



Red Diamond

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Opposing Force (OPFOR) Tactical Task List

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The Opposing Force (OPFOR) Tactical Task List is a listing of tactical tasks that are specific to the OPFOR. OPFOR tactical organizations and individuals perform these tasks instead of the comparable tasks in the Army Universal Task List (AUTL). OPFOR organizations and individuals perform tactical tasks in order to provide challenging conditions for the execution or attempted execution of mission essential tasks by training units.

The OPFOR Tactical Task List serves as the primary source for most tasks the OPFOR must perform. Exercise planners reference this list first when conducting countertask analysis. Only if the OPFOR Tactical Task List does not contain an appropriate task is one selected for the OPFOR from the AUTL.

Listed below are brief definitions of the 24 OPFOR tasks. For a complete overview of each OPFOR task, with a corresponding countertask analysis, see TC 7-101 [Exercise Design](#), Appendix B.

1. **ASSAULT**: An attack that destroys an enemy force through firepower and the physical occupation and/or destruction of his position. An assault is the basic form of OPFOR tactical offensive combat.
2. **RAID**: An attack against a stationary target for the purposes of its capture or destruction that culminates in the withdrawal of the raiding detachment to safe territory.
3. **AMBUSH**: A surprise attack from a concealed position, used against moving or temporarily halted targets.
4. **RECONNAISSANCE ATTACK**: A tactical offensive action that locates moving, dispersed, or concealed enemy elements and either fixes or destroys them.
5. **RECONNAISSANCE**: All measures associated with organizing, collecting, and studying information on the enemy, terrain, and weather in the area of upcoming battles.
6. **COUNTERRECONNAISSANCE**: A continuous combined arms action to locate, track, and destroy all enemy reconnaissance operating in a given area of operations (AOR).



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- 7. DEFEND FROM SIMPLE BATTLE POSITION (SPB):** An SBP is a defensive location oriented on the most likely enemy avenue of approach or objective area. Defenders of SBPs will take all actions necessary to prevent enemy penetration of their position, or defeat a penetration once it has occurred.
- 8. DEFEND FROM COMPLEX BATTLE POSITION (CPB):** CBPs are designed to protect the units within them from detection and attack while denying their seizure and occupation by the enemy. CBPs protect forces while providing sanctuary from which to launch local attacks.
- 9. ACTIONS ON CONTACT:** Designed to ensure OPFOR units retain the initiative and fight under circumstances of their choosing.
- 10. SITUATIONAL BREACH:** The reduction of and passage through an obstacle encountered in the due course of executing another tactical task.
- 11. BREAKING CONTACT:** To remove the enemy's ability to place destructive or suppressive fires on the greater portion of the OPFOR force.
- 12. FIXING:** Prevent the enemy from moving any part of his force from a specific location for a period of time.
- 13. TACTICAL MOVEMENT:** The method by which OPFOR units move on the battlefield. It is employed in any situation where enemy contact is possible. It is most often used in offensive operations, to move from attack position to the point of attack.
- 14. DISRUPTION:** A tactical task intended to upset an enemy's formation or tempo, interrupt the enemy's timetable, cause the enemy to commit his forces prematurely, and/or cause him to attack in piecemeal fashion.
- 15. INTEGRATED ATTACK:** An offensive action where the OPFOR seeks military decision by destroying the enemy's will and/or ability to continue fighting through the application of combined arms effects.
- 16. DISPERSED ATTACK:** The primary manner in which the OPFOR conducts offensive action when threatened by a superior enemy and/or when unable to mass or provide integrated C2 to an attack.
- 17. FIRE AND MANEUVER:** The way in which OPFOR small units move while in contact with the enemy.
- 18. ALL-ARMS AIR DEFENSE:** The simultaneous employment of several arms, in some cases including air defense systems, to achieve an effect against the enemy air threat that will render greater results than the use of air defense assets and systems alone.
- 19. ANTILANDING ACTIONS:** Methods used to prevent landings by airborne or heliborne troops or to destroy enemy landing forces on the ground as soon after landing as possible.
- 20. SOPHISTICATED AMBUSH:** The linking in time and task of reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition (RISTA); attacking forces; and window of opportunity to destroy key enemy systems or cause politically unacceptable casualties.

