they would make a 90-degree turn to the south to hit the north end of the objective. Team Charlie, with the AT platoon attached, was to follow the task force, seize The Whale, then push on to Casey. A north-south boundary line was drawn through the task force objective to designate the team objectives.

Helicopters were ordered to reconnoiter the dry stream beds and other likely danger areas before the task force moved out.

A deliberate attack is supposed to be made by a unit that has detailed knowledge of the opposing force and enough time for detailed planning. This task force had time for planning and had been told about the terrain and the weather, but it knew nothing of the OPFOR's strengths and dispo-

sitions. Its scout platoon did not locate the enemy and, despite receiving permission to patrol east of The Whale, the task force did not actually send any patrols beyond that terrain feature. The helicopter reconnaissance was the sole effective intelligence gathering effort, and it was used only to search the gullies running into the valley in advance of the task force's approach.

As the task force emerged into the bowl, it came under long range OPFOR fire. Near Hill 466, the task force commander's vehicle was disabled. He passed control to the S-3, who was in the task force's tactical operations center near The Shelf about 14 kilometers away. The S-3, unable to control the action, passed control to the Air Battle Captain. By the time the task force commander could commandeer another vehicle and get back into the battle, no one had a clear picture of what was happening.

Team Charlie reached The Whale, but without the AT platoon, which had become separated and lost. (It was not found again, in fact, until after the battle was over.) Although Team Charlie remained near The Whale and did not push on to Casey, the task force commander did not know this.

Teams Alpha and Bravo massed in the vicinity of Hill 466 and established a thin but stationary smoke screen. The two teams then advanced abreast

through the smoke, heading for the objective — Tony — in a massed charge. Neither team established a base of fire; each apparently planned to push all three of its platoons onto its part of Tony at the same time.

The teams did not make it. Most of their vehicles were destroyed in a 300-meter circle about 1,000 meters north of the objective. One mixed force of three vehicles did reach an antitank ditch on the north edge of the objective; about 10 dismounted infantrymen managed to cross it but they were "killed" by an OPFOR counterattack.

ANALYSIS

The TF's reconnaissance effort was totally inadequate. It failed to learn anything about the OPFOR and did not prevent the OPFOR from observing the task force's movement as it advanced. It turned out, for example, that the OPFOR had had a five-man OP on The Whale, and these men had kept their commander fully informed of the task force's dispositions and progress. The OP withdrew unscathed when Team Charlie came up.

This lack of intelligence led to a weak plan. The task force did not assign specific company objectives, and the companies did not assign specific platoon objectives. Company commanders and other key leaders did not conduct personal recon-

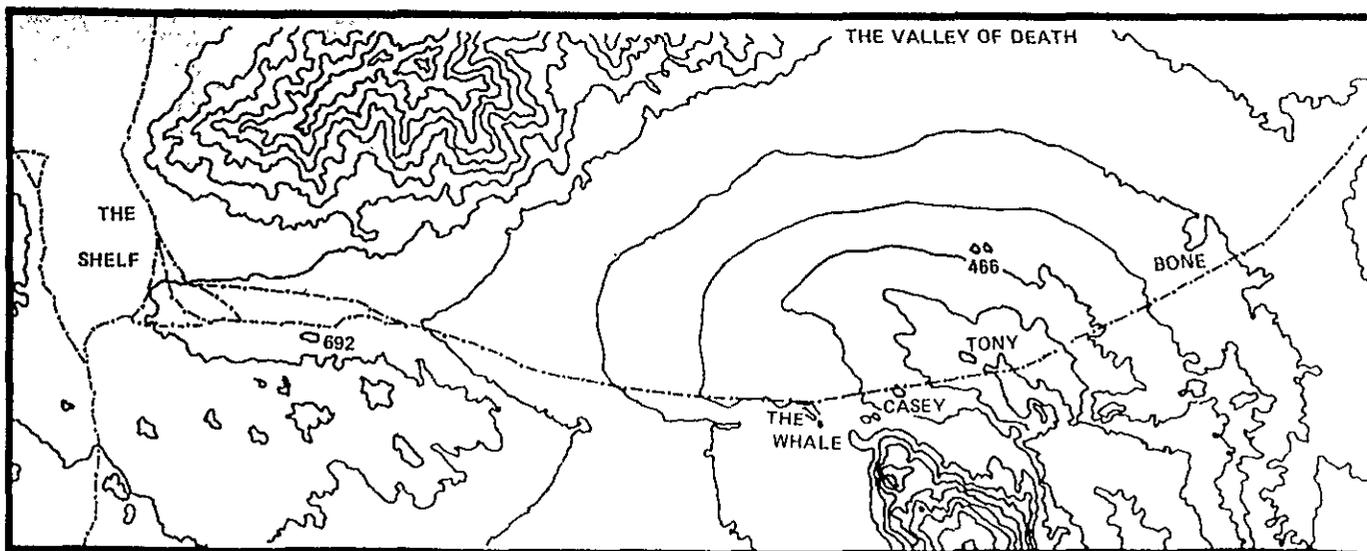
naissances, and this was a key factor in the AT platoon's getting lost and in the failure of Team Charlie to push on to Casey.

