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Tactical Reaction to Nuclear
Attack

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DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS;
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS.
DOD DIR 5200.10

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HEADQUARTERS
3d Infantry Division
Fort Benning, Georgia

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STAFF STUDY

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TACTICAL REACTION
TO NUCLEAR ATTACK

I PURPOSE

To present a discussion of immediate actions to be taken by units of an infantry division in the few hours after being hit by a nuclear attack, prior to a deliberate estimate of the situation, and pending receipt of orders from higher headquarters. This, in the initial stages of a war before actual experience on a nuclear battlefield.

II GENERAL

1. Assumptions:

- a. Missions referred to here will involve normal objectives, zones (frontages and depths), and distances of an ATFA infantry division operating as a part of a larger force.
- b. Enemy offensive employment of nuclear weapons will be followed by an exploiting ground attack employing combined arms forces.
- c. The enemy has nuclear weapons of yields similar to our own, which are annually increasing in quantity and effectiveness. The enemy's nuclear attack may consist of multiple explosions delivered day or night.
- d. A division's reserves and fire support elements and possibly Division CP are the most likely targets for nuclear attack.

2. Facts:

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- a. Discussion pertains to the current infantry division, TO&E 7T-ATFA.
- b. Tactical doctrine is contained in current ATFA training texts.
- c. The physical effects of a nuclear explosion can be predicted with an acceptable degree of accuracy; psychological effects, however, cannot be estimated with reliability since there is no battlefield precedent in the tactical employment of nuclear weapons.

3. Scope:

Discussion in the following paragraphs will be divided into two (2) major subheadings: common problems and specific operations. The first section deals

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with these problems and actions that will be common without regard to formation or mission of the division. Although there are five (5) basic actions; i.e., assembly area, movement to contact, attack, defense, and retrograde actions, the second section will deal only with those situations dealing with the latter two (2). Although the division, itself, on defense is less vulnerable to nuclear attack, the destruction of a division on the latter two (2) types of action can have a far more damaging effect on the mission of its parent corps, and/or army.

III DISCUSSION

1. Common Problems:

a. Although varying degrees of chaos will prevail initially, the division must not remain in a state of operational paralysis pending notification of effects and restoration of control. The immediate problems are: (1) to retain or regain control of survivor units; (2) reorganize, acquire and disseminate information upon which command decisions are made and future actions taken; and (3) inform higher headquarters of the situation, so as to permit intelligent and co-ordinated action at that level.

b. Actions toward Solution:

(1) Missions:

(a) Orders must give commanders effective guidance for immediate action, subsequent to a nuclear attack. The commanders concept in orders assumes increased importance since drastic changes in local situations may require prompt tactical action at considerable variance from original plans.

(b) Contingency planning and thought becomes basic in all operations of battalion-size and larger units. This includes alternate axes of attack and objectives, plans for resuscitation and/or replacement of decimated units, and traffic control measures to be imposed when a nuclear attack occurs. Plans must result from logical and orthodox military thought but actions, thereafter, should provide for a maximum degree of speed and must not rely on normal staff procedures or communications.

(c) More than ever before, better informed, better disciplined, and more professionally competent troops and unit leaders are required.

(2) Reconnaissance:

The nuclear attack will trigger maximum reconnaissance to begin immediately to determine: the extent of damage, surviving combat effectiveness, contaminated areas to be avoided, activities of the enemy which will disclose his intentions, and increased emphasis on acquisition of targets for fire support agencies. The Division Aviation Officer should immediately dispatch aircraft over the affected area and to positions from which enemy activities can

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be observed. Information from these aircraft should be sent directly to the division headquarters and division artillery FSCC by the most expeditious channel available. Battalion-size units struck by atomic attack will be capable only of reconnaissance and reports for their own sector. Battalions adjacent to units struck by nuclear attack must immediately send reconnaissance, under battalion control, into the affected sectors for reconnaissance and reporting. Units not immediately adjacent will increase reconnaissance and surveillance measures in the intervals between battalions. By proarrangement with JOC, a nuclear burst should automatically trigger special tactical air reconnaissance.

