

Expert Insights

Decision Point #1

What is your assessment of the situation? Rank the following options 1-3, with 1 being the answer that most closely describes your own assessment of the situation and 3 being the answer that least describes your assessment:

Rank	Option
2	a. This is a major disaster. The enemy has gained the initiative by seizing a bridgehead on our side of the river. Our attack across the river will have to be scrubbed as we revert to the defensive to contain the enemy penetration.
1	b. This is a highly uncertain situation. We need to figure out what is going on so we can give our regimental commander some options.
3	c. This is not a major problem. An enemy company is not a major threat to a battalion. We can deal with the enemy company in the assembly area and be ready to kick off the attack at 0500.

Expert rationale:

The situation obviously is not good. The enemy has thrown a wrench into our plans, but it is unclear just how bad the situation is. There is a lot we don't know about the situation right now. It is a close call between (a) and (b), but forced to choose we would pick (b). We need to get a handle on things quickly, and that will mean fighting for information. Just how big is the enemy force east of the river? Our scout platoon commander estimates there is an infantry company in the assembly area, but there is almost certainly more than that east of the river. The enemy has been flowing across the bridge for at least the last 30 minutes, and there are reports of tanks and vehicles that are unaccounted for. We know there is enemy in the assembly area, but where else has he got to by now?

If the situation is not a major disaster yet, it will be soon if we do not act quickly (a). The enemy certainly has seized the initiative and now we are reacting to him. The enemy very possibly has pre-empted our division attack, and even if that takes place as scheduled, our battalion will not be leading it because we are in a fight to retrieve the situation. If the enemy secures Hills 158 and 164, he will be well on his way to establishing a strong bridgehead on our side of the river, which will be difficult to eject him from and which will facilitate his going on the offensive rather than us.

Decision Point #2

Where is the key terrain in this situation? Rank the following options 1-5, with 1 being the most important terrain and 5 being the least important:

Rank	Option
5	a. The assembly area.
2	b. Hills 158 and 164.
1	c. The bridge.
4	d. Hamlet.
3	e. Engmont Farm.

Expert rationale:

The bridge is critical (c). Who controls the bridge controls the situation. We must recapture the bridge as quickly as possible. Everything else is secondary. Every minute we waste, the situation gets worse because the enemy pushes more forces across the river. So an attack to recapture the bridge is the one essential part of any decision.

The assembly area (a) is completely irrelevant. It is just a place to form up for the attack. It has no inherent importance. The enemy there is not a threat to us. In fact, he is at a disadvantage because he is hemmed in by Hills 158 and 164. Hills 158 and 164 (b) are next in importance after the bridge. If the enemy controls them, he consolidates his bridgehead and he makes it harder for us to maneuver toward the bridge. Controlling the high ground is the second most important consideration.

Engmont Farm (e) is important only because we are going to pass through it as we maneuver toward the bridge, and the enemy could strike us in the flank if he attacks north from Hamlet.

Like the assembly area, Hamlet (d) is irrelevant at this point. We must assume that the enemy has occupied Hamlet, which he passed through to get to the assembly area, but it confers no significant advantage. Eventually we will need to clear him out of Hamlet, but that will come later, after we have recaptured the bridge, and it very likely will be a mission for follow-on forces.

Decision Point #3

What are you going to do? Rank the following options 1-5, with 1 being the best course of action and 5 being the worst:

Rank	Option
2	a. Seize Hills 158 and 164 with A and B companies to contain the

	enemy in the assembly area. Engage the enemy there by fire, but do not get into a close fight. Report the situation and await further instructions.
1	b. Fix the enemy in the assembly area with A company and attack to seize the bridge with the rest of the battalion on the axis Shaffer Farm-Engmont Farm-Mill Corner.
5	c. Halt and take up defensive positions in our current location. Withdraw the scout platoon. Report the situation to higher headquarters and await instructions.
4	d. Attack immediately to destroy the enemy in the assembly area with A Company reinforced by B Company. Continue the attack to seize Hamlet.
3	e. Fix the enemy in the assembly area with A Company and swing B and C Companies around to the south and attack the enemy in the assembly area via Wharton Farm.

Expert rationale:

Capturing the bridge is the critical thing, so that should be our main attack. Therefore, (b) is the best option by far. Use A Company to contain the enemy in the assembly area by seizing Hills 158 and 164 and engaging by fire while attacking the bridge via Engmont Farm with B and C Companies. Leave D Company in reserve vicinity Engmont Farm to protect the avenue of approach around the northern flank while being prepared to reinforce either of the two attacks. Attacking via Engmont Farm provides a covered avenue of approach, provided the enemy has not already seized Hill 158.

None of the other options addresses the critical problem and all therefore are poor decisions. If we had to pick the next best option, it would be (a), seizing Hills 158 and 164, because it involves seizing the key terrain of the high ground and prevents the enemy from consolidating a bridgehead. It does not get us embroiled in a pointless fight for the assembly area and keeps two companies free to deal with other contingencies that could arise.

Fixing the enemy with one company and swinging around south of Hill 164 to attack the assembly area from Wharton Farm (e) has the fatal flaw of not addressing the critical problem, but it does not attack directly into the strength of the enemy and it also opens up the possibility of continuing the attack toward the bridge around the southern flank.

Attacking directly into the assembly area and then on to Hamlet (d) takes us right into the enemy's strength and gets us embroiled in a fight that does not solve the basic problem.

Finally, breaking contact and waiting for instruction—basically doing nothing—is inexcusable (c). We are the commander on scene who knows how fundamentally the situation has changed. If we report the

situation and wait for instructions, higher headquarters will certainly waste critical time trying to confirm the situation. Report the situation, certainly, but then it is our obligation to take the initiative to develop the situation as advantageously as possible for higher headquarters.

What did you learn from the experts? What did they see that you did not? Is there any part of the experts' decisions that you disagree with? Provide a brief description: