

MILITIA TRAINING

Guide to Raids and Ambushes

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Active operations such as raids and ambushes call for daring as well as patience, decisiveness tempered with caution. This material has been drawn from FM 31-20, and provided to our readers for their information and enjoyment courtesy of the federal government and your tax dollars.

A raid is a surprise attack on enemy forces or installation. It breaks down into four parts:

- 1 - Clandestine insertion
- 2 - Brief, violent combat
- 3 - Rapid disengagement
- 4 - Swift, deceptive withdrawal

Raids may be mounted to destroy enemy equipment and installations such as command posts, communications centers, and supply depots; to capture enemy supplies and personnel; or simply to kill and wound as many of the enemy as possible. They may be used to rescue friendly forces or partisans, and can also serve to distract attention away from other operations.

Organizing The Raid

The purpose of the mission, the type of target and the enemy situation will all have a bearing on the size of the raiding party. But whatever its size it will always have two basic elements - an assault group and a security group.

The assault group conducts the operation itself. They are the troops who go in and demolish installations, rescue the prisoners, steal the plans and code books or whatever the objective may be. As well as out-and-out fighting men, the group may include demolition experts, electronics technicians, and specialists as may be needed.

The security group is there to protect them, to secure the area and stop enemy reinforcements from becoming involved in the action, to stop any would-be escapees and to cover the withdrawal of the assault group.

Another important factor is the likely effect on friendly natives and others as a result of the raid. There are countless examples of tens of local people being executed for every one occupying soldier killed. Planning for this possibility always forms part of the back-up organization to the raid, and psychological operations experts will also be ready to exploit any successes to the full.

Although it should be accurate down to the last detail, the plan must be essentially simple. If success depends on a large number of factors coming together at the right time, any one of them going wrong will probably blow the entire operation. And you can be sure Mr. Murphy will always be traveling in your company!

Time - of day and of year - is a crucial factor in the plan. When the operation is straightforward

and the physical layout of the target is well known, it's probably better to operate during the hours of darkness. Where intelligence is less complete, go for dawn or dusk.

Dusk is the best time for withdrawal; it gives you the advantage of the last minutes of daylight to exit the immediate area of the operation, and darkness to slow the enemy down during any follow-up. But in any event, choose the time very carefully to give yourself the greatest possible advantage.

It may seem obvious, but it's impossible to over-stress the value of accurate intelligence. Local knowledge is of the utmost importance.

In the movement towards the objective, take every precaution so as not to alert hostile troops to your presence. Avoid contact, but make sure that the enemy suffers 100% casualties if the worst does happen.

Where conditions allow, conduct a weapons and equipment test before the assault phase, replacing any pieces of kit that may be faulty or noisy. Personal belongings should be "sanitized" at the same time, even down to removing clothing labels if necessary.

Well-defended objectives sometimes demand large raiding parties. Surprise is just as important as in a smaller raid, but will be much more difficult to achieve. A large raiding party will usually split into small groups and move towards the objective over a number of different routes. That way, even if some components are detected, the enemy may still be "in the dark" as to the real target.

Control and co-ordination of a large raiding party is more difficult, too, especially with regard to timing. Only a high degree of training can make it easier. Most groups should forget about attempting large raids.

Launching A Raid

Whatever the mission and whatever the size of the raiding party, the principles of a guerrilla-style raid are the same. The actual assault team must be protected by security elements who will prevent enemy interference with the operation.

As the explosive specialist lays charges underneath the railway, on-the-spot security is provided by a small team of soldiers. This team will take out any sentries on the objective, breach or demolish obstacles, and provide close protection for the main mission.

After the target has been destroyed the security groups provide cover on the flanks for the assault team to retreat. If the enemy follows the raiders, one security group should try to draw them away from the main assault force.

Night Raids

A typical night raid might consist of disabling a railway. Raids, especially if conducted at night, require meticulous planning and thorough rehearsal. Every member of the team should know exactly what he has to do where and when, and the 'O' Group (Orders Group, or briefing) should cover all eventualities. Rehearse everything, in the kit you will use on the job, preferably over similar terrain in a safe area. When planning the attack use all available intelligence, maps, air

photographs, previous patrol reports and any locally obtained intel. Practice in daylight, using the 'walk through talk through' technique; then do the whole thing again in silence.

Ambush

An ambush is a raid on a moving target. The only real difference is that the timetable of the operation becomes much sketchier and unreliable. Even excellent intelligence sources can't really predict the enemy's operational delays, and so the raiding party will often be in position for some time before the target comes along, considerably increasing the chances of detection.

Ambushes are conducted to destroy or capture enemy personnel and supplies or block their movement. A systematic approach can channel the enemy's communications and resupply operations, and force him to concentrate his movements on to main roads and railway lines, where they are more vulnerable to attack.

Railways themselves are always relatively open targets. Just removing the rails will bring the system to a halt. The attacking force tries to derail as many cars as possible, and leave the wreckage blocking the track. This maximizes the damage to stock, passengers and material, and slows down the work of repairing and reopening the permanent way.

If the attack party is large enough they assault the train with automatic weapons and grenades. Part of the raiding party's security element will remove sections of track in both directions, some way away from the scene of the ambush. Explosive charges should be used to destroy the level road-bed itself. This will prevent any possibility of reinforcements arriving unexpectedly.

Traffic on inland waterways - barges and smaller craft - can be disrupted in much the same way as trains, and the same technique is used against columns of vehicles on roads.

Important Elements of An Ambush

Cover group - while the demolition team is about its task, cover groups should provide flank, forward and rear protection.

Fire group - make sure that the fire support group is in effective range for all its weapons. It may be necessary to clear vegetation from fields of fire, but don't remove too much or it may be noticed. Communicating between groups must be reliable, and if possible duplicated, i.e. radio and field telephone and perhaps a communication cord.

Radio - don't use the radio until the attack is under way.

Camouflage - when laying the wire to the charges, take an indirect path following natural features or fence lines; a path of disturbed grass from the railway track to your position across an open field will be easily spotted from the air, and the chlorophyll from the crushed grass shows an infra-red line scan (IRLS). If there is a continuous wire fence to the target, you may be able to connect up to that.

Command detonation - the site from which you detonate the charge should be in good cover, overlooking the target and far enough away to be safe from the effects of the blast.

Random frequency hazard - if you decide to electrically detonate the charges, be aware of RF

hazard: your charges could be prematurely detonated by a radio transmission near your demolition circuit. You could avoid the problem altogether by using safety fuses, but this is not always tactically appropriate, so minimize the risk of keeping the radio will away from the demolition circuit.

FRV (Final Rendezvous) group - pick an easily recognizable and defensible spot a few hundred meters away on the inward route to use as an FRV. You will withdraw here to regroup before you move off after the raid. Leave it secure with an FRV party, who will also provide rear protection.

Hot contact withdrawal - if you are attacked, you may have to withdraw to the FRV under fire. You should get away fast using fire and maneuver tactics. Discourage the enemy from following you by liberal use of white phosphorus, short-fused Claymores, other mines and booby traps. Make sure everyone knows the safe route out!

5 POINTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL AMBUSH

- 1 - Set the ambush in a site you can move into and out of unobserved.
- 2 - Use a night ambush if the mission can be accomplished by a short, intensive burst of fire.
- 3 - Use a daytime ambush if a follow-up is required.
- 4 - Choose a site where the terrain forces the enemy to bunch up.
- 5 - Bear in mind that a secondary ambush may be needed if enemy reinforcements can reach the scene quickly.

Finally, as students of military history, readers should note that tactics work both ways.

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