
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
THE BASIC SCHOOL
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CAMP BARRETT, VIRGINIA 22134-5019

AMBUSH PATROL
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STUDENT HANDOUT

Ambush Patrol

Introduction

Patrolling is used for a myriad of purposes and the nature of patrolling in warfare runs the gamut of military operations. Ambush patrols add an offensive punch by striking the enemy when he feels secure or shows signs of complacency. An aggressive ambush effort can disrupt the enemy's scheme of maneuver. An effective ambush effort can diminish his morale.

Importance

The ambush mentality is an attitude central to maneuver warfare and relates directly to the fundamentals of warfighting. An appropriately conducted ambush orients on the enemy and creates disorder and uncertainty through planned, violent, aggressive action. Understanding the art and science of the ambush is central to understanding MCDP 1 and the manner in which the Marine Corps operates.

In This Lesson

This lesson builds off of the patrolling fundamentals discussed in Patrolling Operations. This lesson will give you an introduction into the planning and execution of ambush patrols.

This lesson covers the following topics:

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Ambush Patrol (continued)

Learning Objectives

TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE(S)

Given a unit, an order, and an area to patrol from, while motorized, mechanized, or dismounted with or without assault support, and operating in the full range of environmental conditions, during daylight and limited visibility, lead a unit in patrolling operations to accomplish the mission and meet the commander's intent. (TBS-PAT-1013)

ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE(S)

Given a mission to patrol, a scheme of maneuver, and overlay materials, prepare an overlay to depict the patrol scheme of maneuver. (TBS-PAT-1008a)

Given a simulated combat environment, a mission, while part of a unit, conduct patrolling rehearsals to increase proficiency. (TBS-PAT-1008b)

Given a tactical scenario, a mission, and a simulated combat environment select a patrol assembly area to facilitate preparation for the patrol. (TBS-PAT-1008d)

Given a tactical scenario, a simulated combat environment, while in a patrol, perform individual actions during departure/reentry of friendly lines to facilitate successful movement of the patrol. (TBS-PAT-1008e)

Given a tactical scenario, a simulated combat environment, while in a patrol, perform individual actions at halts to maintain security of the patrol. (TBS-PAT-1008f)

Given a tactical scenario, a simulated combat environment, while in a patrol, perform patrol immediate actions to mitigate the threat and accomplish the mission. (TBS-PAT-1008g)

Given a tactical scenario, an order from higher, a simulated combat environment, while in a patrol, perform actions at established patrol control measures IAW the operations order. (TBS-PAT-1008h)

Given an evaluation, identify patrol base considerations without error. (TBS-PAT-1013j)

Given an evaluation, describe a QRF without error. (TBS-PAT-1013k)

Given an order from higher and a mental estimate of the situation, develop a scheme of maneuver to accomplish the mission. (TBS-PAT-2002e)

Ambush Basic Information

Ambush Patrolling Defined

MCWP3-11.3 defines ambush as – “An ambush is a surprise attack by fire from a concealed position upon a moving or temporarily halted enemy target.”

Surprise is paramount. When conducting an ambush, we attempt to achieve surprise at a time, a place, and an instant in which the enemy is not prepared. Even an advance warning of a few seconds may be enough to allow the enemy time and space to escape the ambush and begin maneuvering.

Purpose of an Ambush

The primary purpose of an ambush is to destroy enemy troops and equipment. The loss of personnel, equipment, and supplies reduces the overall combat effectiveness of the enemy.

The secondary purpose of an ambush is to harass enemy units. Frequent successful ambushes will cause the enemy to divert assets from other missions in order to guard convoys, troop movements, and logistics supply routes. Frequent successful ambushes also degrade the enemy’s morale and make him more susceptible to human factors, creating apprehension to conduct missions and causing him to adopt a defensive mindset. The cumulative affects significantly reduce the enemy’s combat effectiveness.

Classifications of Ambush Patrols

Deliberate Ambush

A deliberate ambush is planned in detail, well rehearsed, and established in a specified location to destroy or capture a specific enemy target. The patrol leader needs to have specific intelligence about the target such as the size, composition, organization, rate of movement, route, armament and equipment of the enemy force and the location of the ambush site. This level of detail is necessary so that the Patrol Leader can appropriately task organize and create detailed actions on the objective in order to kill or destroy the specified target.

An ambush patrol may be required to assault through the objective in order to confirm the specified target is in fact destroyed and to collect information on the enemy. Tasking a unit to “Attack By Fire” does not necessarily require an assault. Tasking a unit to “Destroy” may require an assault.

Ambush Basic Information (continued)

In the case of destroying, it is likely that “Mission Has Priority” and that the unit conducting a deliberate ambush will be platoon-sized or larger. To understand when the patrol will assault through the objective the Commander’s Intent must be clear.

