

SOLUTIONS - Tactical Vignette 98-2

THE PROBLEM:

"Defense of Kozda" from the March-April 1998 issue of ARMOR

Situation

Enemy. The S2 reports that within the brigade's area of operations, the 13th MRD is conducting an attack to seize Kodza Airport, a key logistical site, that will allow enemy forces easy access into the theater of operations. Within the battalion's area of operations, the 3rd MRR is conducting an attack to seize the city of Kodza. This will allow the regiment to seize additional logistical sites (hospital, stores, and water) that will support the division.

The most probable course of action is for the 3rd MRR to attack along Avenue of Approach 1, enveloping the TF from the west, and maximizing its combat power. The most dangerous course of action is for the 3rd MRR to attack with two MRBs abreast, forcing us to fight in two directions and denying us the ability to concentrate our combat power.

Friendly. TF 3-37 defends BP 22 at 260630SEP98 to destroy enemy forces in EA Crush in order to protect the western flank of the brigade's main defense in the vicinity of the Kodza Airport.

Company Situation. You are the commander of Charlie Team (tank heavy), TF 3-37. You are the main effort of TF 3-37 that is defending in sector. The brigade commander wants the task force to protect the west flank of the BDE main effort TF 2-10 AR, which is defending a key logistical site (Kodza Airport) east of the city of Kodza. Delta Company has been attached to TF 2-10. TF 3-37 is arrayed with two companies forward and one back. Bravo Team is occupying BP 1, oriented on TRPs 2 and 3. Alpha Team (mech) is occupying BP 3, oriented on TRPs 2 and 4. The TF commander's intent is to destroy the enemy in EA CRUSH by establishing a deliberate defense on BP 22, reinforced by extensive obstacles in the engagement area; this will deny the enemy from seizing the city of Kodza (See Figure 1).

Your team consists of two M1A1 tank platoons and one infantry (BFV) platoon and a MANPACK Team. You have priority of mortars and are responsible for triggering artillery targets AB001 through AB003. Currently, the company is occupying BP 2, oriented on TRPs 1 and 2, and is backed down in turret down positions, having withstood an in-

itial artillery bombardment. However, you have taken some losses.

1st Platoon (mech) is down to 3 BFVs, while 2nd Platoon reports that one tank has received heavy track damage and another suffered severe gun tube damage. 3rd Platoon reports no damage to any of its tanks.

Bravo Team has just made contact and destroyed three BMPs, and the TF scouts in the west report that the MRB will be in their sector within the next 15-20 minutes. As you are monitoring these reports, you hear Terminator 6 (TF commander) trying to raise the Alpha Team commander or his XO. He has lost all

radio communications with Alpha Team, and the last transmission the A Team commander sent was that he was engaging three armored vehicles and was down to 9 vehicles. The TF commander now believes that the MRR is attacking with two MRBs abreast along Avenues of Approach 1 and 2. The TF scouts in the east confirm this by reporting that an MRB is moving fast along Avenue of Approach 2 and will be in Alpha Team's sector within the next five minutes. The TF commander believes that the enemy will successfully penetrate Alpha Team's position, leaving his flank exposed. He orders you to block penetration of Alpha Team's sector. You must act now! What do you do?

