

Trouble in Ponchoville

by Sgt Eric P. Serna

Situation

You are the commander of Company C, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines. Your battalion has been conducting peace enforcement operations in the country of Tenochichitlan. Tenochichitlan has been suffering from a horrible civil war, and U.S. forces are supporting the legitimate government by helping to eliminate armed guerrilla resistance. Your company has been tasked with conducting a cordon and search of the village of Ponchoville in order to locate weapons and information on guerrilla activities. This small village of about 200 people has been known to support the guerrillas by hiding weapons and providing food.

The guerrillas are known to possess Soviet small arms (AK series, Dragunov sniper rifles, light machineguns, and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs)). They operate in small units and only conduct harassing attacks. They will not fight to the death and are not capable of reinforcing. They will withdraw when friendly reinforcements arrive.

The village consists of several small stone houses and a few farming structures. Ponchoville lies in a valley surrounded by forested hills and fields of lettuce. There are three dirt roads leading into the village that break the surrounding farmland into three areas. Many of the villagers are indifferent about the U.S. and government forces, but some are very upset about the foreign presence.

You have tasked organized your company into cordoning and searching elements. 1st Platoon and weapons platoon will enter the village to do the searching, 2d and 3d Platoons will lay in the cordon. Additionally, you have six HMMWVs from the battalion's heavy machinegun platoon attached. They consist of three M2 .50 caliber heavy machineguns

and three Mk19s, all vehicle mounted. 2d Platoon will place one squad along each road as it enters the valley. Each of those squads will have two heavy machinegun HMMWVs attached. 3d Platoon will conduct patrols of the farmlands and forested areas around the village while the search is conducted.

The cordon is in place at 0500, just as the sun comes up. 1st Platoon and weapons platoon arrive at the village 1 hour later. After meeting with the village chief, he agrees to have the villagers assemble just outside of the village to the west. Weapons platoon watches over the villagers while 1st Platoon searches.

3d Platoon begins its patrols. Two hours later, 2d Platoon calls and informs you that there is a large crowd of approximately 100 visibly upset civilians approaching the northern cordon position. They appear to have come from a nearby village north of their position. They are carrying banners that state, "Amerikan go hoom!" You immediately send 1st Squad, 3d Platoon to their position to aid in dealing with a potential riot.

One hour later, you're told that the crowd at the northern cordon position is getting bigger and angrier. At the same time, you hear the sound of RPGs and small arms fire south of the village. 2d Platoon calls to inform you

that the southern cordon position is under attack. The two HMMWVs have been destroyed by RPGs, and many of the squad are wounded. Your first sergeant reminds you that the search is not yet complete and that the villagers are getting restless.

Requirement

In a time limit of 5 minutes, issue orders to your platoons and reports to higher headquarters. Include your intent, scheme of maneuver on an overlay, and report(s) to higher headquarters. Send your solution and rationale for your actions to *Marine Corps Gazette*, TDG #04-12, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, fax 703-630-9147, or e-mail <gazette@mca-marines.org>.



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