(3) Communications:

(a) Serious disruptions of communications should be expected. However, complete destruction of the grid communications system is unlikely. Commanders should be aware that a surviving communications center is a good initial location from which to regain communications control of the division.

(b) Re-establishment of communications is of primary concern. Nuclear attack should be the signal for immediate command action to control the use of the communication means to insure that only the most urgent traffic is handled. Radio nets should revert to controlled net type operation. Chain of command will normally designate alternate NCS. Communications checks, both radio and wire, must be made immediately, and appropriate commanders and staff officers advised of the status of communications. Maximum use must be made of messengers and liaison officers. Air messengers should be employed when available. The basic importance of communications discipline must be stressed in training of all ranks. *Good!*

(4) Reports:

Nuclear attacks will produce a rash of inaccurate, exaggerated, and redundant reports. To some extent, training and systematic reporting procedures can overcome this failing. Standardized report forms and operations codes present a partial solution. Simple "fill in" type forms will facilitate radio transmissions and will tend to stimulate more nearly complete reporting. More detailed reporting will be possible when confusion has diminished. Reporting agencies must employ rapid means for transmitting these reports, but in the interest of keeping electrical communications free for emergency traffic, messengers should be used whenever distances permit. This is a particularly fruitful field for further research and development.

(5) Reorganization:

(a) Destruction of a headquarters must not result in protracted loss of control of its subordinate units. At division level, the use of alternate or tactical command posts must be habitual. Surviving headquarters must assume the functions of destroyed higher headquarters without delay, in conformity with previously prescribed standing procedures. When electrical communications fail, liaison officers must be dispatched immediately to the next higher surviving headquarters. Senior officers of all units should "FLASH" report to *Good!*

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their own and/or next higher headquarters their personal location and physical condition.

(b) Unit rallying points and straggler lines must be covered in SOP's or specified in combat orders. These must be within unit sectors or immediately adjacent thereto; they can be considered alternate positions. The senior survivor at each rallying point assumes positive command and establishes interim organization. Through survey of subordinate unit rallying points, each successive commander can determine his surviving combat power and whether further assembly is necessary. These rallying points and straggler lines should be easily identified and should not require or permit a general or more rearward movement of frontline forces, and thus compound panic. They should be patterned to reduce vulnerability to artillery and air attack, which will ordinarily follow a nuclear attack.

(c) The support given by organic artillery and armor is of the greatest importance in stabilizing the division.

(6) Fire Support:

(a) Surviving division fire support agencies, particularly artillery, are of maximum value to immediate reaction to nuclear attack. These agencies may be presented with a highly remunerative target when the enemy forces are in their final concentration areas preparing to launch the exploitation. The operations SOP of fire support units must facilitate immediate reorganization of surviving elements and units, so as to provide for massing of fires on: probable assembly areas, attack positions, and avenues of approach. Maximum use should be made of airborne observers. As far as feasible, probable nuclear missions should be planned ahead in order to reduce the time required for delivery. These "on call" missions should be kept current at Corps as far in advance as the tempo of operations will permit. Also, by prearrangement with JOC, an enemy nuclear burst should trigger an automatic request for tactical air support. Speed is essential to avoid the necessity of hitting close-in targets after forces have mingled. A maximum and immediate effort will gain time for the division while it recovers from the effects of a nuclear attack.

(b) The loss of reasonable efficiency in two or more organic artillery battalions will require reinforcing artillery from Corps.

2. Specific Operations

a. Defense:

(1) Considerations:

(a) It is a fundamental disadvantage to the defender that although passive means of defense increase the chance of survival, battlefield initiative is forfeited and the overall safety of the parent units is placed in greater jeopardy.