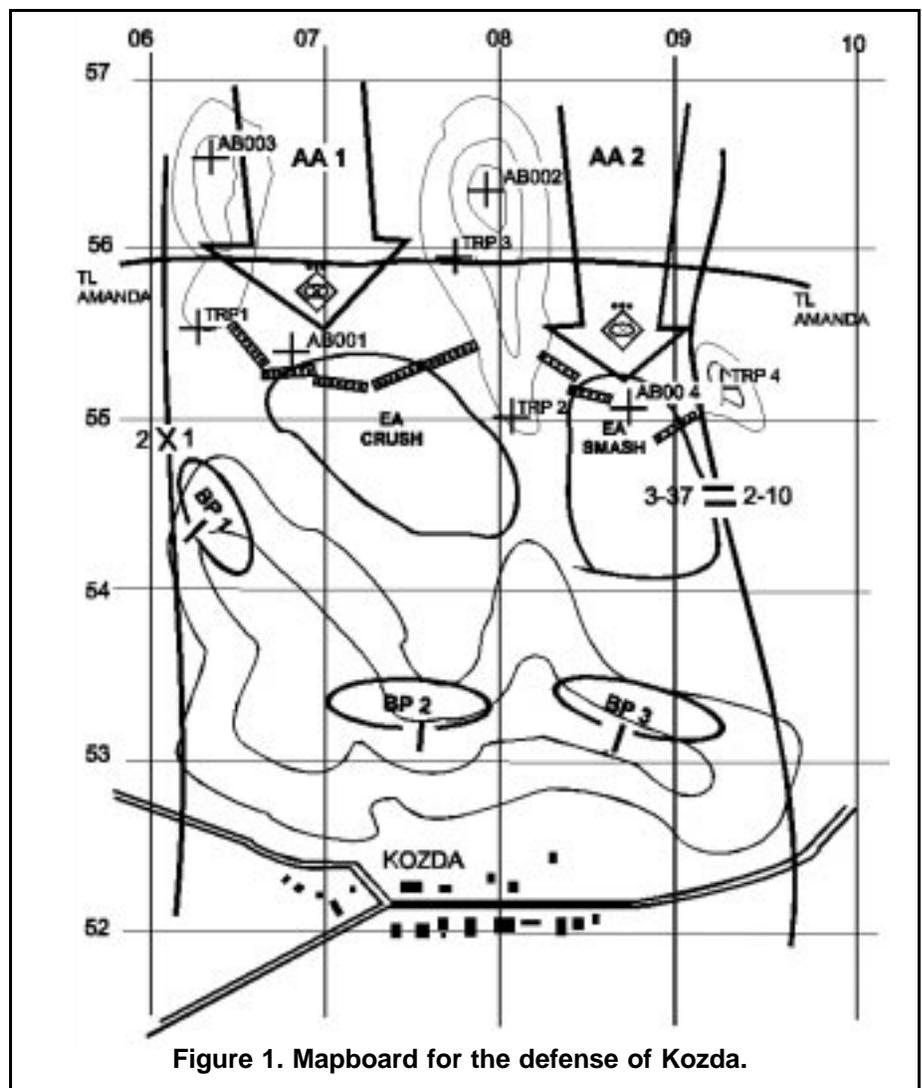


Figure 1. Mapboard for the defense of Kozda.

THE SOLUTIONS:

Author's Solution

FRAGO

GUIDONS, this is BLACK 6, FRAGO follows.

Situation: The TF scouts have reported a second MRB moving in the east and closing on TM A's position. The TF commander has lost all radio communications with TM A; the last transmission the TM A commander sent was that he was engaging three armored vehicles and was down to nine vehicles. The TF commander is concerned that the enemy will successfully penetrate TM A's position, leaving the TF eastern flank exposed. BREAK.

Mission: TM C establishes a hasty defense vicinity 083537 to destroy enemy forces in EA SMASH to prevent penetration of the TF's eastern flank. BREAK.

Intent: We will accomplish this mission by splitting our team in two and fighting on two fronts. BREAK.

Tasks to subordinate units:

RED (MECH), maintain your current position and be prepared to reinforce BLUE in the east. BREAK.

WHITE, have Alpha section maintain their current position (damaged vehicles) and have Bravo section follow BLUE to the east. Once BLUE establishes a hasty defense, have Bravo section establish a position to BLUE's left flank. BREAK.

BLUE, move your platoon to 083537 and establish a hasty defense oriented on EA SMASH. You are the main effort. BREAK.

BLACK 5, maintain your current position and take control of the fight in the west. I will move with BLUE. BREAK.

FIST, follow me and establish a position where you can call for effective fires. BREAK.

BLACK 7, maintain your current position. Be prepared to conduct logistical support across two fronts. BREAK.

RATIONALE

The TF commander has ordered me to block the penetration of TM A's position. However, leaving my current position

entirely leaves the center of the TF's defense vulnerable to penetration.

Splitting my company team in two will allow the TF to maintain greater lethality on two fronts. Furthermore, leaving my XO, a section from RED, and the two damaged tanks from WHITE at BP 2 gives me organic assets to protect my western flank as I reposition the rest of my forces to BP 3. To maintain command and control of the company team, the XO will control the fight from BP 2. I will move with Blue and a section from RED. As the most experienced officer, it is logical for me to take charge of the fight in the east (BP 3). My first priority once I get to BP 3 will be to establish a hasty defense anchored on the left flank of TM A. Second, I will attempt to regain communication with TM A. Third, I will determine what TM A's combat strength is and take control of those assets if the leadership of TM A has been killed. Fourth, I will contact the TF commander and update him on the situation and provide him with any recommendations, if applicable.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: We purposely reduced the unnecessary verbiage staying away from the perfect school house solution that would be unrealistic in the heat of battle. We want to provide to the readers a quick realistic FM fragmentary order from the company commander to his subordinates.

