GENERAL ORDERS

JOURNAL FOR LIVING HISTORIANS OF WORLD WAR TWO

Special Edition: GO's Greatest Hits



A Tribute to Tim O'Neill
1943 – 2023

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  Medieval Times with Tanks
- **Pushing the Training Envelope:**
  The Combined Arms Team
  So You Want To Be A Leader?
  Working with Others
  WW2 U.S. and German Infantry Squad Tactics
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  The Platoon Sergeant – A Primer
- **The Art of War: Sun Tzu**
  How To Read and Use Terrain

Special Edition 2026

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GENERAL ORDERS SPECIAL EDITION

A Tribute to Tim O'Neill 1943 - 2023

My friend Tim O'Neill died just the day before October 7, 2023. I didn't know him long, in terms of hours spent together – that happens when reenactors live far apart. But I spent a lot of time interacting with him online as co-editor of ReenactorPro, and assistant editor of *General Orders*.



Tim O'Neill in July of 1970 on Seadog Hill/Hill 162, Quang Tri Provence, Vietnam, sitting on the turret of his M48A3 (C66) "Sounds of Silence". Tim was CO of Company C, 1st Battalion, 77th Armored, attached to the 5th Infantry Division.

It's odd to associate his passing with the passing of so many Israelis, and I can't help that. The dates of these events are too close, and my wife is Jewish (she also knew Tim), so these reminiscences are strangely comingled with two different sadnesses – one, for the Israeli people whom I have come to know from my visits to that land, and who are not all Jewish; and two, for my friend Tim, who gave us sage advice, stern corrections, and many Irish jokes, all in a nasal tenor with a thin southern drawl that I hear now only when I read the annotations in the many field manuals that grace the library of ReenactorPro.

I think I know what Tim would have said about that day that he did not reach – that it was a horror, of course, that so many lives were wasted wantonly. But also, he would have said that each life wasted was also a loss of history, of a people whose knowledge, philosophies, culture and religion stretches back through centuries. Tim was like that – I felt that by knowing him that I was touching well of experience that stretched back centuries, and a knowledge that especially was valuable to us as reenactors.

That's what this issue will be about, primarily: a selected sampling of Tim's past articles, plus a few favorites from past contributors. He would have wanted it that way, to be not all about him – the best reenactors are also teachers, willing and eager to pass their knowledge and experience on to others, for each of them has a wealth that may not stretch back centuries, but is wealth to be shared, nonetheless.

Tim was like that. And I will miss him for it.

— Lynn Kessler

FROM THE EDITOR

Medieval Times with Tanks

Last week we celebrated the tenth birthday of a grandchild. We had just returned from a visit to Paris with her, but year ten is still a decimal milestone, so she requested dinner and a show at Medieval Times. For those who haven't experienced this quasi-historical lesson in the ways of hard times, Medieval Times is a glitzy look at knights beating on each other and horses thundering around a sandy arena followed by varlets with sand scoopers to deal with the expected results. The visitors are seated in areas dedicated to one of the competing horsemen and encouraged to cheer for their favorites while they eat roast chicken with their fingers. It's not as dumb as it sounds, but the history lesson could be made more dramatic by simulating the Nike Riots in Constantinople (CE 532) when the Byzantine rabble objected to rising athletic gear prices or something and for their pains were herded by the efficient general Belisarius into the local stadium by thousands to be butchered. Constantinople, of course, was not the Portland of the East. But there may be, after all, examples of "too much history."

As I watched the mock carnage, I had to think about the current living history project consuming far too much of my shrinking future. I'm young enough to enjoy the hobby (for the moment) but old enough to remember two years of combat deployment. The audience at Medieval Times could enjoy the archery and lance-hurling, the mace swinging and broadsword swinging without thinking about the filth, the misery, the jolly plague outbreaks, the lack of medical care, and all the not so glorious side effects of mayhem.

I'm working now on a tank-infantry demonstration on a more realistic scale and operational rules to give the public a better look at what war was like from a distance. The WWII hobby has few such events—Conneaut is the real exception—because WWII combat was not conducted by marching battalions carrying regimental colors across open fields. It was more likely to be noises in the woods and some smoke (but not as much as we enjoy with black powder).

We can simulate combined operations on the "Fury" level, though it takes training (yikes!), leadership, and attention to detail to make the show authentic and *safe*. But for the audience it's still Medieval Times.

The other side of ground warfare (unlike air warfare, which involves a lot of sitting around the officers' club pool sipping gin and tonics alternating with sudden death) is harder to replicate. Here's the other side of the show: not enough water, endless bully beef and spam, if you can get them, cold or hot, dust or mud, wet socks with holes in them, hot diarrhea, incomprehensible orders, stupid replacements doomed to die within a few days, lost friends, sleep deprivation, fear, boredom, an annoying rash in private places combined with ragged underwear, a letter from your girlfriend back in Mobile who has discovered the chams of your high school baseball team mate Jody, desperate locals stealing supplies, brief exposure to dumb second lieutenants, bad jokes repeated over and over, dirty songs, and an enemy whose life and mood are much like yours.

That's what war is. The public doesn't see that. All it sees is Medieval Times with tanks. This promotes a dangerous lie: war is a glorious game. It isn't a rifle company attacking at half strength after extended combat. It's perhaps ninety individual soldiers, exhausted and scared, and some about to be surprised by death. It's gangs of combat engineers trying to assemble a Bailey bridge on the Rapido under fire by mortars and MG42's. It's an unlucky soldier last seen alive by the tired nurse who pulls a sheet over his face to hide a combat loss on a bloody sheet.

This can get pretty morbid in no time—but so can combat.

How can we convey the reality of combat overshadowing the triumph of those who came home—and those who didn't?

Not a rhetorical question. There's an answer somewhere. Somebody tell me what it is.

* * *

Note: General Orders is not supposed to be a private soapbox for the editors. If we deliver on our potential it will be because serious reenactors are willing to contribute. That's a slow process.

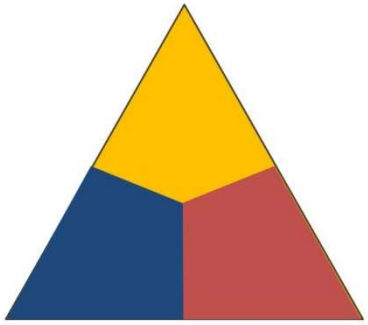
We accept articles written by reenactors and addressing (with eloquence and dignity—no trolling, complaining, or accusing) learning topics, suggestions for improvement, and other issues that interest our community.

We also accept letters to the editors. Again, professional discourse, not insults.

PUSHING THE TRAINING ENVELOPE

The Combined Arms Team

By Timothy O'Neill



WW II living history has for years been an "infantry thing." Large events would usually include some wheeled vehicles, often in ways that confused any large field exercise. Now and then an armored car might appear, and a few tracked vehicles would show up for a special occasion. The results were often disappointing.

There are two reasons for this. First, vehicle owners tend to be proprietary about their equipment, and have expected over the years to have an independence of action that contributes little to the maneuvers. The vehicles are scattered here and there, usually with their home units, and there is never enough concentration of mounted force to make a difference. Second, most commanders had no real idea how to use the vehicle assets they have at hand. There is an art to making infantry and mounted units work together effectively, and it is generally ignored.

That has created even more problems as the number and variety of vehicles available for events has steadily increased. Making these valuable resources contribute to a field exercise takes some wheeling, dealing, and skull sweat. We can't put that off forever. Having more armor available can lift the level of realism in the hobby, or it can create confusion, frustration, and a mobile safety threat.

Let's try thinking this through, turning a problem into an opportunity.

The Combination of Arms

Armies wrestled for years with the problem of combining infantry and mounted forces. The long debate, largely between the "tanks as infantry support" and the "armored force as independent arm" proponents is chronicled in the ReenactorPro online resource library (*Armor for Reenactors*). Enough to say that the armored force proponents won, hands-down, in the summer of 1940. Infantry and Armor work together, but as combined arms teams. This is very different from the current reenactor model, which has armor scattered everywhere and unable to influence the outcome of simulated battle.

Solving this is technically simple; politically it is more complex, but the advantages of using sound practices are too obvious to ignore. Let's see why.

Cross-attachment

The point of combining arms (for example, infantry with tanks) is to produce a force that takes advantage of the strengths of both and reduces the weaknesses of each. Tanks, for example, provide protected firepower and shock effect in the offensive; the infantry that accompanies the

tanks protects the tanks' weaknesses (for example, getting ambushed by kids with a panzerfaust), and makes it easier for the force to consolidate on an objective once it has been taken.

There is a simple and standard way to do this. We call it "cross attachment." It is second nature to experienced commanders. Here is how it works.

We will start with the example of two battalions, one tank and one armored infantry. These might be the maneuver elements of an armored division combat command; they might be two independent battalions grouped together.

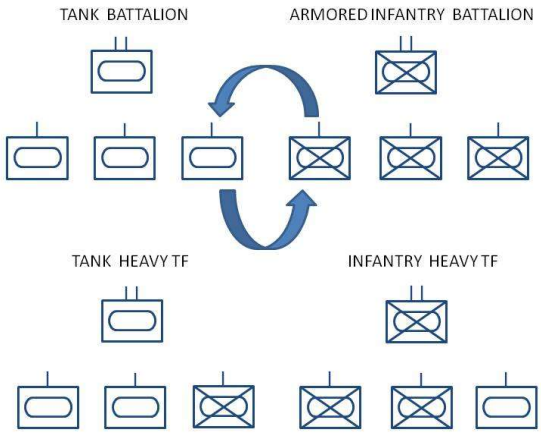


Figure 1. Two battalions are shown here; only the maneuver units (tank and armored infantry companies, three each) are displayed. The headquarters and support units will not be affected by cross-attachment, so we'll focus on the maneuver companies. To cross-attach, the battalions simply exchange one company each: the tank battalion sends a company to the armored infantry battalion, and the infantry completes the trade by sending one of their armored infantry companies to the tank battalion. The result is two combined arms teams, one "tank-heavy" and the other "infantry-heavy."

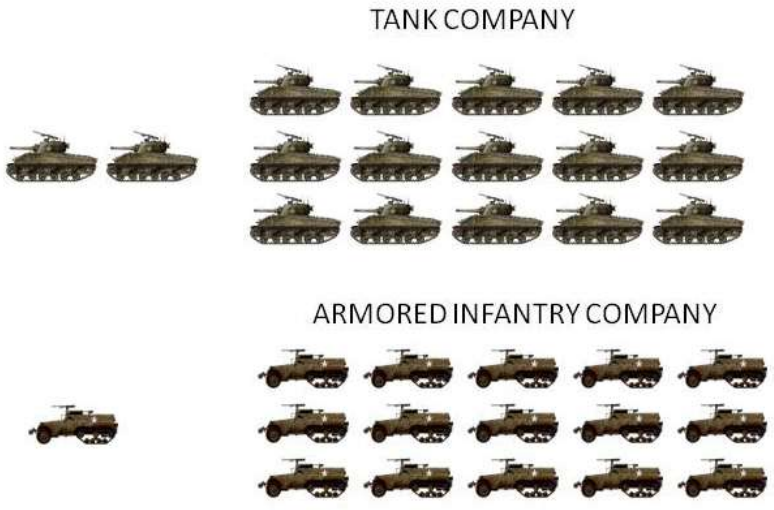


Figure 2. Now we go down to the company level. One company of each arm trades off just like their parent battalions. Here we have a tank company—again, I show only the maneuver elements (platoons). The tank company has 17 tanks, two in the HQ element and five in each of three platoons. The armored infantry company has a HQ element

in a halftrack, and three platoons carried in 4 halftracks each. (For those who haven't read the FM on armored infantry in the resource library of ReenactorPro, each platoon has a HQ element and first squad in one HT, two HT's carrying the 2nd and 3rd rifle squads, a mortar HT and a machinegun squad HT.)

The "swap" method works at company level, too. All that is involved is switching one platoon from each company, creating two combined arms teams. (Later practice uses terms that were less solid in WWII: a combined arms force at battalion level is called a "task force," while a cross-attached company is called a "team." For this explanation, we will keep it simple.)



Figure 3. When we trade a tank platoon and an armored infantry platoon, we produce a tank-heavy team and an infantry-heavy team. This two-company force is now stronger because each maneuver team is composed of mutually supporting combined arms.

Now, this example assumes full strength units. This seldom happens in extended combat, and is even less likely to happen at a hobby event. But we can easily do what commanders do in wartime: *the best we can*.



Figure 4. This is what we would call a "balanced team"—that is, neither tank- nor infantry-heavy. It's not impossible to imagine having the armor assets to make this happen at a large tactical exercise. Two tanks and three halftracks would do in a pinch. However, we would not like to go with just one tank unless absolutely necessary (doctrine discourages it because two tanks can provide mutual support, but one tank is a sitting duck). In this case, this is the

command element of an armored infantry company (halftrack on the left) and one platoon, plus one three-tank platoon from another company.

How to Use Tanks

The first thing to master is the idea of *task organization*. This is the real goal of the cross-attachment procedure and other tricks of the armor trade: *no unit is organized to accomplish every task it may be assigned*. The types of weapons and combat elements of all branches are part of the approach to each and every mission on the battlefield. We organize a force—often temporarily—to meet the demands of a given mission in the most effective way, based on the mission, the enemy, and the forces available.

When we organize a group of resources to tackle a given mission, the result is a *task force*.[1] This approach demands flexibility, but it solves a basic problem of modern combat: it can place the right forces at the right spot instead of having them scattered and ineffectual.

If we are going to use tank-infantry teams, some basic principles of tank employment are useful to know:

- Tanks are used in the offense to exploit breakthroughs, not to support infantry attacks. Tanks move fast; infantry on foot moves slowly. If tanks are used in support of infantry attacks, it sacrifices the mobility that makes them effective.
- In the defense, tanks are employed in reserve to counterattack and prevent breakthroughs.
- Tanks are best employed in mass.
- Tanks are never used alone.

All this said, there is one more principle: these rules are sound and are there for a reason. But the enemy gets a vote. You may have to do what you have to do in dealing with the battle you're handed.

How to Use Armored Infantry

Infantry field manuals are in the 7- series. Armored infantry, however, is found in the armored force (17-series) field manuals (see **FM 17-42**[2] in the ReenactorPro resource library). This is no accident. Armored infantry is explicitly a part of the armored force, and its tactical doctrine is based on that fact.

Armored infantry rides in halftracks, not because of the armor protection (which is not impressive compared to the tanks') but because of the mobility. Infantry does not fight from the halftrack carriers except as a last resort: casualties in loaded infantry halftracks tend to come in groups of ten. Nor is the halftrack just a "battle taxi." Yes, it can keep up with the tanks, but when the doctrine hits the fan and the enemy has to be destroyed by firepower, maneuver, and shock effect, the infantry squad in the HT dismounts and fights as infantry, and the halftrack (with its extra firepower in the form of a heavy MG and one or two light MG's) provides fire support, maneuvering as needed to be part of the squad.

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[1] The term *task force* is roughly equivalent to the German *Kampfgruppe*. The enemy became very adept at forming Kampfgruppen, and using them to bring maximum force to bear on the key place on the battlefield (*Schwerpunkt*) using available forces. Those forces are often smaller than we would like, and are not always the kind we would prefer to have in hand, but we always do the best we can with what we have.

[2] Documents available in the ReenactorPro resource library are shown in boldface.

As noted earlier (Figure 2) the armored infantry platoon consists of three rifle squads (one in the same HT as the platoon command element), a mortar carrier, and a MG squad carrier.

The mortar carrier has an 81mm mortar, not the dismounted infantry's 60mm. There is a good reason for this. The three mortars in the company will often have to provide fire support fire the rifle squads. The 60mm can only reach out and tough the enemy to about 1300 yards. The rifle squads in their HT's move much faster than dismounted infantry, so the greater range of the 81's provides better cover as the rest of the company advances.

The MG section in the last HT carries two light MG teams and plenty of ammo. These go forward with the rifle squads.

How to Use Them Together

For this, we can consult FM 17-36 and **FM 17-42**. Here are some tips:

Infantry supports tanks by:

- protecting tanks from personnel manning small AT weapons.
- seizing ground from which tanks may attack.
- following the tank attack to secure the ground for the tanks to reorganize, mop up, and assist in consolidation.
- forming a base of supporting fire for the attack (using infantry vehicles in defilade with cover, concealment, observation, and fields of fire).
- finding and removing or destroying obstacles to tank movement.

Tanks assist infantry by:

- supporting by fire with main gun and machine guns.
- neutralizing enemy automatic weapons.
- neutralizing the objective until the arrival of infantry.
- breaking up counterattacks.
- neutralizing or breaking up the enemy's reserves.
- breaching wire and other obstacles.

Armored infantry uses mobility and firepower to:

- move infantry under protection from small arms fire and light shrapnel to dismount points.
- use vehicle weapons to suppress fire. (The cal. 50 is on the halftrack for AA protection, but it is also very good for suppressing fire. When possible, the .50 should be dismounted for a better protected firing position.

In the approach march:

- use common formations: column, wedge, inverted wedge, echelon.

In the attack:

- use fire and maneuver.
- envelop when possible.
- place vehicles in defilade; put platoon vehicles under control of an NCO.

Let's Try It Out

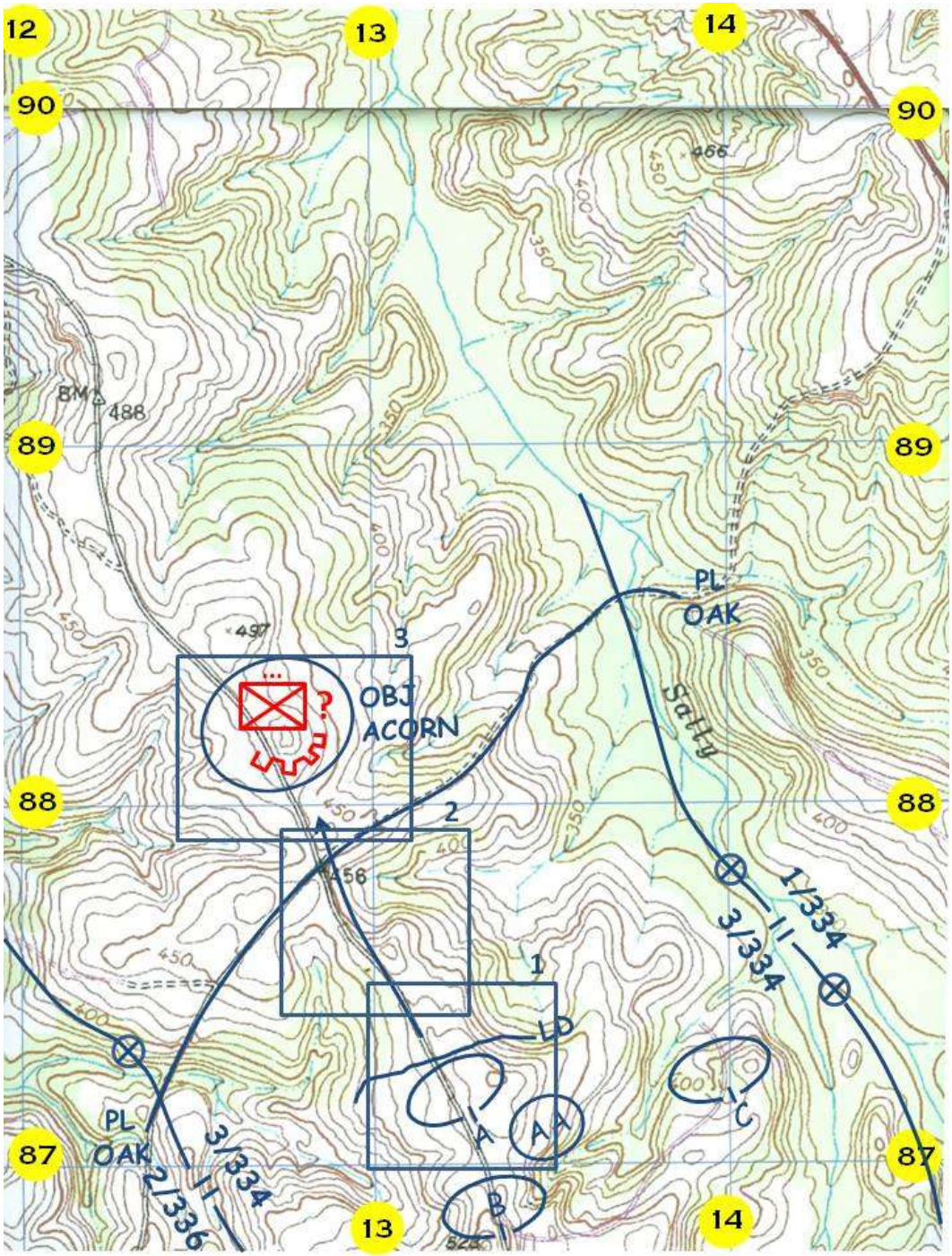

Figure 5: Our maneuver area. Rectangles 1-3 show detail areas.

Our chosen terrain is a ridge line between Bonham and Sally Creeks, part of the large training area at Fort Benning, Georgia. We selected this post because the Maneuver Center of Excellence, combining the Infantry and Armor Schools, is located there.

This is an area of fairly soft soil. What may appear to be ridge lines are really just the spaces between eroded creek beds and draws created by drainage over the years as water flows from

higher ground and into Upatoi Creek, a tributary of the Chattahoochee River. Remembering our studies on Terrain Analysis and Operations (Courses 1 and 4 on ReenactorPro's "Continuing Education" program), there are some observations that suggest challenges and opportunities.

First, the creek beds are heavily wooded, and mobility across the grain is not assured for heavy vehicles. Main roads tend to follow the ridge lines; roads that cross the valleys and draws tend to be secondary roads (gravel with concrete culverts at crossing points over streams). The high ground (ridge crests) tends to be fairly clear of woods. Predominant large vegetation is pine forest, rather scrubby and surrounded by low scrub and "wait-a-minute vines".

An Example

Your force is designated TEAM TRACK, composed of one tank platoon and one armored infantry platoon, both understrength (Figure 5 above is our available strength and organization).

Field Order

1. INFORMATION:[3]

Enemy situation: Patrols and prisoner interrogation indicate that the enemy has placed a platoon-sized fortified outpost vic GRID 127882at a position just south of hill 497. Composition of the OP is not known, but examination of aerial photographs and indications of spoil and attempts to camouflage suggest at least one AT gun may be present. The location of the OP is a "false crest" overlooked by hill 497, selected because a defensive position on 497 itself would allow infantry to approach behind the false crest, making observation and fields of fire difficult.[4]

Friendly situation: 3/334 Infantry defends sector south of Hill 497.

2. MISSION: TM TRACK will pass through MLR in 3/334 sector, advancing north along the main road and securing OBJ ACORN; be prepared to continue on order to secure Hill 497.

TROOPS

TM TRACK is composed of A/51 Armored Infantry Battalion, minus 1st and 3rd platoons; 1st Platoon B/705 Tank Battalion.

TM EASY attack will be supported by mortar fire and heavy machinegun fire from heavy weapons company, 3/334; DS artillery support from 178 Artillery Battalion; and from 2nd platoon cannon company 334.

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[3] For recent veterans: we use the terms of the field order (OPORD) current in 1944. INFORMATION is now SITUATION. See Lesson 4 of the Operations online course at ReenactorPro.

[4] This is an important lesson about key terrain. Hill 497 looks like a fine place to occupy, but only to a dumbass recruit or a second lieutenant. The false crest allows an attacker to creep up to within 300m of the higher ground, screened by the smaller rise. To cover this, the large OP would have to put out a smaller OP, which defeats the purpose of having the outpost to begin with.

3. TACTICAL MISSIONS FOR SUBORDINATE UNITS

a. All elms[5] TM TRACK dpt[6] AA 0530 and move to LD; on order begin approach march.

b. On approach march, 2nd plat 51 AIB and TM command group lead, with 1 plat B/705 to rear prepared to provide fire support, until reaching PL OAK.

c. At PL OAK (RJ vic BM 456[7]) tank plat takes position to overwatch advance of 1st plat 51 AIB, providing fire support during infantry assault.

d. 1st plat A/51 AIB dismounts at PL OAK and assaults OBJ ACORN, supported by tank fire and HMG on vehicles.

e. All mortar and artillery fire begins prep on arv[8] TM TRACK at PL OAK, lifts on command of CO TM TRACK during final assault.

f. On securing OBJ ACORN, tanks advance to cover infantry in consolidation on the objective.

x. TM TRACK continues atk[9] to secure vic[10] Hill 497 on order.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS: (omitted)

5. SIGNAL COMMUNICATIONS: (omitted)

Execution: step by step

TM TRACK has moved by route march to their assembly area to the rear of the 3/334 sector. This time is spent doing last-minute resupply and maintenance (fixing what went wrong in the road march). Finally it's time for SP (start point). The team moves out, quickly crossing the LD (line of departure), at which time the team deploys into approach march formation.

