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POINT MAN

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISMOUNTED TACTICAL LEAD ELEMENTS



Center for Army Lessons Learned

<https://call2.army.mil/toc.aspx?document=6968>

Traditional Overview of Point Men

- The Point Man has typically been a Soldier assigned to a position some distance ahead of the patrol to navigate, detect, locate, and communicate to the rest of the formation.

Updated Overview of Lead Elements

- Lead elements no longer consist of a single Soldier. Current lead elements may consist of a combination of one or more of the following: host nation partners, military working dogs, engineers, navigators, specialized equipment, and security elements.

Note

- Enablers outlined in this reference are not mission critical, only mission enhancing. It is possible to achieve mission success with strictly organic resources.

Purpose/Introduction

The purpose of this reference is to provide an overview of TTPs that will enable lead elements to maximize their capabilities. These principles do not guarantee 100% mission success. Principles outlined in this reference are strictly for consideration.

Selection of Point Man/Lead Elements

- Lead element personnel should be experienced volunteers who are tactically sound and physically fit.
- Primary navigator should not be the patrol leader.
- Point man/lead element responsibility should be shared with alternate personnel in order to ensure continuity/redundancy/endurance/focus on movements.

Lead Element Possible Enablers

CAPABILITY	APPLICATION
EOD	Explosive handling
Sapper/Engineers	Explosive detection
Canine Team	Explosive detection
Patrol briefs/debriefs/ColST/after-action reviews	AARs/trends/observable indicators/SIGACTs (TICs/EDS/IDF)
Imagery (GRG)	Terrain analysis
Local contacts/HUMINT	Information gathering
Thor-3	C RC-IED
AN/PSS-12	Metallic mine detector
AN/PSS-14	Low metallic mine detector
Goldie	Command wire detection
VMC-1	Metallic mine detector
VMC-2	Dual sensor mine detector
Man portable line charge (MPLC)	Clearance charge for mined or trip-wired environments
SWATs system	Individual gun shot detection

Lead Element Pre-movement Checklist

Considerations for lead elements to incorporate into Troop Leading Procedures:

- Terrain Analysis:** Conduct threat analysis of known danger areas of primary and alternate routes using available imagery, historic, and ColST resources, identification of known danger areas, and named areas of interest.
- Route Selection:** Often, the lead element will be provided a corridor of maneuver.
- Alternate Route Selection.**
- Communications plan:** Consider host nation enablers and hand and arm signals.
- Enabler Pre-movement:** Coordinate with all enablers in lead element. Ensure all understand command and control structure and procedures. Utilize a pre-mission checklist. Choose specialized equipment/enablers.
- Conduct rehearsals** of key activities and expected danger areas. Check all enabler weapons, equipment, specialized equipment, food, and water. Receive back-briefs and conduct rehearsals.
- Ensure fire support plan** is understood and incorporated.
- Ensure medical evacuation plan** is understood and incorporated.
- Identify in-route rally points** and actions upon reaching checkpoints.

CAUTION: Ensure lead element responsibilities are spread across lead element: navigation, pace, marking IEDs, etc.

Danger Areas

- A danger area is any place where a moving element may establish a pattern and be vulnerable to enemy observation or fire.
- Many danger areas can be discovered through a thorough map recon. Others require a close inspection of imagery and a review of historic IED and troops in contact SIGACT information.
- Lead Element will need to communicate danger areas encountered, especially if not identified during initial route planning.
- Minimize time spent on and around danger areas. Avoid if possible. If decision is made to cross a danger area, rehearse actions to ensure fluid crossing.
- Several danger areas to consider:

WALLS

WADIS

AQUEDUCTS

ABANDONED STRUCTURES

ABANDONED EQUIPMENT

BRIDGES

CAVES

ROADS

MOUNTAIN TRAILS

OPEN FIELDS

ORCHARDS

GRAPE HOUSES

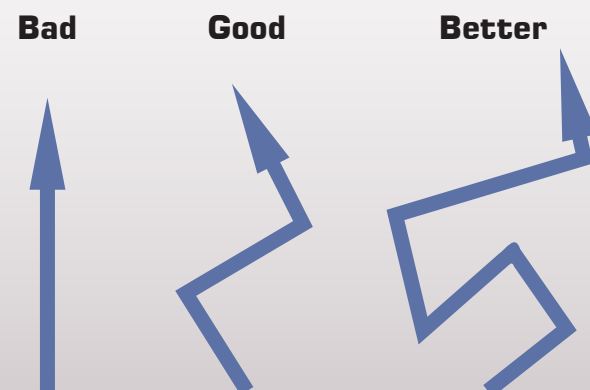
Other Danger Area Considerations

- Cross danger areas at the point of most resistance or least likely avenue of approach.
- Consider using three ladders when crossing walls. Two ladders set up for security on each side of the main body, one ladder for movement of the main body.
- Minimize silhouetting when crossing walls.
- Lower dogs first to inspect far side of wall.
- Plan for moving casualties and heavy equipment over walls quickly.
- Plan for enemy contact while crossing danger areas.
- Ensure danger areas are surrounded with indirect fire coverage.