Command and control was weak at the start and finally collapsed altogether. The TOC was ineffective and, in the confusion that resulted from the control of the battle being passed from the task force commander to the S-3 to the air battle commander and back to the task force commander, vital information about Team Charlie and the AT platoon was lost.

There was no fire support of any kind. The fire support teams did not call in missions, and there was no battalion base of fire because Team Charlie did not get to Casey with the AT platoon. This error was compounded when the company commanders failed to establish company bases of fire.

The use of smoke was also faulty. The attacking companies took almost no casualties until they passed through the thin, stationary smoke screen. Then they became easy targets for the OPFOR gunners who were able to shoot without being distracted by return fire.

An alternative scheme of maneuver that could have been used is quite similar to the one the task force actually adopted. But in the alternative plan, the first step would have been to establish an OP on The Whale. From this OP the scout platoon could have



observed the objective and the surrounding area at the same time it kept the OPFOR from observing the approach of the task force.

Team Charlie should have led the task force instead of trailing. This would have improved command and control because the task force commander would have been on the spot to see that the base of fire was established. The occupation of Casey and the establishment of a base of fire was crucial to the success of this operation and had to be done before any further progress could be made.

The TOC should have moved just behind the maneuver force, setting up communications and leap-frogging forward to stay near the battle. This would have further improved the TF's command and control efforts and would have kept the alternate command post near the scene of the action.

The sweep to the north did succeed in bringing the task force onto the flank of the objective, but it could just as easily have brought the TF to the rear of the objective instead. In the alternative scheme, Hill 466 would have been assigned to Team Alpha as an objective. From that point Team Alpha would have served as a near base of fire to complement the far base established on Casey by Team Charlie. The OPFOR would then have been forced to fight in two directions.

Team Bravo would have continued past Hill 466 and then turned to attack the south half of Tony. This move would have put the OPFOR at a serious disadvantage: if it faced Team Bravo, it would have had Charlie in its rear and Alpha on its flank. Team Charlie's TOW fires would have been highly effective in isolating the OPFOR on the south half of Tony from their friends on the north half.

Team Bravo would have attacked the south half behind a *moving* smoke screen that would have stayed with them all the way into the objective. This would have allowed the effective use of smoke without interfering with the effective employment of the base of fire.

With the south half of Tony secured, Team Bravo would have assumed the role of near base of fire, firing on the north half from close range while Alpha launched its assault. Then, to defend against Alpha's attack from the north, the OPFOR's rear would have been exposed to Bravo's fire from the south half of Tony and its left flank to Charlie's fire from Casey.

In this scheme, the principles of suppress, isolate, and destroy would have been used to concentrate overwhelming combat power on a portion of the OPFOR.

LESSONS LEARNED

Again, several lessons can be learned from the task force's experience:

- A TF cannot conduct a deliberate attack without intelligence. If it does not have hard intelligence, it must go out and get some.

- A good reconnaissance effort can pay double in terms of denying observation to the enemy. The occupation of The Whale in this operation illustrates this point.

- Commanders and leaders cannot skimp on or ignore their personal reconnaissances.

- Commanders should routinely assume that they will be taken out of action at the most critical point and plan for that eventuality. The delegation of command should be worked out before the battle, and the designated backup commander must always be in position to take charge of the battle.

- As a unit closes with its enemy, the intensity of combat increases to the disadvantage of the attacker. An attacker can offset this disadvantage only by increasing his use of artillery fires and air support, and by establishing bases of fire.

- Each echelon — task force, company, platoon — must establish its own base of fire. Trying to sweep onto an objective with all maneuver forces but without bases of fire is to repeat the mistake the Light Brigade made in 1854. ("It is magnificent, but it is not war.")

- Multiple bases of fire that subject an enemy force to fires from different directions are extremely effective because they force the enemy to fight several battles at once.

- The assignment of specific company objectives improves command and control and makes planning easier for the company commanders.

- If possible, TF objectives should be taken in sequence with the aim being first to isolate the objective under attack and then to concentrate the TF's full combat power on it.

- Smoke is effective only if it keeps up with the maneuvering elements. But the smoke must not screen the OPFOR from the TF's base of fire.

Units that learn these lessons and apply them to their training at the NTC will stand a better chance of winning against the OPFOR.

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