Ambush of Opportunity

An ambush of opportunity is planned and rehearsed, however, detail of a specific target is not known. An ambush of opportunity is established on or near a specified location to destroy or capture the first suitable target encountered. This is the most common type of ambush and will generally be executed by a reinforced rifle squad.

The ambush of opportunity will usually be part of an effort to harass and interdict, or gain intelligence on enemy forces in the Tactical Area Of Responsibility (TAOR). When establishing an ambush of opportunity the commander will likely direct that “Time Has Priority” and instruct the Patrol Leader to establish the ambush in a specific location and return even if the ambush is not tripped. As a result, an assault of the kill zone may not be required. The patrol will still seek to kill the enemy and destroy their equipment but again the overall effect will be harassment of the enemy and the collection of information.

Hasty Ambush

A hasty ambush is an Immediate Action where the patrol makes visual contact with an enemy force and has time to establish an ambush without being detected. A hasty ambush is not planned but is well rehearsed and is accomplished through the use of hand and arm signals given from the Patrol Leader.

Types of Ambushes

Point Ambush

A point ambush is an ambush where forces are deployed to attack a single kill zone.

Area Ambush

An area ambush is an ambush where forces are deployed to attack multiple, mutually supported kill zones.

Ambush Basic Information (continued)

Ambush Tactical Control Measures

Ambush Site

Terrain on which an ambush is established. It comprises the area that is physically occupied by the members of the ambush patrol and the kill zone.

Kill Zone

Portion of the ambush site where fires are concentrated to isolate, trap, and destroy the enemy.

Objective Rally Point (ORP)

A covered and concealed position behind the objective (ambush site) where the patrol makes its final preparations before occupying the ambush site and where the patrol reorganizes after the accomplishment of the mission.

Release Point

The position after the ORP and just before the ambush site where the patrol leader passes control to element and team leaders. Two marines from the Security Unit will remain at the Release Point to hold rear security and serve as the "gate". The patrol will move through the gate before occupying the ambush and when it returns from execution.

Planning and Preparation of an Ambush

Prior Planning

Detailed prior planning is the key to a successful ambush patrol. Keen attention to the following planning considerations will aid the Patrol Leader (PL) in a clear understanding of the patrol's mission and his developing an accurate estimate of the situation (METT-TC).

Mission (METT-TC)

Upon receipt of Higher's order, the patrol's Task and the Commander's Intent must be analyzed to start the planning process. Only then will the PL be able to determine the classification and type of ambush his unit will be conducting. During this analysis the PL will also identify all specified and implied tasks to his patrol.

Enemy (METT-TC)

A deliberate ambush is based upon extensive knowledge of the enemy, terrain, and the enemy's use of that terrain. In a deliberate ambush the ambush site and the specific target to be destroyed are known. This allows the PL to maximize exploitation during the execution of his mission.

An ambush of opportunity is based upon limited information of the enemy, terrain, and the enemy's use of that terrain. In an ambush of opportunity the ambush site and target to be destroyed are anticipated and refined from within the ORP.

The PL will determine the Enemy's Most Likely Course Of Action (EMLCOA), will identify the enemy's Center Of Gravity (COG), and will identify the enemy's Critical Vulnerability (CV). The PL will use these tools to develop contingencies and rehearse his patrol's exploitation of the ambush site and destruction of the enemy and his equipment.

Task Organization (METT-TC) **Personnel Considerations**

An ambush patrol is still a patrol and should follow the traditional task organization of a Support Unit, an Assault Unit, and a Security Unit. All additional patrol duties that are unique to an ambush patrol are distributed between these three elements. Some examples of this task break-out follow but should not be considered all inclusive because each individual ambush patrol will require its own special considerations.

Planning and Preparation of an Ambush (continued)

Assault Unit

- Likely designated the Main Effort (ME).
- Responsible for 1/2 of the kill zone.
- Responsible for actions on the objective.
- Responsible for sweeping the Kill Zone.
- Responsible for searching the Kill Zone.
- May fulfill EPW Team duties.
- May fulfill Aid & Litter Team duties.

Security Unit

- Likely designated a Supporting Effort (SE).
- Responsible for front and flank security during movement to and from the objective.
- Responsible for isolation of the ambush position.
- May fulfill EPW Team duties.
- May fulfill Aid & Litter Team duties.
- Responsible for Flank Security of the Ambush Site.

Support Unit

- Likely designated a Supporting Effort (SE).
- Likely includes the PL, RTO, and the APL.
- Responsible navigation to and from the Ambush Site
- Will likely initiate the ambush

The PL will need to consider these Element Leaders key billet holders when developing the patrol's Task Organization. Additionally the PL will need to develop Tasks for these Element Leaders along with the Assistant Patrol Leader (APL), Flanks, and any inorganic support elements to the patrol.

Supported Task Organization

Depending on the type of enemy that the ambush patrol is tasked with destroying higher may provide a supported unit to the squad since the squad may not be able to accomplish the mission with the assets that are organic to them. It is the Patrol Leader's responsibility to utilize the support element properly where they can best carry out the mission in the ambush site.

Planning and Preparation of an Ambush (continued)

Equipment Considerations

Appropriately equipping the Ambush Patrol can make the difference between mission success and mission failure. The amount of equipment choices are never ending and thus it is curtail for the PL to identify and require only equipment that is necessary for mission accomplishment to be carried on the ambush patrol. It is equally important that productive rehearsals refresh the necessary skills to use the equipment and that appropriate inspections are conducted to ensure that the patrol members are not carrying unnecessary equipment. Below are six categories of gear and equipment to consider when creating the patrol's task organization.

Gear and Equipment Common to All

This should be straight-forward thinking that includes considerations for weather and human factors. Examples of required items: utility uniform, warming layers, flak jacket, FLC, weapons cleaning gear, red-lens flashlight, food, water, etc.

Gear and Equipment Required for Movement

In addition to the obvious (map, protractor, lensatic compass, pace cord) the patrol may require additional inorganic gear and equipment to assist in reaching and returning from the objective area. River fording and rappelling equipment includes numerous small items such as carabineers, Swiss-seats, and safety lines that will weigh down your Marines and slow your movement. Night vision devices (NVD) will enhance the movement of your patrol and the clandestine occupation of the ambush site.

Gear and Equipment Required on the Objective

Special equipment may be required to enable the patrol to accomplish its mission once they have reached their objective area. Some items can enhance Command and Control (see below), some items can enhance Observation of the Kill Zone (see below). Other items like man-made obstacles can trap or canalize the enemy in the Kill Zone. Claymore mines can enhance surprise, shock, and lethality of the Kill Zone. Site Exploitation kits to efficiently collect items and information from the enemy and his equipment. EPW kits to efficiently maximize a detainee's exploitation.

Planning and Preparation of an Ambush (continued)

Gear and Equipment that Enhance Observation

The use of optical devices will enable the ambush patrol to better observe an enemy's approach to the ambush site, establish positive identification (PID), and appropriately time initiation.

Observation equipment such as Leopold Binoculars, thermal imaging devices (PAS 13/22), Night Vision Devices (NVD) (PVS 14), and rifle combat optics (RCO) all allow the patrol to use Combat Hunter techniques to accomplish the mission.

Gear and Equipment that Enhance Command and Control

The use of inorganic and non-traditional communication devices will enhance the PL's command and control. Field Phones will allow the PL secure voice communication with the Flank Security. Tug lines are an awesome field expedient way to silently pass messages between element leaders. Luminous and engineer tape can be strategically placed to mark key leaders or routes between the ORP and the ambush site. Whistle blasts can signal friendly forces in/out of the Kill Zone. Pyro can immediately shift and cease fire.

Gear and Equipment that Enhance Weapons Employment

The employment of crew served weapons will create the need for special considerations. Medium and Heavy Machine Guns should be emplaced on tripods and sand bagged in. SMAWs will need cleared back blast areas prior to their employment in the ambush. Indirect fire assets can be effective in canalizing the enemy, preventing escape from the Kill Zone, and disallowing reinforcements into the Kill Zone.

Ambush Site Location / Selection (METT-TC)

When choosing an ambush site all sources of information (maps, aerial photos, satellite imagery, and personal reconnaissance) must be used to exploit the terrain available to kill the enemy. Generally we want the terrain to work in favor of us and against the enemy. To aid in your planning, below are two categories in which to consider terrain usage.

Planning and Preparation of an Ambush (continued)

Patrol Routes

Your patrol will need a primary and an alternate route. From your patrol's departure of friendly lines and into the ORP the route should maximize concealment so to support a clandestine loading of the ambush site.

From the ORP the route should allow the patrol to enter the ambush site from the rear and should support a covered and efficient unloading of the ambush site.

From the ORP back to friendly lines the route should again maximize concealment so to support a clandestine link-up with the forward unit's guide.

Ambush Site

An effective ambush site will:

- Canalize the enemy into the Kill Zone, trap him there, and impede his ability to maneuver once attacked.
- Provide adequate observation of the enemy as he enters the Kill Zone.
- Provide favorable fields of fire on the enemy in the Kill Zone
- Maximize cover and concealment of the patrol during occupation, while ambushing, and while unloading the ambush site.

Time Consideration (METT-TC)

Time can affect the ambush patrol in a few fashions. How you plan for and utilize time will either create friction or minimize friction during the execution of your mission.

Your tasking statement may indicate that "Time Has Priority" requiring you to return to friendly lines at a designated time. Or it may be that you know precisely when the enemy target will be in the Kill Zone and so the time in which you occupy the ambush site is critical to destroying the enemy target. Overwhelming the enemy in the Kill Zone is a factor of timing the initiation signal, maximizing surprise, and establishing fire superiority. However, the most difficult of time considerations will be your analysis of time and space. Your ability to appropriately plan for and allow adequate time to patrol from friendly lines to the ORP, reorganize yourself, conduct a leader's recon, load the ambush site, destroy the enemy, and return to friendly lines will be a difficult and daunting feat itself.

Execution of the Ambush

Productive Realistic Rehearsals

Successful execution of the ambush patrol begins with the PL's detailed plan with an emphasis of actions on the objective. Every member of the patrol must be thoroughly familiar with the entire occupation plan and must understand who is responsible for what actions beginning in the ORP. The most efficient method to ensure these actions are understood is productive and realistic rehearsals. Ideally rehearsals will start with a talk-through then graduate to a walk-through in an open area (LZ or AA) so that members can observe one another. These rehearsals should culminate with full-dress rehearsals in the tree line and on terrain similar to the actual objective site. Actions to be rehearsed should start with occupation of the ORP, then occupation of the ambush site, initiation of the ambush, unloading the ambush site, and should continue through departure of the OPR when returning to friendly lines.

Occupation of the ORP

In his order the PL designates the tentative location of the ORP. This easily recognizable and defensible piece of terrain will be near the objective area and will provide the patrol with cover, concealment, and space to reorganize and make final preparations before occupation of the ambush site. The ORP should:

- Facilitate expedient, covered and concealed movement of elements and teams into the ambush site.
- Be out of sight, sound, and the effects of small arms fire from the objective
- Be away from natural lines of drift of enemy units and noncombatants.

The location will remain tentative until the PL confirms it. The two methods of occupation are Deliberate and Hasty.

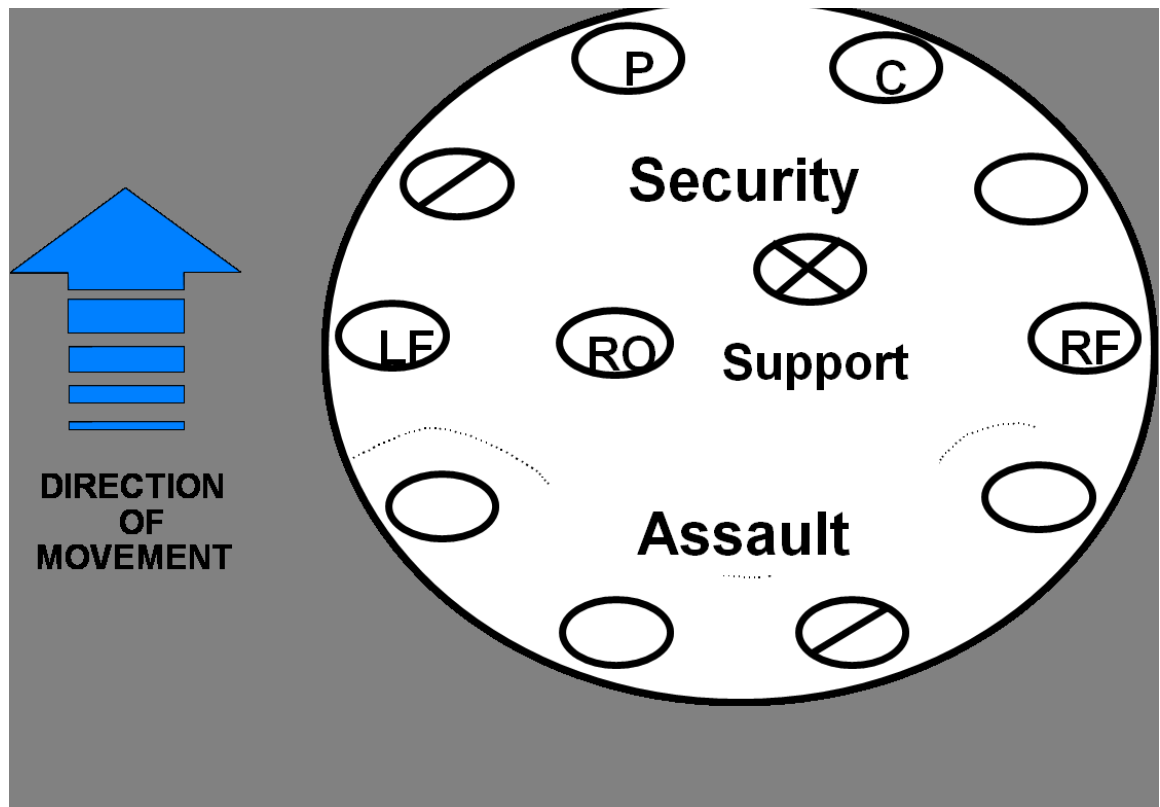
Deliberate Occupation

As the patrol approaches its tentative ORP, the PL halts the patrol. Before departing, the PL leaves a five-point contingency plan with the Assistant Patrol Leader (APL), who remains with the main body of the patrol. The PL then moves forward with the security unit to ensure the area is suitable for the ORP and that no enemy forces are nearby. The team and their actions are delineated in the patrol order.