[5] "elements"
[6] "depart/departs"
[7] BM 456 is a surveyor's bench mark located in the vicinity of the road junction128878.
[8] "arrive/arrives"
[9] "attack/attacks"
[10] "In vicinity of"

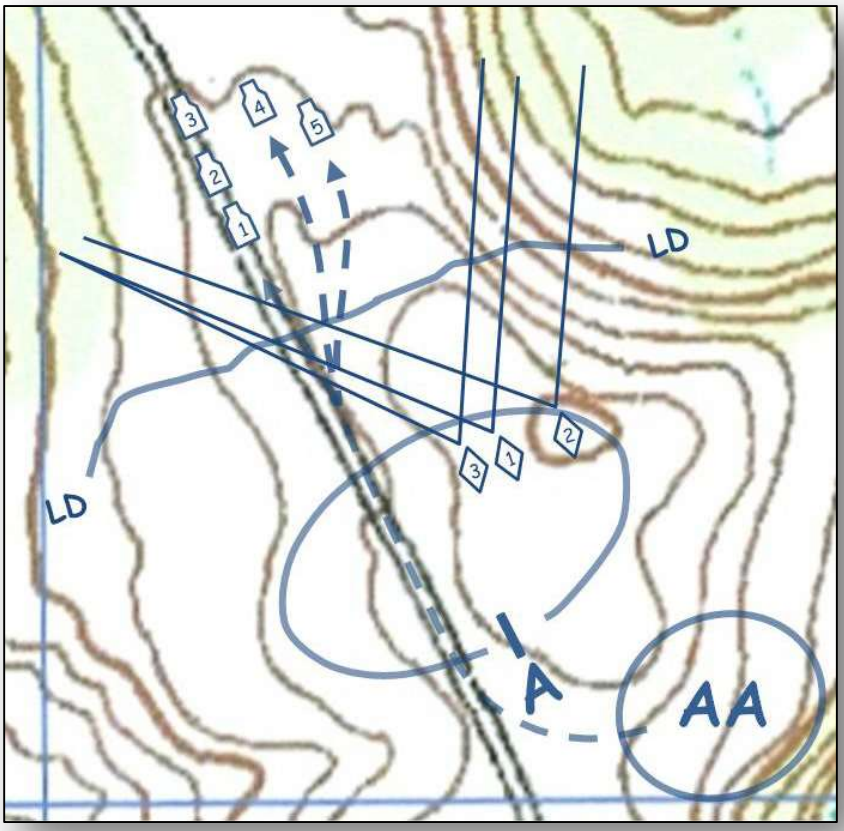
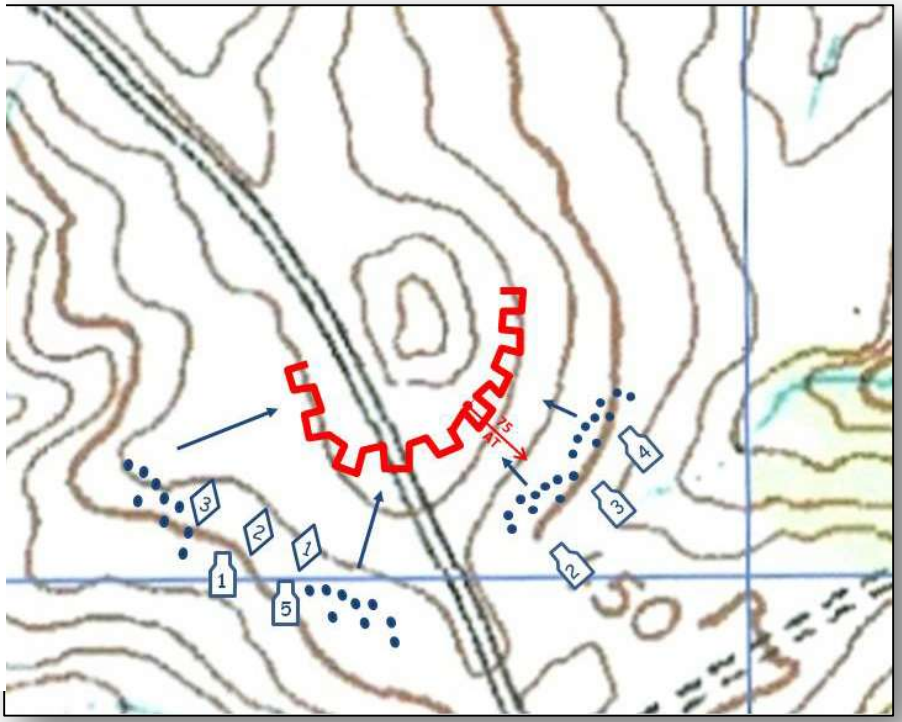


Figure 5-1: Team moves out of the assembly area (AA) in column. In this case, tanks lead, because they will be moving into an overwatch position very soon. On arrival at the designated LD (just beyond the 3/334 MLR [front line]) the tank platoon peels off and occupies defilade positions on the high ground, from which they can provide direct fire as needed to cover the advance of the infantry in halftracks.

The infantry crosses the LD. Note that halftrack 1 is the team commander (CO A/51); halftrack 2 carries the armored infantry platoon leader and the first squad. Vehicles 1-3 proceed for the moment in road column; vehicles 4 and 5 deploy in echelon to the right flank.
(Diamond shapes [see FM 21-30] are tanks; the other shapes are halftracks.)

Figure 5-2: North of the LD there is a defile—high ground and embankment on the right of the road, down slope and woods to the left. If the enemy can knock out the lead halftrack at that point, the attack will get complicated. So the team commander has the halftracks halt briefly south of the central hill, allowing the tanks to bound forward and take another overwatch position in defilade (remember "defilade" means behind the crest with only the turret showing). This will allow the infantry to clear the defile by using tank suppressive fire against that pesky AT gun (a PAK 40).



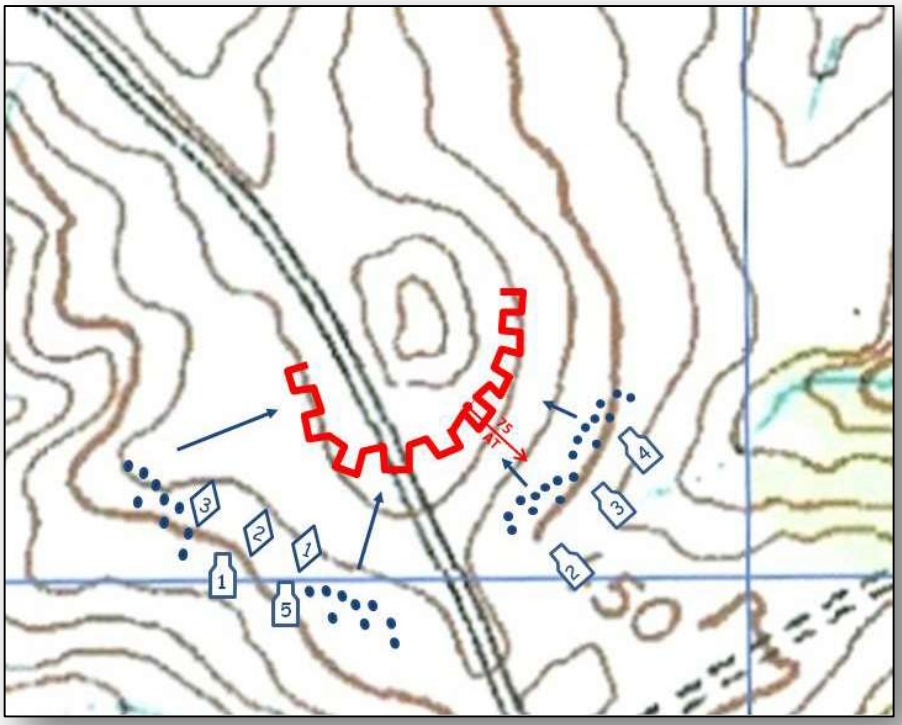


Figure 5-3: We're lucky today—the infantry made it through the defile. There is no covered position between the defile and the objective to organize into an attack position, so with a hearty "Hail Mary" we launch the attack.

The tanks deploy on the left flank, tormenting the enemy with 75mm and cal. 50 fire while the halftracks disgorge their squads and use their cal. 50's to add to the tank suppressive fire; the squads deploy and assault the left of the enemy's position. The remainder of the infantry dismounts and attacks from the front, using defilade provided by the slope of the ground ("dead space").

Conclusion: See how easy it is? Except, of course, it isn't. Remember: *the enemy always gets a vote*. The PAK 40 might have nailed one of the tanks (you hope the other two finished it off), and the infantry still has to make the close assault work.

Fire Support: Note that the field order specified four sources of fire support; if nothing else is going on at that moment, you might actually get all three.

From 3/334: the battalion heavy weapons (M) company, there is an 81mm mortar platoon available to add HE and smoke. There are also the mortar sections from the forward rifle company positions, but they are at the extreme edge of their range, and that annoying high ground blocks a good view of the objective. There is also the heavy machine gun platoon (the water cooled M1917's); these can be fired like artillery using a gunner's quadrant and firing tables, and rain plunging fire down on the objective.

From 334th Infantry: The cannon company can provide as much 105mm as can be spared from other missions (you may not be the only ones attacking today).

From division: Usually a regiment on line will have one of the division's three direct support (DS) battalions allocated to support the 334th in its mischiefs. This could mean eighteen 105's raining terror down on the enemy (although since you're basically knocking out a platoon OP, that's probably overkill unless everything else is quiet).

And, *from the sky*: if AAF assets buzzing around in the area have nothing else to do, the air liaison officer at the 334th might just see fit to encourage any flights of P-47's in the area with nothing else to do with their ordnance stores to add to the party; a couple of jugs bombing and strafing the competition is always good for morale.

Reminder: Once you have overrun the objective, don't just sit down and have a smoke. *Consolidate on the objective*, and remember you may have to continue the attack northward and secure Hill 497 for The Cause. Hope for the best, but plan for the worst.

Takeaways:

- A combined arms, tank-infantry team is stronger than a single-branch team of the same size.
- Tanks add firepower and shock effect to the infantry in the attack; infantry provides protection for the tanks and takes the lead in consolidating on an objective that has been secured.
- In WWII, tanks were intended to be used in the *attack*, not in the *defense*. When tanks are allocated to a defensive role, they usually form a reserve and counterattack force.
- Tank-infantry teams are created by cross-attachment.
- Antitank defense is the primary mission of tank destroyers, not tanks. (This changed by the 1950's, but we will deal exclusively with WWII doctrine and practice.)
- From Clausewitz: "The important things are always simple; the simplest things are always hard."

Next Time:

In the next issue we will examine how tank destroyers were used in WWII, and how they were integrated into the combined arms team.

PUSHING THE TRAINING ENVELOPE

So You Want to Be a Leader?

"The most important thing I learned is that soldiers watch what their leaders do. You can give them classes and lecture them forever, but it is your personal example they will follow."

–General Colin Powell

You've been around the hobby for a while. You figure it's time to make your mark by wearing rank. What do you do now?



STEP ONE: Lie down for fifteen minutes. The idea may pass. If not, proceed to step two.

STEP TWO: Ask yourself "why do I want to wear rank?" If the answer is something like "I want to look cool" or "it's my turn", go back to step one.

STEP THREE: Ask yourself "what can I bring into my unit by getting promoted?" Okay, now we're getting somewhere.

Here are some things to consider:

1. **RANK IS *NOT* A STATUS. RANK IS A JOB**. If you're not ready to work harder, learn more, take responsibility, and have your performance judged by friend and foe alike—be a private. Pinning on or sewing on rank does not make you a leader—only you can do that. "Rank" is meaningless without the knowledge, skills, and leadership to do the job. Let's be clear: we are all the same rank: *reenactor*. Here's a handy rule of thumb: *one good private is worth five bad NCO's; one good NCO is worth ten bad officers*. Forget rank; it's about leadership.

2. **IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU**. It's easy to spot a good leader: Just look at the people he leads. If they're standing tall, looking proud, and doing the job, it's likely the leader is doing his job. If somebody is wearing rank but has no job, just an individual impression, he's not a leader. He's an empty suit.

   Being a leader implies selflessness. A leader whose impression is over the top—silk scarf, AAF crusher cap, or a bunch of attempts to look cool—is suspect. The proof is in how the unit he leads looks and performs.

3. **IT'S ABOUT THE EXAMPLE YOU SET**. You don't have the Articles of War, the Army

Regulations, or any force of law to back you up. The only powerful tool you wield is *force of personal example*. A leader is usually the first one there and the last one to leave. He takes his responsibility seriously. His impression is sound—not flashy or designed to set him apart; he represents his unit, not himself. He is cheerful, positive, and helpful. He takes responsibility for his own actions. He's there for everybody. He knows his job and his impression; he can perform as well as or better than most in the unit. Serious reenactors want to be like him.

"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."
—General Dwight D. Eisenhower

4. A LEADER IS ALWAYS LEARNING. Too many nominal leaders in the hobby have decided that if they don't know something, it isn't worth knowing. A real leader is always trying to improve. Real soldiers take months or years of daily experience, training, and practice to learn a job well enough to be promoted. You're starting out 'way behind. Try to catch up.

5. A LEADER IS ALWAYS TEACHING. See 2, above. A leader learns and polishes his performance so he can bring his unit up to a higher level; he teaches as if any member of his team may have to take over his job. And one of them most certainly will.

6. DON'T RETIRE IN PLACE. Too many reenactors rise to a given rank and just . . . sit . . . there. Promotion is not social security. "Squatting" in a position for too long sets a bad example and blocks others from developing and moving up.

7. BE A WARRIOR, NOT A WEASEL. Don't poison the water supply by blaming others when you talk to your guys. Take it behind the barracks. Don't argue with others in front of the troops; that diminishes everyone and undermines confidence. Don't bitch and moan about what's happening at an event—help make it better. Always assume that when you're in a bad mood nobody wants to listen to your bullshit; be positive.

8. USE YOUR IMAGINATION. It's your job to maintain high morale. Small things can improve everybody's experience. Try singing on the march—corny, maybe, but it works. Foster competition. Don't let things get stale. There are always moments at an event when everybody is sitting around (at the Gap, usually sitting around in the snow); have a few "hip pocket" things to do. If it's cold and you have time, show people how to use the small squad stove; make some coffee or soup. Talk to your guys about how to avoid heat or cold injuries; how to dress. If you're waiting for orders, put out security OP's. It's *something* other than sitting around bitching, and it's something Army units do. Keep people engaged.

9. LOOK OUT FOR YOUR PEOPLE. Being a leader means it's *not* every man for himself. Make sure everybody has his gear, complete and worn properly, before going out. Everybody has to have a canteen, and there is always some dumb ass who falls in without it. If they're supposed to have extra dry socks, verify they have them. Make sure people aren't walking on blisters. Make sure they hydrate. They may complain, but they know why you're bugging them. Better putting up with a grumble or two that having a medical fallout. *It's your job*.

10. KEEP A SENSE OF HUMOR. Drill sergeants understand this. People will put up with amazing amounts of necessary annoyance—fatigue, bullshit, chicken shit, and nit shit and nagging—if they can find something to laugh about.

"Start every day with a smile and get it over with." —W. C. Fields

IMPROVING THE IMPRESSION

Working with Others – Or What to Do When the S*** Hits the Fan

Working with others is rarely easy. Differing personalities, individual circumstances, situations, interpretations and expectations often complicate interpersonal relations and make working in a cohesive manner a challenging process. In re-enacting, especially at events where small teams are often thrown into larger formations, the challenge of forging cohesiveness is critical to mission success. In this article, Rich Lees puts together some guidelines to follow and consider when thrown into command of a motley group of re-enactors whose culture, standards and training may differ from one's own.



The GAP was a wonderful event. You either loved it or hated it or loved to hate it. Whatever your take on it was, it will be missed. Last GAP I was on I was unwittingly shoved into a command role of a coalition of troops. Luckily via social media and past interactions all of us in our varying groups sorted out billets, command structure and administration beforehand so we were familiar with each other.

At the beginning of the event, Major Terry Hunter was commanding, and I was CSM. My job was simple, keep up unit standards. Run the weekend like I would any other course or exercise. Easy peasy. I had my core NCO's to take care of the troops. I knew who was coming and what positions they held in their units. My job was to do an authenticity check, safety check, ammo check, and march them down to the buses. Once to the field I just had to keep people from freezing, make sure they were fed and watered and put out the occasional helmet fire.

Major Terry Hunter was attending Thursday night's O-groups along with myself and his runner (usually a new guy at his first big event). I am there as the CSM but I half-listened to what was being said, because, quite honesty, they seemed a bit long in the tooth and I didn't understand most of the jargon. I got peeled off to another O-group while the battle plans were being passed. The O-Group I attend with other Sr. NCO's was about troop safety, I listen, knowing that Terry will pass on his info later in the barracks.

It's now Friday morning at the Gap. O-Groups are over, the buses are being loaded and it's time for another tactical. I for one loved the Friday tactical. It's a small-scale rehearsal for the next day's big event. It gives the unit a day to shake off the cobwebs and lets us loosely interact with the other lucky guys who have the time and gumption come out. Our team had been selected and as usual it's a motley bunch. We have the Poles, elements of 15th Scottish Recce, 1 Can Para, Brit Para, a couple of French Resistance, and the 9th Punjabi Elephant Brigade, a cross dresser named Shasta and every other oddball

unit the organizers can jam in there because they don't fit the GI mould. But hey we are Commonwealth and the feeling is nobody really understands what we bring to the table, or our capabilities, and organization. Command will just strip us of our armour anyway and send us off to some far forgotten corner of the line, such is our lot in life.

I am relaxed though. Terry is more than capable of the leadership role we have dumped on him. Between him, me and the others attending, we have enough blanks and corporate knowledge to make this a fun day. Go to the field, teach the new guys, have fun, be safe. All is good until suddenly I hear Terry shout to me and to my horror the day's tactical has taken its first casualty. Terry is at the bottom of the stairs and his knee is twice its normal size. He tells me he has to sit this one out and I have to take command.

Mother-Fornicator what now.



Given the challenges of an ad hoc motley group, not only within my own unit but with other units under my stead, it is important to remain focused on the task at hand. In fact, in order to maximise productivity and minimize tensions, there are a number of principles that can assist with providing the proper mindset when working with others. I must review some of the basic leadership truths that were instilled on me when it comes to working with others.

Be Patient. My tempo will not be the valid blueprint of success. Impatience and trying to force others to work at my accepted rhythm can be counterproductive. I must be mentally prepared to adapt to the unique set of circumstances that are present. Patience and self-discipline will do more to mission success than a frenzied approach that will aggravate the situation than contribute to a solution.

Be Adaptive and manage your expectations. The key here is to realize that not only am I here to lead, but also to work with other units and others within my unit. They will determine the tempo or aggressiveness of our actions. They come with different resources, training and organizational culture. It is my task to learn as much about them as possible, develop a plan to meet the aim of the mission. Upon execution I may have to adjust but don't let it frustrate me. Be open-minded and agile so I can re-jig the plan as necessary.

Actions speak louder than words, talk is cheap. We all know that guy who is a big talker and how great and awesome he is in his own mind. If you are thrust into command one thing is simple, never explain what you can demonstrate. No one asked for your resume. The sooner you can show you are expert at what you do the sooner they will give you their undivided attention. The flip side of this is that although you may have been given an unfamiliar motley bunch or a group that talks a big talk, you must observe them to see if their actions and ability to react will meet the demands you place on them. Always have the mindset that your tactical plans may need to be adjusted in order to achieve the greatest effect.

Appreciate that perception is more important than reality. You may be the most prominent expert in re-enacting there is, a part of the best and most personable group ever, and your thread count is on point and you're 1944 head to toe. However, the people you are attached to may see the event as a

waste of time and you and your group as the most arrogant, pompous over-rated second-rate players ever. Your task will be difficult. You need to care about what the others think, keep abreast of attitudes and aggressively clear up any grievances.

Communication will be key. Communicate the 5 W's (Who, What, Where, When, and Why) as well as How. Explain changes, address misconceptions, and never assume your impression of yourself or activity is the same as everyone else's. But above all try to continually do your best.

Remember that the message sent is not always the message that is received, and it is the message that is received which is the message that is acted upon. In other words, was it lost in translation? Is the intended recipient actually understanding and acting on what you said? Was something lost in the jargon, slang and concepts we are familiar with but have a different meaning? I see this all the time as I come to events and try to understand "American". How is my Canadian jargon being translated? I understand the situation, but why can't you? What did I leave out of my communication? Like my teenaged daughter said to me one day: "It's obvious to you, dad, but you need to use your words and not assume I know what I am doing."



See the world through the eyes of those with whom you are interacting. Assumptions and priorities will vary significantly from those with whom you are working. My assumptions are not your assumptions. Things I take for granted (kit, transport, radios, training/experience, well-endowed manhood) may be a major challenge to others. If you start every sentence with "Far be it for me…" or "I don't mean to be rude..." you should stop immediately and assess the situation. You don't need to accept another group's style or standards. Just understand them and how it may affect their attitudes and behaviours and yours too.

Do not judge the behaviour of others and, instead observe, learn and try to understand. Do not be arrogant or superior. How many times have you heard "that's not how we do things"? Their way is not necessarily the wrong way. It's just not *your* way. Don't tell others how to do their task. Something that may work well for your unit may not fit for another. However, DO NOT GIVE ANYONE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT. Check and confirm that they have the requisite skill/knowledge/background/qualification required before undertaking an activity that is questionable or hazardous.

Always be respectful. How you treat and interact with others is important. Treating others with respect conveys a valuable message of not only what you, but also your organization, deems is important. It's an enabler that generates goodwill, cooperation and friendship. Lack of respect will deteriorate these factors and we see it all the time**.** Examples are that officer that comes out of nowhere who's barking some command at you and you have no idea who this guy is. To top it off, he is contradicting the orders you were just given. Another example is the unit that thinks it's too good to follow the rules or take hits.



Respectfulness demonstrates professionalism and helps to foster bonds that create personal and organizational networks. Lack of it deteriorates these factors.

Deal With frustrations privately. Discuss the frustration and pet peeves with your inner circle in private when those you are attached with are not around. In the presence of others remain cool calm and patient. This will earn trust and strengthens unit relationships.

Do not adhere to unrealistic standards. Excellence is a noble pursuit and mediocrity should never be accepted. Why do we spend thousands of dollars on this hobby if we aren't going to do it right? We must be conscious of the time, resources, realities and how much each individual can realistically achieve. Improvement should be incremental; these steps to improve should be accepted and applauded. Excellence can only be achieved if your foundation is solid; this takes time and experience. In other words, do your best, learn from your mistakes and don't beat yourself up.

To put it lightly, I placed what I could in my brain and tried to lead as best I could. Give each unit a chance to fight the good fight. It wasn't perfect, I made mistakes and did not heed my own advice at times; I lost my cool and got shot for it by a sniper looking for someone who was giving orders. He said I was losing my shit and said that guy has to be in charge. I saw the shot, took of my helmet and learned my lesson the hard way. I also made an old man run. I yelled at a guy wearing coke bottles for glasses because he couldn't see the enemy. I got us in a jam between Germans who were shooting at us and GI's who shot before they looked. But I sucked backed and relaxed and placed us in the best position possible and fought like hell until we were hit or our ammo ran out. We had fun. We got accolades from the opposing force and made our way back to our lines just in time for the GAP to end abruptly forever.

This was our swansong and I was honoured and humbled to take part in the role that fate had chosen for me. Take leadership seriously, but not yourself. You'll be better off for it.



Rich Lees joined the Canadian Army at 16 in 1988 and served both in the Infantry (North Nova Scotia Highlanders) and Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (8th Canadian Hussars). He switched trades and services and joined the Royal Canadian Air Force where he has accumulated over 2800 flying hours on the C-17 as a Loadmaster with 429 Sqn. He is still serving as a Warrant Officer and resides in Brockville Ontario Canada with his ever patient and understanding wife Jackie. Rich has been re-enacting for the past 13 years and is always seeking to improve his impression and knowledge within the hobby. You can usually find him with his 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion impression or as a North Nova Scotia Highlander depending on the event.

PUSHING THE TRAINING ENVELOPE

WW2 U.S. and German Infantry Squad Tactics – The Main Differences

By Jud Spangler



When asked to write an article on the differences between U.S. and German infantry squad tactics, my immediate reaction was a gut-level, possibly over-simplified thought: "The German squad was centered on employing a light machine gun and the U.S. squad was not."

Of course, there is a little more to it than that. My premise here is that doctrine and resources had the greatest influence on the weapons and in turn the tactics.

Opposing infantrymen face many of the same problems and in practice will often land on similar or identical solutions. Many of the elements of cover and concealment such as rocks, trees, hills, fog, and darkness are available to any infantryman of any army and their proper use should be no secret to them. What was not available to opposing soldiers were the *exact same* weapons at the squad level, and from there came from the tactical differences.

The role of resources in the aftermath of the Great War is hard to overlook. The U.S. spent the inter-war period pursuing disarmament and facing budget cutbacks, and many of the problems left unsolved in 1918 were, from the standpoint of a WW2 U.S. rifleman in 1942, still unsolved. In contrast, the German infantry squad was grounded by far more inter-war doctrinal evolution and weapons development. The result was that by late 1942 when U.S. and German infantry faced each other for the first time, the Germans had a light machine gun organic to their squads (the MG 34) and the U.S. did not.

How did this happen?

With the Versailles Treaty mandating a small German military of 100,000 enlisted, NCOs and officers, it didn't have the intended consequence of suppressing military activity—it accelerated a radical re-evaluation of everything that was now regarded as the lost luxury of having a huge land army, from the rigid and ultimately counterproductive social barriers between officers and men to making the best use of a limited number of men. The development of a powerful but "squad-mobile" light machine gun seems almost inevitably obvious in hindsight and actually reflects German experience with its *strosstruppen* or Stormtroopers in the Great War. And so, as the 1920's ended, Germany's new light machine gun was already off the drawing table and being tested. It went into production in 1934 and was issued to *Heer*

(army) units starting in 1936. Thus, the light machine gun became the primary weapon of the German infantry squad because it achieved the right balance between "light but lethal":



1) It was light enough at 26 pounds to be moved with relative ease by just one man supported by at least one but preferably two Assistant Gunners carrying ammunition and parts.

2) It could be fired from a prone position on the ground using a small bipod attached to the barrel, or from a standing position (which further facilitated rapid movement). The bipod could fold toward the gunner and be gripped to stabilize the barrel, but it helped to have something like a tree branch for support.

3) It fired the same 8mm ammunition used in the rifleman's K98 Mauser.

4) The rate of fire was in the 900 rounds per minute range which was better than the U.S. Browning .30 cal. at 600 rounds per minute and as good as the heavy "Ma Deuce" .50 cal.—neither of which were organic to U.S. rifle squads. The doctrine and the weapon went into combat in 1939 and performed well enough that the Germans were already in the process of upgrading the MG 34 with an improved and more powerful version, the MG 42.



At 47 pounds and using 30-06 ammunition, the American M1917 water-cooled .30 cal. Browning was found during WWI to be too heavy and cumbersome to be moved by a rifle squad; at 31 pounds, the air-cooled M1919 was not much better regarding mobility. In practice, a crew of four was still required to move and keep either one operating. The M1919 also required a heavy tripod mount, which added the burden of finding a firing position, getting the crew on the ground, covered, and so forth. There wasn't much that could be done with this design to make it lighter, more mobile, or less complex, and the arms limitations policies postwar spread scarce resources even thinner.



MACHINE GUN PRACTICE, CAMP EDWARDS, MASS.



With war on the doorstep by Christmas of 1941, the U.S. was scrambling to hold the Pacific together, and it began applying experience from the Pacific theatre and working out the bugs of another WWI designed, but more practical squad weapon, the Browning Automatic Rifle. By 1942/43, the Army was also replacing Springfield rifles with the M1 Garand semi-automatic rifle. Given the choice between putting an up-to 600 rounds per minute, 15 pound .30-06 BAR with a 20 round box magazine (200 rounds total in mag pouches, plus more carried by the Assistant Gunner, but period BAR manuals are unclear on this point) into the squad, or carrying a 600 round per minute, 31 pound .30-cal machine gun and tripod with two 200 round ammo cans to feed it, or developing an entirely new light machine gun from scratch, the U.S. made a rational choice for the ETO and instead "up-gunned" squads with riflemen with semi-auto M1s and a BAR team, carrying a minimum of 200 rounds, integrated from the platoon's pre-war discontinued BAR 4th squad.



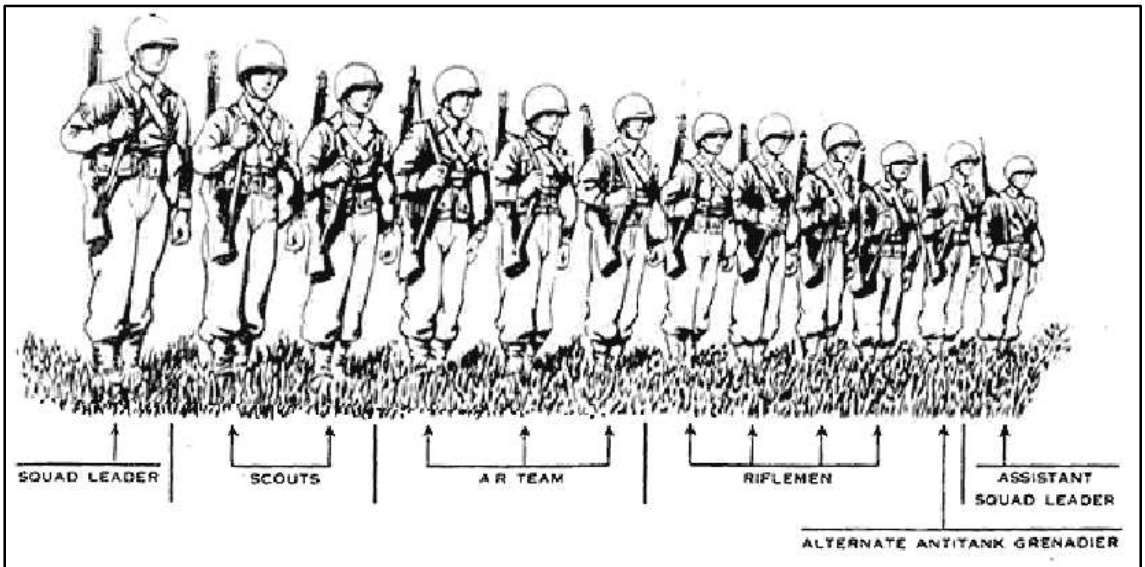
Which is not a lot of rounds overall with the BAR, compared to the German squads, which will be shown in a moment. But American doctrine also played a role: our military has long believed—rightly—in the utility of artillery, and U.S. artillery in WWII was often decisive – a prime example of the American method of solving problems by "overwhelming" them. If U.S. infantry squads and platoons had good-performing light semi-automatic and automatic weapons, the right tactics and leadership, heavier firepower could be brought to bear from outside the squad and platoon.

What did it look like in practice? The following graphics are excerpted from Tim O'Neill's lesson on "The Rifle Squad" online at ReenactorPro:

https://reenactorpro.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Lesson-1-the-Rifle-Squad-2.pdf

Since ReenactorPro has already done a thorough job on the U.S. rifle squad, it won't be repeated here, but it will include enough to make meaningful comparisons:

The U.S. infantry squad looked like this:



Weapons	*Carried by*
Ten M1 Rifles with bayonets.	Squad leader, scouts, assistant automatic rifleman, ammunition bearer, and all riflemen.
One BAR, M1918A2.	Automatic Rifleman.
One Rifle M1903 with bayonet.	Assistant Squad leader.

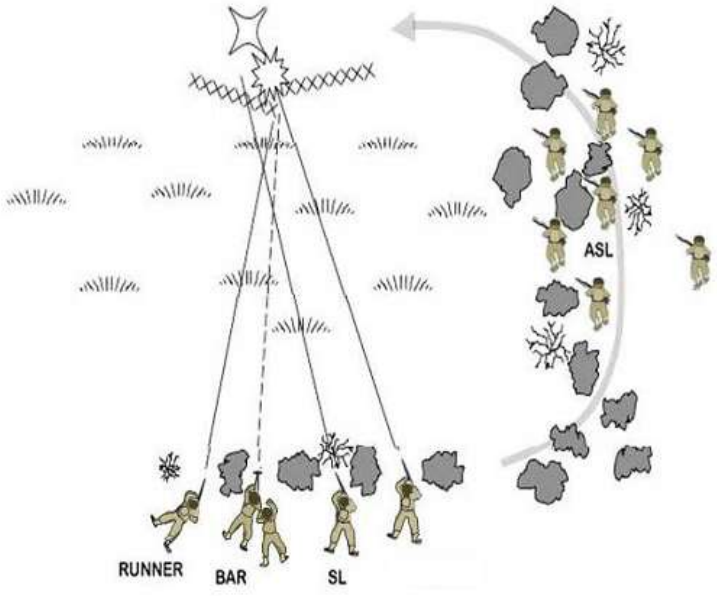
Extra ammunition is issued just prior to combat.
All members of the squad may be issued grenades.

Figure 1: The Rifle Squad. This shows scouts designated separately, as of 1942.

And it often attacked like this:

Squad in the attack

A squad may attack by itself or as part of a platoon attack. In the case of a rifle squad assigned to assault and secure an enemy position, the procedure is simple:

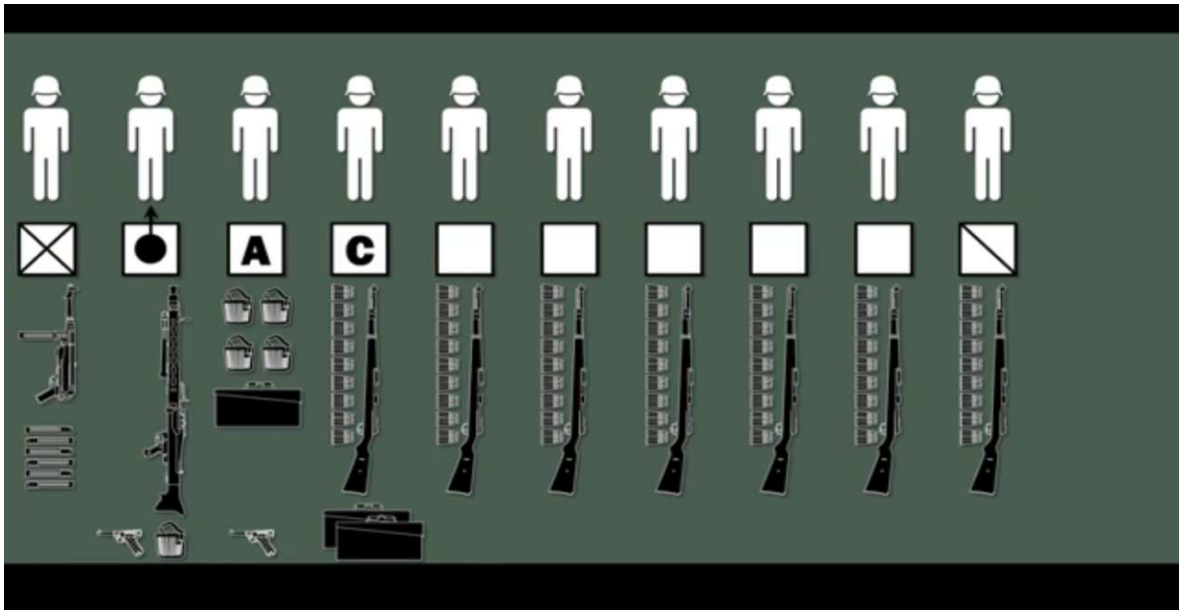


A full strength squad (admittedly a rarity after some time in combat) assaults an enemy position, dug in and protected by wire. The squad could attempt a frontal assault, but this would probably fail disastrously. The squad leader wisely chooses to use fire and maneuver.

He places the command group (SL and a runner, plus the NAR team and the grenadier) as a fire support element. These keep the German position amused while the rest of the squad, led by the ASL, maneuver using cover and concealment to engage the enemy from the flank.

Of course, squads of both nations fought more often as part of a platoon, and platoons formed rifle companies. The tactical differences begin to blur as the formations get larger, but the basic building block was the squad.

The German infantry squad looked like this, on the following slides from a video clip lifted from Military History Visualized on Youtube.com that are based on a wartime German manual called *H.Dv. 130/2a* that I will show shortly: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rKRt5zVZgw



The squad leader (man with the boxed "X") was armed with the MP 40 machine pistol and 6 magazines each with thirty-two 9mm rounds. The effective range was 100m. He would also have carried a pistol—NCO's typically carried the P.08 designed by Luger. (The smaller PPK and P38, among other lesser known pistols, were favored by officers.)

The squad depicted above is carrying the MG 34 with 5 assault drums, each drum holding a belt of 50 rounds. The MG34 could be drum fed or belt fed. The gunner (Gunner 1, with the boxed "O" and arrow) carried one drum, the first Assistant Gunner (Gunner 2 with the boxed "A") carried the other four, plus a box with 250 rounds in two extended belts made by connecting the 50 round belts together—one extended belt contained 100 rounds and the other contained 150 rounds. Both Gunner 1 and Gunner 2 carried a P.08 pistol. The second Assistant Gunner was called Gunner 3 (with the boxed "C") and was armed with the Mauser K98 rifle. He carried two more boxes of belts, each with 250 rounds configured like that of Gunner 2.

