

Fight or Flight

by Capt Curtis E. Moore II

Situation

You are the section leader of a pair of AH-1W Super Cobras on an armed reconnaissance mission. Each attack helicopter's weapons load consists of 2 TOW missiles, 2 Hellfire missiles, 7 2.75-inch high-explosive rockets, 7 2.75-inch fl chettes, and 400 rounds of 20mm ammunition. While engaging an enemy mechanized column, your wingman is brought down by enemy fire just as you launch your last missile. After confirming no one survived the helicopter crash, you discover your helicopter has lost external radio communications and has fallen below the fuel minimums required to safely return to the forward arming and refueling point (FARP).

Trying not to think about the loss of your squadron mates, you task your copilot, Sean "Dirty" Canahal, to navigate the aircraft through the mountainous terrain to the FARP under the most fuel efficient condi-

tions possible. During the 24-kilometer flight to the FARP site it is not until you make a hard turn through one of the mountain passes that a reflection from behind your aircraft catches your eye. The reflection emanates from the canopy of an enemy Ka-50 Hokum attack helicopter. You cannot be sure how long he has been behind you, but you determine that since he has not attacked yet, even though you are in range of his weapons systems, he may have another motive. Is his goal to discover the location of the FARP site? If compromised, the FARP could be attacked/destroyed by enemy artillery, rockets, or aircraft. A successful attack on the FARP would kill several people and destroy aircraft and other equipment.

While you consider options, the following conversation takes place between you and Dirty over the internal communications system.

Dirty: "Hobbit, I thought we had air superiority. Where did that guy come from?"

Hobbit: "Obviously the enemy is pulling a few wild cards out of the deck. The S-2 never even mentioned those in their air order of battle."

Dirty: "Without any radio communications we cannot call the Hornets to help us out on this one. The way I see it we have two options: we can try to make it back to the FARP site, hope our fuel lasts until we get there, risk compromising the site, and pray our Stinger man-portable air defense missile bubbas tag this guy, or we can turn, try to engage, and shoot this guy down. If we go that way, assuming we get him in our sites and destroy him, I am sure we will be out of fuel before we make it back to the FARP site."

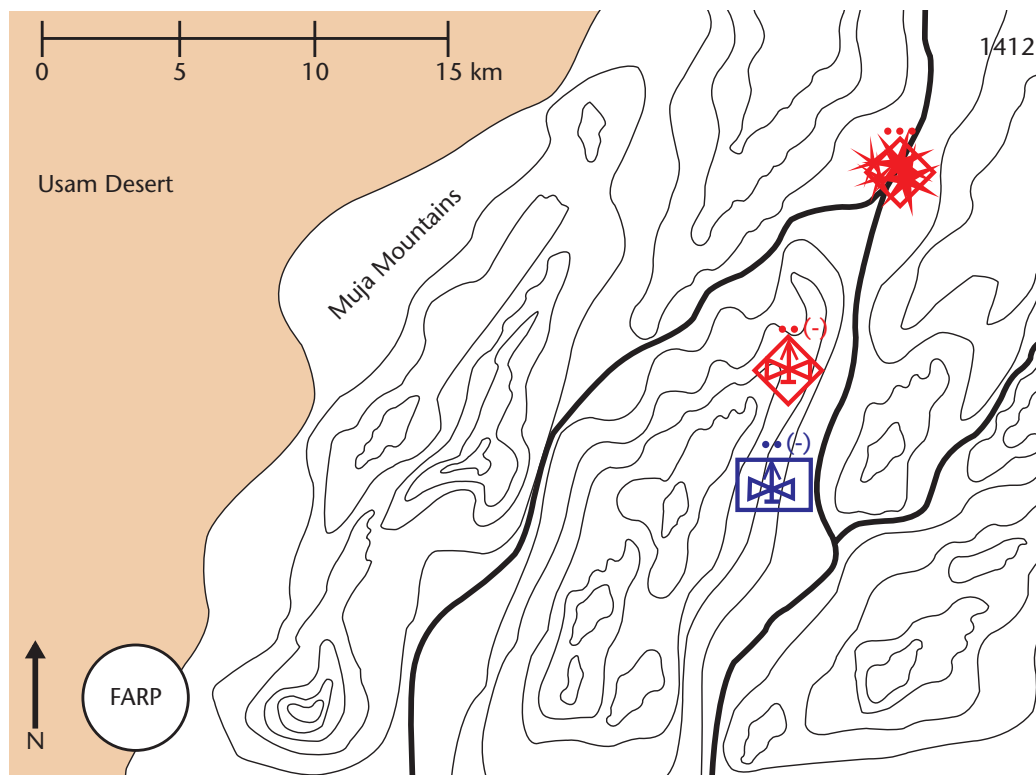
You consider his counsel, take a deep breath, and explain your plan to Dirty.

TDG #02-5 Requirement

In a time limit of 30 seconds, come up with a plan and be prepared to brief it to your copilot.

Draft a mission statement, intent, and a graphic representation of your proposed course of action. Submit your solution to *Marine Corps Gazette*, TDG #02-5, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, fax 703-630-9147, or e-mail <gazette@mca-marines.org>.

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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 <<http://www.mca.marines.org/Gazette/gaz.html>>.