

Village Ambush

by Paul Turnan

Situation

You command a Marine rifle company conducting a movement to contact as the lead element in the battalion's march westward. Your battalion is the supporting effort and does not have priority of fires. The battalion's route of march is through a rural, wooded landscape dotted with small villages.

Roads, logging trails, firebreaks, and footpaths crisscross the region. There are few all-weather, hard top roads. The local population counts just as many who favor the enemy as who welcome the Marine forces. Most of the locals remain impartial, trying to stay out of the line of fire. Enemy activity has been limited to small, meek reconnaissance foot patrols. Weather has been stormy and foggy with low ceilings and limited visibility that has grounded aircraft.

Your company is making slow progress through a village. You move forward to join the leading platoon commander. You tell him to get going, get his point element moving, and push his flank security beyond the few houses that line the road. The point squad is just past the village and hustling along the road. The platoon commander has his second wind and is directing his flank security farther away from the village buildings. From the nearest house an excited schoolgirl runs to you shouting. All you can decipher from her gestures and fractured English is that the enemy is "over there." How many? How far? You can't understand the girl.

You offer pen and paper for her to draw a picture for you when shots are fired from the wooded hillside 300 meters west of town. The point squad dives for cover unscathed as scattered shots strike the road amidst them. The platoon commander already has Marines returning fire on the wood line from behind village buildings. From the woods comes a very long burst of heavy machinegun fire stitching high across the village, splintering wood and shattering masonry. All of this happens in less than 30 seconds. The machinegun stops firing. You can hear Marines in the houses calling out to each other, loud and calm. You look over your shoulder at 2d Platoon on the road, just coming into town. You spot the 2d Platoon commander. He has an "I'm ready. What next?" look on his face. You sprint to the cover of the nearest building as firing resumes—rifles shots are being fired, and there are more long bursts from a machinegun in the woods. This fire is answered with suppressive fires from two squads of your lead platoon. You have a plan already in mind.

Requirement

In a time limit of 5 minutes, issue orders to your company. Make any reports and requests for support that are necessary. Provide your fragmentary order, overlay of your scheme of maneuver, and the rationale for your actions.

