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Prof Matthew Meselson
Harvard Univ
Cambridge, Mass

Dear Prof Meselson:

I thought your presentation went quite well the other night.

I talked to Falter about the anti-tank problem. For tanks the US has adopted the plug a mask in approach, while the Soviets have a sealed vehicle approach. While the US (according to Falter) thinks this is the right approach, there is one major advantage with the Soviet approach. If one is thinking in operational terms, one adopts the Soviet approach; If one thinks of only fighting on the battlefield, then the US approach makes the greater sense. In practice this means both are required. (For command vehicles, the Soviet approach is used).

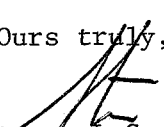
As for anti-tank weapons, the new mask (because the plastic is pliable against the eye) can be used for weapons having eye pieces (virtually everything above the machine gun). With the present mask, this is only possible with extensive training, virtually ruling it infeasible. The one technical complication with the new mask is optical distortion, a deficiency being corrected.

Finally it must be remembered that in the attack, the attacker need not fire *his* weapon to the extent that the defender must. That is because the attacker is using suppressive fire (arty) to hold down the fire while a much larger force charges or gets in between positions to launch rolling out attacks against the defender's flanks and rear. This means that any degradation of direct fire weapons is more serious for the defender than the attacker. Masking will always mean some degradation--in the past it has almost been total.

The point of the above is that a general, across the front capability is not the criterion. Rather it is a capability at limited points in space and time that allows the attacker to obtain a temporary asymmetric advantage, leading to considerable leverage. Specifically it is a technique that helps the attacker to get inside the defender's framework, thereby if successful, leading to its collapse. Casualties etc--the normal way of thinking about the problem--is a misleading criterion.

I've enclosed a recent presentation at the Wilson Center.

Yours truly,


Steven L. Canby