(b) Of the various battlefield situations the defense is the one in which the initiative is surrendered to the enemy.

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(c) Units in prepared positions are less vulnerable to the effects of nuclear weapons.

(2) Actions toward Solution:

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(a) The battlefield vacuum created by nuclear bursts can be treated somewhat like a penetration. Since fire support and reserve elements will be priority targets, some blocking positions must be deeper than normally required to block a conventional penetration. Plans for rallying points and emergency assembly areas should be tied in with blocking plans. As time permits, blocking positions should be dug in and prepared for rapid occupancy. Fire plans will be developed to support combat in these areas. Requirements for ammunition and other critical supplies at these positions must be ascertained immediately and CO, Support Command, informed thereof. Consistent with availability of vehicles and trailers, as much as possible will be retained "on wheels."

(b) Based upon assumed areas of penetration, both conventional and nuclear, counterattack plans will be prepared. Having sustained a nuclear attack, the division's capability to launch a successful counterattack of more than local nature is doubtful unless nuclear fire support is available.

(c) The static nature of a defensive situation dictates special emphasis on deception measures, both passive and active. In details, more means must be provided for false gun positions, "canvas" air strips, and more resources made available for camouflage and concealment of command posts, installations, and materiel.

(d) Probable enemy assembly areas, attack positions, avenues of approach, and utilization of shielding terrain remain constant in the defensive sector, thus facilitating acquisition of intelligence and target data, and the preparation of detailed and accurate fire plans. Prompt delivery of fires will gain time for the occupancy of blocking positions and general reorganization. The static situation of areas of threat permits detailed planning for the defensive employment of nuclear weapons.

b. Retrograde Actions:

(1) Considerations:

(a) Retrograde actions are most vulnerable and conducive to panic.

(b) Local air supremacy is of optimum importance.

(c) Supporting fires tend to be less effective because of the requirement for frequent displacement of indirect fire weapons.

(d) Evacuation of personnel and equipment is complicated and may be impracticable or impossible.

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(2) Actions toward Solution:

(a) The enemy's use of atomic weapons, obviously, increases the danger of panic. Better trained and better disciplined troops, leadership of the highest order, and plans which will guide individuals and units in the periods of greatest stress and confusion will counteract this danger. Plans must provide detailed instructions which permit continued movement by units and individuals during periods when no orders are received from higher headquarters. Contingent orders must be based on the phase of the operation; i.e., at assembly points, during ontrucking, during movement, or after detrucking. Rallying points should be designated in such orders.

(b) Security of forces and speed are the principal deterrents to encirclement and defeat in detail. A greater than normal requirement for traffic control posts will exist. Teams, prepared and equipped to clear debris, must be organized at each battalion level. All planning must slant toward one consideration; i.e., in the retrograde, the decision as to course of action has already been made and is virtually unalterable.

(c) Great dependence is placed on security forces. An aggressive enemy in attack formation and with a nuclear weapons capability will conduct active reconnaissance in force, including probing of the forward positions. This greatly increases the dangers inherent in the current technique of night withdrawal, if we don't succeed in deceiving the enemy as to our intention to withdraw. Further, the units left in contact will lack the capability and/or willingness to interfere effectively with an enemy attack. Since it is essential to protect the main force from attack during movement, a combined arms force, capable of delaying actions, seems necessary. In some situations the best solution may be to withdraw, at maximum speed, under cover of a nuclear spoiling attack, which must be in co-ordination with some ground offensive. This offers a good prospect of success in day or night operations.

(d) In the delaying action, some type of time schedule is inevitable in order to preserve a degree of control during periods of stress and lost communications. Such schedules must be simple and based on a sequence of events rather than the clock. This will allow local commanders to co-ordinate their actions in the absence of specific instructions.

(e) The prospect of mass casualties while moving away from the line of contact creates a serious problem of logistics and morale. While continued movement of the main force is essential, every effort must be made to make maximum use of available transportation to evacuate the wounded. Most situations will not, in all probability, permit adequate care for the dead or evacuation of immobilized equipment.