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- 21. MANEUVER DEFENSE:** A type of defensive action designed to achieve tactical decision by skillfully using fires and maneuver to destroy key elements of the enemy's combat system and deny enemy forces their objective, while preserving the friendly force.
- 22. AREA DEFENSE:** A type of defensive action designed to achieve a decision by either forcing the enemy's offensive operations to culminate before he can achieve his objectives, or denying the enemy his objectives while preserving combat power until decision can be achieved through strategic operations or operational mission accomplishment.
- 23. INFORMATION WARFARE (INFOWAR):** Specifically planned and integrated actions taken to achieve an information advantage at critical points and times.
- 24. INSURGENCY:** Groups that conduct irregular or unconventional warfare within the borders of their country in order to undermine or overthrow a constituted government or civil authority.

Tactical Task Example

TACTICAL TASK 3.0 AMBUSH (ANNIHILATION)

The OPFOR Tactical Task List is a listing of tactical tasks that are specific to the OPFOR. OPFOR tactical organizations and individuals perform these tasks instead of the comparable tasks in the Army Universal Task List (AUTL). OPFOR organizations and individuals perform tactical tasks in order to provide challenging conditions for the execution or attempted execution of mission essential tasks by training units. The tactical task for an annihilation ambush is located in TC 7-101 [Exercise Design](#) (2010), Appendix B, p. B-3. The critical tasks below include a matrix for evaluating task proficiency.

An *ambush* is a surprise attack from a concealed position, used against moving or temporarily halted targets. The purpose of an annihilation ambush is to destroy the enemy force. These are violent attacks designed to ensure the enemy's return fire, if any, is ineffective. Generally, this type of ambush uses the terrain to the attacker's advantage and employs mines and other obstacles to halt the enemy in the kill zone. The goal of the obstacles is to keep the enemy in the kill zone throughout the action. The subtasks for an annihilation ambush are as follows:

3.1 Occupy Ambush Site

3.2 Isolate Kill Zone

- ◆ Maneuver and deploy security element(s) to ensure additional enemy forces do not join the battle unexpectedly. (Security elements may become fixing elements.)
- ◆ Continue to provide early warning.
- ◆ Prevent the enemy from gaining further information.
- ◆ Prevent enemy maneuver.

3.3 Contain Enemy

Stop, hold, or surround enemy forces and prevent them from withdrawing any element for use elsewhere.

Tactical Task Example

3.4 Destroy

Render the enemy combat ineffective and/or damage selected element(s) of his combat system to the point of uselessness.

3.5 Exfiltrate

Conduct undetected movement from areas under enemy control by stealth, deception, surprise, or clandestine means.

TACTICAL TASK 3.0 AMBUSH (ANNIHILATION)		
No.	Scale	Measure
01	Yes/No	Unit moves to and occupies ambush site without detection.
02	Yes/No	Unit isolates kill zone from assistance.
03	Time	To execute ambush.
04	Yes/No	Enemy in kill zone during projected time window.
05	Yes/No	Enemy contained in kill zone.
06	Percent	Friendly forces available to continue mission.
07	Percent	Combat effectiveness of enemy force.

Article of Interest

Annihilation Ambush: An example

by Jon Moilanen

Planning and Preparation for the Ambush

This example of an annihilation ambush illustrates the planning and preparation for the ambush site along one of several regularly traveled enemy lines of communication (LOC). The target is a small supply convoy of cross-country utility trucks and convoy security of armored wheeled fighting vehicles. Surveillance of the route and size of convoys in past weeks confirmed a norm of four to nine utility vehicles with a security escort of one armored HMMWV to the front and one armored HMMWV to the rear of the column. Aerial screening of the route by enemy helicopters in the last month has no set schedule, but has never been more than one aerial screen in a day.

