

ers must be trained and experienced enough to operate independently. The platoon leader coordinates tactical decisions directly with the section leaders and contacts the platoon sergeant to discuss both the tactical and the logistical situations.

Maintenance. A mortar platoon lives or dies by its maintenance practices. The M106A2 mortar carrier and M577A2 command post vehicle are aging pieces of equipment that require special care. In addition to these vehicles, there are the M30 mortar system, M53 sight, M2 .50 caliber machinegun, SINCGARS radio system, M23 MBC, M2 aiming circle, night observation devices, individual weapons, and protective masks.

None of these items is more important than the other. All of them must have weekly preventive maintenance checks and services to operations manu-

al standards with status written up on 2404s. The equipment must also be cleaned, repaired, and serviced. In the field, at least one 2404 on each vehicle usually must be written up daily and given to the platoon sergeant to take to the combat trains. All other items must be checked to standards and any deadline defects recorded on 2404s.

A good maintenance program should be an integral part of the mortar platoon's operation, and quarterly services must be a period of high intensity maintenance, with the sole objective of improving the platoon's equipment readiness status. Services must be coordinated not only with the company maintenance officer, but also with the communications repair shop, the armorer, and the direct support weapons repair shops. These services must include protective masks, NBC equipment, and TA-50 equipment, all of

which must be thoroughly cleaned and inspected.

Platoon SOPs, battle drills, the Korean terrain and weather, platoon and section operations, local security, communications, and logistics and maintenance are the essential elements of the successful tactical employment of a 4.2-inch mortar platoon. These building blocks should not be restricted to the platoon's immediate chain of command. They should also have the attention of company commanders, battalion commanders, and battalion S-3s as a part of planning and executing mortar platoon training and operations.

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Scouts

Engagement and Risk Assessment Criteria

CAPTAIN KEVIN J. DOUGHERTY

Stealth is a key element of all reconnaissance operations. In a textbook reconnaissance, the scout platoon moves undetected to its objective, gains whatever information is required, and reports that information without the enemy ever knowing it was there.

Of course, this is all easy to say and hard to do, and it does not address all battlefield situations. For this reason, standing operating procedures (SOPs) and orders for scout platoons (and other units that conduct reconnaissance) should include instructions for two key criteria—target engagement and risk

acceptance.

It is almost universally accepted that the scouts are the "hunters" as opposed to the "killers" on the battlefield. As far as direct fire goes, the scout platoon's limited size and its lack of automatic weapons make this pretty much a foregone conclusion. But the scouts' ability to call for and adjust indirect fire does provide a tremendous potential for destruction.

During a rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), for example, a scout squad pinpointed the opposing force's battalion supply point and

destroyed most of the site. The mission was performed without a single friendly casualty. Such success is rarely achieved by entire battalions during deliberate attacks against similar objectives. Obviously, then, there are times when it is appropriate for scouts to be "killers." The question is, "When?"

It is too late to begin answering this question when a scout observer finds himself frozen behind marginal concealment with an enemy platoon on a direct azimuth to his location. His actions must be guided by what he has already learned from SOPs, the opera-

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tions order (OPORD), and the commander's intent. Before he ever passes through friendly lines, his leaders must check his knowledge of this information. This is best accomplished by a series of "What if?" backbriefs: "What if you find yourself in Situation X? What will your actions be?"

The scout leader must train this soldier on at least four contingencies that will affect a decision to engage a target:

- The need for self defense.
- The availability of combat forces in the area.
- The effect of the engagement on future operations.
- The importance of the target.

The cases involving self defense are the most clear-cut. All scouts must be able to engage the enemy to protect themselves. Usually these situations involve using short-range direct fire and breaking contact as soon as possible after an engagement.

If self defense is not the issue, the next question the scout must ask himself is whether there are combat forces in the area that can destroy the enemy better than he can. He must remember that he is trained and equipped to locate, observe, and report the enemy, while the soldiers in the rifle companies are trained and equipped to close with and destroy the enemy. If a combat force is in a position to destroy the enemy, the scout should report his observation and leave the killing to the better-equipped force.

