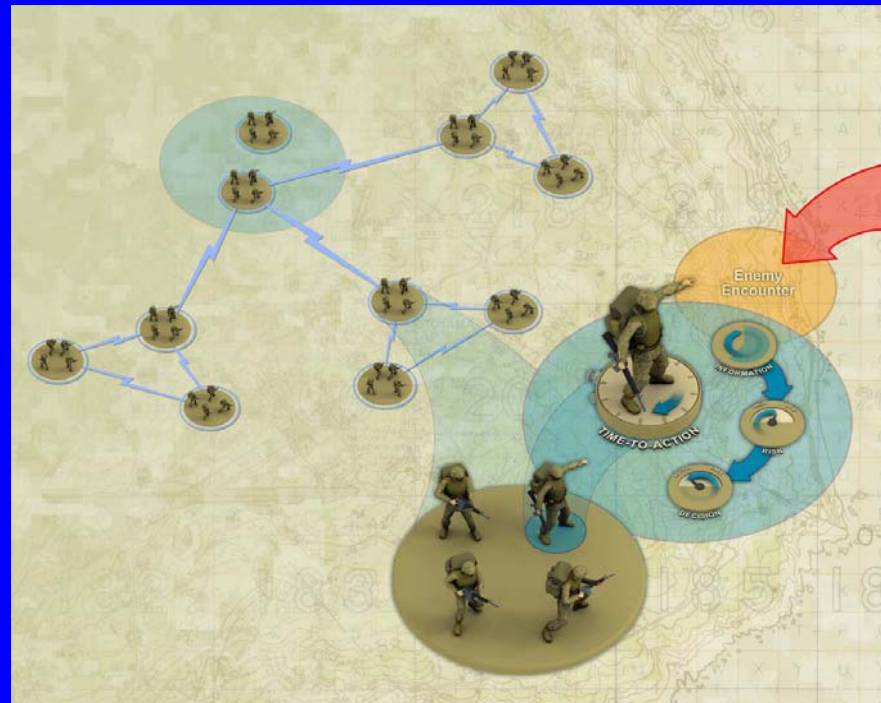


# Distributed Operations and Command: A Brief Historical Perspective



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# Purpose

- What did previous efforts in executing “distributed operations” intend?
- What were the results of previous DO efforts?
- What are the implications for command & control?



# Agenda

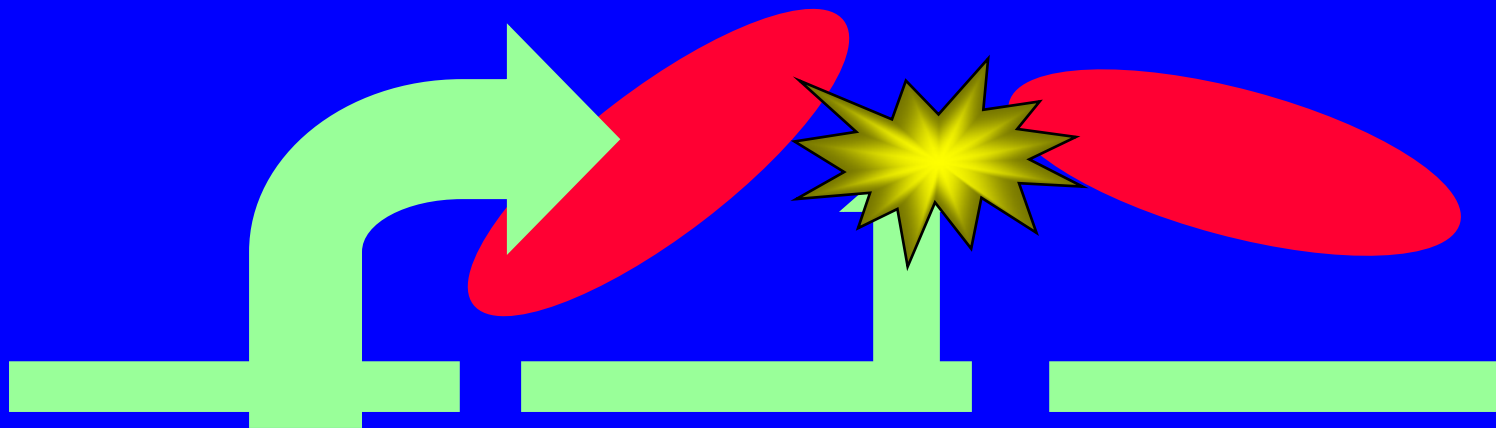
- **Historical Evolution of DO:**
  - What “Drove” DO
  - DO Historical Antecedents
  - Historical DO Theory and Practice
  - Historical Trends
  - Historical DO Countermeasures
- **Historical DO Command and Control Patterns**
- **Historical DO Intelligence Patterns**
- **Implications**