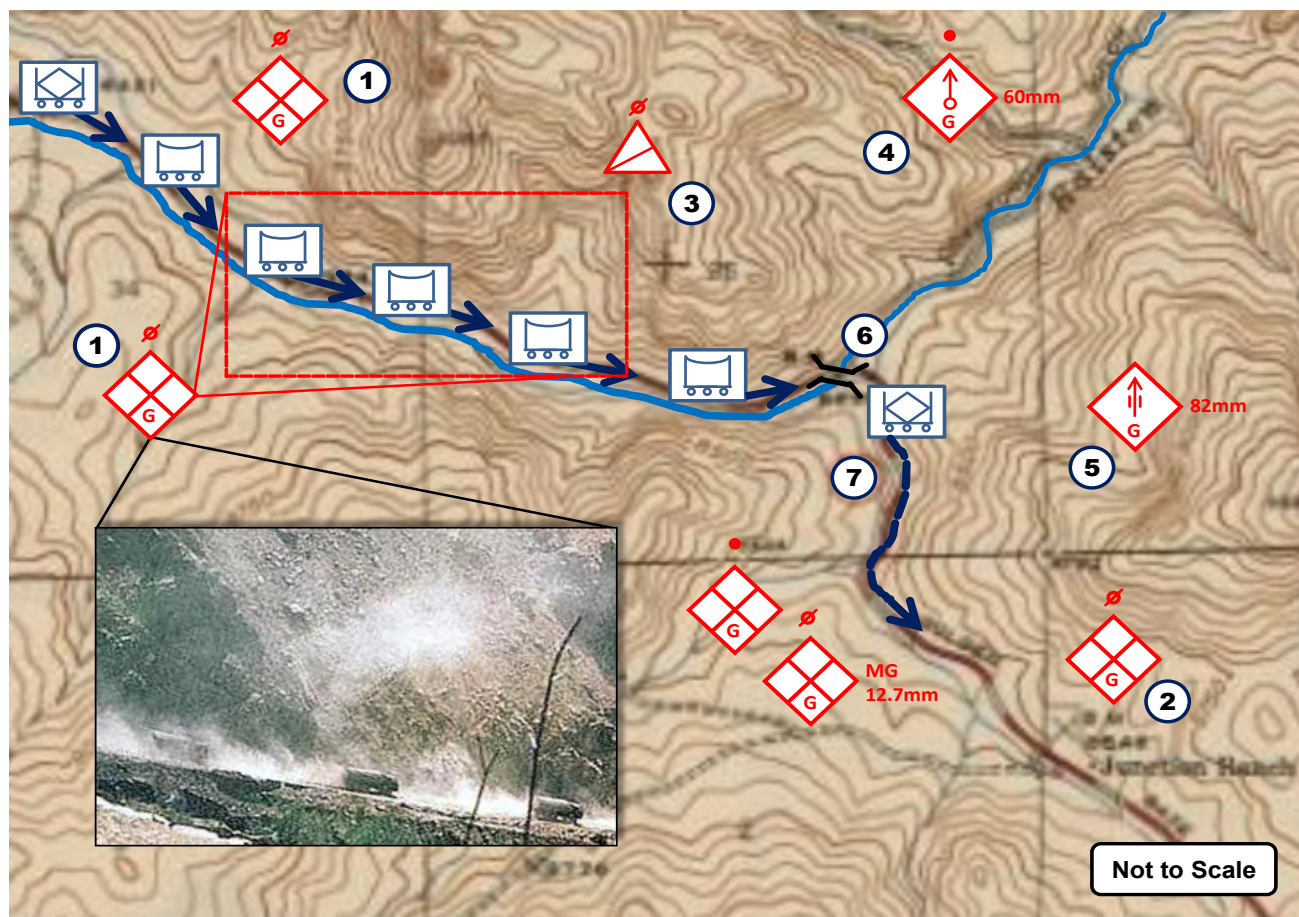


Figure 1.0: Planning and preparation for the ambush.

For the past weeks during limited visibility periods and at night, guerrillas have been preparing hide positions and camouflaged fighting positions in masked terrain overlooking the canalized road parallel to the mountain river. These fighting positions orient on three kill zones selected by the guerrilla commander. Each kill zone has elements tasked with primary and alternate fields of direct fire. The guerrilla platoon leader restricted emplacing IEDs along the road with the excep-

Article of Interest

tion of two purposely arrayed for easy identification and disposal by enemy engineers. No IEDs have been emplaced for the past two months, and recent convoys are noticeably without engineer assets.

The ambush has three functional organizations as follows: security elements (1 and 2), ambush elements (1 and 7), and support elements (4 and 5). The security elements establish surveillance of the convoy route to the northwest and to the southeast. These guerrilla teams also provide early warning to the ambush and support elements at the ambush site. Security elements are also responsible to isolate the ambush site once the ambush is initiated. This isolation task contains any egress of enemy from the kill zones, and blocks any ground rapid response force from assisting the ambushed force. In this example, a security observation post (3) is also responsible for directing calls into the kill zone for the 60mm mortar team (4), and will report battle damage assessment on the convoy during the ambush. The guerrilla platoon has no man portable air defense systems (MANPADS) but can use limited volley fire of RPGs to disrupt any helicopter support arriving at the canyon.

