

DEVELOPING COUP D'OEIL:¹ TACTICAL DECISION GAMES AND THEIR TRAINING VALUE FOR THE CANADIAN ARMY

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Tactical Decision Games (TDG) are abbreviated tactical exercises without troops (TEWT) meant to place those executing them into a scenario with little information and time to arrive at a solution. They require few resources, allowing for a repetitious approach to training. TDGs have been prominent training tools for the US Army and particularly the United States Marine Corps for several years. They are a flexible and effective training aide that will help soldiers, non-commissioned officers (NCO), and officers with their analytical and intuitive decision-making skills. TDGs are not completely foreign to the Canadian Army (CA); however, their use has not been institutionalized.


Tactical Decision Games are a highly efficient means of training tactical decision-making and should be institutionalized within the CA, within both schools and operational units. Commanders employing TDGs will be able to mentor and develop the decision-making skills of their subordinates during periods outside collective training. Trainers can use them to discuss and exercise concepts prior to deploying to the field for practical application.

This article provides an overview of TDGs and how they differ from other training tools. It then reviews what makes TDGs useful training aides and concludes with a discussion on how to conduct a training session. A TDG example is included at the end of the article.

WHAT IS A TACTICAL DECISION GAME?

Fundamentally, a TDG is similar to a TEWT. A TDG places a student into a tactical situation and requires that they arrive at a solution. Tactical Decision Games, however, differ in practice from what most CA leaders would associate with a TEWT.

A TDG requires that the student express their solution in the form of direction to subordinates. This grants the student an opportunity to practice delivering direction verbally, but also using tactical graphics on a diagram or map. Canadian courses, such as Developmental Phase (DP) training, the Army Tactical Operations Course, and the Army Operations Course, often require students to work through the estimate process, presenting a multi-page product including deductions based on the direction they received. This process culminates in the selection of a course of action (COA) and then a back brief to one's superior. However, this process does not always result in the natural next step of drafting and delivering orders, which is the critical skill set linking problem solving and decision making to action. The schoolhouse approach places a great deal of emphasis on the student "showing their work." The student is to demonstrate how they proceeded from a fact to a deduction for a task, an element of planning guidance, grouping, or coordinating instruction. This approach has merit when instructing students with little to no experience; however, it is not a realistic depiction of



decision-making on operations and falls short of the critical requirement of passing direction to subordinates, particularly in time constrained environments. Tactical Decision Games address this shortfall by shifting the focus to decision making and issuing direction.

Tactical Decision Games put students under severe time constraints. A common time limit on a TDG is to issue direction to a platoon or company/combat team 5 to 10 minutes after having completed reading the situation. Often, commanders and staff in training and on operations will need to decide rapidly and in a situation that continues to evolve during the decision-making process. Canadian Army TEWT, usually grant those executing them several hours to either walk the ground, if in location, or to work their way through the orders and then execute the estimate. While battle procedure time on operations will change based on the situation, what does not change is the advantage gained by those who decide faster than their enemy. Tactical exercises without troops, as currently practised, do not highlight the time constrained nature of combat and do not force students to develop strategies and abilities that allow them to make competent decisions in very short periods of time. Tactical exercises without troops, at least those executed in schools, are generally process-oriented versus results oriented.

Tactical Decision Games are intentionally ambiguous. Within a TDG scenario, a student does not have all the details desired to support the decision-making process. Information is intentionally left out to simulate the fog and friction of actual combat and operations. This is critical to train leaders on becoming comfortable with making decisions in conditions of uncertainty. Tactical exercises without troops often come with a complete orders package, which enables the decision-making process, and contain a complete plan for the operation and full Situation paragraphs or even Intelligence annexes. During operations, when a unit crosses the line of departure, ambiguity will be the rule and the ability to work within the commander's intent will be paramount. When direction comes, it will likely be via radio, data, runner, or if lucky, a very quick face-to-face with the commander as he/she tours the battlefield.