# What Drove DO in History?

- Progressively larger units grew beyond ability of a single commander to command them effectively
- Need for speed/tempo at operational and tactical levels—coupled with growing size of force—demanded decentralization of decisionmaking
- Social and economic factors allowed effective decentralization to occur

# DO Entails Decentralization & Infiltration

- Senior Commander can no longer see and command reaction to fleeting opportunities everywhere contact is made/will be made
- Lower level leaders allowed to “break contact” with flanks to get through “gaps” in opponent



# Past DO Historical Trends

- Consistently “higher” casualties—particularly among junior leaders—but gained results that were disproportionately larger
- The smaller the DO element, the greater the risk of isolation and loss; mitigated by “supporting range” of other elements (forces and arms)
- Cohesion factors paramount during employment
- Works best asymmetrically against opponents with centralized C2 structures that cannot react fast enough to OODA challenges
- **Reconnaissance pull is central pillar to tactical success**

# Reconnaissance Pull:

## What It is...What It Isn't

- “Your forward element is a reconnaissance screen. Its job is to look for surfaces and gaps. When it finds a gap, it goes through, *and calls for other forces to follow.*”
  - Forward element DOES recon; doesn't have to BE recon—pulls neighboring units behind it when gaps are found
  - Example: SSgt Rubarth on the Meuse vic Sedan, 1940 (see Doughty, *Breaking Point*)
- Recon Pull is NOT WAITING for HHQ to send/redirect units through recon-discovered gaps.

William S. Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985); Robert A. Doughty, *The Breaking Point: Sedan and the Fall of France, 1940* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1990)

# DO Historical Antecedents (I)

- 1916-1918 German stormtroop tactics
  - Decentralize to squad level; infiltrate trench line, reaggregate in rear to attack defending artillery and “collapse” the defense



Bruce I. Gudmundsson, *Stormtroop Tactics* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1989); Timothy T. Lupfer, *The Dynamics of Doctrine* (Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1981).



# DO Historical Antecedents (II)

- 1939-1940 Finnish “motti” tactics
  - Decentralized action against strung out Soviet motorized columns on roads



# DO Historical Antecedents (III)

- 1944 CHINDIT operations in CBI
  - Long-range direct action operations under independent command



# DO Historical Antecedents (IV)

- “Stingray” teams in Viet Nam
  - Small camouflaged teams with dedicated “on-call” supporting arms



# DO Historical Antecedents (V)

- **Combined Action Platoons (CAP), VietNam**
  - Provide decentralized persistent presence to cut off insurgent from the people



INFILTRATION

Michael E. Peterson, *The Combined Action Platoons* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1989)

Al Hemingway, *Our War Was Different* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994)



# Historical DO Theory (I): Complementary Force Dilemma

- **“Fix and flank” – decentralization of capability:**
  - Do it with a single army; apogee was Frederick the Great
  - Do it with several armies; apogee was the anti-Napoleonic Coalition in 1813-1815
  - Do it within a tactical organization: apogee within 20<sup>th</sup> Century to the squad level (for a 3GW force) – birth of DO
- **All required decentralization—trend has been to decentralize command to lowest level.**

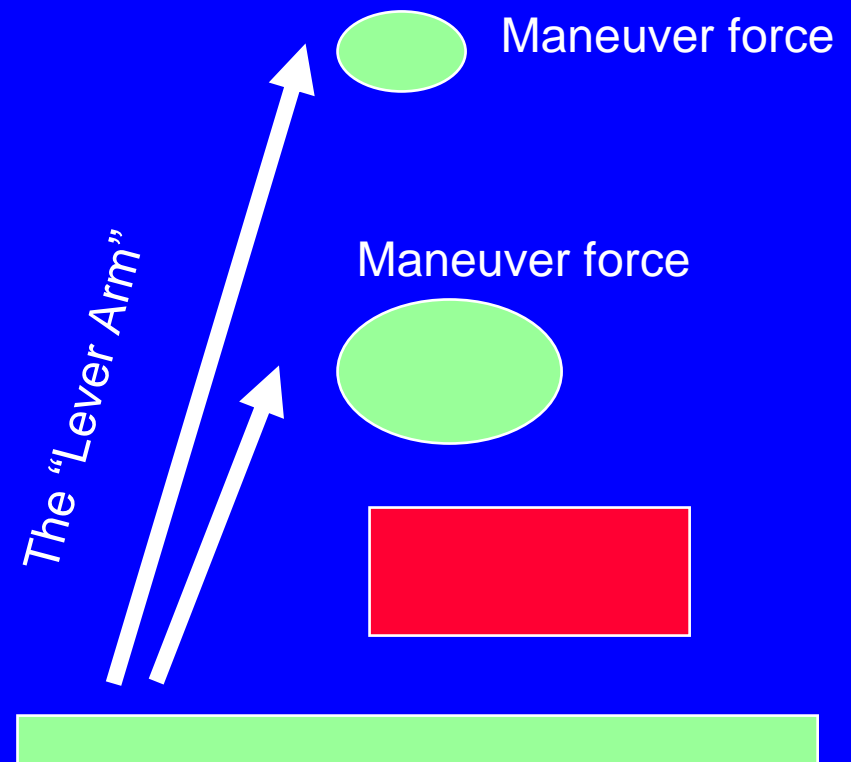
John A. English & Bruce I. Gudmundsson, *On Infantry (Rev Ed)* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994); Stephen Biddle, *Military Power*, (Princeton, NJ: 2004)

# Historical DO Practice (I): Complementary Force Dilemma

- **Situational Awareness obtained locally by employed forces in contact proved most useful in execution**
- **Collaborative/cooperative C2 worked better than hierarchical C2**
- **Assumes adversary not as nimble as you—if he is, this won't achieve disproportionate success**

# Historical DO Theory (II): Operational Leverage Relationship

- The deeper the penetration/turning movement, the smaller the force can be, but the longer the effects take to be felt at the front.
- Conversely, the shallower the penetration/envelopment, the larger the force must be, and the faster effects will be felt at the front.





# Historical DO Practice (II): Operational Leverage Relationship

## ■ When the relationship worked:

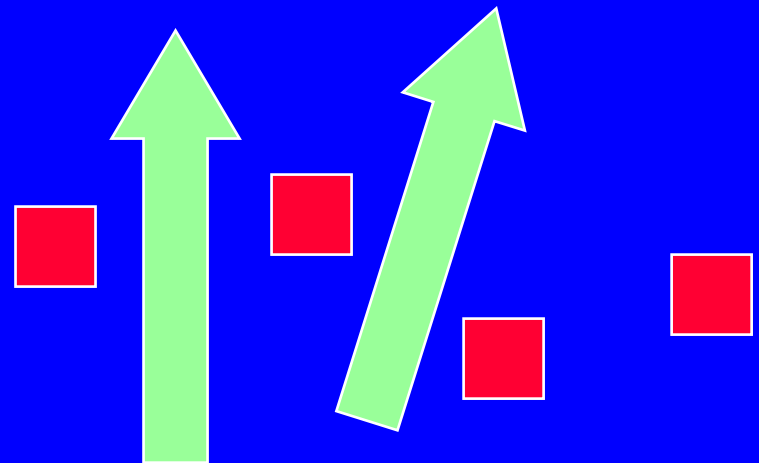
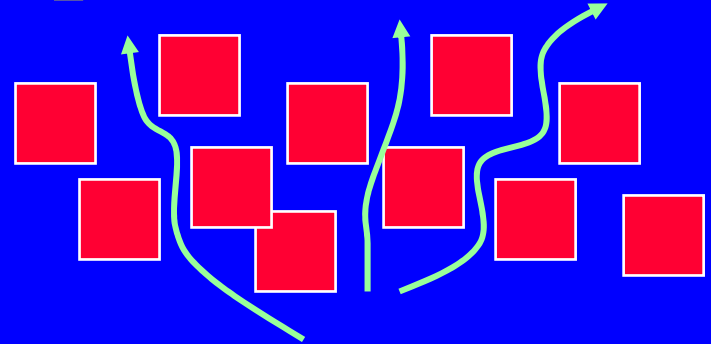
- Stormtroop tactics, 1916-1918
- Norway and France, 1940
- Russia, 1941 through early 1942
- South Pacific, 1943-44
- Inchon, 1950
- Ia Drang Valley campaign, 1965
- U.S. Recon Ops in Vietnam
- Afghanistan, 2002

