

TRAINING NOTES



Fixing the Enemy In Guerrilla Warfare

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Enemies accustomed to employing guerrilla-type tactics are seldom willing to fight a toe-to-toe battle with a larger force. They survive by avoiding decisive engagement. Therefore, any plan to destroy this kind of enemy must include a detailed plan to fix him. This is consistent with what Field Manual (FM) 90-8, *Counter guerrilla Operations*, describes as a "locate, fix, and engage" methodology. Manuals in the 7-series (FMs 7-10, 7-20, 7-30) identify the requirement as "find, fix, and finish."

Two techniques have proved successful in fixing guerrillas who would rather hit and run than become decisively engaged:

The first is to establish blocking positions along likely escape routes. FM 7-30, *The Infantry Brigade*, addresses this technique when it says the *fix* force isolates the enemy, once the *find* force locates him, blocking both escape and reinforcement routes.

The second technique is the encirclement described in FM 90-8. The initial encirclement "is designed to cut off all ground routes for escape and reinforcement." Once this is accomplished, the enemy is captured or destroyed by "a simultaneous, controlled contraction of the encirclement."

The blocking position technique was

used successfully by the Greek National Army (GNA) during the Greek Civil War, and the encirclement technique was used successfully by United Nations forces during the Korean War. These two historical examples will help illustrate the techniques.

The Greek Civil War

After World War II, the GNA found itself embroiled in a guerrilla war against an enemy described by Edgar

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O'Ballance as "organized into small units of between 50 and 100 men each...scattered in the mountains, each being self-sufficient, responsible for its own fate and finding its own nook" (*The Greek Civil War, 1944-1949*, Praeger, 1996).

Against such a decentralized foe, initial GNA clearing efforts were woefully insufficient. O'Ballance sums up these efforts by saying, *As these were disjointed, restricted in scope, and only employed a limited number of troops, they did not achieve much success. The Democratic Army* (the Communist

guerrilla) *units were able to avoid the traps with comparative ease.* In short, the GNA had failed to fix the enemy.

Then on 25 February 1949, General Alexander Papagos became commander-in-chief of the Greek armed forces. Papagos centralized the haphazard plans of local GNA commanders and began to synchronize priorities and objectives. Under his leadership, according to O'Ballance, "the country was to be treated as a whole and to be swept from south to north." This approach is similar to the linear technique for search and attack (Figure 1) described in the article "Search and Attack," in the November-December 1994 issue of *INFANTRY* (pages 41-44).

A start in this direction had already begun in December 1948 when the Greek Navy moved a complete infantry division and four commando units to the Peloponnesus peninsula, where some 4,000 insurgents were known to be operating in small groups in the mountains. After dropping off the troops, the Navy patrolled the coastline to keep supplies and reinforcements from reaching the insurgents. In so doing, the Navy fulfilled the FM 7-30 requirement to isolate the enemy.

By fixing the enemy, focusing re-

sources on a specific area, and clearing systematically, the GNA gained tremendous success. By mid-January 1949 all sabotage had ceased in the Peloponnesus, and by 16 March the Greek government was able to announce that the peninsula was completely clear of insurgents. With the situation thus in hand, government troops could now be released for clearing operations on the mainland.

On 10 July the Greeks experienced a windfall of assistance in fixing the guerrillas when Josip Tito, in an effort to distance himself from Josef Stalin, announced that he would begin a progressive closing of the Yugoslavian border with Greece. This decision greatly reduced the guerrillas' freedom of movement and caused Nicholas Zakhariadas, the commander of the Democratic Army, to turn to positional warfare.

Accordingly, Zakhariadas concentrated 7,000 troops in the Visti Range and another 5,000 just to the south in the Grammos Range. Because he had systematically cleared most of the rest of Greece, Papagos was now able to concentrate six of his eight field divisions against the Communists. He began his offensive on 5 August, and by 16 August the last organized resistance in the Visti area had been overrun. Once again, however, many Communists escaped into Albania and then reformed in the Grammos mountain range.

On 19 August, with much-appreciated air support in the form of American-supplied Curtiss Helldivers, the GNA attacked the Grammos. Key to the attack was the seizure of the Starias and the Baroukas passes, the two main routes from the Grammos into Albania. (These routes had been so extensively used by the Communists during the previous few months that they were nicknamed the "twin boulevards to Athens.") Here the GNA employed blocking positions along likely avenues of approach to fix the guerrillas.