WHY USE TACTICAL DECISION GAMES?

The factors of severe time constraints and ambiguity should work in tandem over a series of TDGs, particularly with good mentorship and coaching, to help our leaders realize that they should be aiming to make decisions that are good enough versus optimized. An optimal solution is, of course, a great thing; however, it comes at a cost in time. That cost in time is often not possible for our leaders. The problem is particularly acute for our commanders from section to company level who lack the staff necessary to analyse and plan while the commander is engaged in the current operation. The CA's planning processes for the combat estimate, the estimate, and the operations planning process (OPP), are meant to optimize solutions via analyses which produce a comparison of multiple COAs. Yet decisions are made much more intuitively than these tools depict, particularly at subunit level and below.² Tactical Decision Games are meant to build an intuitive and timely decision-making capability that will provide leaders an edge in combat.

Generally speaking, human beings make decisions in two ways. A decision can be made analytically based on an understanding of all the factors involved, arriving at a series of potential solutions. The decision maker then compares the solutions to each other based on criteria deemed relevant. The other option is that a person relies on an intuitive interpretation of the situation. This is when a solution jumps out at the decision maker, or perhaps one might experience a “gut feeling.” Intuition, however, is not magic. It is not the gift of those born with a God-given genius for war. Intuition is the realm of the expert. It is pattern recognition.³ It is the human brain’s ability to rapidly recognize situations that are similar to those experienced in the past and then, based on a previous successful response to that situation, undertake a similar response.⁴ This response will not be perfect, but if the decision maker has been well trained, it is likely to be good enough and made rapidly. The advantage of deciding and acting before your opponent cannot be underestimated and is explicitly recognized in our doctrine under the auspices of the Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act cycle⁵ and the concept of pre-emption in the Manoeuvrist Approach.⁶ While some may feel such an approach to decision making is haphazard, it is in fact a reflection of expertise. It is the ability to recognize the commonalities in a situation and to rapidly propose a solution. Further, this is what humans typically do when under the pressure of time constraints and the friction of operations.⁷ Consequently, the CA must train leaders to be able to make decisions in this manner.

Daniel Kahneman, a professor of psychology and winner of the Nobel Prize for his work on decision making, argues in his book *Thinking Fast and Slow*, that humans are prone to several cognitive biases and that System 1 thinking (intuitive and subconscious processes) dominates our decision making. This system of thinking is very rapid, almost instantaneous, but is also error prone. It contains those portions of our brain evolved to make rapid and crude assessments to support survival as a hunter and gatherer. It does not involve complex analysis.⁸ There is also System 2 thinking, which is rational and checks System 1 processes. System 2 thinking entails those cognitive processes that engage in analytical decision making, such as the combat estimate, estimate, and OPP. It is, however, slow and cognitively demanding, which leads to people often relying on their intuitive impressions.⁹

Kahneman does not directly comment on the impact of emotional states on a person’s ability to impose System 2 thinking; however, it is self-evident that some emotional states can make people less rational. An angry, fearful, or depressed emotional state will degrade an individual’s ability to engage System 2 processes and make that individual more likely to make decisions based on intuition. The physical and emotional domains are not separate and as leaders become more tired, cold, or hungry, they are likely to experience more negative emotions. This process works both ways—negative emotions may make physical symptoms more acute.



In the combat environment, there will be few factors in place to enable slow, deliberate and rational decision making. Leaders will be under great stress to perform, they are likely to be physically uncomfortable and exhausted, and likely scared, angry or sad at various times from the violence they have experienced and/or inflicted. This environment will curtail the leader's ability to apply the full range of their cognitive abilities through System 2 thinking and will place a premium on intuitive decision making.¹⁰ Tactical Decision Games are an exceptional training opportunity not only to mitigate the effects of being forced to make intuitive decisions but also to prepare our leaders to thrive in such an environment and make better decisions faster.

A key to getting appropriate intuitive responses to tactical situations is “tactical reps.” These are similar to an athlete in the gym who executes repetition after repetition of an exercise or movement, they eventually become more efficient at the exercise and more skilled at the movement. Top-level chess players offer an even more appropriate comparison. Chess players at the highest levels can play dozens of games simultaneously. How can this be possible? It's a matter of an intuitive response to the pieces positioned on the game board based on having experienced thousands of games and analyzing the patterns. The player is able to instantaneously understand the position, what the key elements of that position are, what moves are possible and how to exploit them.¹¹ This is the “Coup d'Oeil” that Clausewitz spoke of and that he believed Frederick the Great and Napoleon possessed.¹²

In this situation, there is a dichotomy. Cognitive biases plague human decision making, such as the desire for confirmation or anchoring on a particular piece of information. This means that in unfamiliar situations we should engage the rational portions of our brain to determine what is important and how we will use that piece of information. War, however, is a time-




Source: Combat Camera

competitive process, and the human brain has very real limits to how much information it can absorb. Too much information will in fact activate cognitive biases.¹³ Importantly, our intuition is the result of thousands of years of successful evolution and competition to survive. This is a tool that would be foolish to ignore, particularly in a situation where one's life and the lives of those they command hang in the balance. These are the types of situations for which our intuition has evolved.

In a perfect world, CA leaders would get “tactical reps” through high fidelity training, particularly free-play force-on-force exercises. Resource limitations and operational tempo, however, do not allow for this. Not all commanders will have an opportunity to go through Exercise MAPLE RESOLVE and even that experience provides no guarantee of a sufficiently broad and deep experience of “tactical reps,” to allow them to start reliably making sufficiently good intuitive decisions. Tactical Decision Games offer an additional low cost training venue to expose soldiers to a variety of tactical scenarios and cover gaps in knowledge and experience.

Tactical Decision Games offer a great opportunity to be bold. History teaches, and doctrine espouses, that commanders should take risks, use their imagination, and do the unexpected in war.¹⁴ Having said this, often we find ourselves executing schemes of manoeuvre very similar to our peers and unimaginative COAs that seek to eliminate all risk. Live fire ranges are particularly prone to this, which we often use for validation, due to the safety limitations that rightly must be put in place. During a TDG there is no risk of anyone dying and mission failure is an opportunity to learn and grow. The Instructor executing the TDG should put those participating at ease and limit the impact of egos so that students feel free to express creative solutions. If leaders cannot come up with bold, imaginative solutions in the comfort of a no-risk learning environment, then their ability to do so during operations may also



be hindered. Leaders should tell their subordinates that this is the time to be bold, to build a habit of innovation, so that they might be ready when similar solutions present themselves during more trying times.

In the context of the field force, TDGs are a superior tool for building implicit communication and learning about your subordinates.¹⁵ A typical subunit commander will go to the field with his company for a few weeks during the fall and then some form of winter warfare exercise. Some will be lucky enough to do high readiness training in Wainwright. During these windows, there is a variety of training that must be completed and only a small proportion of it will be at the platoon and company level. The company will design much of this training itself, meaning it will not be high-fidelity live fire or force-on-force training. The situation for battalion commanders is even grimmer. This means that there are few opportunities to really discover how one's subordinate commanders think, observe their strengths and weaknesses, and build mutual understanding between commanders. It is this mutual understanding that builds cohesion and allows for increased speed of action on operations. A leader who executes TDGs on a regular basis will gain great insight into how subordinates analyze problems, think creatively, and accept risk. This will allow the commander to notice trends in their subordinates' solutions and will facilitate the development of individualized development plans for each subordinate.

