

The Company Leader

Leadership Lessons from the Tactical Level of War

TACTICAL DECISION GAMES

On Watch

The Company Leader TDG 20-05

Sniper Employment





On Watch

TDG

You are the Battle Staff NCO of 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment, 199th Brigade. Your Brigade's AO is Jalalabad, Afghanistan, in support of NATO forces. Recently, your battalion has been focusing on the southern sector of the area of operations. Your units intercepted arms and explosives flowing from Pakistan into Afghanistan through the mountains of tribal Pakistan into the Tora Bora region. This region has three major tribes in the area – Pashtun, the Wakhi, and the Tajik tribes. The clans, led by family patriarchs continue to fight each other, regardless of tribe, over water rights, territory, and trade rights. The BDE has started to establish allies and informants in the area.



A competitor in the USASOC International Sniper Competition uses a digital range finder on his weapon while engaging long-distance targets at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, March 19, 2019. (U.S. Army photo by K. Kassens)

This is part of our Tactical Decision Game Series. There is no ONE right answer, but there are varying degrees of right and wrong. Feel free to post your answers in the comments, on Social Media, or submit to The Company Leader. For an aggregated list of TDGs click [HERE](#). To subscribe to The Company Leader click [HERE](#).



On Watch

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Situation

Acting on intelligence from a local tribe, the Battalion Commander tasked Alpha Company to conduct a cordon and search operation in the village of Alikhel on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The team is to interdict insurgents and weapons flowing into the country. With BN Commander Approval, the Alpha Company Commander deployed light sniper teams (two teams of four men with:

- 2xM110
- 2xM2010
- 2xM249
- 2xM4A1
- 2xM320

Their mission was to detect weapons and insurgent activity prior to commencing the cordon and search. Once the sniper teams detect insurgent activity, they are to report to the tactical operations center (TOC). Then the TOC will notify the Alpha Company Commander triggering their deployment into the area.



On Watch

Commander's Engagement Criteria

I intend that all soldiers under my command understand their authority and obligation to defend themselves, fellow service members, our allies, and local civilians from any hostile act. However, our leaders are under a further obligation. This is to understand that most engagements should be resolved in our favor using methods other than deadly force. In many circumstances, resolving situations through de-escalation vice resorting to deadly force will increase our standing and authority among the local populace.

Resolve situations through means other than deadly force, when possible. This will increase my ability to work with local leaders. It demonstrates that – while soldiers can kill those who attack us, our allies, and those we protect – we apply selective force. This tells neutral and hostile parties that we are not using full force but are holding back. These neutral and hostile parties will be more inclined to talk because they do not know how much we are holding back and what our full force is. I intend to exploit that uncertainty and our standing among the local population for our advantage. But, I need thinking leaders who do not shoot first and ask questions later. I need you to set the stage for me to engage hostile and neutral leaders from a position of advantage.



On Watch

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Team Capabilities

Highly proficient teams (sniper weapon capabilities 1 MOA) with means to determine range (Storm II's) +/- 5 meters. Environmental conditions (Wind from SW 2-5mph, visibility is clear), team routinely able to estimate wind +/- 2 mph. Shooting positions from OP's are supported sitting tripod. Team is equipped with 24 HEDP rounds for 320 and 1,200 rounds for M249. No CAS on site.



U.S. Army Cpl. Kevin Dehaven, Sniper Team Leader, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, provides security, at Observation Post Mangol, Feb. 8, 2012, in the Nari district, Kunar province, Afghanistan.



On Watch

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Scenario

If compromised, the Battalion has a QRF team on standby (3rd Platoon, Bravo Company) to retrieve the sniper teams. It will take the QRF 30 minutes to reach the extraction point. It is 0800z and the two sniper teams have been in place south of Alikhel (Team one 630 meters from OBJ; Team two 810 meters from OBJ) since 2300z last night. Currently the Battle Captain is in a meeting with the BN Commander. You are operating the TOC and overhear one of your radio transmission operators talking to the sniper team. The RTO turns to you and says, “Sergeant, Dagger 2 has contact.” You grab the radio and identify yourself to the sniper team and receive the report.

“Approximately 20 enemy armed with clubs and rifles are attacking a local family. Estimate four minutes before they slaughter the family. I am engaging pending your orders. Both teams will need Evac in 40 minutes, over.”