Execution of the Ambush (continued)

The five-man team moves to the tentative ORP in a formation that provides for all-around security. Upon arrival at the tentative ORP the entire team conducts a reconnaissance of the area. The unit moves far enough forward through the tentative site to ensure that the area is clear and that it can accommodate the entire patrol. When the recon is complete the PL confirms it as the ORP. The Point, Cover, and Security Unit Leader (SUL) remain at 6 o'clock in the ORP while the PL and Navigator move back to guide the remainder of the patrol into the ORP.

Once in the ORP the patrol establishes a hasty perimeter that provides for good all-around security. In the order the PL normally specifies the locations within the clock system for respective units and key individuals. The PL designates 12 o'clock as the main body arrives, ensuring that the occupation of the ORP is completed expeditiously and with a minimum of movement and shifting (see 'Organization of the ORP' diagram below).



The security unit, positioned at 12 o'clock relative to the ambush site and occupying from 10 to 2 o'clock, is positioned for ease of movement and departure on the ambush site recon.

Execution of the Ambush (continued)

The positioning of the support unit is based upon the enemy situation and location relative to the ORP. For example, if the last enemy sighting was in the direction of 3 o'clock, then the additional fires provided by the support unit would be placed at 3 o'clock. This way, the patrol has a weapon system positioned to deliver effective fire in the event an attack occurred on the ORP. When the enemy situation is unknown, the support unit positions to provide coverage of the most likely avenue of approach.

Hasty Occupation

This technique is used when either speed is the primary concern or the PL's navigation is off. With this method, the PL decides he has arrived at the location of his tentative ORP and organizes his patrol as detailed in the patrol order.

Leader's Reconnaissance of the Ambush Site

Once the ORP is secured and occupied, the PL conducts a leader's reconnaissance of the ambush site. Leaving the APL with a five-point contingency plan, the PL takes the Security Unit and Flanks, the Support and Assault Unit Leaders, and a Radio Operator if the patrol has more than one. The Support Unit Leader (SPL) brings the machine gun tripods and sand bags. The Flank and Security Unit Leaders bring any communication equipment to be used.

The APL remains at the ORP during the leader's reconnaissance. The APL ensures the patrol at the ORP maintains security and reestablishes the perimeter.

The PL ensures there is adequate all-around security when moving from the ORP to the release point. The release point is a location between the ORP and the objective where the patrol leader passes control to individual unit/team leaders.

While conducting the recon of the ambush site, everyone in the objective area must exercise noise discipline. Marines must not move any closer to the kill zone than is absolutely necessary to accomplish the recon. The PL ensures the appropriate security is in place throughout the recon. Marines within the recon party will engage the enemy only if compromised, fired upon, or on the PL's command. The sequence in the table below should be executed during the leader's recon of the ambush site.

Execution of the Ambush (continued)

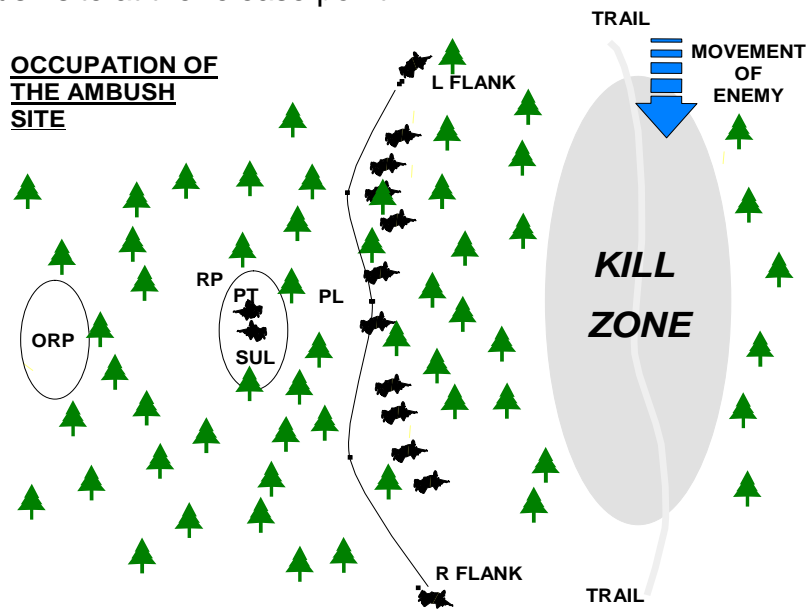
Step	Action
1	At the tentative release point, place the flanks in temporary positions to provide flank security during the PL's recon of the ambush site.
2	The PL and SUL conduct a recon of the ambush site to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm / Deny assumptions based on EMLCOA • ID Kill Zone • Confirm suitability of Ambush Position • Confirm Fields of fire
3	The PL then positions the flanks in their final ambush positions.
4	The PL and SUL then move to the center of the ambush site. If demolitions such as claymores are used, the PL coordinates their emplacement and runs the firing wires back to the SUL's position.
5	Once the flanks are wired and demolitions placed, the PL moves back to the release point and guides forward the SPUL. The SUL remains located at the center of the ambush site.
6	The PL directs the Support Unit Leader (SPUL) and the Assault Unit Leader (AUL) to his tentative position and designates sectors of fire for his crew-served weapons and unit. To maximize their destructive effects, machine guns are normally assigned a principle direction of fire (PDF) along the long axis of the kill zone. Once sectors of fire are confirmed and machine gun tripods placed, the PL and the SUL return to the release point.
7	The PL then directs the Assault Unit Leader (AUL) to his tentative positions within the ambush site. Additionally, the PL designates sectors of fire within the kill zone. The PL and AUL then return to the release point.
8	The recon element then returns to the ORP leaving the security team in place at the ambush site.

Occupation of the Ambush Site

The patrol occupies the ambush site at the latest possible time to reduce the risk of discovery and the amount of time the patrol must remain still and quiet. On the PL's signal, the patrol departs the ORP. As the patrol arrives at the release point, the PL passes control of the patrol to the unit leaders who direct their units into position in the sequence below.

Execution of the Ambush (continued)

Step	Action
1	If the ambush force is large enough, a security team may remain behind at the ORP as the remainder of the patrol occupies the ambush site.
2	The Support Unit leads the remainder of the patrol into ambush site. They then occupy positions as designated by the SPL, if utilized.
3	The Assault Unit is last to occupy the ambush site. Assault team occupies positions as designated by the AUL.
4	The APL positions away from the PL, normally to the rear of the ambush site at the release point.



Actions During Occupation

Unit leaders will:

- Assign sectors of fire to ensure mutual support, overlapping fires, and coverage of the kill zone
- Position their men and point out sectors of fire
- Camouflage each of their men as necessary by covering them with leaves, brush, etc.

Once in position, everyone remains absolutely motionless while maintaining observation within the assigned sectors of fire. They will fire into the kill zone only on the PL's signal or if they are prematurely detected.

Execution of the Ambush (continued)

Execution of the Ambush

In the patrol order, the PL designates the signals for the execution of the ambush. These signals include the signal to:

- Alert
- Initiate the ambush
- Cease fire/search the kill zone
- Reinitiate fires
- Withdraw from the ambush site

Alert Signal

The flank security normally is in the best position to alert the PL of the enemy's approach. They do so by using the field telephone and announcing the number and direction of the enemy approaching. Therefore, all phone operators must monitor the phones continuously. Ringing the phone is not an option as it may alert the enemy.

The PL may also plan a silent signal, such as tug lines, to other members of the patrol. Tugging on the line signals the alert of the enemy's approach.

Signal to Initiate the Ambush

The PL controls the signal to initiate the ambush. On signal, the patrol fires into the kill zone with as heavy a volume of accurate fire as possible. Properly delivered fires (including demolition, claymores, mines, etc.) will contribute to the surprise and destruction of the target. The signal to initiate must be:

- Casualty producing
- Appropriate to the target ambushed
- Reliable
- Known by all members of the patrol

Signals to Cease/Search Kill Zone

The PL ceases fire into the kill zone using either an audible or visual signal. If the patrol's mission is to:

- Capture enemy personnel, equipment, or documents, the PL send a TSE and EPW team to sweep across the Kill Zone. The dispatch of teams into the kill zone is dangerous because it takes place during a very critical moment. When designated, these teams normally enter the Kill Zone from one end and exit the Kill Zone through the opposite end. The PL must carefully plan and supervise rehearsals of searching the kill zone to allow for thorough coverage of the
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Execution of the Ambush (continued)

- team's actions, control of friendly fires, and the speedy execution of the search.
- Destroy or capture enemy personnel and/or equipment, the PL may have the assault unit clear the ambush site.

Signal to Reinitiate

If the enemy is not effectively neutralized, the PL may reinitiate the ambush before the search or withdraw. However, if SSE and EPW teams have already entered the kill zone, reinitiating fires into the kill zone is not an option.

Signal for Withdrawal

Once all actions in the ambush site have been completed, the PL directs the withdrawal of the patrol from the ambush site using either an audible or visual signal.

Withdrawal to the ORP

When the PL issues the signal to withdraw, the units and teams move rapidly from the ambush site. The patrol withdraws by unit back to the ORP through the release point, where the APL ensures accountability out of the ambush site:

- The assault unit withdraws first.
- The support unit then withdraws followed by the security unit.