Tactical Decision Games can reinforce lessons learned or prepare an audience to receive instruction or training. As part of a "crawl, walk, run", methodology, a TDG works well in the crawl phase before units head to the field to start executing a specific type of operation. The author experienced this as Officer Commanding I Company, Second Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment. Prior to embarking on a two-week urban operations concentration, several TDGs were selected that were set in an urban environment. The company's leadership reviewed the relevant doctrine as well as reading and discussing a series of articles on the importance of suppression in infantry tactics, particularly in urban operations.¹⁶ With this theoretical foundation established, the TDGs were executed where numerous participants applied lessons from the readings to their solutions. Upon moving to the urban ops site, the platoons executed the training force-on-force with one platoon commander acting as the company (minus) commander with his platoon and one other while the remaining platoon commander was the opposing force. It was evident that lessons gleaned from the readings and the TDG transferred into the live execution against thinking, highly motivated human opponents. As an example, one of the platoon commanders established an elastic and active defence oriented on counter attacking rather than just holding a rigid line of buildings.

Lastly, TDGs are an efficient method of training soldiers and leaders two levels up. Doctrine demands that we understand our superior commander's intent, know our higher commander's concept of operations and be ready and able to assume the higher commander's position if required.¹⁷ Most TDGs completed by I Company were at the Company/Combat Team level. Some were at the Battalion level. Tactical Decision Games were also executed with section commanders which were all at the platoon level. Occasionally, a TDG was conducted

with the whole company present, targeting junior soldiers who would assume the role of the section commander. These initiatives were well received by soldiers, cost nothing, and opened the door to discussions that furthered subordinates' understanding of tactical situations and increased the potential for implicit communication between leaders and subordinates across the company's chain of command.

HOW TO EXECUTE A TACTICAL DECISION GAME

There are three major ways that TDGs can be employed: solo, group, or two-sided play.¹⁸ Solo play is where an individual plays the TDG alone. This offers the least training value with no critical discussion after the game. Published solutions can improve this method by allowing the player to compare their solution to those of others in order to find strengths and weaknesses and consider how they came to their solution versus the rationales of others. Two-sided play is like a war game. It is force-on-force play between two players or two teams. This method requires an active moderator and is significantly more demanding than the other two methods but also offers the greatest learning potential.¹⁹

Group play offers the best balance between resource demands and providing a learning environment for one's subordinates. In this method, a group receives the TDG which includes the time limit and what the expected returns are for a solution. Once all members have read the problem, the clock starts. After a specified time has elapsed, members will present their solutions. A large diagram of the TDG is useful at this stage to facilitate briefing the group. Players should start their response by explaining their understanding of the situation so that the audience understands why they chose their solution. This will prevent the discussion from overly focussing on minor details by ensuring that those listening to the solution are aware of the assumptions that were made in support of the response.²⁰ The presenter will then complete the remainder of their response in the form of direction that they would deliver to their subordinates. This will most likely sound something like an operation order with Situation, Mission, Execution, Service Support, and Command and Signals, however, it may not. Giving the requisite information to subordinates is more important than the format of delivery. The group could then discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using different approaches to communicating direction.

The moderator and fellow participants should then analyze the solution. They should ask questions such as:

- What is the enemy's key weakness and does your plan exploit that?
- What are the friendly vulnerabilities and how do you protect them?
- Does your COA meet your higher and superior commander's intent?
- Did you consider any other COAs?

- Why did you select that form of manoeuvre?
- What was your main effort, how did you weight it, and why?
- What reports would you make to higher command?
- Who would you coordinate with and what would you coordinate?
- How could you mitigate the risk in your COA?

These questions will serve to force greater analysis of the problem and its relevant factors, and while much of the solution created by the player was likely done so intuitively, this discussion will help to sharpen player's analytical faculties and improve upon what will occur to them intuitively. As other players present their solutions and go through the process, all players are exposed to a variety of responses. This allows for a COA comparison, as well as drawing out additional relevant factors that some players missed. By the conclusion, all participants, including the moderator, have been exposed to a variety of solutions to a similar situation thereby increasing everyone's knowledge of possible responses.

