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patrols, each consisting of five men accompanied by a native guide. Patrols Able and Baker were to proceed directly east to the coast and return. Patrols Charlie, Dog, and Easy were to move directly south along the ridge below Mount Alifan with Charlie heading toward Mount Lamlam, Easy to Umatac, and Dog along the coast below Facpi Point. Each patrol was to send a radio report every two to three hours and call for artillery support if needed. Except for these general instructions, the patrols were to move according to their own discretion.

Patrol Able got less than halfway to Ylig Bay when two of its members and the guide came down with yellow fever and had to return. Patrol Baker then assumed responsibility for the entire area from Ylig Bay to Talofofu Bay. The patrol spotted a few Japanese the first day but avoided contact. The next morning they moved north along the coast some four and one-half miles, where they met some Chamorros (native people of the Marianas) who told them that all Japanese of platoon size or larger had moved north. With this information, Patrol Baker returned to friendly lines.

Meanwhile, Patrols Charlie and Dog reached the slopes of Mount Lamlam but were turned back by rifle fire. Patrol Easy was able to slide between its flank patrols and reach Umatac on the west coast below Facpi Point. Patrol Easy found little evidence of enemy activity and returned along the coastal road without any of the contact Patrol Dog had experienced.

On 30 July, Bruce sent out Patrols Fox and George to recon Pago Bay and the southeast portion of the island. Patrol George penetrated more than seven miles toward Inarajan and did not return until 2 August. Neither patrol observed any enemy activity.

The information brought back by the 77th Recon Troop confirmed Geiger's assumption that there was no organized Japanese resistance in southern Guam. With this knowledge he could then concentrate his efforts to the north. The 77th Recon Troop had given their commander the information he needed.

Defining boundaries for the reconnaissance of southern Guam was easy enough since the end of the land marked an obvious limit of advance. The beachhead secured by the III Amphibious Corps served as the objective release point for the 77th Recon Troop and provided the patrols with security in case they had to break contact. When Patrols Charlie and Dog did not receive fire, it was easy for them to return to the safety of established friendly lines. Not all of the troop's patrols overlapped, and there was, in fact, a large gap between Umatac and Inarajan that was not patrolled. But Geiger was concerned only with an enemy large enough to threaten his corps, so he could afford to sacrifice total coverage for time. Where contact was made—as in Patrol Dog's area, for example—another patrol—in this case Easy—did overlap and found no organized resistance.

Because of the long, narrow shape of the island, the 77th Recon Troop did not have to worry about limiting themselves

to just a couple of adjacent patrols for fear of enemy contact in more than one direction. But they did have to be concerned with the enemy getting between the longer and shorter range patrols. Thus, the longer patrols, Fox and George, did not leave until the others had returned.

Although the 77th Recon Troop's zone reconnaissance of southern Guam may not be a textbook rendition of the fan method, the idea is the same. Perhaps more important, the operation shows how the factors of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time) can allow a commander to take some shortcuts in the interest of time. In this case, Geiger was looking for a target for his corps-size force. If he had been looking for scattered bands of guerrillas, he would have had to take a different approach.

Soldiers who are faced with zone reconnaissance missions at the JRTC and elsewhere will do well to consider this example. The 77th Recon Troop tailored a "by the book" technique to meet the specific METT-T situation. This is the proper application of doctrine. Scout platoon leaders, S-2s, and commanders can use this historical example as evidence that the ARTEP techniques are not just academic drills but combat-proven solutions to real problems.

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# Using the Company Mortars

**SERGEANT FIRST CLASS ERIK P. HENRIKSEN**

Company mortars are often ineffective on the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) battlefield. Among the problems

are the lack of proper positioning and carrying of mortar ammunition, the suitability of an objective release point or

patrol base from which to fire mortars, and a failure to plan 60mm mortar fire for squad, platoon, and company mis-

sions. My observations are based on lessons learned, as well as discussions with section leaders and other key leaders while training at the JRTC.

Examining four areas will help a commander turn a burden into an asset:

**Command relationship and planning.** The company commander and the mortar section leader must establish a solid working relationship. This will help the mortar NCO understand how the commander plans to fight the battle. He must be the subject-matter expert, advising the commander on employing the mortar section. Because of the importance of his recommendations, the section sergeant must understand offensive and defensive infantry tactics and the ways his section can best support the company.

A commander can conceptually use his indirect fire assets, but he generally lacks specific expertise regarding the capabilities and limitations of 60mm mortar employment. Because of the complexity of missions, the section leader's responsibility as the commander's advisor has increased dramatically. The section leader's advice can benefit the commander's planning process in the areas of mortar support location, how best to tie the mortars into the scheme of maneuver (split section, handheld), and where best to be located in the movement. A technique that facilitates proper planning and execution of company mortar support is for the commander to develop courses of action (COAs) along with the section leader.

Employment considerations should be based on mission requirement, type of support required, commander's guidance for fire support, and engagement criteria. Specific items to address are the location of the mortar section, the range of ammunition, radio communications, and the amount and type of mortar ammunition to be carried by the company. This COA development and subsequent wargaming will help the commander in his planning and decision making process—where, when, and how to use the mortars to support the maneuver plan.