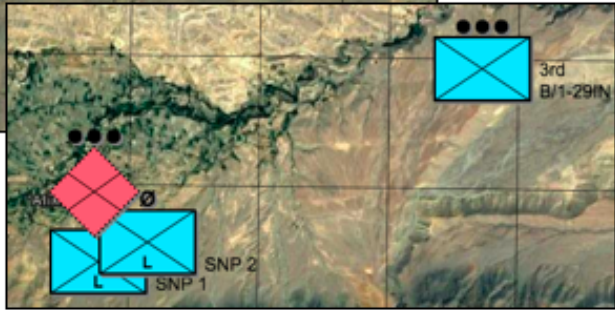
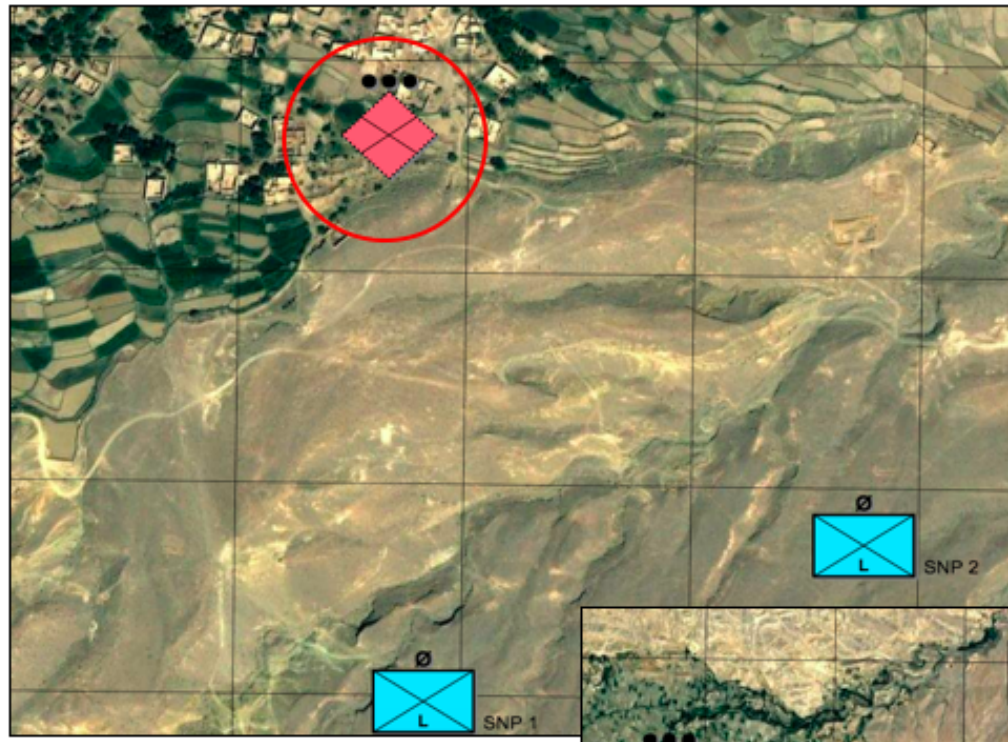
On Watch



TACTICAL DECISION



North



3rd Platoon, Bravo Company staged NE from sniper teams. ETA 30 Minutes for QRF.



On Watch

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Output Required

You have 10 minutes. Explain the order you give to the sniper team leader; what actions you take in the TOC; the information you report to the Battle Captain, Ops SGM, and/or BN Commander; what actions do you recommend higher headquarters take; and what actions do you recommend Dagger 2 take?

A Few Leader Questions to Consider:

1. What do you believe is Dagger 2's intent?
2. Do you believe his actions are in keeping with the Commanders intent? Why?
3. What are your actions and orders to the troops on the ground? Why?
4. What are the potential consequences of Dagger 2's s actions?

Staff Sgt. Christopher M. Rance served as an Instructor at The United States Army Sniper Course at Fort Benning, GA. He is a recipient of the NCO Writing Excellence Program Award for his article, [“Commander, May I Engage.”](#) which discusses the restrictive nature of contemporary Rules of Engagement and how it can hinder a sniper team from performing their mission. He has also been published on [Small Wars Journal](#). The views and opinions of the author is of his own and not of the United States Army.



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