

TACTICAL DECISION GAME

SOLUTION: RAID GONE BAD

Lieutenant-Colonel Matthew Rolls

In Raid Gone Bad, we see a platoon commander (Pl Comd) facing a significantly changed situation but with no change in their commander's intent that the enemy force in the objective be prevented from interfering with M Company (Coy)'s defensive preparations. The Pl Comd received the task to "destroy this enemy to protect M Coy's defensive preparations and the crossing of the multinational formation." This suggests that we, as the Pl Comd, need to consider just how we will achieve our higher comd's intent, understanding that the task to destroy and the offensive activity of the raid is less important than achieving the purpose of protecting M Coy's defensive preparations to enable the crossing of the multinational formation. As completing the defensive preparations is largely a matter of time, we need to provide that time to M Coy, whether by eliminating the threat or by slowing it down.

There are a few elements of uncertainty in the current situation. The enemy's intent in the objective area remains unknown. Do they still intend to attack after what sounded like an engagement with B Security? If so, when? Also, at this point we know the enemy's strength has increased, but we don't yet know by how much, except for the increase in armour strength of an additional two T-55s. We should also consider the fact that a large truck can usually carry close to a platoon of infantry. Fortunately, A Security remains in the vantage point to keep us informed about the enemy situation. Lastly, based on the fire you heard from Bravo Security,

the enemy has been alerted to your presence in the area. This suggests that the enemy will do one of two things, or both. First, they will look to secure their assembly area with their dismounted infantry in the close terrain surrounding it. Second, they will seek to accelerate their preparations to depart the assembly area and, presumably, attack M Coy. The enemy strength and the reduced likelihood of you surprising the enemy are critical factors in deciding your next steps.

The friendly situation is clearer, but B Security's situation remains uncertain. Their immediate welfare is beyond your control, and you need to focus on how to adapt to the new situation. However, as part of your plan, it is worth considering how you will support an eventual link-up with B Security. You have A Security forward providing you with situational awareness and your navigation team securing the release point. C Security is set up in a cut-off position to your south. Other than that, you have the remainder of your platoon and attachments centralized in the objective rendezvous (ORV) providing you with a measure of flexibility to respond to the situation.

The terrain in your immediate area, has, of course, not changed; however, it has taken on new significance as the situation has changed. The close terrain provides cover and concealment to your dismounted platoon, but the area immediately around the objective may be less secure if the enemy chooses to dismount infantry and clear it.

The road is a high-speed approach for the enemy forces, but the close terrain canalizes their movement, tying them to the road and the area immediately around it. The stream and the bridge over it represent another obstacle which will canalize enemy movement. The best locations for maximizing the range of your anti-armour weapons and machine guns are around the objective from your currently planned firebase locations, as well as several points along the road where there are longer lines of sight. The road has four 90-degree turns that offer the potential to isolate portions of the enemy column as it moves down the road and creates possible L-shaped ambush locations.

Time and space factors are largely uncertain and dependent on what actions the enemy takes. As a motorized force, the enemy has a significant speed advantage over our force. If they choose to move as quickly as possible, it will be difficult for our platoon to respond quickly enough. This suggests that speed of decision and execution is of the essence to be able to get into position before the enemy can commence movement and pre-empt whatever action we seek to take. Time and space are linked to the considerations of surprise and security and the enemy. As the enemy has been alerted to your presence,

achieving surprise will be more difficult. Surprise is a matter of catching the enemy unprepared, which means moving faster than they can react or doing something unexpected. For example, moving faster than the enemy can post local security likely becomes much more difficult once they have been alerted.

Our analysis demonstrates that the purpose behind our mission (the intent) has not changed; however, we will want to consider whether we should pursue¹ it in another way. US doctrine uses the acronym DRAW-D (Defend, Reinforce, Attack, Withdraw, Delay) for this type of analysis to consider broadly what options we might pursue¹. In this case we can eliminate the options of reinforcement and withdrawal. Based on the location of M Coy, it is highly unlikely that reinforcement could arrive in a timely manner, and it would divert them from their defensive preparations, which is why we are on this task in the first place. Withdrawing would allow the enemy to conduct their preparation activities and movement to M Coy's location undisturbed, and we would thereby be failing in our purpose of allowing M Coy to complete their defensive preparations. We can therefore look at the options of defending, attacking and delaying.

