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The instructors will need some tools and reference materials during this phase—machetes, shovels, knives, parachute cord, copper wire, and any other tools that will help in building the stations. Field Manual 21-76, *Survival, Evasion, and Escape*, is a good reference; the easy-to-carry Ranger Handbook contains useful information on survival topics; and AR 350-30, *Code of Conduct/Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) Training*, is good for regulations governing SERE training.

The individual stations should appear realistic and professionally prepared. For example, when lashing limbs together to build a shelter, use vines found in the area instead of parachute cord. Build many types of shelters that would be used in the particular climate or tactical situation. The shelter-building station will take the most time to construct. Five or six shelters may take up to 30 or 40 man hours. Other types of stations include the fire-building station, water procurement and outdoor cooking, and traps and snares.

Since one objective of the SERE course is to stimulate imagination, these stations can be built in many different ways. The instructors should read about numerous methods before building the stations and then, during the building process, record the best techniques, the time required, and the best terrain for them. While the instructors are building and rehearsing their stations, the site

OIC and the OPFOR OIC should conduct a ground reconnaissance of the E&E route, also selecting water points, trafficable roads, and possible pick-up points.

The final portion of the train-up phase consists of rehearsals. The instructors brief the OIC on each of the stations. They train to a standard of 30 to 40 minutes per station, which allows for a thorough explanation of the subject and hands-on training.

#### **Execution Phase**

The execution phase is broken down into two events—station training and the E&E course. Conduct the station training first. When the students arrive at the training site, the OIC briefs them on the training objectives, safety, and administrative requirements. Next, they are broken into groups to conduct the station training. Once this training is complete, the students are divided into two-man teams and are inspected for proper equipment, such as maps, compasses, radios, and food and water. After this inspection, the teams are released in intervals at the start point. The OPFOR is placed in a position to allow the students a fair start. The OPFOR aircraft should begin the search about an hour after the last team has left the start point.

As the E&E teams get closer to the release point, the requested utility aircraft should be on standby to extract them. To keep radio traffic to a mini-

mum, the extraction aircraft should arrive at the pickup point at predetermined times without being called. If the extraction aircraft lands at the point and no one is there for pick-up, it leaves and returns at the next predetermined time.

#### **Recovery Phase**

During the recovery phase, personnel and equipment are accounted for, and the after-action review (AAR) is conducted. During the AAR, students are encouraged to comment on both positive and negative aspects of the training. Additionally, certificates of completion and awards are presented to the students at this time.

Clearly, running a SERE course requires some planning and train-up. It is not an easy event to put together, yet it's not too difficult either if you rely on your commander and first sergeant to help you over the hurdles. If you commit yourself to training soldiers to fight, win, and survive in a combat environment, in the process you'll also accomplish training that will help save lives in combat.

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# **Search and Attack**

**CAPTAIN KEVIN J. DOUGHERTY**  
**CAPTAIN RICHARD C. TOWNES**

The search and attack is one of the techniques used to conduct a conventional movement to contact to find, fix, and finish the enemy. This technique is usually employed in a fluid environment

against an enemy operating in dispersed elements with no conventionally fixed lines. In this type of environment, it is especially important for the battalion commander to make a thorough analysis

of the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB).

The IPB process helps the commander visualize the terrain, weather, and enemy in formulating his courses of

action. This detailed analysis is vital to his decision on how best to concentrate his combat power in the execution of the search and attack.

According to Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations*, the principle of *mass* requires commanders to “mass the effects of overwhelming combat power at the decisive place and time.” Likewise, FM 7-20, *The Infantry Battalion*, lists as one of the characteristics of offensive operations, the “concentration of the battalion’s combat power on the enemy at the point of attack” (page 3-1).

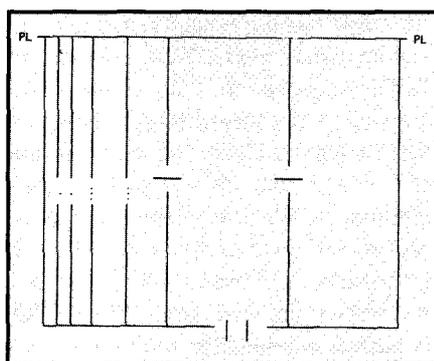
When discussing the deliberate attack, few commanders would deny the wisdom of these fundamentals. But when discussing a search and attack, many would shy away from mass in favor of decentralization and dispersion. These are qualities inherent in search and attack operations, but only in a relative sense. Decentralization and dispersion are techniques for achieving the characteristics of the offense. Most notably, decentralization contributes to speed (tempo), and dispersion to surprise. Neither addresses concentration.

There are at least three possible techniques a commander considers when planning a search and attack operation. We call these the *27 independent squads*, the *linear search*, and the *decisive point* techniques.

The *27 independent squads* technique (Figure 1) overemphasizes decentralization and dispersion. A commander focuses on the search part of the operation instead of the attack part. This technique is usually the product of a weak analysis of the intelligence available to the commander in developing his concept. In the typical scenario, a battalion commander divides his zone into three company zones. The company commanders follow suit, giving the battalion nine platoon zones. The platoon leaders continue the pattern, and the result is a 27-squad search and attack operation. The search and attack does, in fact, consist of “multiple, coordinated patrols” (FM 7-20), but too many commanders emphasize the *multiple* at the expense of the *coordinated*.

The commander accomplishes his search task by saturating the battalion zone with squad-size patrols and finds the enemy beyond his wildest expectations. Unfortunately, he finds the enemy in a way that puts friendly weaknesses up against enemy strengths. FM 90-8, *Counter guerrilla Operations*, says, “Guerrilla tactics are characterized by elusiveness, surprise, and brief, violent action.” If we fight the battle with dispersed squads and teams, we do exactly what the enemy wants and do not use our tremendous firepower advantage. In short, we forget an important characteristic of the offense: concentration.

So how do we obtain concentration in



**Figure 1. 27 Squads Technique**

a search and attack? FM 7-20 contains diagrams (pages 3-19 and 3-20) in which a dispersed battalion masses after finding the enemy, but this is no easy task. In those examples, what if the patrol in the north makes contact at the northernmost point of its sector when the patrol in the south is at its southernmost point? What if both patrols make contact at the same time? How can either patrol fix the enemy long enough for the finish force to arrive?

One way is to follow what we call the *decisive point* technique (Figure 2). This technique follows the concept development guidance in FM 7-10, *The Infantry Rifle Company*, which is quick to point out that developing a concept for a search and attack is much the same as developing a concept for any other offensive operation: “The decisive point must be determined and a concept developed for generating overwhelming

combat power there. The initial concept must include actions to finish the enemy forces once they are located.”

As an example, during the low-intensity conflict phase of a Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) rotation, the generally accepted decisive point is the enemy’s battalion supply point (BSP). To win at this decisive point the commander must first determine where the BSP is, and this is where the IPB is most critical.

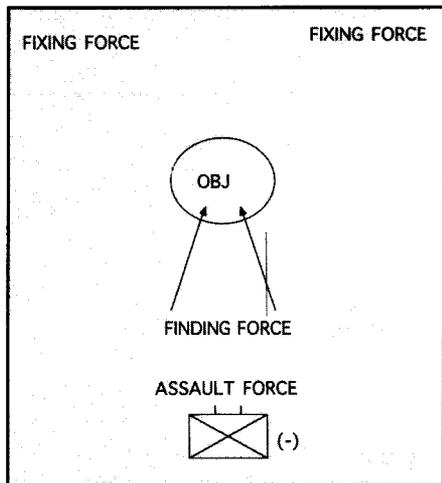
Many S-2s argue that they can’t template the BSP with the limited information they have before entering the battalion zone. We agree that an S-2 can’t do this with 100 percent accuracy, but he should be able to identify the three or four most likely sites and rank order them. Through a careful analysis of terrain and enemy, the S-2 can eliminate much of the terrain in his zone as unsuitable for a BSP operation. He can then drastically narrow the scope of his battalion’s search by looking for a site that meets the following criteria: offers cover and concealment for all the battalion’s supplies, can be defended by a platoon or a platoon (minus), is near a single ship landing zone, has access to a trail network capable of supporting wheeled vehicle traffic, is relatively near a water source, and is on a reverse slope to make the most of protection and limit observation.

By providing this information, the S-2 enables the commander to focus his combat power by organizing the battalion into *find*, *fix*, and *finish* forces. Assuming that the purpose of the search and attack is to destroy the enemy, the finish force will be the main effort; the battalion commander therefore gives this force the resources to destroy an enemy of whatever size the S-2 has templated at the BSP. The other two forces will support this main effort by finding and fixing the enemy.

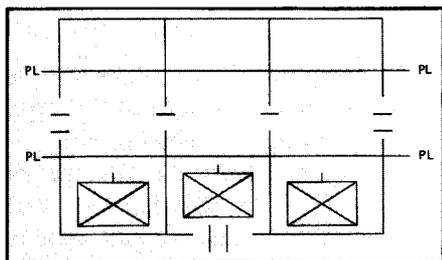
The fixing force should be first in order of movement and should establish blocking positions along the likely avenues of escape from the BSP. Even the best finding force will have trouble doing its job without being detected, and

once it is detected the enemy will try to evacuate his most important supplies. With the fixing force already in position, the enemy is far less likely to escape. Also, once the enemy is found, the battalion commander can focus his attention on the finishing force. (The size of the fixing force will depend upon the number of blocking positions required.)

The fixing force has now isolated the objective, giving the finding force a zone of perhaps two square kilometers in which to search—depending on mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time (METT-T). The size of the finding force will depend upon the degree of certainty about the location of the objective. Since that location is merely templated, this degree of certainty is relatively low and, on the spectrum of



**Figure 2. Decisive Point Technique**



**Figure 3. Linear Technique**

reconnaissance, the task is related more to zone than to area. Thus, a finding force of perhaps two rifle platoons and the scout platoon, all under the command and control of a company commander, will reconnoiter the zone using the *converging routes* or the *fan* tech-

nique. If they find the BSP, they notify the finishing force; if they do not, the entire battalion moves to the second most likely BSP location and repeats the process.

The finish force must be responsive to the information obtained by the find force. If it seems that the enemy can evacuate his BSP in six hours or less, the finish force must be able to launch its attack before that time has elapsed and should therefore stay within a couple of kilometers of the find force.

This concept is not peculiar to the JRTC. For example, after much trial and error, U.S. forces participating in a drug interdiction operation in Bolivia in 1986 learned that the decisive point was a drug lab. And the lab's location was indicated by such factors as lines of communication (airfields, rivers, roads, and trails), a friendly population to provide labor and security, cover and concealment, and logistics in the form of the raw material to make the drug, water to refine it, and food for the labor force. Thus, the lessons learned at the JRTC concerning the importance of the decisive point in an operation other than war are consistent with those in the field.

We believe the decisive point technique is the best way of approaching a search and attack. But if the commander is not convinced that his S-2 has enough information to template the decisive point with an acceptable degree of certainty, he can use a more dispersed but still adequately controlled method that we call the linear technique (Figure 3). This technique is similar to the example in FM 7-20, but it is conducted with companies on line, which makes it easier to mass forces.

In the linear technique, control is achieved by having the entire battalion move in the same direction at the same pace. All battalion elements are roughly on line and able to respond to each other when one of them finds the enemy. Depending on his analysis of METT-T, the commander may reinforce the reconnaissance for this mission.

The reconnaissance force is not the only find force. Each company must

organize itself into find and fix forces and also be prepared to act as the battalion's finish force. The companies advance roughly on line trying to find the enemy, most likely through successive sector reconnaissance.

The search should focus on likely enemy locations instead of on terrain. When a patrol finds the enemy, it must decide whether it can also fix and finish that enemy. The commander can control the response time through the spacing of his phase lines: The closer the phase lines, the shorter the time required to consolidate. When a patrol locates the enemy, it must also be prepared to fix the enemy frontally, while an adjacent patrol fixes the enemy on one flank and another finishes him by attacking the other flank. Either a patrol or indirect blocking fires can help fix the enemy to the rear.

The advantages of this technique are that the battalion can cover a large zone instead of a few isolated locations, as in the decisive point technique. By moving in the same direction at roughly the same speed, the battalion also clears the zone as it advances. By leaving forces behind to secure this cleared terrain, the battalion now has a relatively safe area for main supply routes (MSRs), mortar positions, train locations, and command posts. By using phase lines and checkpoints to control the battalion's movement, the commander can ensure a rapid concentration of forces and attack after the enemy is located.

The disadvantage of this method is in weighting the main effort, which is the company that the battalion commander, with S-2 advice, believes will make contact. Still, each company must be prepared to do all three tasks—find, fix, and finish.

Until the enemy is located, there is little opportunity for supporting efforts to help the main effort. Proponents of this technique will argue that this is where the idea of shifting the main effort arises, but once the battle is joined the battalion's ability to refocus its resources is limited.

FM 7-20 suggests using the reserve,

priority of fire, and other available assets to weight the main effort, but this is difficult once the fighting begins. The original concept changes, and the commander now needs to shift the main effort. He has already task organized his forces and can't reallocate them now that he is in contact. He has already positioned his reserve so it will be responsive to his original main effort, and a foot-mobile reserve may have a hard time moving to support the new main effort in time.

*Priority of fires* sounds impressive, but it is a relatively insignificant means of weighting the main effort. All it means is that if two units call for fire at the same time, the unit with priority gets its mission fired first. As the main effort is shifted to the unit in contact (and if the other units are not in contact), there is little competition for fires anyway. This technique offers less concentration than the decisive point tech-

nique, but considerably more than the 27 squads technique.

The only area in which the decisive point technique is not clearly superior is in the potential for a secure MSR. In this area, the decisive point technique consciously ignores terrain to focus on the enemy. As General Sherman did in cutting loose from his lines of communication to get to Atlanta, the decisive point technique favors speed in reaching the objective over a methodical advance. We feel this trade-off is worthwhile, especially since casualty evacuation and resupply will be easier with the entire unit in roughly the same location.

The spectrum of search and attack techniques is based on a thorough analysis of the intelligence available in a particular situation. A thorough, detailed analysis gives the commander the flexibility he needs to use in finding, fixing, and finishing the enemy.

If the necessary information is not available to conduct this detailed analysis, the commander must focus his attention upon gaining that information. Without it and the resulting analysis, his orders will be based on assumptions instead of facts.

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**Captain Richard C. Townes**, also a small-group instructor for the Infantry Officer Advanced Course, commanded a rifle company in the 6th Infantry Division during a JRTC search and attack rotation. He previously served in the 2d Infantry Division in Korea and in the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. He is a 1983 graduate of The Citadel.

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# Back to Basics

## Training Close Combat Skills

LIEUTENANT COLONEL THOMAS A. DEMPSEY

Before I was assigned to command a Basic Combat Training (BCT) battalion at Fort Knox, I served as executive officer of an infantry battalion during a rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC). This sequence of assignments helped me realize the special benefits of BCT, not only in terms of the training the soldiers receive but also in terms of the skills cadre members take with them when they return to line units.

During the JRTC rotation, my battalion made mistakes and took a lot of casualties at the hands of one of the deadliest light infantry forces in the

world today—the JRTC's opposing force (OPFOR)—which we were encountering for the first time.

In the after-action review (AAR) that followed that battle, we got some unpleasant surprises. The OPFOR, which we had estimated at a company (minus), turned out to be less than a platoon. Nevertheless, it had succeeded in destroying an entire rifle company in a series of disjointed, squad-on-squad fire fights, while suffering only minimal losses from our infantry. All in all, it had not been a good day for us.

While the battalion would learn from that engagement and eventually locate

and destroy almost the entire OPFOR company, the memory of that first experience remained a sobering one. It became evident during the AAR that the soldiers of the OPFOR had won their fire fights for some simple reasons: They had out-shot us, consistently scoring first-round hits with M16 MILES (multiple integrated laser engagement system) at ranges of 100 to 200 meters. They had also been far more effective in using individual movement techniques and executing battle drills at the buddy team, fire team, and squad levels.

Following this rotation, I spent a great deal of time thinking about the best way