

mission, it could be beneficial to select a single platoon to use for the counter-reconnaissance mission. Operating to the front of the battalion is normal for the scouts, but a line platoon with a mixed offensive-defensive mission needs to practice the coordinations and skills essential in a counterreconnaissance force. Not every platoon needs to

execute this mission; few, in fact, ever will. Those few should be given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, retrain, and execute better the next time. Other platoons that replaced these in the force would be more likely to repeat the same mistakes.

In essence, it all comes down to one thing: On the battlefield, intelligence is

power, and there is no reason a light infantry battalion should not have this power.

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Aerial Resupply The Blackstar Technique

CAPTAIN MARK SHANKLE

Numerous evaluations, battalion level exercises, and training rotations at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) have revealed one glaring weakness in the light infantry battalion: With its austere tables of organization and equipment (TOEs), it cannot afford to commit the resources and personnel needed to establish and maintain a secure main supply route (MSR).

Supply convoys, even with security from the military police and the TOW platoon, repeatedly encounter vehicle ambushes prepared by opposing force (OPFOR) units.

Aerial resupply also has some disadvantages. Specifically, an approaching helicopter that is landing, or even hovering, during daylight is easily detected and always draws the OPFOR to its location. The OPFOR may also establish direct and indirect fire ambushes on possible landing zones.

The 10th Mountain Division, after experiencing the disadvantages of both vehicle convoys and daylight aerial resupply, decided there had to be a better way. The division developed a tech-

nique that enables the light infantry to conduct secure resupply operations during periods of limited visibility without compromising their positions.

This technique (called Blackstar) was designed specifically for light infantry rifle and scout platoons. It has proved successful in the jungles of Panama in summer and in the forests of northern New York in winter. A single UH-1H helicopter has supplied four light infantry platoons at four separate locations during a 27-minute period in darkness. The Blackstar technique has been adopted as standing operating procedure in the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry, 10th Mountain Division.

The following scenario will illustrate the way it works:

During a light infantry battalion search and attack operation, the MSR has been interdicted, and resupply must be done by air. To protect the air assets and maintain operational security, the unit determines that its best option is to conduct the resupply during the hours of limited visibility. There are few landing zones in the sector and

some of these are unusable—either because of enemy obstacles, because they are suspected of being under enemy observation, or because they are covered by direct or indirect fire.

The aerial resupply annex of the Ranger Handbook is ideal for pre-mission coordination. When units are down range, however, the information needed is not difficult to obtain. As long as FM communication is good, the minimum coordination required is the following:

- Communications checkpoint (CCP) locations (prominent terrain features within the battalion's sector).
- Report times and windows (the time the aircraft will arrive at the designated CCP).
- Frequencies and call signs.
- Actions on enemy contact (both ground unit and aircraft).
- Courses of action in case of communication failure.

For purposes of this scenario, the S-3 air and the S-4 have completed their coordination with the ground unit, the aviators, and the supply personnel. The

aircraft lands at the combat or field trains to load supplies in the appropriate classes and amounts. Since logistics packages (LOGPACs) are carried inside the aircraft, the seats are taken out.

Depending on the situation, the rifle company XO, the headquarters company (HHC) XO, the support platoon leader, or the S-4 may control the missions from inside the resupply aircraft. Infrared chemical lights are attached to the LOGPACs with 550 cord and waterproof tape.

When the aircraft is ready, it flies toward the designated CCP at the designated time with its external lights off. The supply personnel inside the helicopter contact the ground unit at maximum FM radio range. The ground unit sends the aircraft the CCP to be used (if this has not been decided earlier, or if the situation has changed), along with the direction (magnetic azimuth) and distance from the CCP to the unit's location. For example "M76 this is Y44, CCP 1, 270, 800," which means fly to CCP 1 on a heading of 270 degrees for 800 meters.

The ground unit, upon hearing the aircraft, turns on a strobe light with an infrared cover and pulls it above the trees (just like raising a 292 field expedient antenna). Then they ensure that the area immediately below the strobe light is kept clear so that no troops will be hit by the LOGPACs. The resupply helicopter then flies to the CCP, picks up the correct flight heading, and flies

the approximate distance while the pilots and supply personnel locate the flashing infrared (IR) strobe with their night observation devices (NODs).

Once visual contact of the strobe light has been confirmed, the IR chemical lights attached to the LOGPACs are activated. Then, while the helicopter hovers as low as possible directly over the strobe light, the LOGPACs are either kicked out or belayed from inside the aircraft. The ground unit then lowers the strobe light, locates the packages (using night observation devices), collects them, and quickly moves out to distribute them at another location. The helicopter may continue to resupply other units, conduct false hovers, or return immediately to the rear.

This system places no extra burden on the infantrymen; all the equipment they need to receive the supplies is already in the field with them. A rifle platoon needs a strobe light, an IR strobe light cover, 75 to 100 feet of 550 cord, a PRC-77 radio, NODs, and one full canteen (which is attached to the 550 cord so it can be thrown up into the trees).