The importance of the follow-on analysis should not be underestimated. It is during this portion where deeper understanding can be achieved; the moderator must be critical in its execution. Returning to world class chess players, Josh Waitzkin was a chess prodigy whose early life provided the basis for the book and film *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. He now runs a consulting business that focuses on highly individualized learning plans for business elites looking to improve their performance to allow them to be the best within their fields.²¹ In his book, *The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance* he describes how he internalized lessons from chess and created intuitive knowledge of what had been an unfamiliar situation.

These moments where the technical and psychological collide, are where I directed my study of the game. In the course of a nine-round chess tournament, I'd arrive at around four or five critical positions that I didn't quite understand or in which I made an error. Immediately after each of my games, I quickly entered the moves into my computer, noting my thought process and how I felt emotionally at various stages of the battle. Then after the tournament, armed with these fresh impressions, I went back to Vrhovlje [Waitzkin's coach] and studied the critical moments... Usually long study sessions went like this: I began with the critical position from one of my games, where my intuitive understanding had not been up to the challenge. At first my mind had been like a runner on a cold winter morning—stiff, unhappy about the coming jog, dreary. Then I began to move, recalling my attacking ideas in the struggle and how nothing had fully connected. I tried to pick apart my opponent's position and discovered new layers of his defensive resources, all the while my mind thawing, integrating the evolving structural dynamics it had not quite understood before...

When I looked at the critical position from my tournament game, what had stumped me a few days or hours or weeks before now seemed perfectly apparent. I saw the best move, felt the correct plan, and understood the evaluation of the position. I couldn't explain this new knowledge with variations or words. It felt more elemental, like rippling water or a light breeze. My chess intuition had deepened.²²

What should be evident from Waitzkin's experience is that the analysis following the game is what allowed for the internalization of his experiences. This internalization is intuitive knowledge, recognition of the new position, which then allowed him to draw on it in later games with an understanding of a position that was instantaneous.

Establishing a conducive learning environment is critical to the success of TDGs. The games must be executed in a manner that those playing do not come to feel overly intimidated. It is not an easy position to be in as a lieutenant asked to come up with a battle group scheme of manoeuvre and brief it in front of your peers and superiors. The question period cannot be treated as an inquisition and must be done in a manner that coaches all participants to improve. Senior members must be self-aware of the comments they provide and the context in which they provide them. As the questions above indicate, a decision on a COA being good or bad, pass or fail, is not required. The question period is an opportunity to explore how the decision was made, how it was justified, and to be exposed to other potential solutions. Facilitators must also be wary of bias towards an approach building up as the group becomes familiar with the methods that influential members of the group prefer. As an example, if the commanding officer (CO) habitually prefers plans that are less bold and risky, then subordinates will begin to shape their plans in this manner. In one way this is advantageous, as the unit's leadership learns the CO's preferences it will allow for better mutual understanding on operations. Conversely, it can lead to the ossification of thought within the unit. The disproportionate influence of the senior officer present is inevitable, but it can be mitigated by having them speak last and allowing conversation, and debate, to take place prior to their final comments. It is inevitable that there will be different opinions in the room from the most senior officer present and in this way, they will be heard and can be discussed before the senior officer speaks.

CONCLUSION

This article argued that the CA should institutionalize TDGs. This would cost little, and the first step can be with the attached TDG and its use and discussion across the CA. Publications such as the *Canadian Army Journal*, the *Infantry Corps Newsletter*, and the *Armour Newsletter* could begin printing TDGs in each issue, receive responses and print the best responses in the following issue. *The Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Bulletin*, which pre-dated this publication, did just that for a short period of time.²³ The *Canadian Military Journal* could also pursue something similar to a TDG but use more joint problems, potentially at the operational level of war. Operational decision games are now being used at American staff colleges.



Source: Combat Camera

Employment of TDGs at the Combat Training Centre Schools will begin paying dividends rapidly and could be immediately pursued. As an example, after a class on offensive operations on infantry officer DP 1.1, students would execute an offensive TDG to help reinforce the class they just received on the relevant principles of war, fundamentals of the offence, and stages of the attack. Eventually, the TDGs published in the professional journals and created by the field force should be consolidated into a single digital reference which would be distributed across the force.

The field force could immediately integrate TDGs into their respective unit professional development programs. The field force is exceptionally busy, and professional development is often sacrificed to achieve operational outputs, training objectives, or support to the institution. Ultimately, there is only so much time in the day. A TDG, however, takes very little of that time compared to other initiatives and can achieve disproportionate effects.

Tactical Decision Games are a cost-effective and time-efficient means of training one's subordinates. They have a role to play in our professional journals, our classrooms, and in the operational units. While most CA tactical decision-making training is directed at completing an analytical process to arrive at what is hoped to be an optimized solution, the TDG works on a participant's recognition primed intuitive decision-making abilities. These abilities will be critical on operations. Tactical Decision Games do not, however, completely forgo analytical skills. Through group discussion and critique, players analyse factors and compare COAs after multiple members of a group present solutions. If we seek to create soldiers, NCOs and officers who can decide faster than our future opponents, then what we need is a means of making more decisions. Like a fighter looking to sharpen his jab, single leg take down, or triangle choke, we need more "tactical reps."

SAMPLE SCENARIO: DECISION AT THE BLUE RIVER


You are Officer Commanding (OC) I Company (Coy) Combat Team (Cbt Tm), 2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group (2 RCR BG). You have two organic mechanized infantry platoons and headquarters as well as an attached, operational control (OPCON), Leopard 2 troop (4 x Leopard 2) from C Squadron of The Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD) and a forward observation officer (FOO) / forward air controller (FAC) party from The Second Regiment Royal Canadian Horse Artillery (2 RCHA). Your third mechanized infantry platoon has been detached, OPCON, to C Squadron, RCD.

2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (2 CMBG) has been operating in Atropia for three months. Following successful defensive operations, the brigade (bde) is back on the offensive. Donovanian forces are withdrawing to what is assessed to be a main defensive area in vicinity of the regional capital. Covering their retreat is a rear guard that is utilizing delaying tactics to buy time for the main body to establish the main defensive area. This rear guard is estimated to be a task organized battalion tactical group (BTG) made up of three motorized rifle companies equipped with BMP-2M and a tank company with T-72B. This BTG likely also has its own artillery, air defence, antiarmour, and electronic warfare units. It is assessed that the BTG will attempt to take maximum advantage of the Blue River to impose heavy delays on the bde by forcing and then disrupting a deliberate crossing operation. It is assessed the enemy will attempt to defend on both sides of the river, and reconnaissance assets have confirmed the presence of motorized platoon-sized elements at battle group objectives (BG Obj) 1 and 2.

Commander 2 CMBG is looking to rapidly seize crossings over the Blue River and establish a bridgehead on the far side to allow the Multinational Division Commander to commit a US Army Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) to continue the pursuit of the enemy and give them as little time as possible to make defensive preparations. To do this he has tasked 1 RCR and 2 RCR each to seize two crossings, establish a bridgehead, and conduct a forward passage of lines with the ABCT. The RCD BG will be in reserve to exploit success and to establish the bridgehead on the far side of the river. The coalition has achieved local air superiority for this offensive but is very cautious in the use of close air support due to the adversary's localized point air defence systems and man-portable air defence systems.

The Commanding Officer of 2 RCR (CO 2 RCR) intends to simultaneously seize BG Objs 1 and 2 with infantry heavy combat teams allowing him to dominate the crossings and the far bank with fire followed by the seizure of BG Obj 3 by the C Sqn Cbt Tm. He will pass C Sqn through whichever crossing is seized first. His end state sees both crossing points secure, C Sqn Cbt Tm occupying BG Obj 3, and the BG prepared to initially pass the RCD BG followed by the ABCT. His main effort is C Sqn Cbt Tm seizing BG Obj 3.

To accomplish your task, you decide to execute a very shallow left flanking with a fire base provided by your attached troop of four tanks (1 Tp). 1 Tp is tasked to support by fire, 7 and 8 Platoons (Pl) are tasked to destroy enemy in the vicinity of BG Obj 1. Upon the dismount,



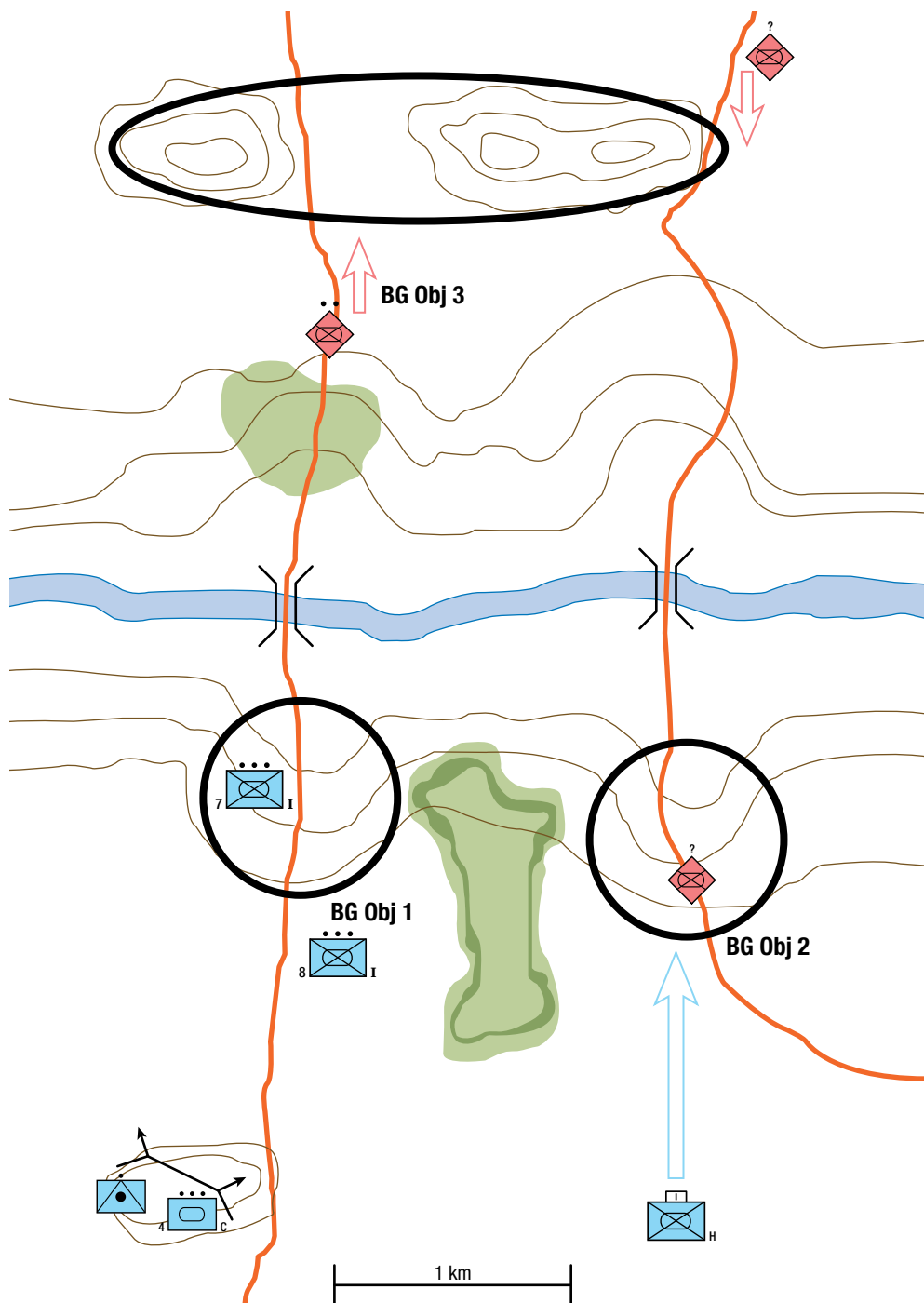
your light armoured vehicle (LAV) Captain will assume control of your LAVs and get them oriented to the north of the Blue River while you complete the assault and reorganize for the passage of C Sqn Cbt Tm. You and OC H Coy coordinated your H-hours so they are staggered by ten minutes allowing you to receive support from 2 RCHA before they switch their support to Hotel Company (H Coy). The CO was concerned that he wanted his attacks to be simultaneous to overload the enemy's ability to respond but accepted that ten minutes was a sufficiently short window.

At 0700h your FOO establishes surveillance on BG Obj 1 from a turret down position, adjusts rounds of fire and then calls fire for effect with a suppression mission against what appears to be a motor rifle platoon, dug in, in hull down positions. With rounds effective on the enemy position, 1 Troop occupies their support by fire position. The troop leader delivers the fire orders for a troop shoot and four Leopard 2 tanks expose their gun barrels and let loose with a volley of 120 mm sabot rounds. Two of the rounds impact what appears to be a dummy position, another flies over the turret of a BMP and the fourth hits the middle BMP and shears its turret off, sending it spinning into the air. It is now 0705h and your LAVs depart their attack position and cross the line of departure. The remaining BMPs now pop multi spectral smoke for cover, playing havoc with the tank and LAV sights. What can be made out is that the BMPs appear to be backing out of their prepared positions and moving down into the low ground toward the crossing site. You continue your assault towards BG Obj 1 frustrated that the enemy appears to be getting away and notice that there is a continuous hiss coming from your headset in your ear, almost as if someone were sitting on their press-to-talk switch on the BG Command net.

You arrive on BG Obj 1 and confirm that the enemy has successfully escaped; however, they left many of their dismounted infantry who are in no mood for a fight and quickly surrender. Your LAV Capt rapidly orients your LAVs to the north and engages the fleeing motorized rifle platoon, destroying an additional vehicle. It is now 0720h, and H Coy should have commenced their attack ten minutes ago. The sounds coming from the east indicate that there is an intense fire fight going on and you can catch broken pieces of conversation on the radio (Call Sign 0 [C/S 0]) which makes it sound like H Coy is heavily engaged. While you can't understand what is being discussed, a few minutes later, you recognize the voices of the CO and OC C Sqn on the BG Command net. You try to raise the CO to report your situation but can't get through. It is now 0725h and your gunner elbows your leg. He indicates you ought to check your day site and when you do, you see what appears to be a large dust cloud billowing up from behind BG Obj 3.

What now Major?

In five minutes determine what your COA will be. Your response should be in the form of direction to your subordinates, a diagram, and any reports you would attempt to send to higher levels. 🍁





ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

Major Matt Rolls enrolled in the Canadian Armed Forces in 2006 as an infantry officer and later joined The Royal Canadian Regiment. Major Rolls has spent all of his regimental time with 2 RCR, having been a platoon commander, company 2IC, Asst Ops O, Adjt, and rifle company and admin company OC. He deployed as a rifle platoon commander with both the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team and the 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group on TF 1-10 and then spent time in Latvia for Op REASSURANCE as a rifle company OC. He graduated from the US Marine Corps Expeditionary Warfare School and the Joint Command and Staff Program. He has a bachelor's degree in political science from Dalhousie University and a master's degree in defence studies, and he is in the process of completing a master's degree in military studies. He is currently employed in D Mil C as the senior infantry career manager.

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