Attack and Seize the Pass

by Capt Jason C. Drake

Situation

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 or 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.)

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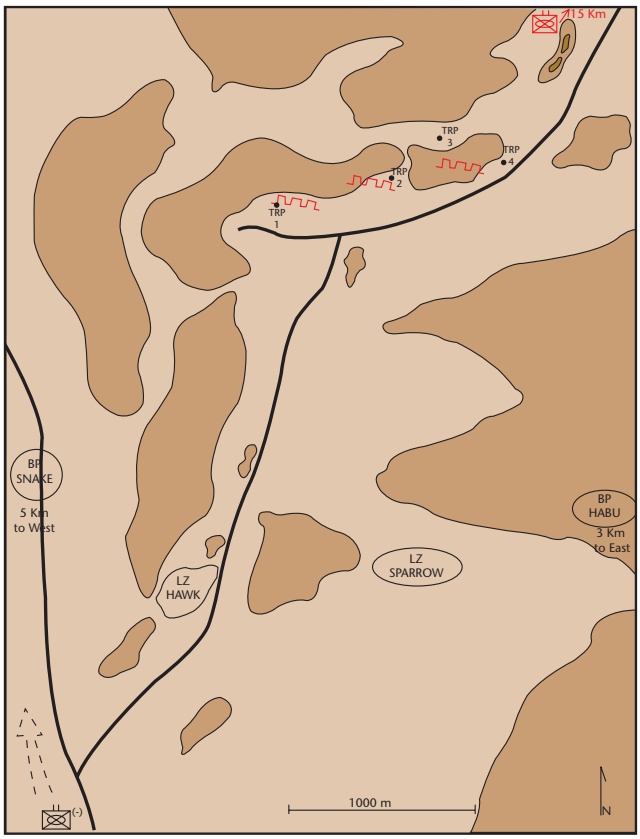

As a heliborne force your company must move swiftly to destroy the enemy in the pass while reserving combat power for immediate follow-on operations. To aid in your attack, the company will have a section of AH–1s and one section of fixed-wing for 1 hour prior to and during your initial arrival into 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.

Requirement

In a time limit of 60 minutes develop a heliborne operation that includes the following: movement of units in the attack (using supporting efforts and main effort), actions on the objective, consolidation, and resupply. Consider fire support assets to be used. Use a graphic depiction to aid in continuous suppression of the objective from insertion of the force to actual destruction of the strongpoint. Lastly, consider the site for possible "resupply LZ" to aid in the hasty defense of the pass. Provide the rationale for your actions and a sketch of your plan. Submit your solution to *Marine Corps Gazette*, TDG #04–1, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, fax 703–630–9147, or e-mail <gazette@mca-Marines.org>.

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