A total of 1,000 rounds. For *one* machine gun, in *one* squad. Against a BAR gunner with 200 rounds.

The counterargument from an American point of view is that a .30-cal machine gun could be assigned from a Weapons Squad for support. But the MG 34 was *organic* to the German squad, while the .30-cal was not to the American, and that makes all the difference.

Add to that, all riflemen were armed with the K98 and carried 60 rounds of 7.92x57mm "8 mil" ammunition, the same used in both the MG 34 and 42. Rifle rounds were carried in 6 belt pouches, each pouch containing 10 rounds on two 5 round stripper clips. At least two grenades were carried by each rifleman as well. While it would be reckless to claim that the *Steilgrenate* (aka "potato masher") wasn't deadly, its intent was not so much to kill (although it did), as it was to disrupt, disorient, and wound the target so that riflemen had freedom to move wherever they needed to.

Since we don't have an in-depth article on the German infantry squad at Reenactorpro, I've included below a table translated from the same source as the graphic above, *H.Dv. 130/2a: Instruction Manual for the Infantry Vol. 2a The Rifle Company, 1942 edition.* (Translation by John Baum). This gives the reader the exact design and intent that the German soldier of 1942 would have found in his training manual.

B. The Squad

I. In General

229. The Squad consists of the Squad Leader and 9 Riflemen.

II. Equipment and Duties of the Squad

230.

	Equipment	Duties
Squad Leader	M.P. with 6 Magazines in the Magazine Pouch Magazine Filler Binoculars Wire Cutters Signal Whistle	**The Squad Leader is Leader and Spearhead for his Squad.** He is responsible for: 1 Achieving his combat mission 2 Directing the fire of the l.M.G and, as far as the combat allows, the Rifle fire 3 Battle usefulness and full count of Weapons, Munitions and Equipment for his Squad
Gunner 1	M.G. 34 with attached Belt Drum Pistol Tool Pouch Flash Light	Gunner 1 is the Shooter. He is responsible for: 1 Operation of the l.M.G. in combat 2 Inspection of the M.G. for shooting (No. 98) 3 Maintenance of the M.G.
Gunner 2	Barrel Guard with one spare Barrel 4 Belt Drums, of these, 1 Belt Drum is with Armor Piercing Munition 1 Cartridge Can Carry Strap 34 Pistol Short Spade Sun Glasses (Of equipment with the Carry Pouch: a) 1 Carry Pouch for Belt Drums b) 4 more Belt Drums instead of the Cartridge Can.)	Gunner 2 is the assistant to the Shooter in combat After going into position he lays sideways on the left or sideways behind the l.M.G., in full cover if possible. He remains lying next to the l.M.G. when cover is present or firing superiority is achieved. When the position requires, he is also available for close combat, e.g. in assault defense. Gunner 2 is responsible for: 1 Providing enough Belt Drums 2 Assisting with going into position when loading from the Cartridge Can
Gunner 2 cont'd.		3 Refilling empty-shot Belt Drums with Belts from the Cartridge Can 4 Assisting with clearing stoppages, Barrel change, and setting the Bipod straight 5 Assisting in the maintenance of the l.M.G.
Gunner 3	Barrel Guard with one spare Barrel 2 Cartridge Cans Carry Strap Rifle Short Spade	Gunner 3 is a Munitions Gunner In fire fights he lies according to possibilities at the rear in full cover Gunner 3 is responsible for: 1 Sufficiency of the Munition 2 Refilling empty-shot Belt Drums with Belts from the Cartridge Cans 3 Care for Munition and Equipment left laying with a position change 4 Inspection of the Munition for shooting (No. 97) 5 Independent work as Rifleman and in close combat when the situation requires it
Gunners 4 – 9	a) Rifle 2 Cartridge Pouches Short Spade b) The most accurate Hand Grenade thrower: also the Hand Grenades c) In addition, depending on orders: Belt Drums, especially with armor piercing Munition Smoke Grenades Balled Charges {*stick grenade heads attached to a stick grenade*} Munition Tripod	a) Gunners 4 – 9 lead the fire fight with Rifles, they are close combat fighters b) The acting Squad Leader is also responsible for: 1 Preservation of cohesion within the Squad (no individual Riflemen left behind) 2 Supervising the execution of all orders 3 Communicating with the Platoon Leader and the neighboring Squad 4 Indicating the front line. He carries the Flag to the front line

- 74 -

- 75 -

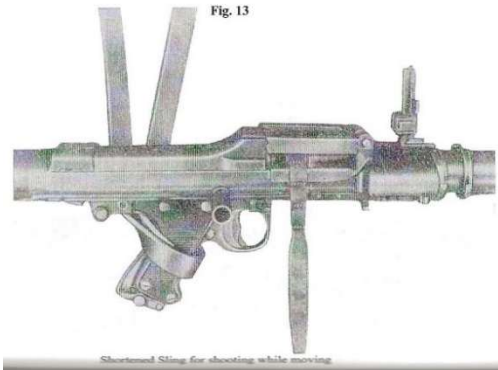
It should be clear at this point that German light machine guns were intended to be the primary offensive weapon of the infantry and therefore the focus of the German infantry squad. Put the MG fire on the target. As soon as it opened fire, riflemen maneuvered in for close combat, generally throwing grenades first but not before the MG opened fire.

A word should be mentioned here about the difference in individual training philosophies between the German and American armies. In the U.S. Army, from WW1 through today, individual marksmanship and expertise with the M1 rifle was paramount, while in the German army, even though every man was expected to qualify with the K98 on the range, the best marksmen were assigned to the MGs. Always.

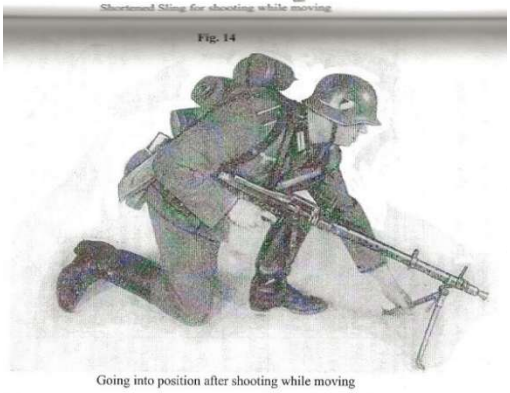
Earlier we mentioned that the light machine gun could be carried and fired by one man while moving—before we get to squad movement, below are some illustrations to help visualize that from the 130/2a manual:



Attack position for the Gunner with the l.M.G. while moving



Shortened Sling for shooting while moving



Going into position after shooting while moving

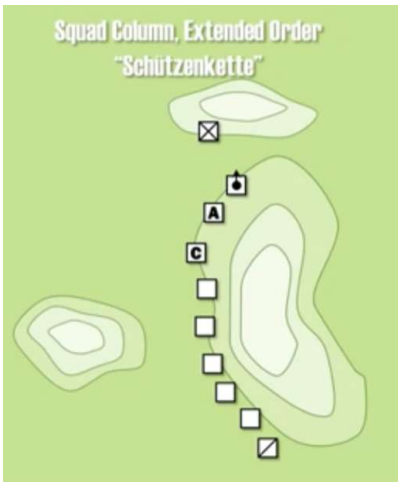
Which brings us to squad movement, and it helps to understand “eine bischen Deutsch” or in English, “a bit of German language.”

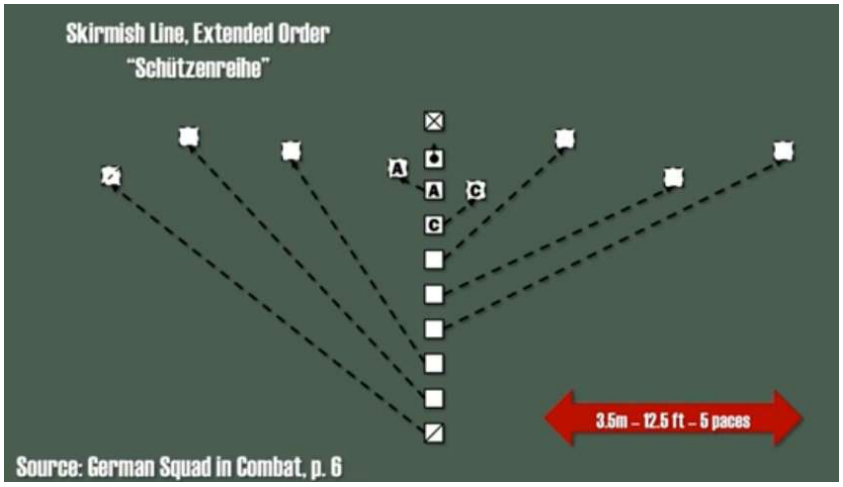
Schütze	Infantryman
Schützenreihe	Skirmish line
Schützenkette	Squad column

Below are a series of illustrations that show squad movement, beginning with the close-order march formations used in garrison:



In combat, movement looked like this on patrol. A squad column or *Schützenkette* was favored since it presented a minimal target forward but was potentially vulnerable to flank attacks where there was no natural flanking cover. That could be modified to the *Schützenreihe* and was done so rapidly—the leading three riflemen broke right and the remaining two plus the assistant squad leader broke left.



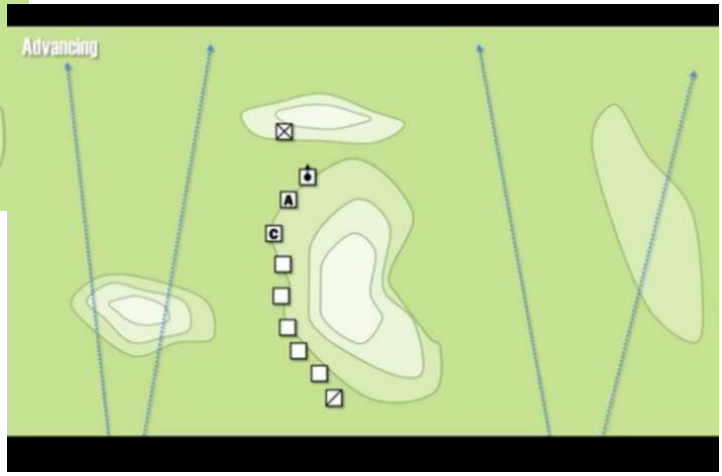


Note that the squad leader and Gunner 1 with Gunners 2 and 3 (AG's) were always in front and together so that the squad leader was closest to the decisive point and could put the primary weapon on that point immediately. This follows at a micro-level the overall doctrine that you can never be strong enough at the decisive point.

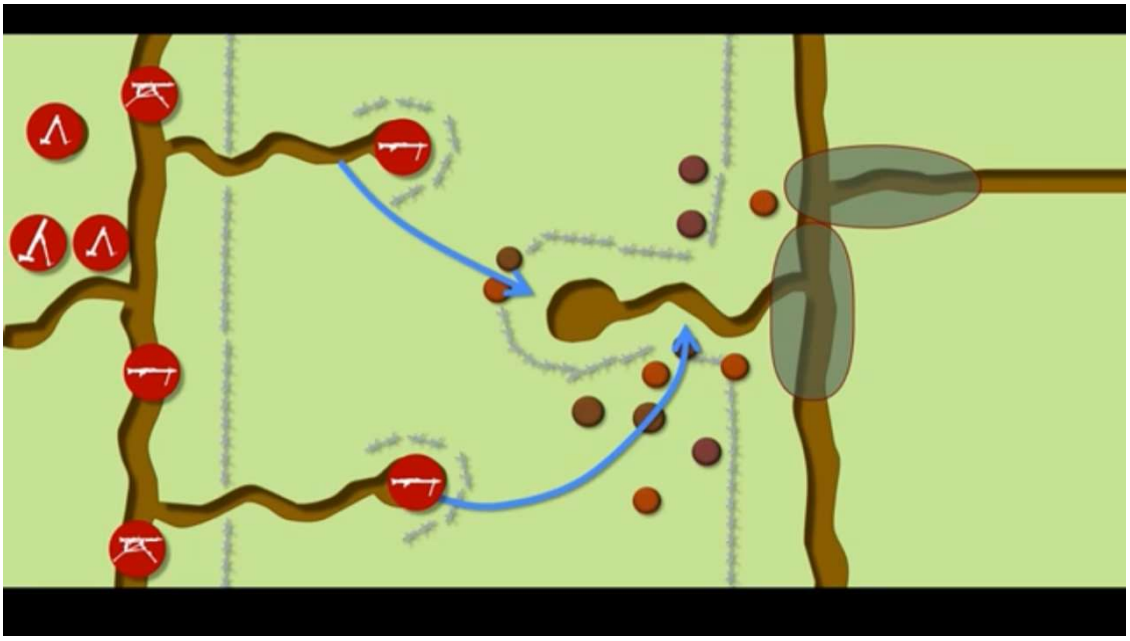


If the squad was advancing without support and drew fire, the MG was already forward—it could fire if standing or immediately find a covered position from which to fire.