With the enemy thus fixed, the end was just a matter of time, and by 30 August the GNA controlled the Grammos Range. Although some 8,000

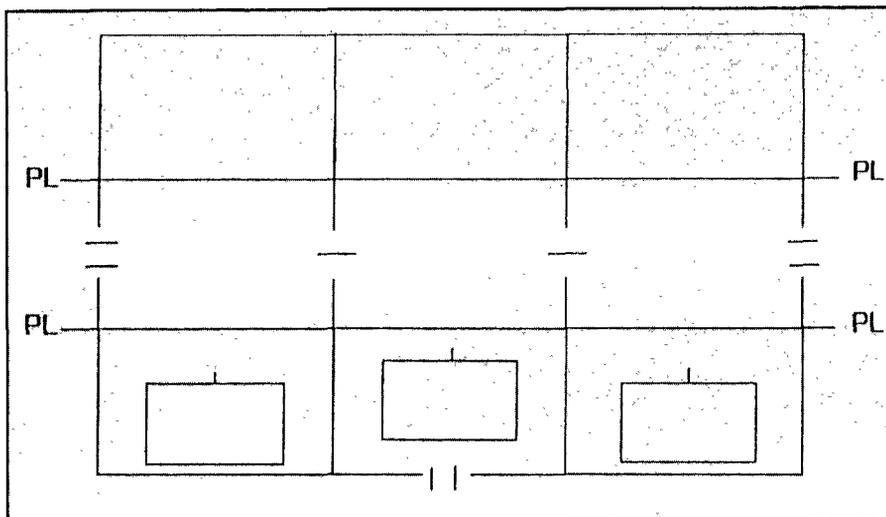


Figure 1. Linear technique

Communists managed to escape into Albania, by this time the latter had lost its enthusiasm for the struggle. On 26 August, Albania announced that all armed Greeks found in the country would be disarmed and detained. Now a combination of diplomatic and military realities had the insurgents truly fixed. On 16 October, the Communists announced a cease fire. Once confined to Greece, the insurgency failed.

Operation Ratkiller

Guerrillas were also a problem for United Nations forces during the Korean War, and November 1951 brought

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an upsurge in such activity. As usual, the biggest problems occurred in the mountainous Chiri-san region in southwestern Korea. In response to this development, Eighth Army commander Lieutenant General James Van Fleet (who, incidentally, had been the head of the Joint U.S. Military Advisory and Planning Group during the Greek Civil War) ordered the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army to establish an antiguerrilla task force composed of the ROK Capitol and 8th Divisions, both minus their artillery units. Van Fleet wanted the task force operationally ready by the

first of December. Its first mission would be to stamp out guerrilla activity in the hotbed around Chiri-san.

This was the beginning of the sardonically named Operation *Ratkiller*. On 2 December Lieutenant General Paik Sun Yup's Task Force Paik initiated its operations by moving in from a 163-mile perimeter around Chiri-san. The intent was to cordon off the troubled area.

The 8th Division advanced southward and the Capitol Division northward. Throughout the area, National Police, youth regiments, and security forces established blocking positions to prevent guerrilla escape. For 12 days, this phase of the operation produced a continually tightening noose, which FM 90-8 describes as "contraction" (Figure 2). By 14 December, a total of 1,612 guerrillas had been killed and 1,842 taken prisoner.

On 6 January the ROK forces continued their antiguerrilla operation using an encirclement variation that FM 90-8 describes as the "hammer and anvil." In this technique, one or more units in the encirclement remain stationary while the others drive the guerrilla force against them. In this case, the 26th Regiment of the Capitol Division provided the anvil, setting up blocking positions north of the Chiri-san mountains, while a cavalry regiment provided the hammer attacking from the south along two converging axes (Figure 3). Guerrillas that managed to escape the