Speed and control are paramount during withdrawal. To minimize confusion, especially in the dark, the APL and another Marine (typically the point form a gate at the release point. Each unit passes through the gate during withdrawal. This ensures accountability and allows the APL to direct the patrol members toward the ORP as they pass.

The PL uses indirect fires as necessary to cover the patrol's withdrawal. As the patrol returns to the ORP, it conducts a short security halt to:

- Regain its formation for movement.
- Redistribute ammunition.
- Make head counts.

The patrol then departs the ORP rapidly to prevent pursuit by the enemy.

Execution of the Ambush (continued)

Local Security

All patrols must maintain 360 degree security and the ambush patrol is no exception. If anything, local security of an ambush patrol is more challenging. Upon entering the OPR the strain on manpower begins to tighten with a requirement to maintain security on the ORP. The strain continues to increase with maintaining security on the release point. Once in the ambush site flank security is used to provide early warning of the enemy force while a preponderance of the patrol is required to focus on the Kill Zone. The real challenge begins when fires are initiated on the enemy in the Kill Zone. The Marines charged with flank and rear security will want to destroy the enemy. If allowed, a maneuvering enemy element can potentially overcome the patrol from a flank or from the rear with devastating results. Local security must be maintained to the front, flanks, and rear of the ambush site from the time that the patrol occupies the ORP until the patrol departs the ORP for friendly lines.

Observation

During our discussion of Task Organization and Equipment we discussed the considerations for optics and their employment. This section develops what specific positions should be watchful of and their appropriate actions.

Rear Security position will provide early warning of civilian, non-combatants, and enemy in the area. This position is also responsible for spoiling the counteractions of the ambushed enemy by repelling any maneuvering forces. It would be useful to weight the Rear Security with enhanced optical devices such as thermal imaging devices, binoculars, and personal NVDs.

The Flank Security positions will provide early warning of civilians, non-combatants, and enemy in the area. These positions are also responsible for spoiling the counteractions of the ambushed enemy by repelling any maneuvering forces. It would be useful to weight the Flank Security positions with enhanced optical devices such as thermal imaging devices, binoculars, and personal NVDs. A predetermined signal will alert the PL of the targeted enemy in the Kill Zone.

The Assault and Security Elements will focus on their respective sectors within the Kill Zone. These elements are responsible for destroying the targeted enemy with their personal and crew-served weapons. It would be useful to weight these elements with weapons, ammunition, demo, personal optics, and personal NVDs.

Execution of the Ambush (continued)

Positive Identification of the targeted enemy within the Kill Zone is the responsibility of the PL. Initiation of the ambush rests with the PL.

Patience

Patience is a true test of individual and unit discipline. Individual patience is required to endure through the human factors as they play against each member of the patrol. Tactical patience is required to destroy the targeted enemy. It is likely that less lucrative targets will present themselves within your Kill Zone. It is even more likely that civilians and non-combatants will present themselves within your Kill Zone. Patience will test your patrol.

If surprise is to be maintained, once the ambush site is occupied, all patrol members must remain motionless and observe strict noise discipline until the initiation signal is given by the PL.

Surprise and Shock

Surprise allows the ambush force to seize and retain control of the situation. In an ambush surprise is achieved by:

- Careful planning and preparation.
- Patience and discipline.
- Stealth during movement and occupation.
- Violence of action.
- Fire superiority during execution.
- Shock:
 - o Shock allows the ambush force to overwhelm a surprised enemy and is accomplished by sudden and violent massing of fires.
 - o Ambushes that achieve surprise but fail to achieve shock are less successful than ones that achieve shock and surprise.

Coordination and Fire Support Planning

- All weapons must be positioned in the ambush site by the element leader to ensure complete coverage of the Kill Zone.
- All fires, including those of available fire support agencies (artillery and mortars) must be coordinated to achieve:
 - o A combined arms effect.
 - o The isolation of the kill zone to prevent escape or reinforcement.
- Fire control measures must include:

Execution of the Ambush (continued)

- Withholding the unit's fire until the enemy has moved into the kill zone.
- Opening fire at the proper time.
- Lifting or shifting supporting fires when the attack includes assault of the target.
- Plan initiation of appropriate actions if the ambush is prematurely detected.
- The use of mines can serve to canalize the enemy and inflict casualties during the enemy's attempt to maneuver, advance, or escape.

Dissemination of Information

After departing the ORP, the patrol:

- Moves at least one terrain feature away.
- Conducts a long security halt to:
 - Pass any information the search and EPW team gained.
 - Distribute captured documents, equipment, etc.

Debrief

Purpose

As with any mission, following execution the entire unit should conduct a detailed debrief. The purpose of debrief is to provide the unit commander with information about his battlespace, the enemy that is operating within it, and the potential for him to operate within it.

