



Night combat

or the need to stay one step ahead

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Engagement opérationnel

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October 6, 1952 evening, Arrowhead Hill, Korea. Preceded by the firing of 8,000 shells falling on hill 281 alone, held by the French contingent, the assault of the enemy forces is launched. Despite intense artillery preparation and overcrowding, the UN troops, fighting with bayonets and grenades, resisted and managed to prevent the Sino-Korean coalition from attacking in the direction of Seoul.

From the Battle of Thermopylae to the hunt for, then the death of Osama bin Laden, each conflict has its share of night operations, the outcome of which can prove decisive for the continuation of the war.

It would therefore seem essential to understand this type of combat well, in order to be able to restrict the constraints while taking advantage of the opportunities it creates. Night combat is not radically different from day combat, but it significantly alters certain Factors of superiority factors of operational superiority (FSO1).

It is possible to limit this alteration by remaining at the cutting edge of technology while preparing effectively for this combat. The recent engagements of the Army, as well as a look at other contemporary conflicts, allow a better understanding of the specificities of this particular combat.

I. Nature and constraints of limited visibility

Night is the space of time between sunset and sunrise in a given place. Its level of brightness as well as its duration differs according to the time of year and geographical location. There are many natural factors that can contribute to obscuring visibility at night, such as fog, precipitation or sand clouds.

This visibility will be radically different depending on whether you are fighting in Europe on a clear, dry December night or in the Sahel, which is swept by a powerful harmattan at the same time. It is then very useful to obtain the most reliable data before operating a night phase. Having a geographical intelligence capacity is therefore an undeniable added value.

Reduced visibility alters the following FSOs:

- **Comprehension:** Detection, location of battlefield targets and above all identification of forces are only possible at much shorter distances than during the day, it is necessary to increase security and reconnaissance;

- **Agility:**

- Orientation becomes more difficult at all levels and the speed of progress is reduced;

- the difficulties of acquisition decrease the effectiveness of the direct shots, the effective range is reduced, more especially as the gleams of departure of the blows facilitate the localization of the friendly positions by the enemy;

- **Stamina:** the increased physical and mental tension leads to additional apprehension and fatigue, which results in less effectiveness of the fighter;

- **Moral strength:** surprise is reinforced, which implies both risks for the defender and chances of success for the attacker;

- **Command performance:**

- The pace of tactical operations is slowed down, preparation times are extended;

- greater difficulties in the precise coordination of fire and movement result in additional risks of interlocking and fratricidal fire...

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