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STREETFIGHTING:

The Rifle Platoon in MOUT

CPT John W. Karagosian, JRTC O/C, TF 1,

[Street-fighting] is a bad misnomer, because the last place you see any sane man is in a street...

Denis Johnston, 1945

Lieutenant Smith and 3rd Platoon, Company C are on orders to deploy to Cortina and are determined to get ready. Enemy forces have been reported to be raiding local villages and towns, and operations in urban terrain are a real possibility. Maximizing available training time, 3rd platoon hones their marksmanship skills on a nearby quick-fire range. They then work on individual tasks and room clearing drills until each fire team and squad is proficient at clearing and marking rooms. Prior to deploying they rehearse numerous iterations in a live fire tire house. Confidence is high.

Shortly after deploying in-country, the wily CLF launch an attack on the nearby village of Shughart-Gordon. As part of the brigade attack, 3rd platoon is assigned to clear building 13, OBJ ROCK, the company objective. As the attack progresses, word comes down from the company commander, CPT Hooah, that the attack by 1st platoon, the company lead element, is in trouble. 1st platoon has failed to clear building 11 and is combat ineffective. 3d Platoon is going to have to clear buildings 11and 12 enroute to OBJ ROCK.

LT Smith advances to building 10 and takes a quick look at enemy-held building 11. He brings up 2nd squad and his two M240's and begins to suppress the building. Mortar fire begins to land behind him, inflicting casualties on hapless 3d squad, bringing up the rear. 1st squad assaults the building and gains a foothold, although they lose half their number to previously unseen riflemen firing from the other side of the street in 2nd platoon's sector. The intrepid SSG Hardcore, assault squad leader, dynamically supervises his men as they clear the building, noting from the open door in the back of the house that some of the enemy have escaped.

LT Smith never makes it to building 11. He is wounded by a CLF rifleman and crawls to find cover. He sees a fellow lieutenant from Bravo company leading a squad of reinforcements around the north side of building 10. The stack of Americans huddles against the wall, getting ready to make their move as rifle fire echoes from across the street.

Hue City. Beirut. Mogadishu. Grozny. Since the end of the Second World War, the population of the world, and its conflicts, have increasingly moved from the rural countryside to modern cities and urban sprawl. The US Army has found itself on this new battlefield, and greater training emphasis is shifting to these likely future conflicts. There is no end in sight to the Army's increasing commitment to this role.

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For today's infantryman, training in MOUT sites and tire houses is a more frequent occurrence then before. One of the most elaborate training events at the Joint Readiness Training Center is the fight at Shughart-Gordon, where a brigade combat team attacks to secure a Cortinian village and return it to host nation control. This fight, as is so often the case in MOUT, hinges on the ability of rifle squads, platoons, and companies to successfully accomplish their respective collective tasks. The comments of Mr. Johnston notwithstanding, many rifle platoons at the JRTC are challenged at getting from one building to the next. At the platoon level, MOUT can be an intense, violent, and short experience that can quickly render the unit combat ineffective. Usually, a majority of casualties occur not in the buildings themselves, but while crossing the deadly ground outside and between buildings. This article will examine some of the recent trends, and propose possible tactics, techniques, and procedures to aid a platoon training for future MOUT operations.

Prior to examining problems for the rifle platoon, we must first consider the terrain. Buildings in the urban setting provide excellent cover against small arms rounds or concealment that masks sandbagging and other force protection steps taken by the defender. With the exception of downtown cities, buildings are usually separated by open streets and sidewalks that provide little to no cover for the attacker. On the other hand, excellent fields of fire are available for the defender, although engagement distances are almost always 100 meters or less. Because adjacent buildings are much closer than 100 meters to each other, seizing a foothold in one will probably require suppression or obscuration of several. For the defender, winning the MOUT fight requires making the fight as unfair as possible in the first place. A good way to do this is to defend from buildings that provide cover and concealment from friendly weapons, and fields of fire into streets and engagement areas that offer the attacker no cover at all. This setting results in time consuming, deliberate operations that require a high expenditure of ammunition and resources to suppress the enemy. The alternative is expenditure of our most precious resource, our soldiers.

At the platoon level, there are several 'fights' we must win to survive in MOUT. For riflemen and team leaders the fight is to seize a foothold in a given building and clear individual rooms. At the squad level, the fight is for a floor or a single small building. The platoon fight revolves around larger buildings, and small city blocks. At all levels of this fight we will be crossing open areas and securing footholds. The platoon level is the lowest level where we begin to see enough combat power to assault buildings while still being able to suppress as well as provide all around, 360^{o} security. This fight requires coordination; coordination gained through fire control and distribution, sectors of fire, and fire and maneuver tailored to a MOUT environment. The team leader/squad leader fight frequently focuses on close quarter battle (CQB) tactics to clear rooms; to assault streets the squad requires support from the platoon to be set up for success.

Commonly, however, platoons at home station focus on the inside-the-building (ie. the CQB, room to room) fight. They accomplish this part successfully. Unfortunately, they are often heavily attrited getting to the building in the first place. Remember, **the majority of casualties in MOUT take place outside the building, where cover and concealment is least available.** Casualties of 70% outside buildings in the village of Shughart-Gordon are not uncommon. The 'high payoff' TTPs to survive outside are the ones we train on the least. Conversely, by building MOUT training plans that span only from individual to team and squad level, (rarely progressing to the outside fight), we set our junior leaders up for failure before we even begin. Training on room clearing at the expense of entering and moving between buildings does us little good if we fail to get to the room in the first place.

Generally speaking, there are three weapons systems that cause almost all casualties among rotational units in the MOUT attack. They are: mines and booby traps, indirect fire (usually 82mm mortars), and

direct fire from small arms. Direct fire, the biggest casualty producer, is commonly caused by:

a. Direct fire at a soldier clearing a building, or fire directed at a stationary soldier inside a friendly-held building.
b. Enemy soldiers inside a building defending themselves from a friendly assault (Friendly troops in the open).
c. Enemy soldiers in a building engaging friendlies in the open. The friendly troops are attacking a different building, or otherwise unaware of the source of the fire.

Items b) and c) are situations that soldiers routinely spend the least time training on; we should not be surprised that these two situations result in the majority of our losses.

Put another way, two to three out of every four casualties are hit by the enemy when they are not clearing or moving inside buildings. To reduce casualties and increase the chances for mission success, we must either:

a. Avoid those areas where casualties are most likely to occur.
b. If we can't avoid them, spend as little time in them as possible.
c. Implement TTPs to better protect soldiers moving through them.

Our vision of this battlefield is part of the problem.

Consider Battle Drill Six, Enter and Clear a Building. (ARTEP 7-8 Drill) The condition for this task states: "the platoon is moving when it receives fire from the enemy *in a building*". In this example, all elements not assaulting are in SBF positions oriented on the objective building. (figure 1) This technique will work if the enemy does not have mutual support from elsewhere. ie. a single, isolated building. If there are nearby enemy we have not considered they could be a real threat to our assault

Yet in the following example we see the problem taken a step further. In this figure, (figure 2) taken from FM 90-10-1, we see a company attacking an enemy strongpoint, labeled as building 26. With the exception of one squad in building 12, all supporting fires (two rifle platoons, a rifle squad, and two tanks) are oriented solely on the objective building from corners D to A to B.

How is this a problem? It's a problem because in the close confines of the MOUT battlefield, an avenue of approach leading to an objective building can almost always be observed by several adjacent structures, which can also be enemy-occupied. By focusing fires and observation on the objective building only, we invite destruction from surprise fire delivered by an alert enemy providing mutual support from nearby. We are then slow to react to this new threat, resulting in multiple casualties in the assault teams as they seek to create a foothold. Taken to an extreme, it is not uncommon at Shughart-Gordon to see a fire team or squad destroyed while assaulting an empty building.

In figure 3, we see two platoons clearing a street. The enemy is defending three buildings with a reinforced squad. Their positions offer mutual support, and their sectors of fire include short range, frontal fire between buildings, (dashed lines) as well as flanking and oblique fire from the sides of buildings. (thick lines) Note that the defenders on the east side of building 11and west side of building 23 are masked from the fire of the friendly platoon that "owns" that building. The enemy crossfire refuses to respect our platoon boundaries. As can be seen, a "by the book" technique will probably result in heavy casualties in the open areas west of buildings 11 and 22.