The guerrilla platoon size element conducts rehearsals of the planned ambush in a mission support site (MSS). Light machine guns, and one 12.7mm heavy machine gun obtained years earlier, comprise the base of organic firepower for the platoon. Other individual weapons are a mix of assault rifles, grenade launchers, and rocket propelled grenades (RPG). The guerrilla company commander has allocated one 82mm recoilless gun (5) and one 60mm mortar with crews to support the ambush. Rehearsals refine the simultaneous execution of the ambush as a platoon leader initiated attack by fire into each of the three kill zones. All guerrilla platoon members and attached members from the weapons platoon attend the rehearsals and brief their specified tasks to the assembled group. A terrain board constructed to scale identifies distinctive terrain features, kill zones, IED location points, fighting positions, routes, into and exfiltration routes from fighting positions.

With rehearsals and logistic preparations finalized in the MSS, platoon elements move to separate assembly areas south and north of the canyon in order to prepare for combat. Couriers are the primary communication means until 18 hours prior to the intended attack date. Radio and cellular telephone is maintained at a normal level of electronic traffic and does not discuss the intended ambush in any open conversation. Code words on the platoon net direct final preparatory movements into hide positions from the assembly areas, and the emplacement of IEDs at the kill zone and along the road northwest and southeast of the ambush site. Code words confirm that all guerrilla elements are in hide positions, have emplaced IEDs, and await the order to occupy fighting positions.

Conduct of the Annihilation Ambush

Security elements (1) report approach of a convoy with one armored HMMWV in the lead and at least four cross country utility trucks. Dust obscures the trail of the convoy, but subsequent reports confirm a total of five cargo supply trucks and one armored HMMWV as rear security. Earlier, about sunrise, security elements were the first of several reports to the guerrilla platoon leader that a helicopter screen was transiting the route from southwest to the northwest. No dust trails along the road to the northwest or the southeast indicate that this is an individual supply convoy. The platoon leader directs elements to occupy their fighting positions.

Reports track the advance of the convoy into the kill zones and the expected slowing of the column as the lead HMMWV checks the route critical point of a small bridge (6) crossing the river. The road width is already restricted due to the steep slope of canyon wall on the north side and the severe drop of embankment to the river on the south side. Once the critical point is cleared, the convoy continues its progress with the HMMWV and lead supply truck crossing the bridge.

The guerrilla platoon leader command detonates an IED (7) as the HMMWV passes the target point. This is the signal for simultaneous direct fires along the ambush site into the three designated kill zones. The 12.7mm machine gun team concentrates initially on the lead HMMWV and once it destroys the armored vehicle, shifts fire to the lead supply truck. The guerrilla squad concentrates small arms fire and RPGs to destroy the HMMWV and supply truck.