IV CONCLUSIONS

1. Between the time a nuclear attack is sustained and orders are received from higher headquarters, there are a number of actions which may be taken which will contribute to unit recovery and will facilitate a co-ordinated effort. Certain of these actions lend themselves to becoming SOP.

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2. The most rapid means the division has to counter an exploiting force is the immediate and maximum employment of all fire support agencies, both ground and air.
3. Well organized and expeditious troop movements are a basic requirement in nuclear warfare. Units that lose mobility on the battlefield invite destruction.
4. Nuclear warfare increases the requirement for alternate and contingency planning and flexibility.
5. The presence of an enemy combined arms force, supported by nuclear weapons, makes it many times more dangerous to rely on current doctrine for the night withdrawal, i.e., the surreptitious movement of the main force (support troops, reserves, and 2/3 of forces in the battle position) to a new rearward position, screened by a heterogeneous force composed of 1/3 combat forces left in the forward portions of the old battle position. The destruction of a delaying position prior to or concurrent with its occupation will probably necessitate the retrograde movement to continue to another position further to the rear.
6. Survival in nuclear warfare will require superior leadership and highly trained, physically hardened, disciplined troops who have been psychologically prepared to sustain nuclear attack.
7. The commanders' concept of operation must facilitate instantaneous independent action and passage of command. Detailed troop briefing becomes more important.

V STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

Attached is a sample "Nuclear Annex" to an infantry division SOP.

1 Incl
c/s


R. D. BOATNER
Major General, USA
Commanding

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Part III, Appendix 2, Annex C, Operations, 3d Infantry Division Standing Operating Procedure, 2 September 1955

TACTICAL REACTION TO NUCLEAR ATTACK

This sect prescribes immediate actions to be taken when the div is subjected to an on nuclear atk pending development of an est of the sit and reestablishment of normal control.

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1. ORDERS:

✓ a. Condr concept portion of orders will be in sufficient detail to permit continuous, and where necessary, independent action by subor units when comms fail

✓ b. Div opn orders for the defense will designate within the div sector "emerg assy areas" and/or alternate positions. Orders of subor hq will designate unit rallying points. Sig for assy at such points will be prescribed or contained in the SOI.

2. RECONNAISSANCE (automatic - without orders):

a. Division Level:

✓ (1) Div Avn Off will dispatch recon acft over blast areas and to positions from which the cn can be observed, rept results directly to div hq and FSCC. En air atk and air supremacy over the immediate area of burst, after the explosion, will be expected.

✓ (2) Unless otherwise entirely committed, CO 3d Recon Bn will dispatch recon elm to affected areas to determine off and surviving combat effectiveness, rept results directly to div hq.

✓ (3) G3 (Air) will fwd immediate req for Tac Air Recon. Arrangements will be made with JOC to accept such requests on a "FLASH" basis, using a readily identifiable code word.

✓ (4) Personal recon by heptry will be initiated by CG, ADC, G3 or DivArty, depending on conditions.

b. Unit Level:

✓ (1) Units adjacent to affected areas will make immediate recon to determine damage and surviving cmbt effectiveness, reporting findings by the most expeditious means available.

(2) Elm within affected areas will conduct local (internal) recon to determine surviving cmbt effectiveness, reporting results by all available means, including liaison officers.

! Rept!

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(3) Unit CBR monitor teams will survey area and report intensity, map coord and time of readings to next higher hq.

(4) Areas where intensity of radiation is 50 r/hr or greater will be posted.

(5) Unit cmnr will control movement of personnel in areas where radiation intensity is 50 r/hr or greater.

c. Radiation Detection:

(1) CO, 3d Ren Bn in addition to gnd recon will dispatch CBR monitor teams to affected areas to determine eff, surveying enbt effectiveness and presence of residual radiation. Results will be reported directly to div hq.