Fire without movement is indecisive. Exposed movement without fire is disastrous. There must be effective fire combined with skilful movement.

George C. Marshall, Infantry in Battle

The underlying purpose behind our direct and indirect fires is to allow our assault teams and squads to secure a foothold on the objective building. Suppressing the building itself helps this happen. Suppression of the adjacent enemy buildings may also be required. It doesn't matter if we suppress the objective building if other enemy are left unengaged. At the close engagement ranges so common in MOUT, unseen and unengaged enemy can unhinge our plan.

Fire control is very important here. Leaders control fires. If we do not control the fires of our soldiers, they will direct their fires in one of several possible ways: at the closest target, the most obvious target (the one whose muzzle flash they see clearly), or where the fire around them seems to be directed. The result is tunnel vision, which makes the unseen flanking fire from buildings 11 and 23 so dangerous.

Let's look at 1st platoon and the assault on building 11.

A common set of task/purpose statement overheard at JRTC sounds like this:

1st squad(ME): secures foothold in building 11 in order to allow plt to secure bldg. 11

2nd squad: suppresses building 11 in order to allow 1st squad to secure foothold in building 11

3rd squad: suppresses building 11 in order to allow 1st squad to secure foothold in building 11

Weapons squad: suppresses building 11 in order to allow 1st squad to secure foothold in building 11

However, if the majority of our casualties in MOUT take place outside the building (they do) then the decisive point in our fight will be getting our assault squad across the open area in the first place (it is). Getting the assault squad to it's entry point will probably make our attack successful. The underlying purpose to our fires and our suppression should be less on solely engaging the objective and more on protecting friendlies crossing the street, open area, or gap between buildings. This requires good fire distribution. We want in the end, to mass the effects of our fires. Twenty soldiers suppressing two soldiers in one building is not massing the fire effects. Twenty soldiers simultaneously suppressing ten soldiers in three buildings is massing fire effects. We'll look at how to do this later on.

Let's focus on the route to the OBJ and protecting the route from enemy fire.

There are three steps at the platoon level to a deliberate attack in MOUT:

- Isolate the building
- Secure a foothold
- Clear the building methodically (FM 90-10-1)

Isolate:

Isolate is the first step in seizing a building. Isolation is defined in FM 90-10-1 as "seizing terrain that dominates the area so the enemy cannot supply or reinforce the defenders. There are two ways, basically,

to isolate a building. We can do it by completely surrounding the building on all sides, or we can do it with fire. Fire is easier, faster, and far more common. By advancing to the flanks of the building, we can use interlocking fire to prevent the enemy from reinforcing or retreating. If we don't do this the enemy can easily reinforce the building under attack, or withdraw and fight another day if threatened. Isolation is very important if we are going to use second story entry techniques, and fight "top down". Isolation of the objective allows us to use the terrain to our advantage. We push the defender out of his building, where he has cover and concealment, into the open where he has neither and can be easily destroyed. This requires good adjacent unit coordination and cross-talk. In limited visibility operations it requires us to use our NVG's and weapons sights to their full capability. The night, which makes it easy for us to approach and gain entry, make it easier for the enemy to escape as well. (figure 4)

Mortars are another way to isolate a building with fire. Close-in fires can prevent the enemy from moving in and around the objective. We still will have to secure a position that allows us to observe the rear of the building in order to provide observed fires. If not, we will need ammunition so as to fire continuously, and should plan accordingly.

Securing a foothold:

First, we must identify where we want the foothold to be. We do this by designating the entry point for the building. Next, we must identify the route from our last covered and concealed, or assault position, to the building. This is usually the shortest distance, immediately across the adjacent street, back yard, or alley. A critical step at this point is to ask ourselves, "From what enemy-held buildings can the enemy observe my avenue of approach?" We must then orient observation and fires on those points to break the mutual support between enemy positions. One of the most common situations that result in casualties in Shughart-Gordon is that of a soldier hit by enfilade fire from a building adjacent to the one he is assaulting, that is not covered by friendly fire. The enemy will not advertise his positions to us , but instead will hold his fire to draw us into the open. If adjacent buildings offer fields of fire to our assault route, we must be prepared to cover them with observation and fire. Being able to predict suspected enemy positions by reading the terrain is an important skill to develop.