Article of Interest

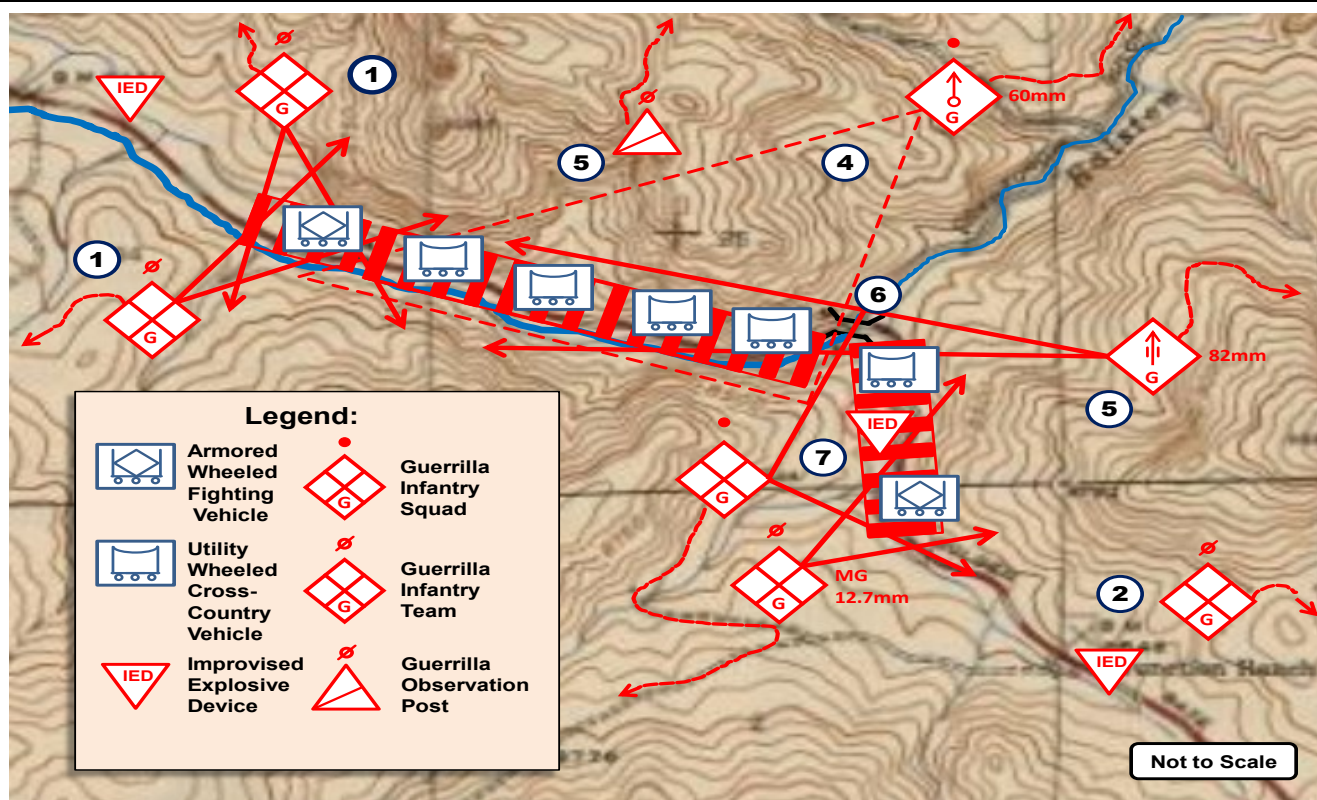


Figure 1.1: Conduct of the Annihilation Ambush

Concurrently, the guerrilla teams to the northwest (1) attack and destroy the rear HMMWV with RPG and automatic small arms fire. The remaining supply trucks are trapped along a narrow road space with no ability to move or maneuver. The 82mm recoilless gun (5) engages individual supply trucks with direct fire, while the observation post (3) directs and shifts 60mm mortar fire on targets throughout the kill zones that can be observed. As burning vehicles and dust obscure observer ability to select targets, the mortar team shifts to preplanned indirect fires laterally across the kill zones.

As reports arrive to the platoon leader that all vehicles have been destroyed, he orders the ambush and support elements to disengage and exfiltrate to their individual assembly points. Wounded guerrillas evacuate with the exfiltration, and any guerrillas killed during the ambush are removed from the site as part of the exfiltration. Security elements (1 and 2) remain in the vicinity to slow any rapid response forces as they approach the ambush site from the southwest or the northwest. If response forces approach and might be able to interdict the ambush or support elements as they exfiltrate, the guerrilla security force command detonates an IED as a means to force deployment of the response force and cause a methodical mine clearing action. The security elements do not engage in direct fire with the response force if possible, and exfiltrate to designated assembly points.

The guerrilla force remains dispersed for a period of time. Based on a code word transmitted over radio or cellular phone, the guerrilla leaders of the ambush rally at a mission support site and conduct a thorough after action review. Observations are recorded in written reports and photographs or video tape [sample guerrilla photograph of enemy march discipline and vehicle interval is attached to tactical sketch], shortfalls or deficiencies are noted for corrective action, and successful tactics and techniques are discussed in detail for future operational use.

Note. The **OPFOR Tactical Task List** is posted in TC 7-101, Exercise Design, Appendix B, Task 3.0.

OE Conditions

Mercenaries

by Justin Lawlor

In a recent book by Parag Khanna, *How to Run the World*, the author suggests that the impending future global situation is not so much unprecedented as it is a return to the conditions of 12th century. Among the parallels to the 12th century will likely be a shift of military power from nation states to other actors within the strategic environment. As we have seen in the last decade, the US Army must be ready not only to meet and defeat state actors, but non-state actors as well. Between the obvious state and non-state actors exists a third challenge, that of professional for-hire soldiers, or mercenaries. The rise of importance of mercenaries will present challenges on a variety of levels, and can potentially cause significant change to how the US Army trains for operations in the future.