If no combat forces are in the region, he must ask himself the next question. What effect will the engagement have on future operations? These future operations include both the scout's reconnaissance effort and the battalion's overall mission.

Engaging the enemy with direct fire will probably disclose the scout's position and affect his ability to continue his reconnaissance. It may also cause the battalion to forfeit surprise by alerting the enemy to its interest in the area. Indirect fire is less likely to disclose the scout's position, and he may be able to continue operating in the area without being detected. But even indirect fire will increase the enemy's alertness and,

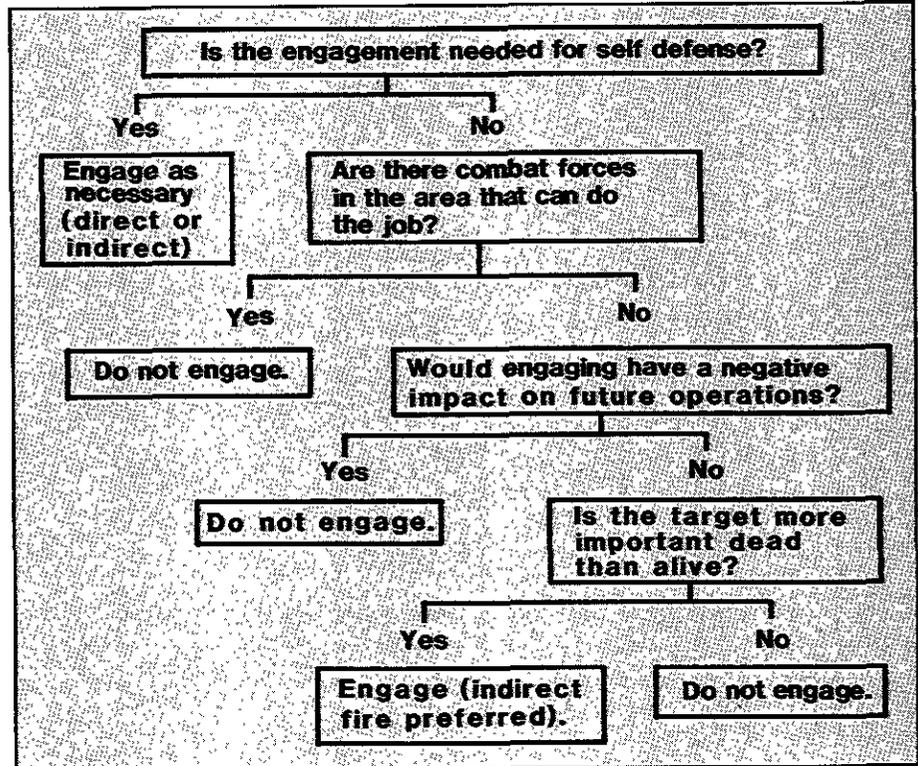


Figure 1. Engagement Criteria

if surprise is critical to success, may hinder the battalion's mission.

The next question the scout must ask himself is whether the target is worth more dead or alive. The battalion commander should tell the scout which targets are so threatening to the mission that they must be destroyed, no matter how or by whom. Depending on the conditions of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time), such targets might be tactical operations centers, air defense positions, or indirect fire weapons.

Other targets, because of their intelligence potential, may be more valuable alive. For example, a team of soldiers moving with empty rucksacks may lead the scouts to the enemy's supply point. Obviously, the value of this information outweighs the value of killing the team. But once the team has led the scouts to

the supply point, the supply point itself may be one of the targets the battalion commander wants destroyed by any possible means.

While a scout has little organic firepower, he does have the ability to summon the great firepower of the artillery, the mortars, and close air support. Whenever he chooses to engage, his preferred method should be indirect fire. A decision tree such as the one shown in Figure 1 may help scouts learn when to engage and when not to engage.

The other criterion that scouts need to know about is risk acceptance, and this is also closely tied to the commander's intent. If left to his own devices, the average scout will continue to get closer and closer to the objective, seeking more and more information, until he is eventually compromised. In the pro-

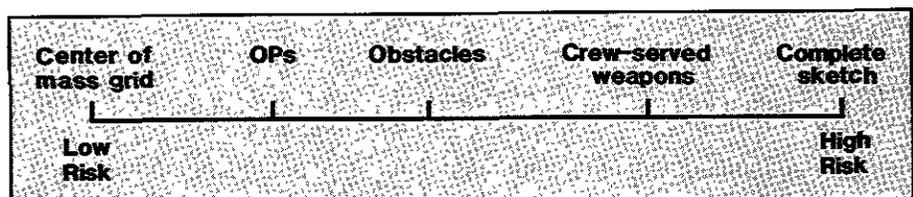


Figure 2. Risk Assessment

cess, he may get a complete sector sketch of the objective, but the loss of a scout patrol or the element of surprise may be a higher price than the commander is willing to pay, even for such detailed information. The scout may also find himself in the ineffective position of having gained valuable information that he cannot relay to anyone because he has been compromised or lacks freedom to maneuver.

Thus, the commander must tell his scouts when they should be satisfied with their efforts. He must realize that if he is not willing to accept much risk, he is not going to get much information either (Figure 2). At this end of the spectrum, he might task the scouts only with determining a center of mass grid to the objective. The scouts can do this easily by merely locating the enemy's exterior defensive positions in each cardinal direction and then extrapolating the grid in the middle. In fact, they may be able to get a good estimate based solely on the noise from generators, vehicles, or radios without ever actually seeing anything.

Exchanging minimum risk for minimum information may be appropriate if

the commander wants to engage the enemy only with area weapons such as artillery or close air support, or if he is not interested in attacking at all but needs to know the enemy's location in order to bypass it during an infiltration to another objective.

At the other end of the spectrum is a case in which the commander is willing to accept maximum risk in exchange for a complete sector sketch of the objective. This is hard work, and the commander must realize that the scouts stand a greater chance of being compromised. But if he is planning a non-illuminated night attack of a fortified position, for example, he may need this degree of detail and be willing to accept more risk to get it.

In between these two extremes are various degrees of information and risk. Locating observation posts is not too difficult, because it can be done from positions well outside the enemy's perimeter. Bypassing observation posts to locate obstacles and possible breach points is more difficult. These posts are closer to the main defensive positions and are usually covered by observation and fire.

Pinpointing crew-served weapons requires reconnaissance even closer in, and it is more difficult because these weapons are almost always manned by alert gunners. Gaining information about crew-served weapons by probing or by trying to draw fire is an example of accepting more risk to get more information. (The Chinese communists became very adept at this technique during the Korean War.)

A scout has a tough job, and the success or failure of a battalion's mission often depends on his actions. If the engagement and risk acceptance criteria are clearly specified in SOPs, orders, and the commander's intent, a scout has a better chance of acting in accordance with his commander's wishes when he has to make tough decisions on his own.

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Training Management Tips

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As a new company commander, you may find training management frustrating, in spite of the clear and specific guidance in Field Manual 25-101, Battle Focused Training. Two sources of this frustration are the newness of the process and the method you use in applying the guidance.

I would like to share a method of managing training that proved effective for me. I learned it through trial and

error, and I hope it will save you time and give you some insight into managing training at company level. This method is not intended as a substitute for the methods found in the manual but as a supplement.

Begin the process by transferring the battalion long-range training plan into company training weeks. I preferred a format that gave seven days and listed resources (Figure 1). Breaking the plan

into weeks gives you a manageable time period for two reasons: Training schedules are done by weeks, and most weeks will have central training themes.

Once you have transferred the battalion training plan to your weekly calendars, check other calendars for events you may have missed or put on the wrong days. Some examples include holidays, paydays, division and brigade compensatory days, leader training, and