> Maneuvers that are possible and dispositions that are essential are indelibly written on the ground. Badly off, indeed, is the leader who is unable to read this writing. His lot must inevitably be one of blunder, defeat, and disaster.
>
> George C. Marshall, Infantry in Battle

By looking at our avenue of approach to the entry point from the enemy perspective, we can determine which buildings and suspected positions are the greatest threat. We then assign sectors of fire that direct friendly shooters at the enemy-held buildings identified.

Remember the purpose behind assigning these sectors of fire. It is to allow the assault team to get that foothold of a room in a building. We have to suppress the building, and protect the soldiers along the avenue of approach (ie. crossing the street or open area) There will be many buildings within 100 meters of ours and the one we are assaulting. These buildings may offer great vantage points not covered by adjacent platoons. The narrow sectors of fire that result from hiding in the recesses of a window or shooting from through a loophole mean nearby elements may not be of much help. Remember to pay special attention to multi-story buildings that offer good vantage points for snipers and forward observers. These are especially valuable to the defenders and are likely to house enemy in force.

This planning takes time. It takes time to identify the enemy buildings, designate sectors of fire, and make sure everyone understands the plan. Ideally, for a deliberate attack, we can take this time while conducting troop leading procedures in our assembly area. If not, we will have to do it under fire. Moving across an open area to assault a building is one of the most dangerous events in MOUT. In this case, remember the sequence slow-fast-slow: slow, detailed planning with dissemination of the plan to squad and team leaders, fast movement across enemy kill zones, (supported by fire) and slow, thorough clearing of the enemy-held building. It is better to spend the time necessary while covered and concealed in a friendly building than out bleeding in the street. A thorough plan disseminated while the platoon is in the relative safety of a building will result in speed traversing the gap. A hasty plan poorly disseminated will not set the conditions for success, but will result in excess time spent in the open, casualties, and possible mission failure. Another platoon or squad will have to clear our building for us, which in the end will take more time then if we did it right the first time. Looking at our example, (figure 5) a different set of tasks and purposes would be:

1st squad(ME): secures foothold in building 11 in order to allow plt to secure bldg. 11.

2nd squad: suppresses building 23 in order to allow 1st squad to secure foothold in building 11.

3rd squad: suppresses building 22 in order to allow 1st squad to secure foothold in building 11.

Weapons squad: suppresses building 11 in order to allow 1st squad to secure foothold in building 11.

Breaching. There are two types of obstacles we might face, existing and reinforcing. At the platoon level, the most common types of obstacles are 1) mined wire obstacles emplaced by the enemy outside the building 2) The doorway, window or wall we must pass through to seize the foothold itself.

Remember the part about designating an entry point? The best way to enter, ROE permitting, is to make our own hole through the wall. Next best is a window, doors being least preferred. If the friendly and enemy held buildings are adjoining 'mouseholing' with demolitions is preferable. Otherwise, AT4's, LAW's or other munitions should be used from the safety of our own building, rather than going out into the open to emplace explosives by hand. An effective technique, and one used by Chechens in Grozny in 1994, is to task organize 'rocket teams' under an NCO. Using pair or volley technique, a breach can be rapidly made and provide the enemy the least time in advance as a warning. Hollow charge weapons in general are not designed to breach walls and one may not be enough. High explosive warheads (such as those in the AT8, SMAW, and Carl Gustav) have better ability to breach masonry. Main gun rounds from tanks are very effective.

