

Dilemma at Styx River Bridge

by Capt Thomas H. Presecan

Situation

You are the platoon commander of 2d Platoon, Company B, 2d Combat Engineer Battalion. You arrived in the country of Devastation 3 days ago. As part of Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 2/6, you are assisting the local government in earthquake relief by providing a secure environment and repairing serious damage.

A fledgling democracy, Devastation is threatened by “insurgent forces” based in the neighboring country, which the BLT S-2 and higher headquarters fear may take advantage of the destruction in Devastation to expand their frontier. The United States hopes to avoid becoming involved in a border war. Rules of engagement allow deadly force in self-defense only. So far, however, there has been no sign of trouble.

The terrain is thick with vegetation, particularly around the river, with many cleared areas for cultivation. The battalion is located in the town of Nice, 25km to the southeast of Nasty. Radio retransmission sites have been established throughout the battalion’s tactical area of responsibility (TAOR).

You are tasked with building a ford near the destroyed River Styx Bridge in order to open the lines of communication within the BLT’s TAOR. Your platoon arrived on HMMWVs at 0700 and has been working all day. The river is 2 feet deep, 10 meters wide, and has a current of 3-5 knots. An NGO (non-government organization) base camp is 500 meters away outside the village of Nasty. The NGO team has been establishing temporary shelters for the homeless, organizing food distribution, and providing limited medical treatment for the local population. You have been unable to raise the battalion on your radio for several hours. You are expected to rejoin the battalion before sunset.

Toward the late afternoon, you are visited by a group of Frenchmen from the NGO camp. They are very concerned about a report that the insurgents will attack the village within the hour in order to capture the NGO camp and supplies, and secure control of the ford site. The Frenchmen report that there are 25 other British and French aid workers at the camp. They have two 2¹/₂-ton trucks and about 18 tons of food and medical supplies.

What do you do?

Requirement

In 5 minutes, explain to the French aid workers what you intend to do, and what you want them to do. Issue any orders to your Marines. Then provide a sketch of your decision.

Table of Organization:

- 1 Platoon Commander
- 1 Platoon Sergeant
- 1 Platoon Guide
- 1 Radio Operator
- 3 Engineer Squads
 - 1 Squad Leader
 - 2 Demo Teams (4 Marines each)

Table of Equipment:

- 1 Radio
- 3 M240G Machineguns
- 3 SMAW Rockets w/ 3 HE rds
- 3 M203
- 24 M16A2
- 8 M9 Pistols

Additional Equipment:

- 1 Lowboy
- 2 1150E Bulldozers
- 2 M819 Dump Trucks
- 3 Highback HMMWV



For more detailed information on the structure of Marine Corps units, Marine Corps equipment, and symbols used in TDG sketches, see MCG, Oct94, pp. 53-56 and the modification reported in Jan95, p. 5.