If advancing with support, the *Schützenkette* formation not only presented a minimal target, with its primary weapon forward, but it also allowed for a clear line of supporting fire from squads with machine guns on both flanks.



Naturally, like their U.S. counterparts, German squads typically worked together in platoons and platoons in turn formed a company. When combined in a platoon and assaulting a fixed position, mortar fire was directed at the enemy's routes of retreat while machine gun fire was directed simultaneously at the enemy's forward position and along the spine, so that there was no opportunity for movement without significant risk.



Dare we ask how well re-enactors of today get these differences right in practice?

Believe it or not, my gut read after 20 plus years is that reenactors have generally got their respective side's *single squad* fire and maneuver right more than they have got it wrong. U.S. reenactors are generally trying to figure out when the MG 42 is going to pop them in the face (not literally of course) and German reenactors are generally looking for U.S. rifle teams to pivot off a BAR team and catch them on the flank just when their attention is diverted.

I think where we reenactors have always struggled is operating at *actual platoon and company* levels. If a unit is fielding just two squads because they have only that many members, when they work at a platoon level, they must combine in the field effectively with at least one or more reenactor "units." And that works well when the unit leadership knows and trusts each other and God willing, the combined units have similar training and skill levels. However, that has proven that it can be a little too much to ask of God's will. Fair enough, He does have other things to worry about.

One of the unique things about reenacting is that it creates entire weekends where we have opportunities to compare each side's way of doing things, albeit without the same level of training and everything else that actual soldiers of the war had to contend with. When comparing opposing armies, it is natural to attempt a conclusion that renders a judgement on which army "got it right" on each aspect of combat. We are still debating whether the Spitfire was a better fighter plane than the Bf 109. The comparisons are fun, but generally the argument runs down an endless rabbit hole because there are so many intervening variables and pre-conditions that tip scales back and forth. Like so much of World War 2, the answers can be found before the war started, underneath a pile of unintended consequences accumulated over the two decades from June 1919 to September 1939. It always boils down to asking a different question, which is, "Why did they do it what way?" which we have answered here with respect to infantry squad tactics.

BARS AND STRIPES: LEADERSHIP NOTES FOR REENACTORS

The Platoon Sergeant – A Primer

by Sgt. Drilldich



Most reenactors envision a Platoon Sergeant as a grizzled old veteran of 12 years' service or more from the prewar Army with vast experience and battle scars, dispensing harsh discipline and folksy wisdom with fatherly understanding and an iron fist. Think Gunny Highway in *Heartbreak Ridge*, or Sergeant Kinney from *Battleground* (do ***not*** think Sergeant Horvath from *Saving Private Ryan*). Now stop thinking, and then think again, because this image is completely wrong. Especially for WW2.

In those days, with the Army's expansion and later casualties, the need for the striped arms of authority was so great that nearly any ***body*** with combat experience would fit the shirt. Think Don Malarkey in *Band of Brothers* instead. And those striped-arm bodies tended to be young and not much older than the charges they led. There was no school of the NCO, other than the basic training and combat they had experienced. But above all, there was the need to take care of the men assigned to them. What these sergeants were, was *good.*

The Platoon Sergeant is the *leader* of his platoon. That's it. He's the leader not in the Platoon Leader (i.e., 2nd Lieutenant) sense, who takes the platoon into combat and other undesirable places, but in the platoon *builder* sense. Through the NCOs beneath him, the Platoon Sergeant makes sure that his platoon operates at top efficiency – in uniforms and comportment, drill and ceremony, tactics, safety, accountability, presentability, care-and-feeding, and a hundred other details that make the platoon the essential building block of the company.

Who Is the Platoon Sergeant?

The Platoon Sergeant (Technical Sergeant by 1944, which is a *rank*, by the way – Platoon Sergeant is a *job*) parallels a Squad Leader's duties. He is more experienced than the Staff Sergeant Squad Leader but does not really differ from him in authority so much as *sphere of influence* — he has daily contact with all soldiers in his platoon and has more sergeants under him. He *makes* backbones and is most responsible for the success of the platoon.

The Platoon Sergeant is the key advisor for the platoon, making sure that everyone (through their Squad Leaders) is trained, healthy, and ready for the day's duties. The Platoon Sergeant must have a great deal of experience in all areas — he must know how ***all*** squad weapons function, where and what his platoon leader and company commander is and does, and especially the platoon leader, for frequently he must take over those duties. Likewise, he makes sure that each NCO knows the duties and responsibilities of the next NCO above, because inevitably, those duties and responsibilities will have to be assumed when necessary. *Learn* one level up, *teach* one level down.

A good NCO is not going to be tough just because he can be by virtue of the stripes he wears. He will be tough because he has learned from experience (especially others' experience) and also because he understands that *responsibility*, more so than *duty*, is a rarefied element that means he must be *personally accountable* for all that happens within the unit he leads. He must make sure that all of his soldiers understand that everyone is responsible for what they do or do not do, that is, for their personal conduct.

The good NCO must assume *command responsibility* — the unit he leads is part of a collective organizational entity and it must function efficiently as part of that entity. His role in this cannot be delegated, and he must be responsible for his own personal conduct. So *DO IT*. Set the example. *Lead*.

What Is Done?

As Platoon Sergeant, you'll never be bored, because there are always things that the Platoon Sergeant is ultimately responsible for. First and foremost, since he is the key advisor for the platoon as noted above, he is the primary trainer for the platoon, particularly regarding drill and tactics. Yet more importantly, he is the role model of behavior for his platoon. He *wants* his soldiers to be like him, *do* as he does, and ultimately *think* as he does. He doesn't get there by tearing them down like Gunny Highway or intimidating them; yelling at your charges will get you nowhere, especially in this hobby. But he doesn't baby them either. He's *tough*, but fair. Tough comes from *knowing* his job; fairness comes from *remembering* that, once upon a time, *he was just like them*, and just as inexperienced.

The elements a Platoon Sergeant has to attend to, or at least keep in mind at all times:

1. Welfare of his soldiers—they're *your* men, treat them right.
2. Platoon leadership—*learn* one level up, *teach* one level down.
3. Personnel accountability—if you *say* it, *do* it.
4. Platoon's senior trainer—assigning, instructing, assisting and evaluating squad training.
5. Formations and inspection of soldiers' appearance and capabilities.
6. Platoon's physical fitness program (hopefully).
7. Weapons maintenance supervisor.
8. Field operations (tactics), mission support (logistics), medical and support (care and feeding).
9. Maintain cleanness and appearance of common areas.
10. Garrison operations, detail support.
11. Administration of platoon paperwork.
12. Weapons qualification.
13. Additional duties as assigned.

Detailing out each of the above isn't necessary; suffice it to say that common sense should dictate the course of action. Just take the above as the overall outline of what must be done to function as an efficient Platoon Sergeant.

How Is It Done?

A well-drilled unit generates an image of discipline and proficiency, and a pride in themselves, to anyone that sees them. Mastering the basics of close order drill and the manual of arms is integral to developing discipline and precision. This is the *big job* for the Platoon Sergeant. The fundamentals of drill are the first thing that any soldier learns, regardless of branch of service, nationality, or period in history. It is the foundation upon which all other aspects of being a soldier are built. For the reenactor, it's the foundation upon which to build the rest of your impression – mastering these drills will help you look and even feel more like a GI.

The Manual of Arms, and Close Order Drill

Platoon Sergeants build *teams*, and nothing builds the collective sense of team more than drill. The more proficient each man can become in performing the individual movements, the easier it will be for him to mesh with the team when the platoon is functioning together. If someone needs help in mastering some of these skills, all of the NCOs in the platoon should be willing to help; but *primarily* it is up to the Platoon Sergeant to see that this happens.

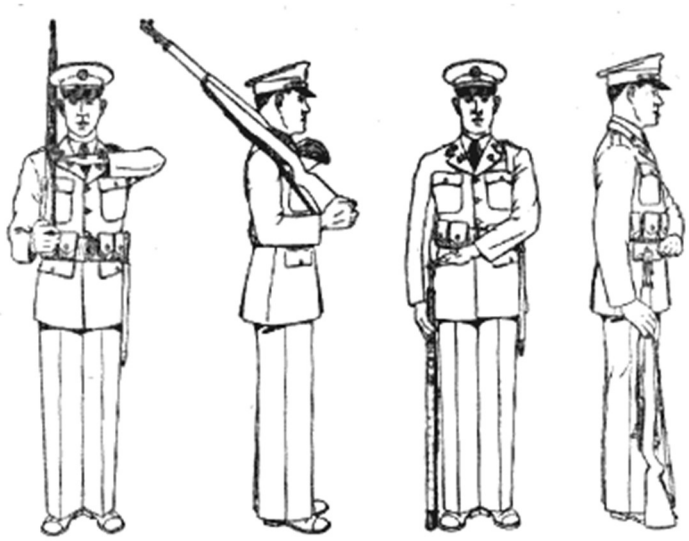


Plate 12. Rifle Salute at Right Shoulder Arms and at Order Arms.

Drill with the rifle, referred to as the Manual of Arms, is the primary level that each individual soldier must accomplish. Gaining proficiency and "snap and pop" in performing these movements, both as an individual and when functioning as part of the platoon, will ultimately develop pride, confidence, and trust in both yourself and your fellow soldiers. Nothing looks sharper than a platoon performing the "Marching Manual", with every hand and every weapon moving as one. But, to get there, each man must first learn and become proficient in the basics.

The second element of the basics is close order drill. Like manual of arms, the proficiency each squad member develops individually in performing the correct evolutions of drill, and then again as part of the platoon, contributes to the pride, confidence, and trust in both himself and his fellow soldiers. This is much harder than MOA, which can be practiced alone. And yes, drill can be practiced alone, but it must be practiced *as part of* the larger unit, meaning the platoon. And that's the Platoon Sergeant's job. Each Squad Leader must make sure his own charges know drill, but it's up to the Platoon Sergeant to make it all function together.

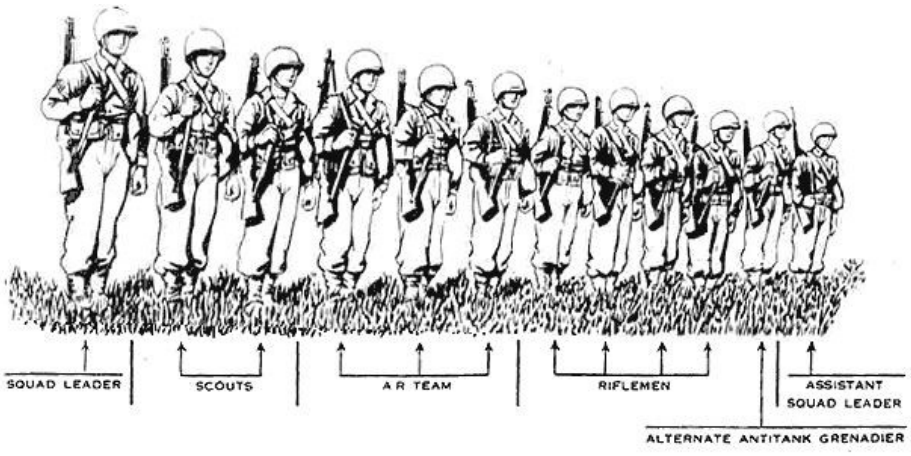


The full detail of how to march a platoon would take up too much space here; you can find this is the appropriate sections in FM 22-5 Infantry Drill Regulations. The basic elements of marching itself and the MOA are in FM 21-100 The Soldiers' Handbook. Both together comprise "The School of the Infantry." The *primary* thing to know is how to form a platoon, and a well-formed platoon is a thing of beauty.

How Do You Make and March a Platoon?

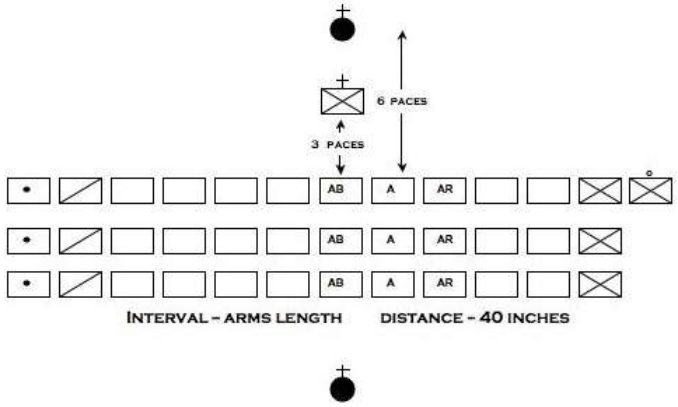
In the Army, then as now, there was a formation for *everything* – reveille, chow, drill, school, colors, retreat, you name it – and there are standard procedures we always use to form and march the platoon that the Platoon Sergeant must know and teach to his subordinates. The creation of a basic formation is usually lost on most reenactors; practicing it and doing it right will put your platoon far above those of other units.