Patrol members will be expected to confirm or deny any and all information that was provided to them during the planning and preparation phase of their patrol. Some of this information came from the unit commander's order. Some information will have come from COC coordination. Still other information will have been assumptions and analysis made by the PL. Patrol members will also be expected to elaborate on any radio transmissions that met PIR and CCIR criteria. In addition to the Intelligence aspect, the ambush patrol debrief should speak to an Operational aspect. For example the battlespace owner would likely benefit from information regarding serviceability and traffic ability of roads and trail networks, location of river crossing or fording points, potential LZs, or terrain that provides a commanding view of the valley floor.

Debrief (continued)

The ambush patrol debrief should include every member of the patrol because the smallest detail observed by one Marine can make the difference for a future patrol or operation. That small detail may jog the memory of another Marine or when combined with another detail may reveal critical information about the enemy. Patrol members should provide points relative to their primary duties and any alternate and supplemental duties performed.

Patrol Base Operations

Definition

An area where a patrol halts for an extended period of time that is not protected by friendly troops which by the nature of the surrounding terrain provides passive security from enemy detection (MCWP 3.11.3).

A security perimeter that is set up when a squad or platoon conducting a patrol halts for an extended period (Ranger Handbook).

The important thing to remember about a Patrol Base (PB) is that it is not a deliberate defensive position. Entrenchment, even skirmishers trenches, can give away your position.

Purposes of a Patrol Base

- Avoid detection by eliminating movement
- Hide a unit during a long detailed reconnaissance
- Perform maintenance on weapons and equipment
- Eat and rest
- Reorganize after infiltrating an enemy area
- Established to execute several consecutive or concurrent operations

Patrol Base Site Selection

A PB established as a result of an on-the-spot decision requires reconnoitering, securing, expanding, and organizing the area occupied during a security halt. A PB selected by map or imagery reconnaissance is tentative. Its suitability must be confirmed by ground reconnaissance and secured by that patrol prior to occupation. PB selection is similar to ORP selection. It should be:

- Easily recognizable
- Defendable for a short period of time
- Provides cover and concealment
- Near a source of water
- Must support mission accomplishment

Security of a Patrol Base

Planning for a PB will include both passive and active security measures.

Passive Security Measures

Choosing terrain which is off the main lines of drift, of little tactical value to the enemy, and removed from known or suspected enemy positions will aid in security of the PB. Additionally, selecting a site in dense vegetation or on terrain that is difficult to move in will decrease likelihood that an enemy force will stumble upon your position.

Active Security Measures

Depending on the size of the unit occupying the patrol base (Squad vs Platoon), the following active security measures should be planned for:

- LP/OPs
- Local Security Patrols
- Early Warning Devices
- Planned defense of the PB
- Withdraw routes
- Alert Plans

Patrol Base Occupation

PBs will be occupied in the same manner as occupying a long halt or an ORP. Plan to enter your PB at a 90 degree turn, in order to avoid leaving tracks which lead directly to your site. A squad sized patrol will form a "cigar shaped" PB. A platoon sized patrol base will utilize a triangular shaped formation, which maximizes security at each axis of the triangle. Both formations have 360 degree security.

Summary

The ambush mentality relates directly to the fundamentals of MCDP 1 and is specifically addressed in MCDP 1.3 Tactics. The disorder and uncertainty created through an ambush patrol can disrupt the enemy's scheme of maneuver and diminish his morale. Understanding how to conduct a successful ambush will aid you in wreaking havoc on the enemy. Patrol Bases are an essential tool for units conducting sustained patrolling operations. The fundamentals of PBs are aligned with the purpose of patrolling: to gather information and develop the enemy situation in a given area of operation.

References

Reference Number or Author	Reference Title
MCRP 3-33A	Counter-Guerrilla Operations
FMFM 6-4	Marine Rifle Company/Platoon
SH 21-76B	United States Army Ranger Handbook
Allen, Charles	<u>Savage Wars of Peace</u>
Garland, Albert N.	<u>Infantry in Vietnam</u>
McKay, Gary	<u>In Good Company</u>
Norton, Bruce H.	<u>Force Recon Diary 1969/1970</u>
FM 7-8	<u>Infantry Squad and Platoon</u>
MCWP 3-11.2	<u>Marine Rifle Squad</u> (formerly the FMFM 6-5)
MCWP 3-11.3	<u>Scouting and Patrolling for Infantry Units</u>
Army Ranger Handbook	

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Term or Acronym	Definition or Identification
APL	Assistant patrol leader
AUL	Assault unit leader
EPW	Enemy prisoner of war
FRAGO	Fragmentary order
ORP	Objective rally point
METT-TC	Mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and fire support available, time, space and logistics, and civil considerations
PL	Patrol leader
PDF	Principle direction of fire
SOP	Standard operating procedure
SPL	Support unit leader
SUL	Security unit leader
TAOR	Tactical area of responsibility

Notes
