SOLUTION ... TACTICAL DECISION GAME

Seizing and Holding an Enemy Training Center in Afghanistan with a Tactical Air Assault

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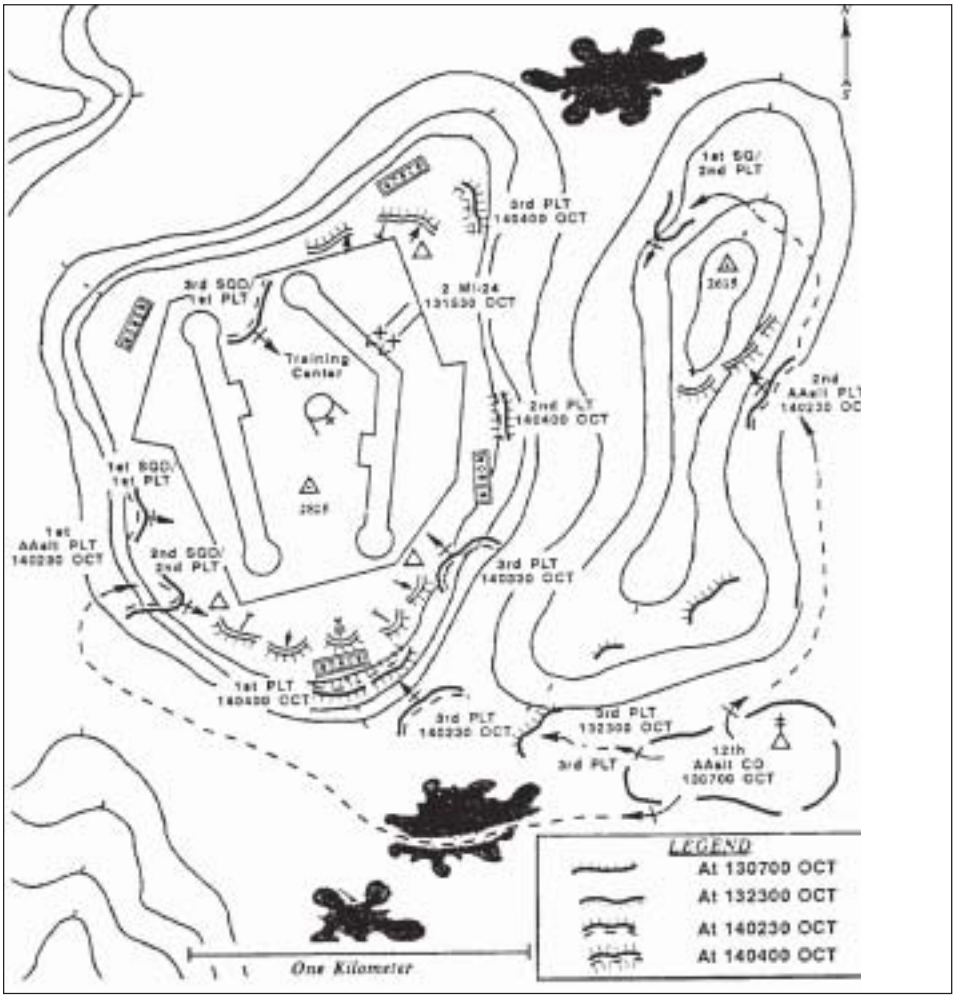
Editor's Note: *This exercise is based upon an actual Soviet operation conducted against Afghan Mujahideen forces in 1985, by the 12th Air Assault Company, and includes comments by the staff of Russia's Frunze Military Academy.*

12th Air Assault Company's seizure of a *mujahideen* training center:

After a full day of combat, The 12th AASLT Company realized that their situation was becoming critical. Ammunition was beginning to run out, men had to fire single shots rather than bursts. The battalion main force was unable to break through and reinforce the company. The company commander reviewed the situation and determined that they must attack at nightfall. The commander ordered his 3rd platoon to seize the southeast slope of hill 2825 to distract the enemy. The 1st and 2nd platoons would envelop the enemy from the west and the east at 14 0230 OCT 85, simultaneously attacking from two directions to seize the base, capture ammunition, and then hold the base until the battalion arrived. His plan worked, and by 14 0400 OCT 85 his company had taken the base without casualties. They had captured three DShK heavy machine guns, two recoilless rifles, 17 individual small arms and ammunition. The enemy tried to retake the base at 14 0600 OCT 85, but was driven off. When the main body of the battalion arrived, they punished the enemy badly and forced him to withdraw, denying the enemy the opportunity to retake the base.

Frunze Commentary/ Lessons Learned:

This vignette demonstrates that a soldier's combat load is essential: proper equipping of air assault personnel, including sufficient ammunition, rations, water, and radio batteries. Additionally, one must ensure that there is uninterrupted resupply and safe LZs to conduct emergency resupply missions. Resupply can determine the course of the battle and—as important as it and casevac are to mission accomplishment—the length of time needed to complete the mission will depend on how well the direct coordination with aviation was done. One must consider the weather conditions and the effectiveness of the enemy's air defense. The closer the LZs are to the objective or the fewer there are, the harder it will be to resupply forces and conduct casevac. From this and previous battles, it was determined that in order to fight independently for three or four days, each air assault trooper would need to carry an approximate load of 35-40 kilograms, so when regular resupply is guaranteed, the soldier's load could be lightened or tailored.



Editor's Commentary:

The air assault company ran out of ammunition after a day's combat, based partially on Soviet doctrine: small arms are used to suppress the enemy and eventually it may kill the enemy. The standard AK-47 fire selector switch goes from safe to full automatic to semiautomatic, which demonstrates the Soviets norm of automatic weapons fire, unlike U.S. doctrine, that uses crew-served weapons to suppress the enemy while small arms are used to destroy the enemy. The standard U.S. assault rifle selector switch goes from safe to semiautomatic to three round burst demonstrating the norm of semiautomatic/ controlled weapons fire. An army facing for a guerilla war needs to devote more time to rifle marksmanship. It saves on ammunition consumption. Frequently in the mountains, bolt-action rifles with better range and accuracy proved to be of better use. However, the rapid firing assault rifle proved most useful in ambushes.

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