(a) Intensity readings, map coord and times of readings will be reported to G3 by radio.

(b) A diagram of the surveyed area showing iso-intensity lines will be submitted to G3 as soon as possible. !!

(c) Assist in posting signs isolating area where radiation is 50 r/hr or higher.

(2) Div Avn Off will include CBR monitor acct in his recon over blast areas and to positions from which enemy can be observed, reporting results to div hq.

(a) Intensity readings of 50 r/hr or greater, map coord and times of readings will be reported to G3 by radio.

(3) Units will not enter areas wher intensity of radiation is reported 50 roentgens/hour or greater. Entry of units into areas of lower intensity will be closely controlled to insure that no individual receives a dosage in excess of 100 roentgens in one day or 300 roentgens in one week.

3. COMMUNICATIONS:

a. General:

(1) Nuclear atk will be the sig for all cmnr to impose strict control over all commo means.

(2) Immediate check of all commo means will be made and status

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rept furnished to responsible cmdr. Subsequent checks of circuits will be made only of those in doubt.

✓ (3) Nuclear atk will not constitute automatic authority to transmit msg in the clear. Consideration of scy and urgency will govern this. Restraint will be exercised in the assignment of precedence to msg. Originators are responsible for verifying actual receipt of important msg, this is to be accomplished by inclusion of the word "acknowledge" in the texts of the msg.

b. Radio:

(1) Rad nets revert immediately to "controlled" type nets. Rad check will be made but must be brief and in accordance with prescribed rad procedure. NCS will be designated by responsible cmdr as required.

(2) G2, G3 assume NCS of Div Opn and Intel nets respectively. S2, S3 of chain of command cmdr assumes NCS if G2, G3 become casualties.

✓ (3) Format for "FLASH" nuclear damage reports contained in Div SSI: Brevity code in Div SOI.

c. Wire:

(1) Serviceability checks of wire circuits will be made in order of priority as follows:

(a) Comd and fire control trunks.

(b) All local circuits.

(c) All others.

(2) Trunk circuits will be checked from the switch board of the hq responsible for instl and maint thereof.

(3) Rep of local circuits will be accomplished immediately.

(4) Rep of trunks will be decided by the Div Sig Off when the pattern of surviving hq has been determined.

✓ 2 (5) Priority of rep of trunks will be for fire control circuits and trunks between major tactical hq.

✓ (6) Cmdr and staff off will exercise positive comd control to assure that telephone circuits remain clear of nonessential calls.

Part III, App 2, Anx C, Opns, 3d Inf Div SOP, 2 Sep 55 (Cont'd)

d. Other Means:

(1) Each Hq, Bn and higher, will dispatch mtr messengers and/or ln off to the next higher hq.

(2) Restraint will be exercised in the assignment of precedence to msg. Only the most urgent matters must receive priority handling if the system is to be effective.

(3) Commo Centers will be prepared to assume the functions of other commo centers at paralled or different echelons.

4. REPORTS:

a. Initial rept will be sent to this hq or next senior surviving hq on a "FLASH" basis and accorded the highest priority.

b. Format and use of special reports will be as prescribed in the SSI.

5. REORGANIZATION:

Good!
a. Div Hq will maintain an alternate tactical comd post separated from the Main Comd Post in the following order of priority unless otherwise designated in orders.

(1) Div "Jump" CP (when operational)

(2) Div Arty CP

(3) Res ICC CP

(4) Spt Cmd CP

b. Hq at all ech will be prepared to assume the functions of their next higher Hq within the div.

c. In agents with radio will be dispatched from all Bn and higher Hq to the next higher surviving Hq with detailed info to include the exact location and tactical effectiveness of parent unit.

d. At rallying points senior survivors will assume comd and reconstitute internal organization.

e. Inf Bn will be prepared to furnish by the most expeditious means, on order, one (1) reinf rifle co prepared and organized for attack or organization of a defensive position, composed as follows:

Excellent!