Mercenaries have been a fixture of warfare for practically the entire history of armed combat. Starting in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in Europe, international legal strictures on the use of mercenaries started to gather steam. As the force of international law became more universal, the acceptable use of mercenaries declined, though their existence continued, especially in more remote areas like Africa.

Recent events in Libya have highlighted the current and future role of mercenaries. As the Libyan regime came under significant threat, its leader, Muammar Gaddafi, has reportedly put out the call for foreigners to fight for his regime. This highlights the value of mercenaries or other foreign-sourced units for internal policing duties, due to their loyalty to the regime and willingness to operate against regime enemies aggressively.

Mercenaries are described in TRADOC Handbook 1.08, *Irregular Forces* using the Geneva Convention definition. The primary definitional element of mercenary is combatants who are not citizens of the nations involved in the conflict. This definition is itself somewhat problematic. First, the US has been dealing with "foreign fighters" in Iraq and Afghanistan for nearly a decade. However, the vast majority of foreign fighters are overwhelmingly ideologically driven versus being economically motivated. As such, they fall outside common use of the term mercenary. Second, while the Geneva Convention definitions appear at first glance to be fairly descriptive, determining precise motive and sponsorship in specific cases can be difficult.

Past, Current, and Future Employment

Africa has long been the global epicenter for mercenary use. The combination of persistent conflict, demand for combat enablers, lack of international visibility of the conflict, and the general weakness of state actors set the conditions for the almost inevitable employment of mercenary actors. Unsurprisingly, a tour through the last 20 years of conflict in Africa shows Russian pilots manning combat aircraft in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea; Europeans in the Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, and Sierra Leone; and former South African National Defense Force serving even former adversaries in Angola.

Most recently, the wide scale employment of mercenaries has been most obvious in Libya, as the Libyan regime seeks to strengthen its forces in its current civil war. Mercenaries - sourced from Africa and potentially Belarus, Serbia, and Russia - provide a combination of both poorly or untrained troops and elements of technically capable enablers. Similar reports of foreigners being employed as internal security forces are coming from the recent Iranian uprising and unrest in Syria, as well. It is likely that the grouping of conditions that drove Libyan, Iranian, and Syrian employment of mercenaries will be replicated as other regimes face similar challenges to their rule. For nations interested in discreet or economical intervention, mercenaries can be used as a deniable means of power projection or influence, especially for resource-constrained nations.

OE Conditions

The current era of persistent global conflict demonstrates the increasing likelihood of US forces encountering mercenaries in any potential OE. Understanding the complications of mercenary employment represents a new challenge for the Army training environment.

Training Implications

To completely replicate the growing dynamic nature of potential OEs, trainers can use mercenary enablers to provide fidelity and stress visiting units. Mercenaries can provide both low-end mass and high-end combat enablers to the opposing force (OPFOR), providing an OPFOR with the ability to meet US units at parity in certain key elements.

- Politically, many nations have used mercenaries in the past as deniable forces to intervene in conflicts where it might be politically undesirable or impossible to do so. The engaging or handling of such individuals in the detainee environment could give interesting and nontraditional challenges to deploying and training units. Mercenaries are likely to be very loyal to the retaining nation, versus having loyalty to subnational elements like tribes or ethnic groups in an OE.
- Militarily, mercenaries with training and experience from militarily advanced nations can effectively and innovatively operate even basic or obsolete military equipment through a combination of training and experience. Mercenaries can provide the “software” to either effectively employ advanced Tier I capabilities, train local forces in the latest TTP, or innovatively employ even obsolete equipment in an effective fashion.
- Economically, the introduction of mercenaries can place unique burdens on an OE, through both expense to the retaining nation and the creation of economic incentives to the mercenary to continue fighting.
- Socially, mercenaries will likely be employed as they were in Iran and Libya, due to their lack of empathy with rebellious populations, and the lack of a social and political constituency, other the government, in the nation at war. Trainers should be attuned to the differences and similarities between mercenaries and foreign fighters as encountered in OIF and OEF.

In the information warfare (INFOWAR) realm, mercenaries from nations with advanced militaries are apt to be trained in the latest deception techniques, will provide insight into the most effective perception management efforts, and can offer effective information and computer attack capabilities. In the case of perception management and computer/information warfare, mercenaries do not even have to be in the specific OE to present tactical and operational impacts. Mercenaries can provide a highly variable component to the information environment of an OE, as their employment can render traditional Blue intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) obsolete or difficult. Mercenary knowledge of other intelligence INFOWAR disciplines can effectively negate even advanced Army capabilities.