It is essential that the mortar section leader attend all company orders. He needs to be at company briefbacks to stay abreast of each platoon's planned execution, and even more important, to con-

duct his own briefback. By listening to each brief, the section leader can ensure that his plan supports the platoon's ground tactical plan—targets and final protective fires (FPF), mortar round drop-off location.

**Battle tracking and responsiveness.** Battle tracking is more than just knowing the company's objective. It consists of knowing the route to be taken, having all company graphics properly drawn, knowing the order of march, and keep-

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***The section leader needs to attend all company training meetings and present his training plan for the mortar section to the commander.***

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ing an updated situation map of current unit and adjacent unit locations. Company mortars follow the ground tactical plan with multiple targets along the movement axis. They shift from the various targets, which gives the commander continuous indirect fire coverage.

The most significant characteristic of the 60mm mortar is its responsiveness, and if the section leader is not tracking the battle, his ability to respond quickly is greatly reduced. An aggressive section leader will periodically get with the

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***Leaders need to be aware of all the ammunition an injured soldier is carrying before evacuating him.***

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commander and the company fire support officer (FSO) to report critical mortar information and retrieve the information he needs for his mission, such as platoons that may have shifted their defensive positions because of terrain.

In the defense, the commander should inspect the mortar position when checking the company positions to ensure that the mortars complement his scheme of maneuver just as he would do with a Dragon position. The commander should check the mortar section's situation map

as he would inspect range cards. This will ensure that the map, target/FPF list, obstacles, and trigger points are accurate. An up-to-date map with the correct grids or unit locations will help reduce the probability of fratricide.

The section chief can also track the battle by actively monitoring the radio. When the mortar section hears that a unit is in contact, it can reduce the response time by advising the leader in contact that the mortars are available. At the same time, the mortars shift the guns in that direction on a pre-plotted target. In essence, the mortar section leader's actions will help remind the leader in contact that another asset is available to attack the target.

Another problem is that the mortar section has one radio (PRC-119), and it is usually set on the company mortar frequency. The mortar net creates two problems:

- The mortars rely on the FSO or forward observers (FOs) for information. As a result, the mortar section misses out on the development of the battle being communicated over the company net.

- Individual soldiers cannot talk to the company mortars without having to find a PRC-119. (Most squads carry the PRC-126, which does not hop frequencies and is not secure.) Information that reaches the mortar section over the mortar net is usually outdated or too late to act upon. Some units monitor the company frequency and then drop to the mortar frequency when a call for fire is initiated, or they locate another radio with the mortar section. Information that is transmitted on the company net is critical to the mortar section's effectiveness on the battlefield.

**Ammunition management.** Generally, companies do a good job planning to get mortar ammunition onto the battlefield but not to the mortar position. On numerous occasions during mortar fire missions, mortarmen have to search through unit rucksacks or assault packs to recover mortar rounds. Also, rounds are often evacuated with casualties. Leaders need to be aware of all the ammunition an injured soldier is carrying before evacuating him, and companies should have standing operating procedures for



ammunition distribution, drop-off, and retrieval.

Some units train with mortar canisters wrapped with tape (for durability) and filled with sand or concrete. PVC tubing also works well in the place of mortar canisters because the plastic is weather resistant. Using 3x5 index cards to represent mortar rounds is another technique. Although soldiers do not experience the weight of the rounds, this forces units to go through the procedures for moving mortar rounds.

A unit's key to success is to train as it will fight, so the best possible training aids should be used. The intent is to train the company on mortar ammunition procedures in all field training and live-fire exercises.

**Training.** The section leader needs to attend all company training meetings and present his training plan for the mortar section to the commander. Mortar training should be annotated on the training schedule and then conducted as scheduled. All live-fire exercises should include the use of mortars, forcing the platoon and squad leaders to plan for and call indirect fire.

One technique is to conduct a movement-to-contact range. As the lead platoon comes in contact, and within safety constraints, the mortars move to a location on the flank and fire in front of the platoon in contact. The mortars should move with the company. This will be more realistic when the mortars need to locate to a suitable firing position and put

the guns into action. The trail platoons file by the mortar position and drop off mortar ammunition according to company SOP.

Another technique is to incorporate the 60mm mortar section into a platoon live fire and combine the M60 machineguns and 60mm mortars in support-by-fire positions. The mortars can support from these positions on a single target or on separate targets that need to be suppressed. In this scenario, the leader can choose to fire the mortar in the handheld or conventional mode.

The biggest concern when planning mortar fires is firing directly over the heads of soldiers. Another concern is the impact of the round close to soldiers. The bursting radius of the 60mm is 25 meters; although this allows for maneuverability, probable error should be factored in.

A live fire of this complexity requires a lot of planning. Good coordination between leaders and range control and identifying ways to reduce risk (rehearsals and wearing flak vests) can provide the necessary "train as you fight" training.

The mortars must receive a balance between their own separate section training and training that is incorporated with the company. If all training is separate, the "train as you fight" principle is lost. Separate training is needed to sustain skills in gunnery and live-fire ranges for missions described in ARTEP 7-90, MTP, *Mission Training Plan Infantry Mortar Platoon, Section, and Squad*. This training offers a good opportunity for leaders to see the capabilities of the 60mm mortar.

A commander and mortar section sergeant can ensure that the section is properly employed by focusing on the four critical areas of command relationship and planning, battle tracking and responsiveness, ammunition management, and training.

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