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- (1) Rifle Company
- (2) HMG Sqd
- (3) 81mm Mort Sqd
- (4) AT (106mm) Soc

6. FIRE SUPPORT:

✓ a. Conventional Fires:

Good!
(1) Fire spt plans will include counter preparation type fires designed to disrupt probable on exploiting forces. In nuclear atk will be the sig to deliver max available effective fire in spt of affected areas.

(2) FDC will be prepared to assume the functions of either the next higher or lower FDC within the div.

(3) G3 (Air) will fwd an immediate req for tact embt air spt over and around area of blast. Arrangements will be made with JOC to accept such req on an emergency basis through the use of a brevity code word.

(4) Each FSCC must be prepared to assume functions of the next higher FSCC.

✓ b. Nuclear Weapons Fires:

(1) G3 (Sp Wpn Off) will maintain a separate nuclear sit map. Preplanned RCZ's, based on probable assy areas and avenues of approach, will be plotted.

(2) Nuclear fire req on probable trt will be completed in all detail except time and trt description and filed at Corps. Arrangements will be made for emergency delivery of these fires in response to a brevity code word or other means of rapid req.

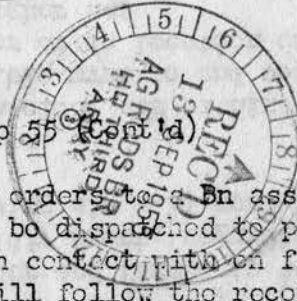
✓ 7. TANK BATTALIONS:

a. Each Tk Bn Cmdr will continually consider and formulate tentative plans for movement, on order, to any portion of the div front, regardless of attachment or mission assigned. Such plans in a moving sit will normally be based merely on map recon.

b. Immediately upon receipt of info of a nuclear atk within the div area, each Tk Bn Cmdr will alert his organ for possible mvmt to and commitment in the affected area. No change in assigned missions or in location of Bns or committed units will be made without orders of higher hq.



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Part III, App 2, Anx C, Opns, 3d Inf Div SOP, 2 Sep 55 (Cont'd)

c. Immediately upon receipt of competent orders, a Bn assigned a mission in the affected area, Bn recon elms will be dispatched to perform route recon to the area, and to locate and maintain contact with en forces exploiting the atomic atk. The Tk Bns concerned will follow the recon elms at the min distance conditions permit.

d. Normal missions to be assigned a Tk Bn in def against exploitation of an atomic atk, will be blocking an en penetration, atk and reduction of an en penetration, reinf of a unit receiving the atomic atk, or occupation of a position previously held by the unit receiving the atomic attack.

✓ 8. MOVEMENT AND MOBILITY:

Bn size and larger units, must have plans made for mov to alternate positions and emergency assy areas by organic means

9. LOGISTICS.

Area Damage Control:

ADC Hq will be established and the Area Damage Control SOP implemented when the Spt Cndr has sufficient info concerning the en burst to do so intelligently. The primary mission of ADC Hq will be to facilitate the accomplishment of the overall mission of the div. Immediate action will be taken to establish and maintain road priorities for the continued spt of enbt. His duty will be entirely logistical. The local tac cndr assumes responsibility for enbt.

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Good!

10. MEDICAL CARE AND EVACUATION:

The protection of the div as a whole and maint of the div on its mission takes priority over med care and evacuation.

a. Immediately following a nuclear atk, med pers surviving the blast will organize a sorting sta in the vic of the aid sta site for the purpose of screening casualties. Patients requiring minor treatment and who are considered to be physically capable of performing their mission will be returned to dy and directed to a rendezvous point. Those requiring evacuation will be held and a cas col pt established. Mass evacuation by all available transportation will be used only when the tac sit permits.

b. Div Mod Svc will take up sorting and evac responsibilities on call, in accordance with the Med Anx to the ADCOC Plan.