

To conduct a successful AAR, the leader must overcome his natural tendency to "take charge"—that is, to evaluate, correct, or just talk. Instead, he must develop the ability to maintain control both of himself and of his group, to ask questions, and then to listen careful-

ly to the answers. Soldiers benefit more if they are prompted to learn from recalling and retelling their common experiences than if they are told what they did.

A good after action review makes the difference between training lessons learned and training lessons lost.

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Another Look at Phase Lines

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A phase line, according to FM 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Symbols, is "a line used for control and coordination of military operations...usually a recognizable terrain feature extending across the zone of action."

Thus it is that we define one of the most basic graphic control measures. In wooded terrain, or rolling terrain cut with ridges, streambeds, distinct roads and trails, this is a more than adequate definition and description. But only a part of the world has terrain that fits this description. How do we as professionals adequately phase operations in wide open expanses? How do we phase desert operations? How can we best enable our subordinates to recognize phase lines? And do we think of night operations when choosing phase lines?

I would like to propose another way of planning phase lines that gives commanders some alternatives to the usual terrain-following method. It is simple; it can easily be adapted for night operations; and it allows the accurate transmission of graphic control measures to subordinates by radio, something our present system does not offer.

Phase lines can be straight. If there are no recognizable terrain features that extend across the zone of action, a leader

must look outside the boundaries and select prominent terrain features that are clearly visible from the zone of action. These include peaks, valleys, draws, spurs, and saddles. He can draw straight lines across the zone that join two such terrain features and thereby produce a pair of points (called a point pair). The actual phase line is the portion of the line connecting the points that falls within the lateral boundaries of his zone.

This kind of phase line is easy to recognize. By simply raising his arms and pointing at the two features, a soldier can gain a good appreciation of his position in relation to the phase line. With peaks and saddles that are clearly visible against the skyline, even night navigation to and identification of the phase line is simple.

Valleys, draws, and spurs can also be used effectively in the daytime or with lunar illumination, but these are harder to identify under low-illumination conditions.

One method of overcoming these difficulties is to plan illumination marking rounds down the sides of the planned advance route. Firing illumination beyond the ridgelines, thus backlighting the horizon, also allows for a clear determination of prominent terrain features.

It also avoids illuminating friendly troops, reduces the highlight cutoff or washout of night vision devices, and may well act as a partial deception measure. If these marking fires are planned as part of an overall harassment and interdiction fire plan, even their intent can be concealed from the enemy.

Obviously, this system isn't perfect. It won't work when smoke, fog, or clouds obscure the features. In these conditions, though, pace count or odometer readings—along with time travelled, speed, and azimuth from the last identified phase line—can help to locate positions through dead reckoning. And, if breaks in the smoke or fog allow extended visibility, this system allows for rapid, positive position identification. Helicopters can also use it.

Of course, it won't work in wooded terrain or extremely rolling terrain with no prominent peaks. But the usual identification of terrain features can be used in this kind of terrain.

The technique works best in large valleys and on small plains with mountains as boundaries. The terrain at the National Training Center is a good example. Where no distinct features are visible on one flank, a modification using the magnetic azimuth to features on the other

flank can be used. But in such cases—moving along the front of a mountain range, for example—adequate stream drainage should provide enough terrain features for a leader to use in conventional terrain-following techniques.

In the proposed system, a leader can send encrypted grid coordinates by radio for the point pairs to connect, along with the name of the phase line. Then, his subordinates can post their maps accurately from the radioed information. This can be critical if an operation is especially successful and a breakthrough operation or pursuit takes a unit rapidly beyond its planned graphics.

This ability to transmit control measures could well allow commanders in an operation to exploit success rapidly while maintaining control of the successful unit.

Under such conditions, boundaries could be designated as: "Ridge, NK123456 to NK124987, and ridge NK208439 to NK201975" and the phase lines could be filled in as follows: "PL Orange NK041522 to NK225498, PL Pink NK124618 to NK206597," and so on.

This would require either encryption or a secure radio net, of course, and the transmission times would be slightly longer than might be desirable, but only the phase lines that were needed immediately would be transmitted each time. Then, once the next to last line had been reached, two or three more phase lines would be transmitted. Realistically, at some point even the most successful unit would have to stop to resupply and rest, and at this point, additional, more inclusive graphics could be brought

forward.

This system isn't a cure-all, but it is simple, and it can be readily adapted to normally featureless wide-open terrain in which position location is often difficult at best.

I have found it useful for desert warfare, where clear skies and limited vegetation allow the horizon to be seen from a long distance. Any leader who conducts operations in a location that favors this technique may want to try it.

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The Three M's of Morale

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We see, hear, and use slogans every day. The trouble with these slogans is that the good ideas they express quickly become just trite phrases, and we forget what they really mean.

Take "Leading and Caring," for instance. This excellent slogan was intended to remind us of the things we were taught early in our careers, but it quickly became "lead'n-n-care'n," and then just a blur of sound that we repeated, but paid little attention to.

Nobody is immune to the danger of forgetting the meaning of such slogans, but several years ago I came up with something that has helped me. I don't know when or where I developed this idea (and if I got it from someone else, I hereby acknowledge the debt), but for quite a few years I have been using what I call "The Three M's." I firmly believe

that if a company commander can keep these Three M's straight, he can alleviate a good many of the troop problems in his unit.

The first of the Three M's is Meals. Always serve the best meal possible, given the tactical circumstances. Serve hot Class A's whenever possible and when not precluded by the training itself.

If you're running a Ranger team—in combat or in training—you probably can't serve that team hot meals, nor should you. And if you're running a survival exercise in which you want your people to live on snakes and bugs, fine. No one is going to be hurt by not eating much for 48 to 72 hours, *if that is the point of the exercise.*

If your company is one of those that are forward in the attack, MREs (meals, ready to eat) are fine. But if it's one of

the companies forward in a static defense, you probably should be serving hot meals. And if your company is in reserve in the defense, I can't think of any reason why you should *not* be serving decent meals. Sure, it's a little more trouble, but your troops deserve no less.

It isn't a matter of coddling them. You know that the best training, the toughest training, is when you're so tired your teeth ache and your eyeballs burn. You feel you can't go on much longer, but you do. Your troops can't go much farther, but you ask them to go on—and they do. But what's the point of feeding them MREs when it has nothing to do with the tactical play? You've heard them say, "I don't have to practice to be miserable," and there's some truth to that, at least where food is concerned. The idea of feeding MREs just because you're in the