## ■ When it didn't:

- Anzio, 1944
- Arnhem and Nijmegen, 1944
- Ardennes Forest, 1944
- Dien Bien Phu, 1954
- U.S. Recon Ops in Vietnam
- Lam Son 719, Cambodia, 1971
- Battle of Mogadishu, 1993
- Operation ANACONDA, 2002

# Historical DO Theory (III): Troop to Task to Space Ratios

- The denser the opposing troop concentration in a given space, the smaller the DO force must be to infiltrate/insert through the front.
- Conversely, the more spread out the opponent is, the larger the DO force can be to infiltrate/insert through the front.



# Historical DO Practice (III): Troop to Task to Space Ratios

- In cases where this failed, it was not during the insertion/infiltration, but afterward
  - Enemy could not be accurately determined and/or targeted...and therefore could not be avoided and/or neutralized
  - **Enemy found the force** and isolated it from other nearby forces
  - **Loss of DO element relative mobility** evident in nearly all cases due to opposing force proximity/troop & weapon densities

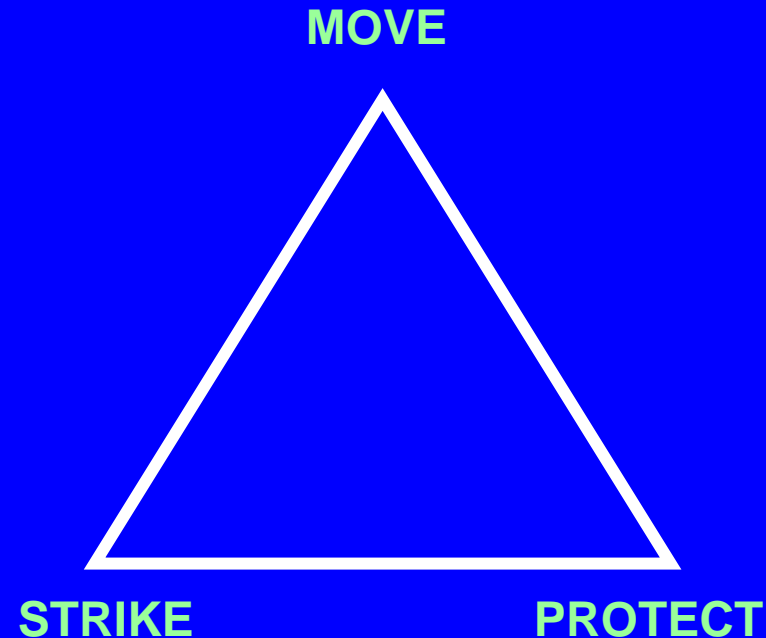
# Historical DO Theory (IV): Dispersion = Protection

- The antidote to increased lethality of fires is ever-greater dispersion of forces being targeted
- Principle of war changing from massing forces to massing effects—**greater demands on C2 and intelligence**

Trevor N. Dupuy, *Attrition: Forecasting Battle Casualties and Equipment Losses in Modern War* (Falls Church, VA: NOVA Publications, 1995); Stephen Biddle, *Military Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Robert Leonhard, *Principles of War of the Information Age* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 2000)

# Historical DO Practice (IV): Dispersion = Protection

- Adopting a “protect” posture means sacrificing abilities to “move” and/or “strike” which exposes the force.
- DO units suffer higher casualties because of this imperative:
  - Physical dispersal causes additional effort to coordinate “move” and “strike”
  - Social/training factors impel action



Robert Leonhard, *Fighting By Minutes: Time and the Art of War* (Novato, CA: 1991)

Richard Simpkin, *Race to the Swift* (London: Brassey's Defence Publishing, 1985)

# Recent Trends Enhancing DO:

## ■ Technological:

- Explosion of electronically accessible information and networks
- Electronic sensor revolution
- Miniaturization of ADP and communications
- Increase in weapon range and lethality forces greater target dispersion to negate effects

## ■ Social:

- Technological competency of American youth
- Greater military cultural tolerance regarding C2 decentralization and NCO responsibility (e.g., “The Strategic Corporal”)

# Recent Trends Inhibiting DO:

## ■ Technological:

- Enhanced technical capabilities require enhanced technical specialization
- Fragility of networks at the “last tactical mile”

## ■ Social:

- “Fourth Generation Warfare” adversaries and methods require solutions beyond purely military ones
- Unfamiliar cultural environments
- Cohesion stability when taking casualties

# Historical DO Countermeasures (I)

## ■ CM #1: Mass Human Wave Assaults

- More bad guys get through than you have fires/ammo/time to stop them
- Best when adversary force is intermingled (CM #2); DO force is away from logistical support (CM #3), engagement in an urban environment (CM #4), and with civilians (CM #5)

## ■ CM #2: Intermingle personnel

- Prevent supporting arms usage, complicate organic weapon employment
- DO force is in turn made vulnerable to opposing DO (e.g., infiltration)



# Historical DO Countermeasures (II)

- **CM #3: Draw force away from source of logistics**
  - DO force cannot defend itself and log source simultaneously if geographically separated
  - Adversary presents its own complementary force dilemma—DO force is “flanked” where it is not fixed
- **CM #4: Pull DO force into urban environment**
  - Leonhard’s “Alcyoneus Principle” applied
  - From “3-Block War” to “A Marine On Every Block”
  - Degrade C2, precision weapons, ISR effectiveness

Brian Steed, *Armed Conflict: The Lessons of Modern Warfare* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002); Robert Leonhard, *The Art of Maneuver* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991)

# Historical DO Countermeasures (II)

- **CM #5: Involve civilians to prosecute attrition warfare**
  - Not easily targeted without repercussions
  - They know the ground intimately
- **CM #6: Protract the conflict**
  - Use defeat in battle to achieve operational goals
  - The “winner” cannot afford more “victories”
  - DO force cannot sustain itself over the long haul

# Conceptual Conflicts and Dangers

- **DO Intelligence requirements** for “on the deck” footprint to support DO may increase, not decrease...**subverts EMW conceptual requirements** for small footprint and greater reliance on reachback.
- DO requires greater “local” intelligence developed while in contact to succeed in execution...**may subvert STOM conceptual requirement** for ship-to-objective employment with no pausing
- Will greater shared situational awareness lead to a return of battlefield shock?
- Is the “sea-base” going to stay secure?

# **DO Command and Control: Historical Patterns**

- **In execution, lateral communications/ collaboration and ad hoc temporary task organization is critical to facilitate reconnaissance pull**
- **Communications failures are catastrophic when in contact**
- **Rigid hierarchical structures inhibit effective (i.e., timely) action**

# Historical DO Intelligence Patterns (I)

- **Emphasis on adequate pre-operation IPB supporting planning**
  - We go where the enemy isn't...and he better not be there when we arrive.
  - Ia Drang (1965) and Arnhem (1944) provide good examples of what can happen when intelligence is wrong.
- **Emphasis on accurate target identification, acquisition, tracking, and assessment**
  - Adversaries focus on blending into environment, engaging when in very close range to inhibit supporting arms employment
  - Finding bad guys may depend more on cultural skills/savvy (“knowing the neighborhood”) than on technical means to achieve target acquisition

# Historical DO Intelligence Patterns (II)

- **Extreme emphasis on sharing locally-gathered intelligence during execution**
  - Primary driver for successful reconnaissance pull
  - In some cases the commander with the best local SA—not the most senior--became the overall battlegroup/site commander (intelligence = power)
- **Dilemma between persistent presence to develop detailed local SA and need to keep moving or “going to ground” to survive**

# Implications

## ■ Doctrine

- May require collaborative development and archival from the field vice “proponency” from the school house (see Doughty’s *Seeds of Disaster*)

## ■ Organization

- Task organization may be performed “on the fly” during execution
- Requirements to perform continuous information management and leverage external/outside resources for DS use will require new TTP

# Implications

## ■ Training

- Technical mastery requirement long recognized
- Cultural mastery possibly most germane for intelligence R&S operations within the DO element

## ■ Materiel

- Pushing down “the last tactical mile” for external database/sensor access
- SCI implications/requirements?
- Intra-unit collections/processing/archival/ dissemination equipment

## ■ Leadership and Education

- Adopting the “special operations mindset” in execution – the mission expert/man on the scene is in charge (see Doughty’s *Breaking Point*)
- Expertise in analytical and dissemination problem-solving

Robert A. Doughty, *The Breaking Point: Sedan and the Fall of France, 1940* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1990)



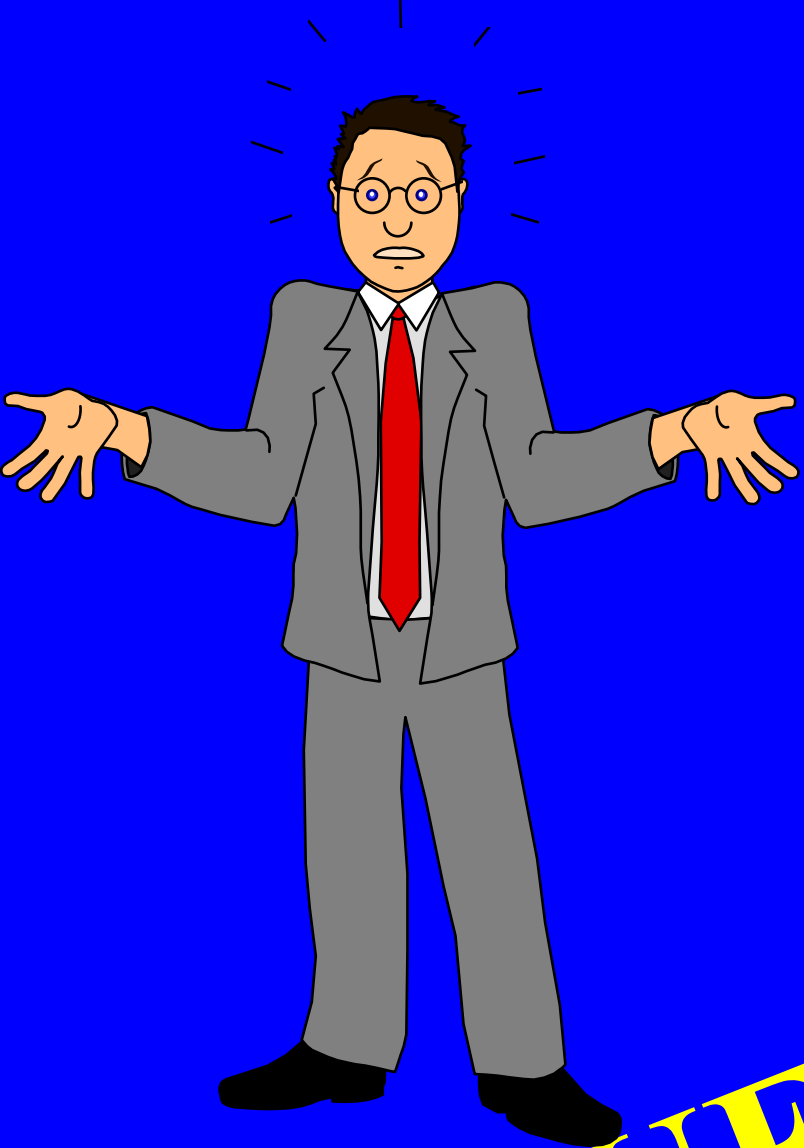
# Implications

## ■ Personnel

- Sustaining DO force trained manpower in protracted conflict will be challenging
  - » Individual skills
  - » Collective skills and unit cohesion

## ■ Facilities

- Information brokerage services probably required on site and via reachback during planning and execution
- NTC/JRTC for DO may be required for units to train within...versatile “Ender’s Game” scenarios/situations



**QUESTIONS???**