

## McBreen Maj Brendan B

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**From:** McBreen Maj Brendan B  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 09, 2004 2:47 PM  
**To:** Barr Capt Stefan R  
**Subject:** OpOrders

Captain Barr:

Have you or your peer instructors seen the TDG solution published in this month's Gazette?

I'm *glad* the Gazette had the courage to publish such a glaring example of possibly the worst order ever written. Trainers all over the Marine Corps can use this order as an example of how NOT to construct a company-level order.

1. No mention whatsoever of the enemy or the enemy's response. No estimate, no opposing will, no possible response - just 'trenchlines.'
2. **Over thirty paragraphs of detailed instructions.** The entire first half of the order is a carefully scripted four-phase concept of operation, which does not even clearly communicate the scheme. More words result in less understanding.
3. **Six "On-order" statements, nineteen "be prepared to" statements, "Simultaneously," "As trench line is reduced," "begins to conduct," "upon destruction of the enemy," "if this occurs," "upon seizure of trench line 3" - the entire order is rife with timing linkages and attempts to synchronize actions in a scripted manner.** These directions reserve decisions to the Co CO, depend on good comm and SA throughout, and make the order fragile and overly susceptible to the inevitable friction of operations. The scheme includes at least two passages of lines possibly executed while under enemy fire.
4. The Co **reserve** is 3rd Platoon, **tasked to "attack and destroy the enemy strongpoint..."** If tasked, he's not a reserve.
5. **Precise tactical terms** are the language of the profession. Clear communications depend on precise terminology. What does "unhooking," "set into battle formation," "lean in fire support," "hug the fire support," "artillery ring," "act as jagd panzers" mean? What multiple meanings do these terms have for the company attachments? HWSAT (Helicopter Wave and Serial Assignment Table) is incorrectly referred to as HESWAT (Helicopter equipment serialized weight assignment table).
6. **Task organization is never clearly communicated.** " platoons have SMAWs attached," "integrate SMAWs and Javelins into your defense" are hints within the order. There are eight units tasked, the three platoons, MG, mortars, and attached HMG, Javelin, and Engineers. The complexity of the order is multiplied by the **eight separate units, all of which require the company commander to directly control by radio, and all of this during a multiple-insert-LZ helicopter assault.** This again reinforces the order's attempt to choreograph the evolution. A dead battery in the Co CO's radio will leave eight units undirected and scrambling to create direct relationships while in contact with the enemy.
7. **Task statements are too long and detailed.** This is risky. The subordinate will not remember everything, and there is a danger he won't even remember the one important thing. Contradictory task statements - "Engineers emplace minefield AND serve as litter bearers," "3rd Platoon...attack and destroy...reserve...FIT...assume an SBF...establish defense...provide security for engineers..." - are a result of trying to task a unit in detail for each phase of the operation.
8. **There is no company mission statement.**
9. Intent statements should avoid multiple clauses connected by AND - "Attack...IOT control the pass AND protect the battalion's left flank." Intent gives guidance when the situation changes. Which of the two intent statements do we expect our platoon commanders to follow? The mission statements of the attachments do not include intent.
10. **Micromanagement (MM), more of the obvious (MOTO) and standing operating procedures (SOP).** There are no right answers, especially for a fictional unit in a fictional situation. A commander with new attachments, without the benefit of training his people on a specific mission, may need to be very detailed and restate SOPs or provide MM training guidelines. The goal, however, should be to reduce these types of phrases to ZERO to keep the order clear and concise. All sentences of an order should be mission-specific.

"establish hot and cold positions" (MM)

"use preestablished TRPs" (MOTO)

"integrate crew-served weapons and Javelins" (MOTO)

"at 100 rounds per minute" (MM)  
"six rounds per minute, alternating tubes" (MM)  
"conserve ammunition" (MOTO)  
"keep accountability of all personnel" (MOTO)  
"bring resupplies into designated LZ" (SOP)  
"ensure ammunition is resupplied" (SOP)  
"collect all casualties" (MOTO)  
"quickly set into...position" "quickly displace" (MOTO)  
"with connector files" (SOP)  
"handle prisoners of war" (SOP)

11. Conditional statements should be avoided. One, they reduce confidence. Two, they inject "if-then" options into the order, increasing its complexity. Three, they give subordinate leaders a fall-back when difficulties are encountered. "Optimum criteria," "if fires are effective," "if artillery is unable," and "If this occurs" are phrases to be avoided.

I've got a lot of philosophies on techniques for creating concise oporders:  
<http://www.2ndbn5thmar.com/orders/>

Semper Fi  
BBM



# TDGs

## Solutions to TDG #04-1

Tactical Decision Game #04-1, "Attack and Seize the Pass," was presented in *MCG*, Jan04 and is reprinted here.

