

MARINE LESSONS LEARNED - CONVOYS

Enemy COAs

Most likely

- IEDs,
- Small arms, RPG, mortar and rocket attacks on soft targets of opportunity
- Vehicle and human born IEDs

Most Dangerous

- Ground attack followed by VBIED attack/attacks
- Mortar/Rocket attack followed by Platoon, Company, Battalion sized ground assault on a FOB/FARP – The threat of this grows as the enemy becomes more organized, confident, and better equipped and armed. Concern is the enemy may try to take down a poorly defended FOB/FARP for propaganda value. Army assesses these attacks can be broken up and defeated with a solid and well-integrated FOB/FARP defense plan.
- Local and limited small scale chemical and bio attacks with mortars/rockets – Although the likelihood of such an attack is minimal having FPMs, canisters, CBR meds, suits, and detection equipment available at geographically dispersed sites is still necessary

Convoys

- All convoys, regardless of size, need to be equipped with crew served weapons. It is also important to equip convoys with M-203 grenade launchers to give the convoy a rudimentary indirect fire capability (many small arms and RPG attack originate from irrigation ditches or from behind courtyard walls where direct fire weapons are less effective than indirect fire weapons in killing the enemy in defilade. Crew served weapons should be placed at the head and rear of convoys. Ring mounts should be used for firing stability (the requirement for crew served weapons and ring mounts will be problematic for MACCS and CSS units not equipped with crew served weapons and ring mounts). If ring mounts are not available or cannot be obtained then improvised ring mounts or pedestal mounts should be fabricated and installed. In larger convoys, crew served weapons should be placed at an interval of every 5-9 vehicles. If crew served weapons and ring mounts are not available “gun trucks” should be constructed. These gun trucks should contain a crew served weapon, a grenadier equipped with a M-203 grenade launcher and individual riflemen authorized to use 3 round burst and supplied with plenty of magazines and ammo. M-998 High Back HMMWVs and 5/7 Ton trucks make good “gun trucks.” These vehicles should be hardened with steal plating and sandbags to protect the gunners from small arms and RPG fire. Canvas should be removed or secured so as not to obstruct observation or interfere with the firing of weapons.

- Lead with the heaviest vehicle first. This will enable the vehicle to force its way through or past an improvised roadblock if necessary. Drivers should be taught when and how to negotiate or force their way through an improvised roadblock (not all roadblocks should be forced). Additionally, the lead vehicle should be equipped with a crew served weapon and an “A-gunner/observer.” The purpose of the “A-gunner/observer is to scan the road for IEDs while the gunner scans danger areas and choke points such as road intersections, bridges, urban terrain, thick vegetation, and overpasses. The “A-gunner/observer” should be equipped with binos and night vision goggles and know how to load and use the crew served weapon. The Army has determined that the vehicle driver and gunner are too busy with other tasks to also scan for IEDs.
- Convoy commanders should coordinate the movement and the time of their convoy’s movement with the local ground force commander whose sector they will be transiting through. This allows the local ground force commander, usually a Battalion or Company Commander to position a QRF, ISR assets, security patrols, counter ambush elements, recon elements, or counter-sniper teams in or around known trouble areas along the convoy’s route. This allows the ground force commander the opportunity to intercept attackers before they make contact with the convoy or block the attackers retreat after an attack so they can be killed or captured. Additionally, pre-staging a QRF enables the ground force commander to respond faster to a convoy that encounters trouble. Most attacks on convoys originate in urban terrain or built up areas where cover and concealment is plentiful. Aggressive patrolling prior to a convoy’s arrival will also minimizes attacks.
- Most IEDs are being emplaced during the hours of darkness. The enemy is also placing IEDs on the roofs of overpasses/underpasses. These IEDs are detonated as the convoy passes underneath the overpass. Additionally, RPGs are often fired or hand grenades are thrown from the blind side of underpasses/overpasses. Therefore, underpasses/overpasses should be checked for IEDs and cleared of personnel before a convoy arrives. If this cannot be done just prior to a convoy arriving than a small security element should move ahead of the convoy to provide over watch of the overpass/underpass as the convoy passes under or over it.
- The enemy likes to attack the rear of convoys. Therefore, unobstructed 360 degree observation and fields of fires are required. Personnel should be looking to the front, sides, and rear of convoys at all times. Therefore, convoys should be organized with personnel **looking and ready to fire to the rear of the convoy at all times**. A vehicle with 360 degrees of visibility should follow vehicles with only 180 degrees of visibility. Examples of vehicles with 180 degrees of visibility are 7-ton trucks with shelters/ISO containers on the bed and HMMWVs equipped with shelters.
- Whenever possible a small lead or trail security element should proceed or follow a convoy at about 300 to 500 meters. This lead/trail security element should consist of at least two armored HMMWVs with crew served weapons. The purpose of the lead element is to clear or conduct over watches of overpasses and danger areas and the trail security elements prevents the convoy from being attacked from the rear.