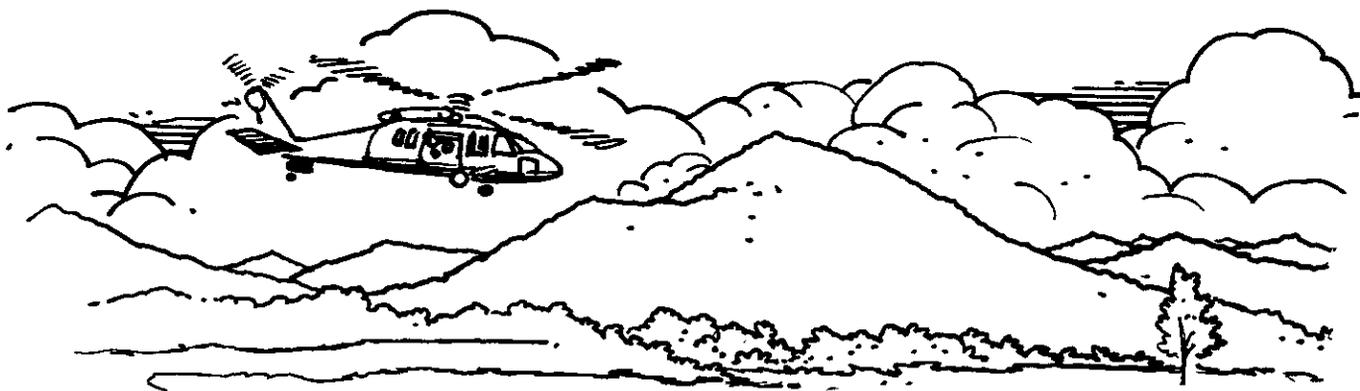
Supply personnel must have air support, IR chemical lights, waterproof tape, 550 cord, snap-links (if a LOGPAC needs to be belayed), PRC-77 with headset, and delivery containers. Some supplies such as IVs and water jugs won't survive free drops, but in thick vegetation, the tree branches usually slow the fall to a semi-soft landing.

Although most ammunition can free-fall, a belay system is needed for such items as hand grenades and 40mm high explosive rounds. (Mortar rounds have never been dropped, as mortars are usually located close to clearings.)

The belay system uses 550 cord, double-wrapped through a snap-link connected to the aircraft's interior. This is more of a controlled fall in which the weight of a LOGPAC crashes through the vegetation to the ground. The number of packs that can be belayed at one time depends on the number of supply personnel on board to handle them. Although the Black Hawk (UH-60A) helicopter holds more supplies and personnel, the older UH-1H can also be used for this mission.

Consideration must be given to the selection of delivery containers. All unnecessary trash needs to remain in the field trains or the combat trains. We have successfully used old duffel bags, aviator flight bags (the unit kept both types until the situation allowed their return), and triple-reinforced trash bags. The latter were buried in the field. A leader can use his imagination with whatever is available.

The supply personnel inside the aircraft (company and HHC XOs, support platoon leader, or S-4) need a designated radio with headsets. I have concluded—after dealing with the large volume of aviators' communications, and after flying in aircraft with inoperative FM radios—that the only way a leader can



be sure of completing the mission is to bring his own radio. The headset, signed out from the battalion signal platoon, allows him to communicate directly with his people on the ground without interference from prop wash and helicopter noise. He can then relay instructions to the pilots if their FM radio is down.

Codes can be coordinated to tell pilots which CCPs to use, to inform aircraft that the ground element is in contact; to direct them to return at a specified later time, to abort the mission, or to drop supplies at the CCP; and to indicate that the ground unit will attempt to recover when possible. Pyrotechnic signals can be established for the alternate communication plan—for example, a green star cluster could mean “drop LOGPAC at the CCP”.

The Blackstar technique offers both

advantages and disadvantages. It helps prevent enemy units from learning exact unit locations (as the Viet Cong did by tracking the daily logistics helicopter). The exact location of a helicopter at night is hard to spot, because the sounds seem to come from everywhere at once. Unless an aircraft flies directly over his head, the enemy will not be able to zero in on the location of the friendly force that is receiving supplies. For the best security, however, ground units should still plan to move immediately after receiving supplies.

The trade-off for the increase in security and stealth is that this aerial resupply technique is, for the most part, a one-way operation. Back-hauling casualties, still one of the most difficult tasks facing a light infantry battalion, usually requires the use of LZs or vehicular extraction, when the tactical

situation permits. The use of the jungle penetrator, combined with Blackstar, may be an answer.

Despite its disadvantages, the Blackstar technique allows light infantry to prevent commonplace MSR attacks when they use roads and LZ ambushes when they use aircraft. This technique enables a unit to conduct aerial resupply at times and places the enemy does not expect it—at night and in the middle of thick forest and jungle.

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Military Operations on Urban Terrain

CAPTAIN JOHN S. ZACHAU

All infantry soldiers should be trained in military operations on urban terrain (MOUT). In recent years, we have seen that, as the world becomes more populated, even more urban areas may become combat zones. For example, during Operation JUST CAUSE in December 1989, a large percentage of the fighting occurred on urban terrain—such as on the military base of Rio Hato and in Panama City. This operation also confirmed that low-intensity as well as high-intensity conflicts can include such operations. More recently, today some of the bitterest fighting in the Balkans is concentrated in towns and cities.

The critical skills in MOUT include

entering urban areas, moving within urban areas, entering buildings, clearing and securing rooms and floors, and detecting and avoiding booby traps. Since soldiers are rarely trained in these skills, I would like to touch on them and also to discuss some techniques that can help during training or during the next MOUT conflict.

MOUT planning revolves around one simple tenet: centralized planning with decentralized execution. Leaders cannot achieve central control during an urban operation, because MOUT warfare often dissolves into many compartmented battles. Leaders must realize this and emphasize a simple mission with a strong commander's intent that

will allow their soldiers to use initiative in executing the mission. If a plan is not central in its development and design, soldiers tend to get caught up in their own battles during the execution phase and forget their commander's intent.

Planning must take into consideration the resupply of such critical items as ammunition, water, and the role of medical evacuation teams, because the tempo of a MOUT operation is much higher than that of a standard operation. Casualties can be two or three times the number leaders may expect. In 20 minutes, casualties or a lack of ammunition can render a platoon incapable of accomplishing its mission. A unit mis-