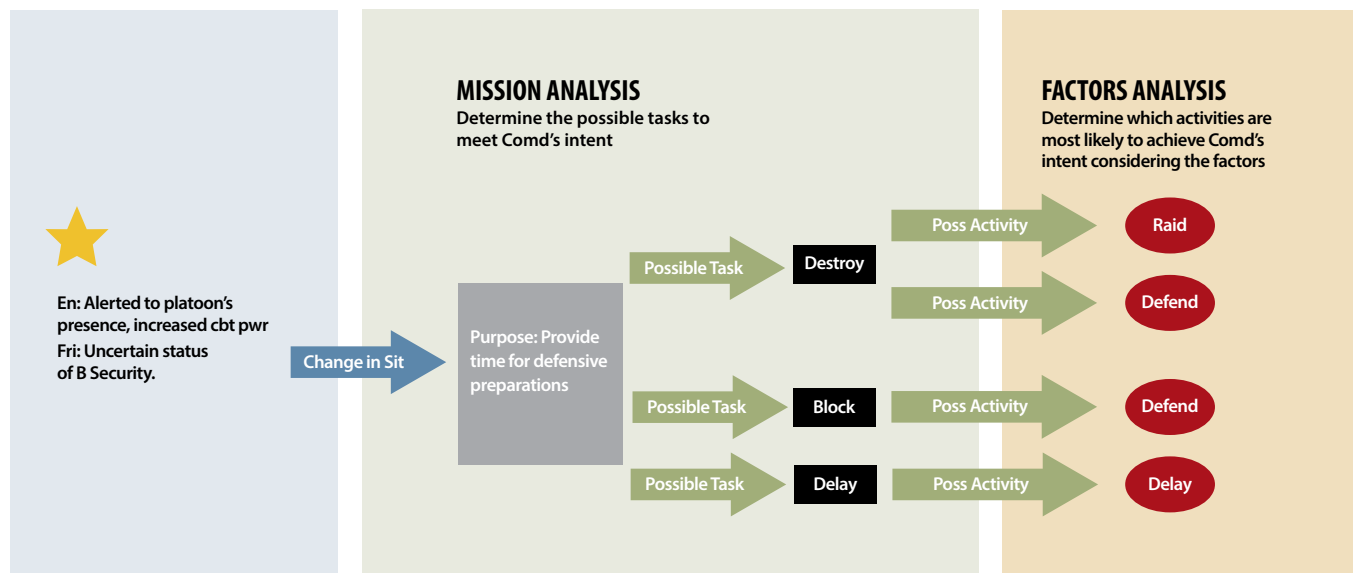


Figure 1: Platoon Commander's thought process throughout the estimate

In the defending option, the canalizing terrain in the area offers the platoon covered and concealed approaches to battle positions from where they could surprise the enemy. The bridge in particular is a tempting location where some standoff could be achieved, at least enough for minimal engagement ranges while still canalizing the movement of armour. Enemy infantry could still infiltrate through the close terrain and through the stream, but the stream still represents an obstacle to infantry movement which could be covered by observation and fire. B Security, having already engaged the enemy, have acted as a sort of security force for the defence in attriting the enemy, introduced uncertainty as to our location and intent, and bought us time to establish our defence. The vantage point is a screen that provides early warning of enemy movement and helps in determining the enemy's intent. This element could be reinforced by the Navigation Team or withdrawn back to the ORV. C Security acts as a form of reserve and perhaps establishes a depth position to eliminate any enemy elements that penetrate the lead positions. As the condition of B Security is still unknown, it would be wise to maintain the security of the ORV by providing them with a known location in which to link up with the remainder of the platoon. In such a scenario, the destroy task could remain extant, or block could also work.