Our casualties in the assault itself will be proportional to the intensity of enemy fire, it's accuracy, and how long our assault teams are exposed to enemy fire. Suppressive fire and smoke together minimize the intensity and accuracy of enemy fire. The breaching fundamentals SOSR (Suppress, Obscure, Secure, Reduce) will assist us here. Smoke grenades draw fire; at a minimum we can expect the enemy to shoot blindly into the smoke cloud. Speed of movement and breaching minimize exposure times. Assault teams must move fast and stay dispersed. If possible, do not stack outside the entry point. Get inside as quickly as possible. (Figure 6)

Clearing methodically:

Once we have seized a foothold in our building, the tactical problem for the defender changes. If the enemy has low morale or is willing to trade space for time he may elect to withdraw and take up the fight

again on the other side of the next street or suitable clear field of fire. If the enemy regards the building as key terrain and is willing to fight for it the fight doesn't end until the enemy is destroyed in the building. The defenders inside will shift their attention away from our SBF across the street and toward our assault force as it clears from room to room. On the other hand, defenders of adjacent buildings now know where our entry point is, if they can see it. Follow-on assault teams 'run the gauntlet' to reinforce the foothold. There must be a plan for how follow-on teams will enter the building, and a senior leader within the platoon should play 'traffic cop' to maintain intervals and dispersion. Fires from SBF positions should shift off the building, but still must focus on identifying and suppressing the enemy and protecting friendly reinforcements. Elements isolating the objective have a difficult task as well, and must be prepared for brief sightings of fleeting targets as the enemy makes his escape. Some shooters should stay oriented on the building until it is completely secured. While many platoons have SOPs that requires them to mark every window and door, in reality, this never happens. Room-clearing teams, in the heat of battle, have other things to do. Marking cleared floors and cleared buildings is a must, but we should not have an unrealistic expectation of what our clearing teams will accomplish. (figure 7)

Moving in MOUT

Many units have proven adept at clearing rooms using the 'stack' technique. Correctly employed, stacks allow us to dominate the room with overwhelming firepower in minimum time. While room-clearing techniques are outside the scope of this article, one by-product of this is that leaders like to 'stack' outside on the friendly side of buildings so they can control their soldiers better. The thought process seems to be that reduced dispersion is OK, because all distances are compressed in MOUT. There is a fine line between stacking and bunching up. It is not uncommon at JRTC to see 5-10 soldiers stacked behind every friendly-held building where perfectly good cover and concealment is available on the other side of the very wall they are leaning against. This makes soldiers extremely vulnerable to snipers and airbursts from 82 mm mortar fires. Platoon and company command posts, reserve squads, and casualty collection points are some of the biggest offenders. Be aware that good forward observers are aware of this trend, and will act accordingly. In the terrain of urban combat, buildings offer cover and concealment from enemy fire and observation. They are the best avenue of approach through a city. Stacking outside buildings and moving around exterior walls are techniques that offer speed, but by considering buildings obstacles to our movement we put soldiers at risk. Remember: If you're not doing anything, don't do it outdoors! (figure 8)

One technique that can have a great impact on our ability to defeat the enemy in MOUT is second story entry techniques, or fighting "top down." One of the best examples of this was on 20 September, 1944, in Nijmegen, Holland. The 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, fighting to seize the southern edge of a critical bridge across the Waal river, was faced with dug-in, resolute SS troops, determined to contest every room and building in the Hutier Park area and bridge approaches. Many of the multistory buildings were adjoining, paralleling the streets leading to the bridge. As a result, the paratroopers were able to fight along the rooftops, entering through the uppermost floors and fighting downward to methodically clear the buildings in succession.

North Vietnamese Army defenders in Hue, South Vietnam, used different techniques when the 5th Marine Regiment fought to take back the city in February 1968. In the Citadel, an ancient, enclosed fortification the NVA sought to inflict maximum US casualties, but realized that they would eventually be forced to withdraw. 1st Battalion, 5th Marines attacked to the south, crossing a series of east-west running residential streets, labeled, in turn, Phase Line Green, Brown, etc.. The NVA established primary and alternate defensive lines on the south side of these streets. The marines had to resort to overwhelming firepower to achieve a foothold on the enemy held side of these engagement areas. These

footholds invariably started on the ground floors. Once a foothold was established, however, the NVA refused to fight room by room, and quickly withdrew to set up a new defensive line one block to the south. In this case, trading space to set up a new engagement area was more important to the NVA than losing soldiers to prolong the defense of a particular room or building. Marines from the nearby 2nd battalion reported a similar situation. In an assault on the Treasury Building, it took several days to cross the street and establish a foothold, but once across, resistance quickly collapsed and the defenders withdrew to alternate positions.