You are the company commander of a rifle company that has been reinforced with the following assets: engineers, .50 caliber machineguns, and Javelins that are all foot mobile. Your total strength is 174 Marines and sailors. Platoons consist of 28 Marines to include corpsmen. Weapons platoon is robust with complete sections: 18 Marines with 6 M240G machineguns, 13 Marines with 6 Mk153 shoulder-launched multipurpose assault weapons, and 15 Marines with 3 60mm mortars. Attachments, as stated, are the following: 8 engineers, 10 Marines with two .50 caliber machineguns, and 10 Marines with 3 Javelins.

Your mission is to attack and seize a platoon (reinforced) strongpoint. It is reinforced with three BMPs (Soviet mechanized infantry vehicle) and possible SA-7 man-portable air defense systems. The enemy has typical Soviet-style small arms with medium machineguns and rocket propelled grenade assets. It is critical that this strongpoint is destroyed and the ground to the northwest of the objective be held to protect the battalion's movement on the left flank of the pass.

The area is a narrow pass in a mountainous and desert terrain. The average temperature is 90 degrees during the day and 60 degrees at night. The enemy is a platoon (reinforced) and has been in the vicinity of the pass for 2 weeks. This has allowed the enemy to prepare minefields, trenches, and harden vehicles in the vicinity of the trenches. All minefields are covered with wire, interlocking fire, and 10 meters in depth. Two of the BMPs are in a hardened position while the remaining BMP acts as a mobile reserve. All intelligence of the site is recent to within 6 hours due to recent unmanned aerial

vehicle flights in the area in preparation for the battalion's movement. The S-2 (intelligence) reports that the enemy position appears isolated, and its purpose is possibly to serve as a "tripwire" for units moving into the vicinity of the pass. In addition, the enemy's parent mechanized battalion is 20 kilometers away.

As stated, your battalion will be moving to your left along a separate corridor to the southwest. The battalion is mechanized with a company of tanks in the lead. They will be moving through the valley in 4 hours. Your mission is to seize the pass. In addition, your company must be prepared to defend the area and protect the battalion's flank until they seize their objective. (Not shown on the map.)

As a heliborne force your company must move swiftly to destroy the enemy in the pass while reserving combat power for immediate follow-on operations. To aid in your attack, the company will have a section of AH-1s and one section of fixed-wing for 1 hour prior to and during your initial arrival into the landing zone (LZ). With two LZs identified (LZs Hawk and Sparrow), the company will have a lift capability of three CH-53s and six CH-46s. To aid in communications, one Huey will serve as "command and control" and aid with initial fire support coordination then pass the "baton" once forces are aground and a "battle handover" is conducted. Fire support will be robust initially with one artillery battery in direct support for the attack.

### Solution A

#### *Company Commander's Frag Order*

To all: "This operation occurs in four phases: Phase I—initial fire support via forward air controller (airborne) (FAC(A)) and landing of heliborne company; Phase II—fire support pass from FAC(A) to fire support team (FIST) and

land force moves to the attack; Phase III—company attack with supporting fires; Phase IV—consolidation, hasty defense, and receive resupply.

"During Phase I the following actions will be accomplished:

- Designate target reference points (TRPs) for each trench system. Designate target reference numbers (TRNs) for strongpoint and key terrain in the area.
  - Designate LZs, initial points, and establish fires via FAC(A) and battery giving a destruction criteria before moving the helicopter force inbound. Optimum destruction criteria is the removal of three of four BMPs, removal of listening posts/observation posts, and effective suppression of SA-7 threat and man-portable air defense systems.
  - In accordance with the HESWAT (helicopter equipment serialized weight assignment table), land first waves into LZ Hawk and LZ Sparrow respectively and quickly establish FIST to prepare for battle handover. Also have the company quickly set into battle formation and ready to lean in fire support.
  - Simultaneously as the FIST is established, elements of .50 caliber machinegun (MG) and 60mm mortar section need to establish fires enabling the company to have constant support for the attack once the company is ready.
  - Concentrate on targets left to right and suppressing key areas vital to the company's attack using preestablished TRPs and TRNs. TRPs are 1 through 5, and targets are AB 1400 and AB 1401.
- "During Phase II:
- FAC(A) continues fires and notifies of bomb damage assessment

*For more detailed information on the structure of Marine Corps units, Marine Corps equipment, and symbols used in TDG sketches, see the MCG web site at <[www.mca-marines.org/gazette](http://www.mca-marines.org/gazette)>.*



prior to conducting battle handoff with FiST.

- FiST continues fires and allows company to complete combat power buildup in the zone. Company begins to conduct movement that will hug the fire support used by helicopters, fast movers, and artillery.

- FiST continues to use all air assets available with continuous execution of the same 'package' until air assets are exhausted. Once air is depleted the artillery will continue suppression as needed until the company establishes its supporting efforts; i.e., M240G MG section.

- 60mm mortars and .50 caliber MGs are collocated in vicinity of FiST for backup marks and suppression once the artillery ring is shut down.

- The company prepares to establish its supporting effort I (SE 1) with M240G MGs and makes further refinements to FiST fires.

- FiST is now ready to aid in the suppression of targets with 60mm mortar and .50 caliber MG fire to facilitate suppression of the enemy on far right targets while M240G MGs suppress close targets.

"During Phase III:

- Internal M240G MGs are established and the unit begins movement to attack from the left to right of the enemy TRPs 1 through 4. Platoons have shoulder-launched multipurpose assault weapons attached and are able to reduce trench line internal. Use of .50 caliber MGs and 60mm mortars aids in support, and shifting fires enables suppression of the far right trenches.

- As trench line 3 is reduced, the company calls in resupply via helos and prepares for consolidation and hasty defense.

- .50 caliber MGs and 60mm mortars begin displacement upon seizure of trench line 3. Suppression continues with M240Gs and platoon internal base of fires until units—with

connector files—pass through and continue the assault.

"During Phase IV we will:

- Consolidate after the destruction of trench line 4 and establish our hasty defense in the pass. Move at least one terrain feature over (not shown) and establish area with all assets to engage enemy.

- Collect all casualties and reestablish ammunition levels. Move casualties to area where they can be extracted with first sergeant and aid and litter teams. This will be in the vicinity of the retrograde LZ.

- Rendezvous with the second wave of resupply and place assets where needed to aid in defense.

- Establish retrograde LZ that is defensible and safe from enemy fire and aids in evacuation of casualties.

- Preregister indirect fires in key area and prepare for counterattacks.

- Engineers will establish a hasty minefield in area of chokepoints and area for dismounts."

*Tasks*

To FiST: "You are foot mobile and will land in LZ Sparrow with the

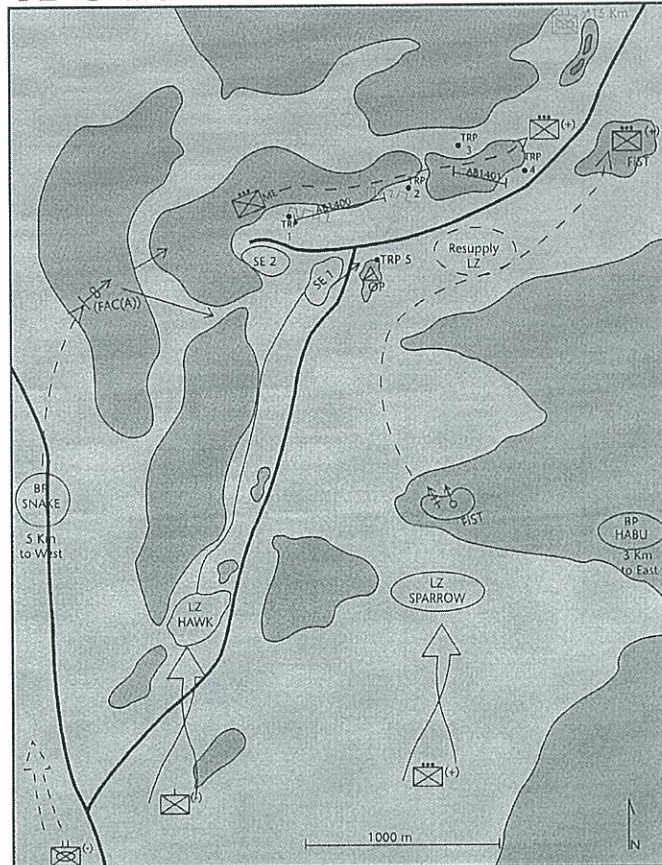
first wave. Develop a fire support plan that incorporates fires for the company's scheme of maneuver that uses all organic and inorganic assets. Plan fires that will be used prior to entering the LZs and be prepared to (BPT) conduct battle handoff with the FAC(A) from the AH-1 section. Ensure you have communications with me, all nets, and include the command and control UH-1 as redundant communications. Develop a signal plan with the platoons, that is the no communications plan ensuring the ability to continue to provide fire support on all levels in case communications go down. After the destruction of the strongpoint BPT quickly displace and aid the company in establishing a defense for the pass to prepare for counterattack. Incorporate the engineer's hasty minefield, Javelins, .50 caliber MGs, and all other assets into the defense.

"Ensure that the battlefield is designated with targets and TRPs, and ensure all platoon commanders and myself have identical copies of maps and fire support available."