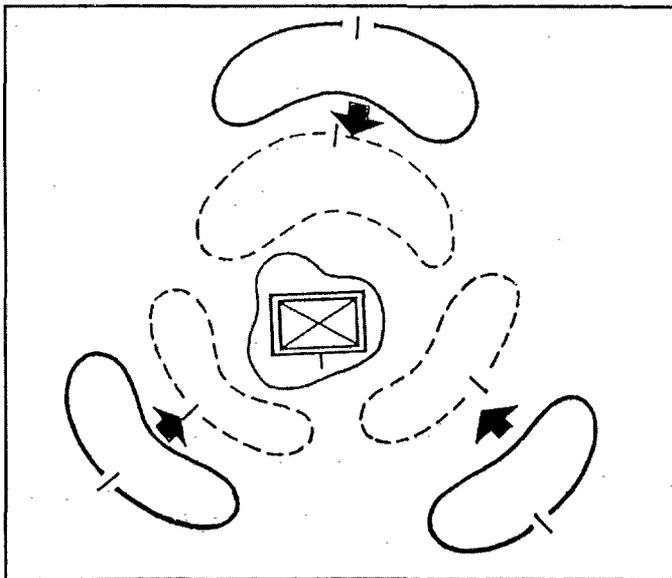


Figure 2. Contraction Technique

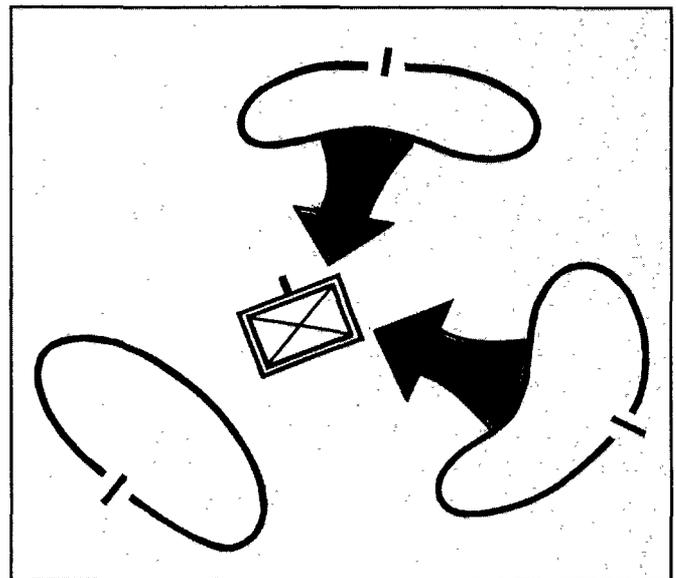


Figure 3. Hammer and anvil technique.

METT-T ANALYSIS		
	BLOCKING POSITION	ENCIRCLEMENT
MISSION	OK to allow some enemy to escape (8,000 guerrillas escaped past the GNA during the Grammos attack).	Must destroy or capture all enemy (Operation <i>Ratkiller</i> killed or captured 20,000 guerrillas).
ENEMY	Has a base to withdraw to or receive reinforcements from (Greek guerrilla base was Albania).	Location specific enough to allow encirclement (Chisi-ran, Korea).
TERRAIN	Avenues of approach defined and limited ("Twin Boulevards to Athens").	Numerous avenues of approach.
TROOPS	Relatively few required.	Many required.
TIME	Restricted (attack on the Grammos lasted about two weeks).	Much available (Operation <i>Ratkiller</i> lasted three and one-half months).

inner ring were policed up by the outer ring. What was believed to be the core of the guerrilla forces in South Korea was destroyed during this phase of Operation *Ratkiller*.

By the time this operation officially ended on 15 March, some 20,000 guerrillas had been killed or captured. General Matthew Ridgway, Commander-in-Chief of United Nations forces, reported that the guerrilla "irritation was ended for good." A large contributor to this success had been the detailed and extensive effort to fix the enemy through encirclement.

As shown in these two examples,

both the blocking position and encirclement techniques can be effective means of fixing the enemy. Any decision on when to use which technique must be based on an analysis of the factors of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops available, and time). The accompanying table can be used as a guide in making this decision.

The FM 7-30 blocking-position approach to fixing the enemy requires defined and limited avenues of approach and the ability to accept some enemy escape along avenues that are not blocked. It is easier to determine the avenues of approach when the en-

emy is depending on a base of operations for supply and reinforcement. The Greek example also shows the need for strategic (diplomatic) isolation as well as tactical isolation. The blocking position technique may require fewer troops than the encirclement, because only selected positions are occupied instead of an entire 360 degrees, and less time because there is no requirement for contraction.

The FM 90-8 encirclement approach to fixing the enemy requires fairly good intelligence on the enemy's location, as well as many troops and much time. Its advantage is that it can cover all avenues of approach and therefore limit the enemy's chances of escape.

Whether the friendly commander chooses one of these two techniques or some other method, his requirement to fix the enemy remains the same. It is not efficient to allow a sizeable number of enemy soldiers to escape and live to fight another day when a little planning can fix and destroy them. Commanders in Greece and Korea wrestled with and solved this problem, and today's commanders can learn from their successes.

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