- **Convoys should consist of at least five or more vehicles. Smaller convoys cannot produce enough firepower to fend off attacks or deal with casualties and provide security simultaneously.**
- All vehicles should be hardened with sandbags, metal-reinforcing plates, and Kevlar blankets to reduce the affects of IEDs, RPGs, and mines.
- Drivers should avoid driving over road potholes or newly repaired or dug up sections of road that look out of place. Newly repaired potholes or sections of road may contain pressure triggered or command detonated mines/IEDs.
- Spare tires should be taken on all convoys.
- **If attacked respond immediately with a high volume of aimed fire to kill or suppress the attacker/attackers.** Personnel only have about 1-2 seconds to identify and respond to the threat.

Ammunition

- **The basic load of ammo is not enough for personnel conducting convoy ops. Personnel should be equipped with the basic load of ammo x 3.** This additional ammo should be carried in ammo cans, bandoleers, or spare magazines and be spread loaded across the convoy. Where the ammo is stored should be standardized and everyone in the convoy should know where it is kept. **Officers and SNCOs participating in convoy ops should be equipped with 6 magazines (90 rounds) of 9mm ammo.** Trying to reload 9mm magazines on the move, under fire, or under stress has proven to be difficult, if not impossible.
- Foot patrols cannot realistically carry the basic load of ammo x 3. Therefore, additional ammo, water, and food should be pre-staged at FOBs/FARPs or Plt, Company, and Battalion CPs for rapid resupply of the patrol if necessary.
- Convoys should also be equipped with grenades, M-203s, and AT-4s for use if the convoy gets ambushed and stopped and has to fight its way out of a situation or establish a strong point defensive position until it can be relieved by a QRF.
- Sufficient quantities of training ammo must be made available to BZO weapons and allow personnel to fire their weapons so they become competent operating their weapons and confident of their own abilities.

Convoy Live Fire Training and Rehearsals

- The Army has established a convoy live fire training course in Kuwait. Units going into Iraq are encouraged to take advantage of this training opportunity or establish their own live fire course of instruction. This period of instruction has proven effective in ensuring everyone knows how to react to various situations and scenarios. It has been found that

CSS and non-combat arms units need this type of training the most. Details and location of this Army Live Fire Convoy course in Kuwait is contained on the classified CD ROM.

- It is important to hold convoy briefs and **rehearsals** prior to conducting convoy ops. Everyone needs to know what their responsibilities are and how to identify IEDs, treat casualties, handle disabled vehicles, conduct rest stop/refueling security, and perform ambush immediate action. Everyone should know how to operate comm. gear (Iridium phones, Blue Force Tracker, tactical radios) and call for CAS and CASEVACs.

Protection of Command Posts, TACC, and Critical Low Density Assets

- Mortars and rockets have attacked almost all Army FOBs/FARPs in Iraq in recent weeks. These attacks are becoming more frequent and sophisticated with each passing day. Enemy combatants have been seen using binos, telescopes, and cellular phones to adjust fire and observe high value targets. Enemy fire teams and squads have also been observed maneuvering during mortar/rocket attacks trying to breach FOBs/FARPs perimeters or find weak points.
- Because of the mortar attacks it is suggested that COCs, CPs, and the TACC be protected with berms, concrete/brick walls, or HESO/Alaska barriers. Additionally, critical low density assets or one of a kind type equipment such as ATC Control Towers, TRC-170s, SATCOM, digital tech control, and tactical data network vans should also be protected with berms, concrete/brick walls, or HESO/Alaska barriers to enhance survivability from indirect fires. In one instance a Bn TOC was told repeatedly to harden their TOC housed in tents. These suggestions were ignored. Then the FOB was attacked with mortars and 16 soldiers in and around the TOC were wounded. The Army suggests using existing buildings with reinforced concrete walls and ceilings. **Based on this information 3d MAW should reevaluate using BASE-X tents for the TACC and other facilities unless the tents are protected by HESCO/Alaska barriers and/or berms.**
- **Large billeting areas should not be built.** Although large tent cities are convenient for engineers to build and Camp Commandants to manage they are lucrative targets for mortars. Billeting areas should be dispersed throughout the FOB/FARP to increase force protection and enhance survivability. Bunkers with overhead cover should be built and dispersed around billeting and work areas. **Many units are underestimating the expense, engineering effort and materials required (sandbags, HESCO barriers, 4X4s, engineer stakes, plywood) to build bunkers and protect critical facilities.**
- COC/CPs should be protected by berms and barriers to reduce the effects of suicide VBIEDs. **A comprehensive multi-layer berm and barrier plan should be employed to foil would be suicide bombers that make it past the first layer of defense.** Recent actions in Saudi Arabia where vehicle born suicide bomber/bombers work in conjunction with an attacking ground force cannot be ruled out in Iraq. These berms and barriers should be located far enough away from critical assets to prevent overpressure, blast, fire, and shrapnel damage.
- Comm equipment such as SATCOM vans, MRC-142, and TRC-170 radio equipment should be remoted away from COC/CPs (i.e. don't do what we did at Al Jaber and Al Kut

by locating the SATCOM van right next to the TACC and Air Boss Facility. These assets indicate a high value target and have become aiming stakes for enemy mortar attacks.

- **According to observations by the CALL assessment team many U.S. and coalition military facilities are not well protected or defended against a determined Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) attack/attacks. Especially, if the attack comes on the heels of an enemy ground force that penetrates the perimeter making a way for the VBIED to enter the perimeter (this has been done 4 times in the last six months in Saudi Arabia resulting in very effective VBIED attacks). The Army assesses that it is only a matter of time before this tactic is used in Iraq. Units also do not appear to be prepared for multiple VBIEDs to be detonated simultaneously at one location. Scenario; one VBIED is detonated at the gate then another VBIED follows the first and penetrates deeper into the perimeter followed by another VBIED. To defend against this kind of attack units must develop a defense in depth at FOB/FARPS, This defense must consist of multi layered berm and barrier plan covered by observation and fire. Units that have constructed berms or barriers have not constructed them with far enough away from high value targets. Consequently, even if a large truck VBIED is stopped at the first line of defense it will often still have catastrophic effects on personnel and equipment.**
- **The above information should be used by Pre Deployment Site Survey teams when picking and laying out FOBs/FARPs. Facilities should not be located in areas or packed into sites where berms, HESO/Alaska barriers, and bunkers cannot be built or employed.**

Perimeter Defense of FOBs/FARPs and Organization of Quick Reaction Forces (QRF)

- All units aboard a FOB/FARP should be integrated into the air base perimeter defense plan. Each unit should be responsible for supplying personnel and weapons to man the perimeter or be part of the QRF in case of an emergency. These FOB/FARP defense plans must be **rehearsed and exercised on a routine basis** so everyone knows their responsibilities and tasks.
- Fighting positions and bunkers with overhead cover need to be constructed on the perimeter of FOB/FARPs. Personnel must be capable of fighting from these positions while under mortar/rocket attack. That means these structures must contain apertures to fire from and not just be places to hide during a mortar or rocket attack.

Medical

- The new “Quick Clot” bandage has proven very effective in saving lives. All medical personnel should be trained on how to use them. Corpsmen and medical units not equipped with “Quick Clot” bandages should order some now. Realistically, all personnel should be trained on how to use the “Quick Clot” bandage and be trained in basic life saving first aid.

- Convoys should be outfitted with at least one Corpsman.

General Intel and Miscellaneous Observations

- Iraqi intel on American forces, weapons systems, and tactics, techniques and procedures is very, very good. This is most likely due to predictability and the failure of U.S. forces to vary their routines, schedules, and tactics.
- Additionally, host nation workers hired by the U.S. military and civilian corporations have been caught collecting intel and placing electronic bugs in and around U.S. facilities. All host nation workers must be searched before coming aboard U.S. facilities and then watched closely while working within U.S. facilities.
- **The enemy is clever and cunning and should not be underestimated.** Unit Commanders that are ignoring or wishing away enemy capabilities and lethality are sustaining casualties.
- **Curfews** – Canceling the curfew was a political, not a military decision. Most lower level military commanders want the curfew reestablished immediately. The number of attacks have increased dramatically since the curfew was lifted. Enemy forces are now free to move equipment and personnel around the battle space or emplace IEDs during the hours of darkness without interruption. Lifting the curfew violates one of the fundamental principles of counter insurgency operations, which is strict control of the general population.
- Units down to the Battalion level need access to SIPRNET. Most Army Battalions do not have access to SIPRNET and therefore are having trouble getting timely access to many intel products.
- Fluids, lubricants, and filters in vehicles and generators need to be change more often. Many Army units are neglecting SAPMs while deployed and their maintenance readiness is starting to suffer over the long term. **A responsive supply support plan is critical to material and maintenance readiness.** The 38% requisition fill rate for repair parts and consumables that was experienced during OIF I will not cut it for a yearlong deployment.