

CHAPTER 9

HANDING OFF OPERATIONS TO A TACTICAL
COMBAT FORCE

As part of the echelon commander's first line of defense in the rear area you respond to halt enemy actions and counter the enemy when you can. But if the combined efforts of the base/base cluster defense force and your response force are unable to jointly neutralize the threat the operation becomes the responsibility of the rear area's TCF. (The TCF is often a composite brigade-sized force of ground maneuver, Army aviation, and field artillery units. Response forces come under the OPCON of the TCF when the TCF assumes responsibility for the battle. A response force may remain OPCON to the TCF until the Threat has been eliminated. Or it may be released from OPCON so it can resume other priority missions.) To ease the transfer of responsibility for the defense operation from the response force to the TCF, defense forces conduct a battle handover.

A battle handover—

- Protects and helps the response force disengage from the fight without excessive losses.
- Delays the Threat if the response force must conduct a withdrawal.
- Keeps the Threat under continuous contact during the transfer of control.

COORDINATING A HANDOVER

Coordination is essential to determine when, where, and how the response force gives up responsibility for the fight and the TCF takes over. A battle handover line (BHOL) and contact points are used as control measures to set both forces' responsibilities. The rear CP's operations cell designates the BHOL and contact/passage points. Both commanders coordinate the BHOL's location. The BHOL is shown on the operations overlay and in the OPORD as a phase line or a boundary. It identifies ground as "owned" by the TCF or by the response force. It sets the location where control of the battle passes from one commander to the other. It is where the TCF can use direct fires and observe indirect fires.

The handover occurs at the time or event coordinated by the TCF commander. The TCF commander decides the method of handover based on METT-T. Generally, one of the following methods will be chosen:

- The MP response force passes rearward through a stationary TCF.
- The TCF passes forward through a delaying MP response force.

- The MP response force sets up a final blocking position with elements of the TCF conducting an attack to destroy the enemy.

The TCF coordinates directly with corps MP or other response forces to exchange recon information, battle handoff procedures, and contingency plans. Liaison involves the exchange of information needed to conduct the battle handover. This includes—

- BHOL or LD/line of contact (LC).
- Mission of units and scheme of maneuver.
- Presence of NBC contamination.
- Fire support.
- Enemy situation.
- Friendly location.
- Contact and coordination points.
- OPs/LPs and patrol routes.
- Assembly areas/attack positions.
- Obstacle locations and types.
- Passage points and lanes.
- SOI information.
- Recognition signals.

Planning Considerations For Battle Handover

ORGANIZATION

- Maintain unit integrity for command and control.

ORDER OF MOVEMENT

Base your order of movement on –

- The number of passage points.
- Degree of security required.
- Enemy situation.
- Terrain.
- Prevent confusion and congestion by giving priorities indicating which units move and when they move.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Ensure that both units have SOI compatibility.
- Both units monitor the rear operations net (critical for recognition signals and fire support).
- Both outgoing and incoming unit elements operate on the outgoing unit's command net.
- The outgoing unit maintains routine radio traffic volume while the incoming unit monitors.
- When the responsibility of the battle has changed over, the incoming unit operates on its own net only.

COMMAND AND CONTROL

- The number of passage points can determine the method of command and control used.
- Ideally, multiple passage points are set up, dictating decentralized control.
- The TCF commander decides how he can best influence the action and positions himself accordingly.
- The MP response force commander collocates with the command group of the TCF during the passage of lines.
- The time or circumstances when responsibility for the battle is transferred is mutually agreed upon beforehand by the response force and TCF commanders.
- Responsibility can be passed by radio communication if need be.

CONTROL MEASURES

- All units must follow the control measures.
- For a response force passing through a stationary TCF, control measures include –
 - **Assembly area.** Used by a unit to prepare for an upcoming mission.
 - **Battle handover line.** The single most important control measure in delineating MP response force and TCF responsibilities. A phaseline where the TCF assumes responsibility for the battle from the MP response force.
 - **Attack position.** The last position occupied or passed through by the TCF before crossing the LD.
 - **Passage lanes.** Areas along which the response force moves to avoid the stationary TCF.
 - **Passage point.** A place where the response force will pass through TCF units. It is located where the commander desires subordinate units to physically execute the passage of lines.
 - **Time of passage.** The time at which the passage is executed by the leading element of the response force to facilitate control through the passage point.
 - **Recognition signals.** Established signals to prevent the response force from directing fire on the TCF, and vice versa.
 - **Contact points.** Designated, easily identifiable points on the terrain where two friendly forces are required to physically meet.
 - **Release points.** Points on the ground where subordinate units are under the control of their respective commanders while en route to their appropriate destination.
 - **Routes.** The prescribed course to be traveled from a specified point of origin to a specific destination.
- For a TCF passing through a delaying response force, control measures include –
 - **Battle position.** A defensive location established by the response force oriented on the most likely enemy avenues of approach.
 - **LD/LC.** This control measure replaces the BHOL in that control of the battle is assumed by the TCF once its units cross this phaseline.

PASSING A RESPONSE FORCE THROUGH A STATIONARY TCF

The TCF commander coordinates with the MP response force at a designated contact point. The rear CP's operations cell dictates the contact point location and notifies both units.

The contact point should be located forward (50-200 meters) of the BHOL. It should be near or on easily identifiable terrain features. At a prescribed time, liaison parties from both forces will meet. Normally, a response force representative is sent to the contact point. At the contact point, the TCF commander, S3, or XO briefs the representative. Response force teams may remain in the

vicinity of the BHOL if passage is imminent. TCF security forces screen along the BHOL and monitor the response force command net.

The actions of the elements on the BHOL are critical. At the BHOL, the TCF scouts, or others assigned the BHOL action, pick up the fight from the passing response force elements. If the response force is in contact, its maneuver elements bound behind the BHOL, preferably to a covered and concealed location. At the same time the TCF elements on the line relieve the pressure on the response force elements.

At the passage point, response force teams identify passing response force units. They make sure the passing vehicles are displaying the correct visual signal. TCF scouts on the BHOL notify the forward TCF company teams by prearranged signal that contact has been made and friendly forces are at the BHOL. Response force elements continue to delay forward of the BHOL. Once behind the BHOL and covered from enemy direct fire, the response force should—

- Display the proper visual signal.
- Orient weapons systems toward the enemy.

PASSING A TCF THROUGH A DELAYING RESPONSE FORCE

This technique is similar to the response force passing through the stationary TCF. The response force will have more information on the terrain and enemy situation than the TCF.

The response force commander sets up contact points, passage points, and routes. At the least he provides guides. The guides meet the TCF at contact points and lead them along routes to passage points and/or release points near the LD/LC.

The response force maintains normal radio traffic. The TCF and response force operations elements temporarily collocate. The TCF commander assumes control of the battle handover at this time. TCF company teams may maintain listening silence on their TCF command net. The response force guides notify their commander when the TCF begins moving forward from the contact points. As the TCF company teams deploy across the BHOL, the commanders of the

- Move quickly, in the directed formation, through the passage points and along designated routes to the release point.

Stationary TCF elements overwatch this movement. The only time the TCF should fire is when positive enemy identification is made.

At the completion of the handover, response forces may either be released by the operations cell to resume other priority missions or tasked to remain, OPCON to the TCF, and continue the fight.

response force and the TCF transfer responsibility for the battle.

The TCF fire support officer (FSO) may collocate with the response force forward observer (or the individual appointed to act as forward observer for the artillery unit in the AO). Fire missions are approved by the RAOC supporting the response force until the battle handover has occurred. After that, any fire missions for the response force are cleared through the TCF FSO. Response force units provide direct fire overwatch IAW the TCF commander's scheme of maneuver. It is coordinated directly by the commanders at collocated command groups.

Response force direct fire support depends on the TCF commander's attack plan and the handover of the battle. But the stationary unit lifts and shifts its direct fire as coordinated by the collocated command groups.

BLOCKING FOR A TCF CONDUCTING A FLANK ATTACK

When defending from a battle position, the response force positions its elements to achieve the TCF commander's intent. The response force sets up blocking positions to keep the enemy from escaping. They select battle positions where they can control, maneuver, and concentrate direct fire on the enemy. As blocking positions are set up, the TCF maneuvers to attack the enemy's flank. A contact point must be set up for coordination, and a reconnaissance of this point can be conducted, time permitting. The TCF and response force commanders coordinate command and control. Other information that must be exchanged includes—

- When to lift or shift fires.

- What targets must be destroyed to allow the TCF to close on the enemy.
- Time, location, or activity to pass control of the battle.
- Engagement areas.

The TCF and blocking force coordinate so that the TCF flanks the enemy. The enemy will be suppressed from the front and also forced to fight in another direction.

The TCF commander will specify tasks for the response force teams defending battle positions critical to achieve the TCF's scheme of maneuver. The response force normally will have to orient its weapon systems on the enemy avenue of approach using target reference points or engagement areas.

The response force may be tasked to–

- Destroy a certain enemy force from the battle position.
 - Control the terrain or block an avenue of approach by holding the battle position against the enemy assault.
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- Reorient weapons systems on a secondary avenue of approach from supplemental positions or avenues of escape for the Threat.
 - Assist in any other task needed to achieve the TCF mission.