Infantry Breach Kits

CAPTAIN JOSEF R. HALLATSCHEK

Throughout the Army, we have improved our doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures on fighting in combined arms teams. At the combat training centers, however, units continue to stall at obstacles and lose momentum when engineer or armor breaching assets are not readily available. Once a unit loses momentum at an obstacle, it is rarely able to recover and go on to accomplish its mission.

A standard breach kit for infantry units—mechanized platoons and light infantry companies—would help a lot. The kit I propose would give an infantry unit the equipment to breach any wire obstacle, breach one lane in a surface-laid minefield, and mark one lane. This kit can be modified on the basis of the soldier's load, the availability of Class V supply, and specific unit breaching and marking drills.

The recommended kit is made up of three components—minefield breach, wire breach, and lane marking. A complete list is provided in Table 1.

The minefield breach items are based on a breach of a typical doctrinal opposing force (OPFOR) minefield presented at the National Training Center (NTC). The OPFOR emplaces surface-laid antitank minefields of three to four rows each. The rows are 20 to 40 meters apart to form a minimum depth of 40 meters and a maximum depth of 120 meters. The normal density of these minefields is 550 to 750 antitank mines per kilometer front, or a density of .55 to .75 antitank mines per meter front. These mines are usually seismic with anti-handling devices and must be blown in place before an infantry unit attempts to breach the minefield.

To breach an OPFOR minefield, an eight-meter breach lane requires, at most, six charges of C-4 explosive. This leaves four charges in the kit to use in handling misfires or detonating any unexploded mines. Two fuse igniters and non-electric blasting caps are required to dual-prime the system, and the four remaining igniters and caps are used with the four remaining charges. Eighteen feet of time fuse provides about two minutes of delay for the dual-initiated firing system and for each of the remaining charges.

A smoke pot is included to provide obscuration during the breach. The remaining items in the minefield breach component are used in setting up the line main demolition system.

INFANTRY BREACH KIT

DODAC/NSN	ITEM	QUANTITY
1375-M038	Charge, C-4, 2.5 lbs.	10 each
1375-M766	Fuse Igniters, M60	6 each
1375-M670	Time Fuse	18 feet
1375-M456	Detonator Cord	1000 feet
1375-M131	Blasting Caps, Non-electric	6 each
5120-00-029-0683	Crimpers	2 each
Fabricate	Probes (Wooden Stakes)	5 each
751000-2665016	Duct Tape (Olive Green)	1 roll
2040-00-378-8440	Grapnel Hook, 100 Meters of 7/16-inch Nylon Rope	2 each
5110-00-224-7053	Bolt Cutters	2 each
8415-00-926-1674	Wire Gauntlets	2 pairs
6260-01-196-0136	Chem Light, Green	30 each
6260-01-196-0136	or Blue	
6260-01-196-0136	or Orange	
5980-01-275-8080	or Kit Flashing Light (IR Strobe)	
DLA-100-86C-4130	Panel Marker, VS-17	4 each
DLA-100-91C-0350	Engineer Tape	1 roll
5660-00-270-1510	Medium U-shaped Picket	8 each
Fabricate	Picket Pounders	2 each
1365-K866	Smoke Pot, Ground M5, 12-22 minutes	1 each

Table 1

INERT TRAINING MATERIEL

DODAC/NSN	ITEM	QUANTITY
1375-M671	Time Fuse	18 feet
1375-M458	Detonator Cord	1000 feet
1375-M097	Blasting Caps, Non-electric	6 each
1345-00-344-2368/K231	M20 Practice Mine	10 each

Table 2

The items in the wire breach component are also based on a doctrinal OPFOR wire obstacle. The OPFOR uses wire obstacles either to reinforce a minefield or to tie an obstacle into a terrain feature, another obstacle, or a battle position. The wire obstacle is usually a non-standard triple concertina obstacle, and a grappling hook, bolt cutters, and wire gauntlets are all that is needed to breach it.

The final components in the breach kit are the lane-marking items. Some of these assist both near and far recognition. The near recognition items include chemlights and engineer tape, and the far recognition items include BS-17 panels and chemlights in different colors. The infrared strobe light can be very effective for a unit equipped with night vision devices.

This breach kit provides only the equipment needed to breach these wire and mine obstacles. The infantry unit must still train on the tasks necessary to use the kit properly. For help in establishing the required training program, leaders might use the following references: ARTEP 5-145 Drill, Engineer Drills, October 1990, outlines the battle drill for a minefield breach with hand-emplaced explosives. The demolition skills required to execute this battle drill are found in the Soldier's Manual for CMF 11, Skill Level 2. For help in understanding breaching theory and breaching tactics, I recommend FM 90-13-1, Combined Arms Breaching Operations. The list of inert training materials shown in Table 2 will also help in the development of a training program.

Within a battalion, this breach kit may be distributed either by standing operating procedure (SOP) or according to METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time). I recommend, however, that each mechanized platoon and each light infantry company have one complete kit on hand. Mechanized platoons can cross-load the equipment internally so that each squad carries a different component of the breach kit—lane marking, minefield, or wire breach.

Light infantry companies can cross-load these items among their platoons. These units can then be cross-attached within a mechanized task force or a light brigade with known breaching capabilities. A light infantry company can carry the breach kit in the combat trains with the first sergeant's vehicle and bring it forward when needed. With light infantry units, this kit will require minor modifications. U-shaped pickets, for example, could be replaced by the shelter-half poles, the picket pounders could be left out, and smoke grenades could be used instead of smoke pots.

As infantry commanders equip and train soldiers with this breach kit, they will be better able to maintain their momentum instead of stalling at an obstacle. With this kit, mechanized infantry platoons and light infantry companies will have the equipment to breach any wire obstacle, breach one lane in a surface-laid minefield, and mark one lane. Commanders will have their own "sappers" as organic combat multipliers and reduce their requirement for scarce engineer assets.

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Fire Support
In Irregular Warfare

CAPTAIN JOSE M. MARRERO

No commander wants to risk injury or loss of life among his soldiers when fire support can neutralize or destroy the enemy as effectively and at far less cost. Fire support is not limited to such conventional scenarios as the ones used in World War II, envisioned for Europe during the Cold War era, or used so effectively in Southwest Asia in early 1991. We must therefore forget about the myths and false concepts that overlook the use of this combat multiplier in irregular warfare. The United States' operations in Grenada, the swift, decisive action in Panama, and the use of mortars in El Salvador are only a few of the many examples where fire support has been used in this type of conflict.

Before using fire support in irregular warfare, leaders must consider some special characteristics of this type of conflict:

Fire Support Coordination Measures. The terrain and the mission in irregular warfare dictate the need for more fire support coordination measures. It is generally known, for exam-