

The Fallen Angel

by LCpl Ramon Pinto

Situation

Your Marine expeditionary unit (MEU) has been conducting operations in the coastal country of Atlantica. A former general by the name of Franco has been terrorizing the capital city by sending his rogue army to loot and pillage the locals and kill all who oppose him. U.S. carrier-launched aircraft have been making low-altitude, high-speed flybys to make our presence known and demonstrate the resolve of the international community. They have also bombed Franco military units after Franco's forces engaged U.S. aircraft with anti-aircraft fire. Later that day a Navy F-18 was shot down by a long-range surface-to-air missile and crash-landed south of a local airfield. The pilot's last radio transmission stated that he had ejected safely and was heading to his extraction point (which is near the airfield).

You are 1st Squad Leader, 2d Platoon, Company C, Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, and your platoon is tasked to conduct a TRAP (tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel) mission to recover the downed F-18 pilot who is hiding in Building 13 of the abandoned airport. The MEU S-2 (intelligence) reports that there is no known enemy presence at the bombed out airport. The airport consists of four administrative buildings made of cinder block and corrugated steel roofs. The runway is cratered and covered with debris.

At 2200 2d Platoon is inserted by helo into Landing Zone (LZ) Alcatraz (500m south of Building 13). Two AH-1 Cobras are on station but only for 20 minutes. 2d Platoon moves out in a tactical column heading north to Building 13. 1st Squad with the platoon commander will clear the building

and find the pilot. 2d and 3d Squads are responsible for perimeter security north of the building using the remains of cars and debris for cover outside of the building. 1st Squad tactically and quickly enters the back door of the building and immediately clears the first floor of the two-story building. When you reach the second floor you notice a dead body with an AK-47 in hand directly across a door in the hallway. Stacked against the wall the lead fire team leads the way into the room. Suddenly the room erupts with automatic rifle fire. The fire team returns fire and the AK-47 fire ceases. The fire team leader yells out, "Room clear," and you enter.

From a closet in the back of the room you hear a voice shout, "I am an American!" The F-18 pilot comes out of the closet and explains that he

was compromised in his hide site and had to seek cover in this building. The enemy rushed him and he shot the one in the door minutes before you arrived. As you step back in the hallway to tell your platoon commander that you have the "package," you see the corpsman frantically tending to the platoon commander. One of the AK-47 rounds penetrated the wall and hit him in the stomach under the interceptor vest. He is bleeding profusely and is out of the fight.

As you digest the fact that you are now temporarily in charge, a long burst of machinegun fire lets loose on 2d and 3d Squads' positions outside of the building. The 2d Squad Leader reports that they are taking heavy machinegun fire from Buildings 10, 11, and 12. The platoon sergeant, located with 2d Squad, has been hit in the shoulder breaking his

collarbone. All Marines carry a full combat load. Additionally, the squad leaders have intrasquad radios, and the platoon has two PRC-119s and a PRC-113.

You are 1st Squad Leader and you have assumed command of the mission. What do you do?

Requirement

In a time limit of 60 seconds develop your scheme of maneuver including any request for close air support. Prepare an overlay depicting your scheme of maneuver, designated targets, and rationale for your actions. Submit your solution to *Marine Corps Gazette*, TDG #04-3, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, fax 703-630-9147, or e-mail <gazette@mca-marines.org>.



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