1. Forming the Platoon

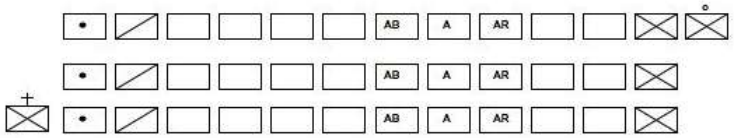


In a full company formation of 2 to 3 platoons (which we almost never have, but the commands are the same, so *learn them*), the *1st Sergeant* will take his place on the drill field and call "Company, FALL IN". At that point, you take up your position 3 paces to the front and 6 paces to the 1st Sergeant's left (if you are 1st Platoon Sergeant), with your back to the 1st Sergeant. You yourself then call "1st Platoon, FALL IN" with a blast of the M1A1E2 Whistle, Brass, Thunderer, for emphasis. The *Platoon Guide* (a position covered in FM 22-5, but is generally unknown to reenactors; see "Mysteries of 'The Grinder': The Platoon Guide" in *General Orders Fall/Winter 2018* for a fuller description of his function) positions himself first, dressing off of you, again 3 paces to the front and 6 paces to the left, and everybody else in the platoon forms on him. The three squad leaders take their positions, and the squad members fall on them, quickly checking dress and cover. (Note: if only one platoon is forming, the position of 1st Sergeant is eliminated, but the platoon still forms in essentially the same fashion, forming directly off in front of the Platoon Leader instead of the 1st Sergeant.)

The Platoon Sergeant then commands "Dress right, DRESS"; the soldiers shift as needed to align properly, followed by "Ready, FRONT."

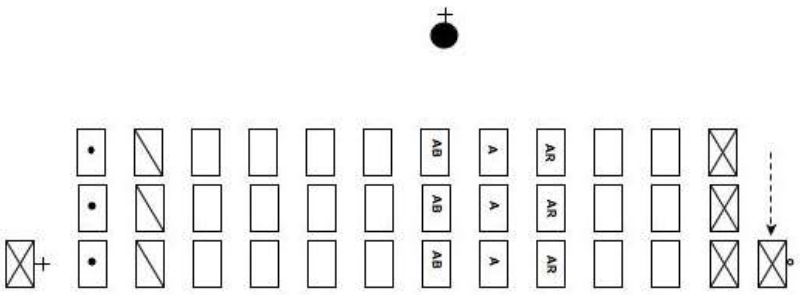


The Platoon Sergeant then takes reports: Orders "Re-PORT"; each squad leader in turn states the personnel status of his squad ("Private Slipschitz on detail"; "Private Schmuckatello absent"; "all present"; [NOTE: "All present and accounted for" is not correct – if a soldier is present, he is by definition accounted for]).



If the platoon is under arms (that is, carrying their weapons), the Platoon Sergeant then gives "Inspection, ARMS" and listens for the distinct clink of a round ejected from the rifle of an unlucky soldier. (Those carrying other weapons – carbine, BAR, pistol — execute inspection arms as prescribed elsewhere.) The Platoon Sergeant then brings the platoon to "Order, ARMS" and faces about. If the platoon is formed alone (in reenacting, it usually is) the Platoon Leader steps in front of the Platoon Sergeant, who salutes and gives the report. The Platoon Leader returns his salute and proceeds by ordering "Post", in which case the Platoon Sergeant takes his position at the left end of the rear file (as in the 2nd illustration above). The platoon is now formed.

2. Getting Ready to March a Platoon



To march the platoon as a separate element, we generally first change the face to march to the right (right because the platoon falls in from right to left, and a left face to march would put the guide and squad leaders at the rear of the formation).

The Platoon Leader commands "Right, FACE"; at this command, all members of the platoon face to the right (illustrated above) except the Guide, who faces about, steps to the front of the rightmost squad, then faces left. (The Guide unless otherwise instructed is on the right, which explains this dance.) The Platoon Leader faces *left*, to finish facing in the same direction as the platoon.

NOTE: There is no such command as "Counter March" for close order drill in FM 22-5 (it is sometimes used to change direction in a band). To change direction front to rear while keeping the guide in front, use successive commands of "Column Left" or "Column Right, MARCH." The command "Right (or Left) ***Turn***, MARCH" is used only in company mass formation (see FM 22-5, para. 155).

ALSO NOTE: The platoon will fall in at regular interval ("FALL IN") but can also fall in at close interval ("At Close Interval, FALL IN"). Close Interval is used when space is limited (not usually an issue for reenactors but knowing how puts you ahead of the game). A problem with falling in at Close Interval is that when you face right or left, cover is reduced (ranks are compressed front to rear), which makes it difficult to march.

Again, see FM 22-5 for the full intricacies of marching the platoon.

Parting Shots

There's a lot left out here because there's just not the space to describe it – map reading, R/T comms, mortar and MG placement and control, first aid, latrine digging – but that is the fun stuff in reenacting, all the flash and drama and polish to make you puff your chest and strut like a peacock. But remember that there's more to being good at your job — you have to *prove* every day that you care about your men, that you have *their* interests in mind, just as you did when you were a Squad Leader. If you're good at this job, it's because you'll have *learned* it and *earned* it by having been good at your past jobs. If you were just awarded it via longevity in your unit . . . well, then you have *a lot to learn*. But you should be selected for the position because you're *good*.

Prove it every day.

Reference Materials

Below are manuals referenced above, plus others that you'll consult frequently in your career as a Platoon Sergeant:

FM 21-100 The Soldiers' Manual
FM 22-5 Infantry Drill Regulations
FM 21-75 Scouting Patrolling and Sniping
FM 21-25 Elementary Map and Aerial Photograph Reading
FM 21-26 Advanced Map and Aerial Photograph Reading
FM 7-5 Organization and Tactics of Infantry
FM 7-10 Rifle Company

Author's Note: The best source for these manuals is ReenactorPro.org, since most have been "glossed" with critical explanation notes by Tim O'Neill. If nothing else, read the gloss notes; you will find them entertaining at least, enlightening at best. And you will have opened the manuals.

THE ART OF WAR

Quite a few things happened long ago that influences World War II and military thought. In this issue, Robert Mosher discusses the contributions of the Chinese military thinker Sun Tzu.

Sun Tzu: How to Read and Use Terrain



The Chinese military thinker Sun Tzu wrote his treatise, *The Art of War*, about 500 B.C., but his masterwork has only been available to read in English since the early 1900's. Major Thomas R. Phillips has edited a volume entitled *Roots of Strategy, a Collection of Military Classics* that incorporates the translation prepared by Lionel Giles, M.A., Assistant in the Department of Oriental Books and Manuscripts in the British Museum. *Roots of Strategy* was published in both London and New York in 1943. The other classic military thinkers represented in this volume are Vegetius, Marshal de Saxe, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon.

Written in an age before the discovery of gunpowder or the internal combustion engine, Sun Tzu's observations remain of value today because he focuses not on weapons but on men, who remain fundamentally unchanged.

Our focus in this article is on what Sun Tzu had to say about terrain and the varieties of ground that may come to be your battlefield. In addition to discussing good terrain, bad terrain, and the ways in which to adapt to them, he also writes about what your enemy's choice of ground might tell you about his intentions. Remember that the enemy may equally detect your intentions from your choices of terrain.

Sun Tzu identifies ten varieties of ground:

1. *Dispersive ground* – "One's own territory is dispersive ground, so called because the soldiers, being near home and anxious to see their wives and children, are likely to seize the opportunity afforded by a battle and scatter in every direction... On dispersive ground, therefore, inspire your men with unity of purpose… fight not."

2. *Facile ground* – "When one has penetrated into hostile territory, but to no great distances, it is facile ground… On facile ground halt not; see that there is close connection between all parts of the army."

3. *Contentious ground* – "Ground that is of great advantage to either side is contentious ground. On contentious ground, attack not; hurry up your rear guard."

4. *Open ground* – "Ground on which either side has liberty of movement is open ground... On open, accessible ground, do not try to block your enemy's way; keep a vigilant eye on your defenses, fearing a surprise attack; beat the enemy in occupying the raised and sunny spots, and carefully guard your line of supplies. Then you will be able to fight with advantage… In dry level country, take up an easily accessible position with rising ground to your right and on your rear, so that danger may be in front, and safety lie behind."

5. *Ground of intersecting highways* – "Ground that forms the key to three contiguous states, with means of communication on all four sides so that he who occupies it first has most of the empire at his command, is ground of intersecting highways… On ground of intersecting highways, consolidate your alliances and join hands with your allies."

6. *Serious ground* – "When an army has penetrated into the heart of a hostile country, leaving a number of fortified cities in its rear, it is serious ground… On serious ground, gather in plunder and ensure a continuous stream of supplies."

7. *Difficult ground* – "Mountain forests, rugged steeps, marshes and fens—all country that is hard to traverse; this is difficult ground… In difficult ground, keep pushing along on the road and steadily on the march."

8. *Hemmed in ground* – "Ground reached through narrow gorges, and from which we can only retire by torturous paths, so that a small number of the enemy would suffice to crush a large body of men, or there are enemy strongholds in our rear and narrow passes in front, this is hemmed-in ground… On hemmed in ground, resort to stratagem; block any way of retreat to make it seem that you mean to defend the position, whereas your real intention is to burst suddenly through the enemy's lines. From a position of this sort, if the enemy is unprepared, you may sally forth and defeat him. But if the enemy is prepared for your coming, and you fail to defeat him, then return being impossible, disaster will ensue.

    a. "With regard to the narrow passes, if you can occupy them first, let them be strongly garrisoned and await the advent of the enemy. Should the enemy forestall you in occupying a pass, do not go after him if the pass is fully garrisoned, but only if it is weakly garrisoned.

    b. "With regard to precipitous heights, if you precede your adversary, occupy the raised and sunny spots, and there wait for him to come up. If the enemy has occupied precipitous heights before you, do not follow him, but retreat and try to entice him away.

    c. "Country in which there are precipitous cliffs with torrents running between, deep natural hollows, confined places, tangled thickets, quagmires, and crevasses, should not be approached or else left with all possible speed. While we keep away from such places, we should get the enemy to approach them; while we face them, we should let the enemy have then on his rear.

d. "In crossing salt marshes, your sole concern should be to get over them quickly, without any delay, because the lack of fresh water, the poor quality of the herbage, and last but not least, because they are low, flat, and exposed to attack. If forced to fight in a salt marsh, you should have water and grass near you, and get your back to a clump of trees.

9. *Desperate Ground* – "Ground where there is no place of refuge at all and on which we can only be saved from destruction by fighting without delay, this is 'desperate ground'… On desperate ground, fight; proclaim to your soldiers the hopelessness of saving their lives. The only chance of life lies in giving up all hope of it."

10. *Entangling Ground* – "If it can be abandoned but is hard to reoccupy it is called entangling ground."

Sun Tzu offered further thoughts on issues of terrain in more general military operations:

"When encamping the army, pass quickly over the mountains, and keep in the neighborhood of valleys."

"All armies prefer high ground to low, and sunny places to dark. Low ground is not only damp and unhealthy but also disadvantageous for fighting. Camp in high places facing the sun. Not on high hills, but on knolls or hillocks elevated about the surrounding country. When you come to a hill or a bank, occupy the sunny side, with the slope to your right rear. It will be better for your soldiers and utilize the natural advantages of the ground."

"Do not climb heights in order to fight. If in the neighborhood of your camp there should be any hilly country, ponds surrounded by aquatic grass, hollow basins filled with reeds, or woods with thick undergrowth, they must be carefully routed out and searched; for those are places where men in ambush or insidious spies are likely to be lurking."

"After crossing a river, get far away from it. When an invading army crosses a river in its onward march, do not advance to meet it midstream. It will be best to let half the army get across, and then deliver your attack."

"When in consequence of heavy rains up-country, a river which you wish to ford is swollen and flecked with foam, wait until it subsides."

"When the enemy is close at hand and remains quiet, he is relying on the natural strength of his position."

"When he keeps aloof and tries to provoke a battle, he is anxious for the other side to advance. If his place of encampment is easy of access, he is tendering a bait."