To .50 caliber MGs:

"Your squad is foot mobile. You will land in LZ Sparrow with the first wave. You will provide direct support to the company in the attack by suppressing TRPs 1 through 4 and shifting on command from the FiST through indirect fire. Anticipate shifting fires from left to right. Fire suppression will be at the sustained rate with 50 rounds per minute. BPT to fire at the rapid with 100 rounds per minute if fires are effective. On order (O/O) you will displace and integrate into the company defense and establish an indirect fire support position for the defense. BPT provide a spotter to aid the FiST for location of rounds during the attack and defense. During defense BPT engage armored personnel carriers (APCs), dismounts, and armor with indirect capabilities tied with coordinated fires."

## TDG #04-1





To Javelins: "You are foot mobile. You will land in LZ Sparrow with the first wave. You will act as my mobile 'jagd panzers.' BPT place your weapons in a position to destroy the enemy's mobile reserve if the air and artillery assets are unable to. Your engagement criteria are the following: tanks, APCs, and wheeled vehicles. O/O you will BPT integrate in the hasty defense and establish hot and cold positions that will best eliminate and destroy the enemy armor threats. Engagement criteria for the defense is the same as the offense."

To 1st Platoon: "You will attack and destroy the enemy strongpoints in order to deny the enemy the ability to control the pass and protect the battalion's flank. You are SE 2. You will establish an intermediate support by fire (SBF) position that suppresses enemy trench lines enabling sister platoons to pass through and attack and destroy the strongpoint. O/O BPT displace and conduct passage of lines through one of the platoons and attack and destroy the far rightmost trench line. O/O BPT aid

in the hasty defense. You will be responsible for establishing the retrograde LZ. You will aid in the LZ defense. You will also BPT act as the counterattacking force and BPT attack with action right or left."

To 2d Platoon: "You will attack and destroy the enemy strongpoint in order to deny the enemy the ability to control the pass and protect the battalion's flank. You are the main effort and will attack the enemy on the leftmost flank with the aid of SE 1 and SE 2 for your attack. O/O you displace and take the leftmost portion of the hasty defense. BPT integrate crew-served weapons and Javelins into your defense. You have the road inclusive."

To 3d Platoon: "You will attack and destroy the enemy strongpoint in order to deny the enemy the ability to control the pass and protect the battalion's flank. You are the company reserve and will follow in trace of 2d Platoon. Upon SE 2's 'unhooking' you will BPT assume an SBF/SE 3 to aid in the reduction of the last trench system. Upon destruction of the enemy you will establish the hasty defense to the right side and integrate with 2d Platoon. In addition, you will provide security for engineers who will go forward and establish the hasty minefield. You have the pass exclusive."

To engineers: "You will land LZ Sparrow, aid in the battalion's defense, and establish a hasty minefield upon destruction of the enemy defense. In addition, you will aid in initial aid and litter procedures for the company's attack."

To M240G MGs: "You are SE 1 and will establish an SBF position that will be general support (GS) to aid the platoons in the attack and destruction of the enemy strongpoint. You will provide continuous fire support with sustained fire of 100 rounds per minute and BPT increase fires to 200 rounds per minute. Upon destruction of the enemy strongpoint you will displace and establish positions in the hasty defense. You will remain in GS of the company. During the attack shift fires from left to right and also BPT slit section and provide suppression if indirect fire assets are unable to adjust and effectively suppress trenches. If this

occurs, conserve ammunition and give suppression at a slow, sustained rate. In the defense your engagement criteria is APCs, dismounted troops, and armor."

To 60mm mortars: "You will land in LZ Sparrow with the first wave. You will be GS of the company in the attack. You will suppress targets using the six rounds a minute and alternating tubes for continuous suppression. BPT shift fires from left to right of TRPs 1 through 4. O/O you will displace to vicinity of extract LZ and establish a fire cap to aid in the defense and covering fire of the hasty minefield. BPT aid in the hasty defense with establishing final protective fires in the vicinity of the minefield and key chokepoint."

To the first sergeant: "BPT to conduct aid and litter operations and establish extract LZ upon conclusion of the attack. Keep accountability of all personnel and Marines who are extracted. You are the marshalling area control officer."

To the company gunnery sergeant: "BPT execute the second wave and bring all resupplies into a designated LZ, which will aid in the hasty defense. Support the engineers in any task and ensure resupply of ammunition is distributed to the units upon your arrival. BPT handle enemy prisoners of war."

To the executive officer: "Upon arrival assist me in the building of the hasty defense and coordinate with the FIST to ensure defense is secure with fire support and interlocking fires."

#### *Rationale*

I believe the best way to move my units into position is by bounding into defensible sectors using an overwatch technique. Additionally, I want to use the terrain to mask the inbound helicopter movement making it difficult for the enemy to engage the helicopters with direct or indirect fires. Lastly, I want my unit to provide security, and after the battalion's extraction I want to have the capability to bound out of the hot zone internally, with enough firepower to bloody the nose of the enemy and cause a delay action on his part.

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