SOLUTION A

(Submitted by SFC Gregory Burbo, doctrine writer, assigned to B CO, USAARMC, Fort Knox)

COMANCHES, this is COMANCHE 6, FRAGO follows. The enemy is attacking along both northern axes of approach. Terminator 6 has lost comms with the Apaches, their last message stated that the Apaches had taken some losses at BP 3. We must assist the Apaches in stopping the enemy in engagement area SMASH to protect the battalions flank. (BREAK)

COMANCHE 5: Move yourself and the remainder of RED with WHITE'S 2 FMC tanks to a position vic grid 079634 orient on EA CRUSH between AB 001

and TRP 2. Control all indirect fires from your position. Be prepared to reinforce myself and BLUE vic grid 094553. Report when set. (BREAK)

WHITE: Move your 3 and 4 tanks to a position vic grid 076534 have them report to COMANCHE 5 when set. Move yourself to a position near your 2 tank and attempt to get his track repaired. Be prepared to resupply Comanche 5 and your 3 and 4 tanks as needed. Report when you are set. (BREAK)

RED: Move your remaining elements to a position vic grid 076534 and report to COMANCHE 5 when set. (BREAK)

BLUE: Move your platoon with me to a position southeast of BP3 vic grid 094533 to block the enemy penetration. We will orient from TRP 2 to TRP 4. (BREAK)

STINGER: Move your team to a position vic grid 075533 and provide the team with Stinger support. Report when set. (BREAK)

FIST: Move to a position vic grid 075533 and prepare to provide fires to the company team. Report when set. (BREAK)

COMANCHE 7: Move the company trains to a position vic grid 085523 and execute our CASEVAC plan. On order conduct emergency resupply of BP2 and/or my location vic grid 094533. Report when set. (BREAK)

COMANCHE 6 will be located with BLUE vic grid 094533 send all calls for fire through COMANCHE 5. (OUT)

ONE MINUTE LATER THE FOLLOWING RADIO TRAFFIC IS SENT:

TERMINATOR 6 this is COMANCHE 6, I am moving myself and BLUE to a position vic grid 094533 time now. I will attempt to regain contact with you once set. (OUT)

FIST this is COMANCHE 5, Fire AB 002 and AB 003 time now. (OUT)

FIVE MINUTES LATER THE FOLLOWING RADIO TRAFFIC IS SENT:

TERMINATOR 6, this is COMANCHE 6, set vic grid 094533. I have comms with the Apaches 6; he is down to 6 operational victors and engaging 4 enemy

vehicles vic grid 087545. I am engaging 7 enemy vehicles vic grid 093548 heading south along the hardball. (OUT)

COMANCHE 5, this is WHITE 1, I am with White 2 set vic grid 071534. (OVER)

COMANCHE 5, this is RED 1, all Red elements are set vic grid 077534. (OVER)

COMANCHE 5, this is WHITE 4, White 3 and myself are set vic grid 079533. (OVER)

COMANCHE 5, this is FIST. I am set vic grid 075533. (OVER)

COMANCHE 5, this is STINGER. We are set vic grid 075533. (OVER)

FIST, this is COMANCHE 5 fire AB 001 time now. (OUT)

COMANCHE 5, this is COMANCHE 7 set vic grid 085523. (OVER)

RATIONALE

We have been ordered to block the enemy penetration of Apache's sector. However we have not been totally relieved of our original mission of defending BP 2. By taking BLUE with me to a position southeast of BP3, I can reinforce the Apaches and should have enough firepower to force the attacking MRR to ground in or near EA SMASH.

I should also be able to regain commo with Terminator 6. This also puts me in a position to be able to take charge of the Apaches should I find their command elements dead. By leaving COMANCHE 5 with White's 2 FMC tanks and the remaining RED elements and moving them to the east side of BP 2, I am able to still engage the enemy in EA CRUSH. This also places them in a position from where they can quickly reinforce the Apaches on BP 3, or my element vic grid 094533, if needed.