Conclusion

The introduction of mercenaries into training events has the potential to add complexity to our current training models. Mercenaries are a realistic, dynamic, and potentially capable threat. The current and expected future global economic conditions and their resultant effects on both state and individual finances are likely to inject more competencies into the international military marketplace, and make even the untrained more willing to fight for money and personal financial security. This complexity will require trainers and deploying units to be even more knowledgeable about the social, economic, and political variables of an OE, to include neighboring countries and regions critical for deploying forces.



Monthly Wrap-Up of CTID Daily Update

CTID analysts produce a *Daily Update* to help focus our readers on key current events and developments which may be of interest across the Army training community. Each *Daily Update* is organized topically across the Combatant Commands (COCOMs). The following list is a highlight of developments in June 2011. CTID does not assume responsibility for the accuracy of each article. The *Daily Update* is a research tool and an article's inclusion in the *Update* does not reflect an official US Government position on the topic. The [CTID Daily Update](#) is posted daily on AKO.

- 1 June: [DPRK hacker threat increases](#).
- 1 June: [Cholera resurgence kills at least 10 in Haiti](#).
- 2 June: [84 drug trafficking networks dismantled over the last two years](#).
- 3 June: [Iraq: Suicide bomb kills 17 in Tikrit hospital, second explosion feared](#).
- 3 June: [Yemen: President Saleh injured in attack on palace \(videos and map\)](#).
- 6 June: [Azerbaijani civilian killed near Karabakh](#).
- 7 June: [Colombian army kills FARC leader and security head](#).
- 7 June: [Iran sends subs into the Red Sea](#).
- 8 June: [CIA Director: China building capability to counter US](#).
- 8 June: [The Afghan War and the problem of Pakistan \(CSIS analysis with multiple downloads available\)](#).
- 8 June: [The conflicts in Yemen and US national security \(SSI monograph\)](#).
- 8 June: [A new Chinese tracked vehicle family emerges](#).
- 9 June: [NDM-1 found in US military hospital in Bagram](#).
- 9 June: [Israel creates special military unit fight Gaza tunnels](#).
- 10 June: [Social Media: NATO using Twitter as intelligence source in Libya](#).
- 10 June: [Europe: E. coli death toll hits 30](#).
- 13 June: [Conditions in Baghdad](#).
- 15 June: [The new cold war in Asia?](#)
- 15 June: [Military modernization and the Russian ground forces \(SSI download\)](#).
- 16 June: [Narcosubmarine in Panama](#).
- 17 June: [Pentagon concerned about terrorists' cyberwar capabilities](#).
- 20 June: [STRATFOR Special Report: Source doubts Los Zetas chief's death in Mexico](#).
- 21 June: [Zetas scouting for El Salvador's weapons](#).
- 22 June: [Philippine troops capture 2 Abu Sayyaf militants](#).
- 23 June: [Syrians pour into Turkey as tanks enter border zone](#).
- 24 June: [6 die in Afghan bicycle-borne IED blast](#).
- 27 June: [La Familia extortion practices detailed by Federal police](#).

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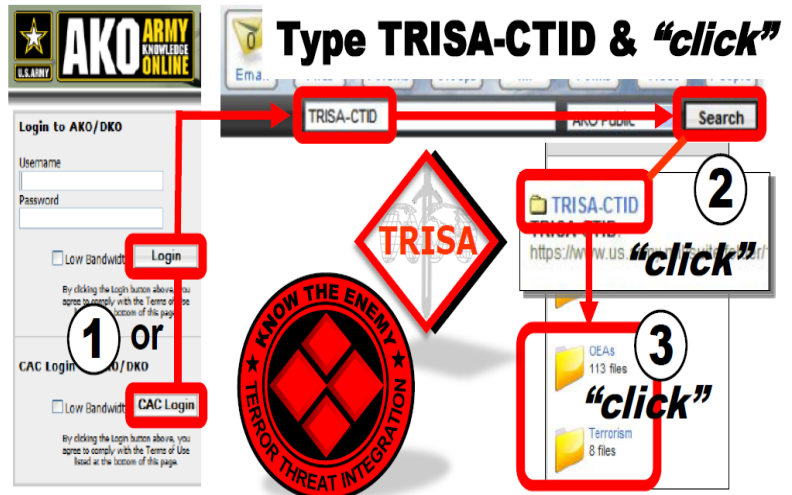
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