The company commander of F Company, 2/5 Marines, BG Michael Downs, (ret.) remarked,

> For a building that *took so much to get into*, (italics supplied) as soon as we were in it, they wanted no part of us. They were on the way out…to say that there were extensive, drawn out room to room defenses would be untrue.

LTG Ernest Cheatham , (ret.) the 2/5 battalion commander, cautioned that "If we would have thrown a grappling hook…the guy that threw it and the first two guys that got near the rope would have been dead within 10 seconds."

What lessons can we learn from these battles?

Clearing "top down" is an effective way to secure a building. It's chief advantage is that it keeps the attacker from being bottlenecked fighting up a stairwell, and forces the enemy down to the ground floor and out into the open rather than trapped in an upper floor where there is no alternative but to make a last stand. The chief drawback to second story techniques is they are time consuming, and increase the time spent and vulnerability of solders in the open if buildings do not adjoin and we are forced to use ladders or grapnels. Speed in getting inside a building may take precedence over entry onto an upper-level floor. If the enemy has the ability to observe our entry point, obviously, assault teams will become extremely vulnerable. To clear "top down" requires detailed coordination. We must be able to secure the entry point from enemy fire. As related before, if we are attempting to fight top down and drive the enemy out into the street, we should take the time to cover enemy withdrawal routes with fire to prevent the enemy from escaping to set up a new defense.

An important consideration is the enemy mindset: if we enter the building, will the enemy stand and fight to the death, or break contact and withdraw? If the enemy will break contact anyway, the risk involved outside in scaling the building may offset the potential gains. An irregular or guerrilla force in urban fighting may not behave like a regular army unit defending a piece of key terrain. In MILEs on MILEs training, fighting to the last man in the last room is commonplace. It will almost assuredly be less likely against a real foe, especially in larger cities which offer dozens of alternate defensive lines to fall back on.

In our defensive training we practice moving to alternate and supplementary positions if the primary positions become untenable. We should not assume that the enemy will act like an E-type silhouette at the local tire house and passively accept destruction at the hands of our clearing teams. He will probably not defend somebody else's living room or kitchen to the bitter end if he can run out the back and put some open ground in front of him.

Another consideration is the building makeup itself. In Nijmegen in 1944, downtown buildings were so close together US paratroopers could leap from rooftop to rooftop. As related before, if we are attempting to fight top down and drive the enemy out into the street, we should take the time to cover

enemy withdrawal routes with fire to prevent them from escaping to set up a new defense. There are advantages and disadvantages to both methods, whether to seek a foothold at ground level or not is a decision best made by the man on the spot based on the particular circumstances.

Flexibility

At JRTC, it is common to see platoon leaders receive a mission to secure a particular building as part of the company mission. They spend the majority of their planning time planning a set-piece, deliberate attack identifying SBF positions, breach points, and task organizing appropriately. On the objective, one of two things almost always happens:

1. A friendly unit has been rendered combat ineffective and failed to secure it's objective; as a result, the platoon must conduct a hasty attack to secure one or more buildings en route to their objective.
2. The platoon secures it's objective, but due to friendly casualties elsewhere, is given a follow on mission to continue the attack.

Usually these additional missions were not anticipated and come as a surprise. On the objective common problems include hasty reconnaissance and a failure to read the urban terrain. These hasty plans frequently result in 'tunnel vision'. Fires are oriented almost exclusively on the building to be assaulted. Rifle platoons as a result, are more likely to become disoriented and become increasingly vulnerable to fires from unexpected directions.

Building flexibility into the plan:

Regardless of the objective building assigned, leaders should conduct contingency planning to include a hasty attack on a building different from the objective assigned. Rehearsals should include assigning sectors of fire, use of suppression and obscuration to protect the avenue of approach to the objective, designation of entry points, breaching techniques, and marking. Battalion scouts will not be able to identify every obstacle, and the platoon should always be prepared to conduct an in-stride or assault breach. When possible, contingency tasks for the squads should mirror the tasks assigned for the original objective. This minimizes confusion. Note the following example: (figure 9) In this case squad s are assigned sectors of fire and tasks for the assault that generally mirror the plan for the original assault on Building 11. This is not intended to create a 'cookie cutter" effect, but by assigning sectors beforehand we maximize security. Whenever possible, refine the plan based on the enemy situation, the 'terrain' of nearby buildings, and reports of what buildings are known to be occupied by friendly and enemy troops.

Situational Awareness

The enemy will not advertise his presence; only after making contact will we get a true picture of his dispositions and intent. Due to the close engagement distances common in MOUT, hidden enemy can inflict severe losses in a short period of time. If leaders are not aware of what is happening around them the attack is liable to be overcome by events. A frequent situation is for a platoon or company to be given a "follow-on" mission to pass through a unit in contact and continue the attack to an intermediate or final objective. The follow-on unit is briefed on what buildings will be secured as part of condition-setting for their attack. The enemy, unfortunately, doesn't follow the plan. If the conditions are not set and the follow-on unit is not aware of what is happening, fire is received from buildings that SBF elements are not oriented on. The results are grim.

Let's look at the following example (Figure 10):

The company commander has directed 1st and 2nd platoons to attack in sector. To provide control, he has designated two phase lines, Red and White. Neither platoon is allowed to cross their phase line without permission. Third platoon will follow 1st, and on order, assume main effort and seize the company objective, building 13, OBJ ROCK. The company commander sees the order of attack as, bldg. 11-22-12-13-23.

Unfortunately the plan goes awry. 1st Platoon is engaged by a reinforced squad in building 11, and a squad with a machine gun firing from building 23. Casualties mount, and 1st platoon is rendered combat ineffective. Building 22, on the other hand, appears to be lightly held. 2nd platoon is directed to secure 22, and suppress the enemy in 23 and 11. 3rd Platoon is directed to renew the assault on 11 after 2nd attacks.

Comments:

1. The use of phase lines in this example represents a way to keep one platoon from outdistancing the other. It is difficult to advance down one side of the street without securing both. In this example, two platoons bounding side by side provide security to each other's flanks. Notice also that moving with the grain, parallel to the street from building to building, is safer than crossing the street, or moving against the grain.
2. In this case the 2nd platoon leader has a decision to make. In his original plan he did not plan for having to suppress the enemy in 11, because that building should have been cleared by 1st platoon before he jumped off. If 2nd platoon does not reorient at least some of their fires onto the east side of 11 the result could be disastrous. It may require 3d and 2nd platoon together to gain the fire superiority necessary to advance onto 22, or 3d may have to attack 11 for a second time. Regardless, if 2nd platoon is not maintaining good communication and situational awareness they will be in deep trouble if the enemy in building 11 reorient to the east. 22 itself may not require as much suppression as 11, even though 22 is the objective of the platoon attack. *It is not uncommon to see one failed platoon attack adversely affect several other platoons nearby, especially if all concern continue blindly along the original path.*
3. The 3d platoon leader has decisions to make as well. Building 13 does not resemble 11 or 12. 3d platoon takes up firing positions in the rooms on the north side of building 10, while the PL tries to find someone in 1st to update him on the situation. It's going to take some time to come up with a new plan; by the time 3d secures building 12 they are at 50% strength and must re task-organize as the original assault squad has taken heavy casualties.

Conclusions:

MOUT is a complex operation. Effective combat units are able to identify the high payoff tasks required to accomplish their mission, establish solid SOP's, and train to standard. Movement between buildings is where the majority of casualties occur in the village of Shughart-Gordon. This problem is a direct result of a lack of understanding of the nature of MOUT and lack of training emphasis on the specific collective tasks required. Units that emphasize movement between buildings and achieve a level of proficiency at this task will be attacking the source of the single greatest cause of casualties in MOUT. To do so requires us to understand how the enemy fights, focus on the relationship between fire and

movement in cities, and the requirement to maintain continuous security as well as a sense of tempo and tactical patience. If we are successful here we will be able to minimize casualties and set up our squads for success as they close with the enemy. We will then be well on our way to accomplishing the mission.

CPT John W. Karagosian is an observer controller at the Joint Readiness Training Center. A 1992 graduate of the United States Military Academy, he has previously served at FT Bragg, NC, Camp Casey, Korea, and FT Campbell, KY. This article is to be published in *Infantry Magazine*