By moving WHITE 1 to a position near his down tank he may be able to get it up and give us that additional firepower. If not, he is in a position to resupply COMANCHE 5 and his two FMC tanks as needed. The Stinger team and FIST is now in a more secure position, which will still allow them to give the company protection from air attack. Comanche 7 is now in a more secure position from where he can execute our CASEVAC plan and resupply either BP 2 or BP 3 as well as my element vic grid 094533 as needed.

SOLUTION B

(Submitted by CPT Ukeiley, USMC)

FRAGO

Guidons, this is Charlie 6 FRAGO follows.

Situation: MRB advancing south AA2. FSE at 55 Northing in 5 mikes. Bravo in good position to cover AA1. Alpha needs help.

Mission: Team Charlie establishes hasty battle position overlooking EA Smash in order to destroy enemy advancing along AA2.

Tasks to subordinate units:

FSO: Immediate obscuration fires to screen company movement.

1st Plt (Mech): Establish hasty BP vic grid 083536 oriented northeast on EA SMASH in order to destroy MRB. Conduct physical link-up with Alpha's left flank.

2nd Plt: Company reserve. Maintain current position and mission. Get damage fixed ASAP. Be prepared to reinforce.

3rd Plt: Main effort! Establish hasty BP vic grid 081539 oriented northeast on EA SMASH in order to destroy MRB.

XO: Get maintenance contact team to 2nd now!

RATIONALE

No plan survives contact with the enemy; the plan is nothing more than a common basis for change. With a confirmed MRB on AA2 and no answer from Alpha, I must act decisively in order to accomplish the brigade CO's intent. His intent is to destroy the enemy in order to retain possession of key terrain, Kodza. Whether Charlie destroys the enemy in EA CRUSH or EA SMASH makes no difference so long as the enemy is destroyed and we retain Kodza. This is why I must understand not just my TF commander's intent, but my brigade commander's as well.

In order to accomplish this, the MRB advancing into EA SMASH must be destroyed. With only nine of fourteen vehicles remaining, Alpha is in trouble and must be reinforced. This is the decisive action that will accomplish the intent. Bravo is in good shape and position to defeat the MRB advancing into EA CRUSH. Additionally, by changing battle positions, I am introducing doubt into the enemy commander's perception of the battlefield.

With heavy incoming artillery and the chaos and confusion of my troops in combat for the first time, I must keep things simple and direct. I must leave my subordinate leaders maximum room for initiative by providing clear mission and intent. Each platoon has been given a very specific task and purpose over the tac net.

With less than five minutes before MRB is expected in EA SMASH, speed is critical. Concise and direct orders facilitate this. Team Charlie must be in its new hasty BP before the bulk of the MRB combat power is in direct fire range. As the move from our current BP to our new BPs is less than 500 meters, time and space factors must be considered. Even with such a short move, it will be close.

First, the accurate enemy targeting of my BP and Alpha's confirms that I am under observation of enemy FO teams. I must blind them in order to regain freedom of maneuver and retain tactical surprise. I am dropping smoke to blind enemy FO teams. I doubt they have thermal sights within their FO teams. Even if the smoke alerts the enemy as to movement, he will not know what I am doing or why.

I sent 1st Plt to actually link up with Alpha for numerous reasons. First, I want to gain situational awareness as to what is happening at their position. Second, the mech infantry platoon with dismounts provides flexibility in coordination, linkup, and assistance to Alpha that an armor platoon will not.

With 2nd Plt degraded, I leave them in position as company reserve and task my XO with getting them mission capable. In addition, this leaves the XO as my directed telescope with eyes on the original EA to deal with unexpected contingencies. If the situation requires, there is still a platoon of shooters overlooking EA CRUSH to destroy any enemy forces that bypass Team Bravo. If not, I can mass the company at EA SMASH.

3rd Plt is now my main effort as they are still at 100% effectiveness and their four tanks (plus mine) will provide the mass of company combat power. 3rd Plt is my decisive bid for victory at EA SMASH. As the terrain dictates that enemy mechanized forces will be naturally channelized to the east along AA2, this will present 3rd Plt with flank shots as the enemy closes.

The mission has changed, yet the intent remains the same. Destroy the enemy MRB and prevent enemy seizure of Kodza.