This option cedes the initiative to the enemy, allowing them to continue their preparations to attack and secure their local area before departing. They may also be successful in finding your vantage point, robbing you of early warning. In addition, siting a defensive position in the dark is no easy task. Conducting a defence does, however, allow you to choose an advantageous position for an engagement. While creating highly protected fighting positions is unrealistic, it is conceivable that shell scrapes could be dug to reduce exposure. Direct fires could also be coordinated to ensure that they are as effective as possible, while acknowledging the challenges of doing so in the dark. The platoon can also establish battle positions more quickly than they can stealthily infiltrate to their planned attack position and firebase locations for the raid. Locating battle positions within mutual supporting distance of each other enhances combat power, facilitates control and maximizes cohesion. Lastly, if the enemy does not find the vantage point, then a fire plan could be coordinated through whatever supporting fires could be made available to provide additional depth to the defence.

The platoon could continue planning to conduct offensive operations. The first option would be to pursue the raid as planned. This option would likely require a hasty occupation of the attack position and firebase. Such movement would reduce stealth and possibly alert the enemy. Being engaged by the enemy while the platoon is dispersed and infiltrating to their assigned positions would cause significant confusion and throw the platoon into disarray, likely making the destruction task impossible. Further, the increased combat power of the enemy means that such an engagement could have grievous consequences. That being said, if the enemy is timid or slow to react, then the raid could still surprise the enemy and allow for their destruction, which is an ideal outcome.

An alternate offensive option would be to leverage one of the locations along the road to ambush the enemy as they move towards M Coy. The 90-degree bends are optimal for establishing L-shaped ambushes. The likelihood of achieving surprise in such an action is high, and it is conceivable that the platoon could inflict significant damage on the enemy. The additional two tanks, however, represent a formidable increase in combat power, and the anti-armour gunners' ability to destroy all four tanks before they could respond with significant firepower against portions of the ambush would be low. Moreover, you did not plan to conduct an ambush, so you did not bring combat multipliers that could have offset these issues, such as off-route mines or obstacles that could have increased the combat power of an ambush.

Lastly, the Pl Comd could decide to conduct a delay. This would necessitate using as much space as possible to slow the enemy's movement until first light, at which point M Coy's defensive preparations should be complete. The Pl Comd could provide the section commanders with maximum latitude to establish their own ambush positions, which would conduct a quick direct fire engagement, force the enemy to dismount to seek out the section, and then withdraw back to a subsequent ambush location.

The delay is no easy task, and it faces many of the same challenges as a platoon ambush but to a greater degree. Controlling the sections would be difficult because they are dispersed. Anti-armour weapons would need to be decentralized, making mutual support impossible. Most importantly, to conduct a delay it is important to be at least as mobile as the opposing force. In this case,



the platoon could find itself in a situation where, even with leapfrogging sections, it would need to literally run from ambush to ambush to stay ahead of the enemy. This is a potential recipe for exhaustion, diminishing control, and eventual defeat. Alternately, a highly effective direct fire engagement could impose delay out of proportion to the effort expended, thereby reducing the number of ambushes that would need to be conducted and providing time for sections to locate, site and occupy their subsequent positions.

The problem above reveals the complications of balancing risk to mission and risk to force for small units operating independently. The requirements for a delay are probably beyond the capability of the platoon due to its limited mobility. Carrying on with the raid against an opponent who is now alerted and more than doubled in combat power is a high-risk, high-reward proposition.

However, the platoon's ability to mitigate that risk is low. Defending or conducting an ambush are the two choices that offer the best balance between providing the highest likelihood of mission success and reducing the risk to the force. As to which is superior, that is a question of how the Pl Comd assesses their ability to maximize the use of terrain at their chosen location and to successfully establish either an ambush site or a defensive position. 🍁

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1. Some US doctrine adds an "E" to the end of the acronym (DRAW-DE) for Employ Weapons of Mass Destruction. This can be of use when considering what the enemy might do; however, in this scenario it is not relevant. US Marine Corps, MCWP 3-11.1, *Infantry Company Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy).