

Decision in the Streets

by Maj David H. Mayhan

Situation

You are the platoon commander for 1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines (1/6). U.S. forces have been conducting offensive operations as part of a multinational coalition in the desert country of Kartiq. The United Nations coalition is operating under a resolution intended to remove the oppressive Kartiq dictator from power in order to return stability to the region. Military resistance has been light thus far. While the majority of the Kartiq population despises their leader, they remain skeptical of American interests in the area. Locals have generally tried to avoid U.S. forces and have not yet demonstrated any open opposition. However, if convinced they were becoming the direct target of military action, they would likely rise up in defense of the homeland. Aware of this fact, the Kartiq military has increased its presence in urban areas in hopes of drawing the local populace into the conflict.

A week ago the regiment seized the town of Rikala. 1/6 has assumed responsibility for maintaining the town's security as the remainder of the regiment pushes north. The battalion has subdivided the town into four quadrants with Company A occupying the northwest. The company's mission is to control Quadrant Alpha in order to prevent the enemy from infiltrating back and reestablishing power. The company has established checkpoints on the outskirts of town, conducted searches of suspected hideouts, and demonstrated its presence with aggressive urban patrolling. Two reaction forces are always available on 10-minute alert: a rifle platoon from your company and a HMMWV-mounted heavy machinegun section from the battalion. Because the United States is at war with Kartiq, the rules of engage-

ment are much less restrictive now than in the past. Servicemembers are authorized to engage the Kartiq military by any means consistent with the law of war. Nonmilitary personnel observed committing serious crimes will be detained using minimal force necessary. If all reasonable graduated response techniques have been exhausted, and it appears that human life will be lost, deadly force is authorized. Self-defense is always authorized.

"two up, one back" double column. Your lead squads advance along either side of the road, staggered with respect to each other, providing security to the front and opposite flanks. 3d Squad is moving in trace of 1st while also providing rear security. As you come to the next intersection, you treat it as a danger area and manage to get 1st and 2d Squads across safely. As you prepare to cross with 3d Squad, a rifle shot suddenly

breaks the silence, and a Marine from 2d Squad crumples to the ground. "Sniper!"

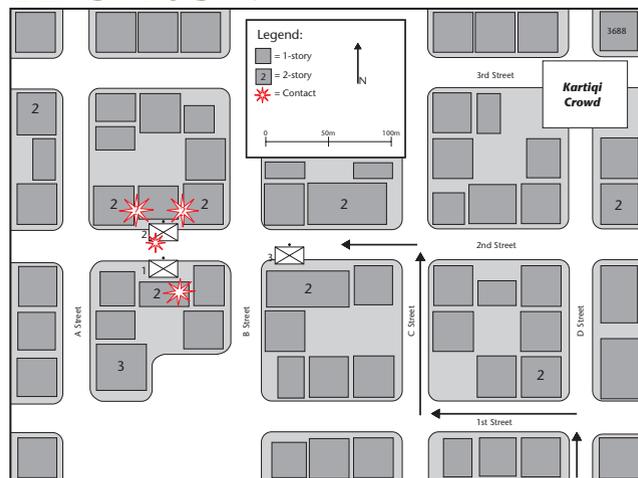
You know the shot came from the north side but can't tell from which building. The two squads appear to be executing your immediate action drill. 1st Squad scrambles for the southern buildings to provide suppression while 2d Squad conducts an immediate assault to the north, dragging the downed Marine inside. As the squads disappear from view, you hear tremendous fire erupting from the southern buildings. Apparently 1st Squad has run into a

fight of its own. "Ambushed!" you think to yourself. You and your 3d Squad are still east of the intersection. You shout to the other two squads but get no response.

Requirement

In a time limit of 5 minutes, develop a plan and state what orders you will issue to your squad leaders. Provide a brief rationale for your decision and a sketch of the plan. Submit your solution to *Marine Corps Gazette*, TDG #03-7, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, fax 703-630-9147, or e-mail <gazette@mca-Marines.org>.

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Your platoon has been tasked with conducting a patrol through the quadrant in order to deter renewed enemy action and report on suspicious activity. Advancing north along the streets, you observe a crowd of approximately 15 Kartiq locals about 2 blocks away, engaged in what appears to be an intense argument. As you approach, they cast a few glares your way but otherwise leave you alone. Thinking better than to continue in that direction, you instead turn west and report the situation to higher. After advancing one block to the west, you notice a large open lot to your front and again decide to detour around this potential danger area. Turning north and then west again, you finally find yourself on a safer route.

Your movement standing operating procedure has been a typical