Avoid Setting Patterns. Dismounted movement TTPs are a constant evolution. Doing something three times makes a pattern.

Lead Element Actions During Movement

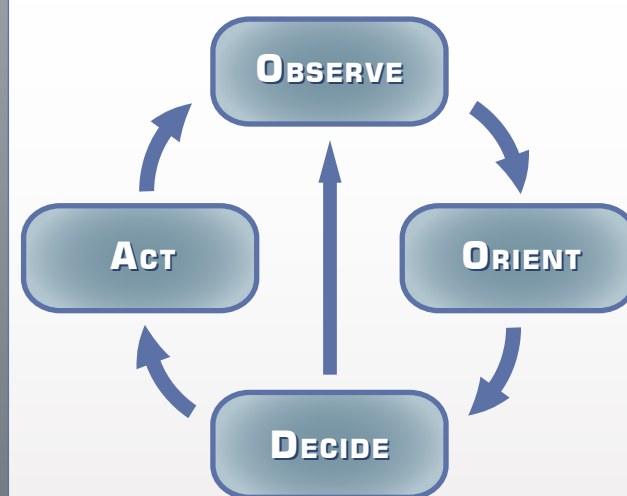
- Navigation through approved corridor should not be straight-line but unpredictable and erratic.
- Diagram below applies to all actions of lead element – **KEEP THE ENEMY GUESSING!**
- Maintain lead element spacing considering terrain, day, night, communications.
- Avoid “tunnel vision” on enabler equipment – visual detection remains the most effective threat detector.



Lead Element Enhancing Equipment

- Should be included based on mission analysis and route characteristics.
- Magnifying optics
- Thermal or fusion goggles
- Ladders
- Powder or paint for marking IEDs
- IR Chem-lights for limited visibility marking of IEDs
- Flash bangs
- Smoke grenades

Lead Element Decision-Making During Movement: OODA Loop



OBSERVE: WHAT IS THE SITUATION? Understand the unfolding circumstances as situation develops. Observation is ongoing with inputs from decisions and actions. What are trends in AO?

ORIENT: WHAT IS NEW? Understand how the current situation differs from the expected situation, e.g., disturbed earth, unusual people.

DECIDE: Develop courses of action.

ACT: Execute chosen COA, repeat cycle. Do surroundings change based on actions taken?

Lead Element Post Movement Considerations

- IPB/IPOE: Work with ColST to identify patterns (including friendly patterns) and event relationships to add to predictive analysis tools for future movements. Ensure ColST receives the five W's (who, what, when, where, and why) of each enemy contact.
- Annotate the types of IED triggers used in your specific AO (e.g., PP, RC, CW).
- SITEMP: ColST tools can show patterns for activities (the “what”), incident maps (the “where”), time event charts and pattern wheel tables (the “when”).
- Provide leadership with feedback regarding lead element concerns. Was the time allotted for movement adequate for lead element to thoroughly clear and move without setting patterns?
- Conduct debriefs to ensure follow-on missions do not repeat mistakes. Funnel debriefs through ColST to ensure widest distribution. Continue to keep lessons learned files for follow on units. What information would you want as a lead element? Collect that information and feed into ColST and beyond.

Enemy TTPs

- Occupying rooftops
- Targeting locations where Soldiers take cover
- Targeting historic IED/POO/SAF sites
- Using harassing fires
- Exploiting choke points
- Exploiting Soldiers' patterns

Enemy Observable Indicators

- Absence of Locals
- Loose Mud in Walls
- Low Points in Walls
- Low Water Crossings
- Aiming Markers
- Lack of Foot/Vehicle Traffic Evidence

Lead Element Order of Movement

During movement, the engineer and dog handler look to point man for tactical guidance and route directions. The rifleman's job is security.

U.S. point man



Host nation rifleman



U.S. dog handler and dog



Host nation engineer



References

- Ranger Handbook
- Operational Reference: Company Intelligence Support Teams (GTA 90-01-022), October, 2010
- JIEDDO Dismounted C-IED Smart Book