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Marines master entry-control point operations at Khaan Quest 2018

FIVE HILLS TRAINING AREA, Mongolia — U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Domenick DiGiovannangelo, a team leader in B Company, 3rd Law Enforcement Battalion, has always taught his Marines to be aggressive – to find cover, maneuver and destroy the enemy.

Donning a United Nations blue helmet and vest, DiGiovannangelo said he drilled into his team restraint, pause and adaptability for entry control point operations training during Khaan Quest 2018 at Five Hills Training Area, Mongolia, June 20.

The exercise scenario called for protection of civilians, adherence to a code of conduct, and a willingness to change tactics mid stride.

When two men bearing AK-47 rifles approached the gate, DiGiovannangelo and his team had a range of options open to them. As the men became increasingly aggressive, those options rapidly narrowed. Would the Marines make the right choices under pressure?

The purpose of Khaan Quest is to gain U.N. training and certification for the participants through the conduct of realistic peace support operations, to include increasing and improving U.N. peacekeeping interoperability and military relationships among the participating nations.

Along with his Mongolian Armed Forces and Qatar Armed Forces counterparts, Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Capt. Takashi Sannomiya acted as the Marines' peacekeeping operations headmaster, instructing them in the U.N. code of personal conduct, an ethos that protects civilians while allowing U.N. service members the ability to protect themselves.

“If we don't know the culture and don't show respect to the host nation, we cannot do anything,” Sannomiya said. “That is why we apply the code of conduct always.”

Because use of force is a possibility in peacekeeping operations to protect civilians and the force, the captain said it is imperative to escalate force in a thoughtful manner.

“In peacekeeping operations, there is no war, there is no enemy,” Sannomiya explained. “Peacekeepers come to a host nation to help them, so there is little reason for the use of force to deal with a situation. We have to always manage the use of weapons.”

DiGiovannangelo said harmonizing the protection of the host population and the safety of his unit can be an exercise in walking a razor's edge.

"The biggest challenge is, while protecting civilians, also protecting my Marines," he said. "It makes things real complicated. You have that fine balance with the U.N. rules where you have to place the safety of the civilians first."

Two Mongolian role players simulating a pregnant mother and her teenage son approached the gate seeking entry. They were looking for food and safe passage. Though DiGiovannangelo's team could pass them through, the Marines gave them information of where a non-governmental organization could best provide them with aid.

In rapid succession, the Marines dealt with several scenarios ranging from intervening when two men beat up another man outside the gate to a routine vehicle search that turned up contraband ammunition and drugs. Through it all, the Marines of 3rd Law Enforcement Battalion relied on their military police training to rapidly work through every situation, so they were ready to tackle the next one.

Finally came the men with rifles. They seemed friendly enough, but there was a big hitch. DiGiovannangelo's interpreter was called away when there was a disturbance at another gate.

Any attempt at verbally communicating with the men failed.

"We can let you in, but first we have to search you, and to do that we have to take your weapons," the team leader said to a response of confused stares.

Through the initial stages of the encounter, the Marines remained friendly and non-threatening. Quickly enough, DiGiovannangelo resorted to pantomime to get his message across. He demonstrated on a fellow Marine what he wanted, relinquishing his weapon to his comrade.

The men immediately understood, and they weren't happy. They backed up and each fired a single blank cartridge in the air. Still, the Marines maintained their composure. The fact is rounds flying in the air aren't much of a threat to the Marines, but it put them on notice.

Finally, the men fired at the Marines and scrambled.

"As soon as they turned around, and we saw their weapons down, we were behind cover and worked to gain fire superiority," DiGiovannangelo said.

It was as though a switch had been flipped, turning the Marines into a force determined to defend the base and protect one another.

Because the Marines swiftly arrayed themselves for effective cover and gained fire superiority, they quickly overwhelmed the two men. One was felled by a simulated bullet to the leg, and the other one fled on foot.

The threat averted, the mental switch turned back the other direction. Though the wounded man had been an adversary just moments before, DiGiovannangelo rushed to retrieve him under the cover of his Marines.

Giving medical aid to those who are hurt, even if they are enemies, is the American and the U.N. way, DiGiovannangelo said.

“Once they're disarmed, and they're no longer a threat, as per the Geneva Conventions, we're to provide aid to them,” he said. “We didn't have to wrap our heads around that because we train and understand that.”

For his part, Sannomiya said he was pleased how what he described as “aggressive Marines” could temper themselves when the situation demanded it. As far as the captain was concerned, DiGiovannangelo and his team made the right choices at just the right time when it counted most.

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PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **Flickr link** includes an event album with the complete selection of full-resolution, free downloadable images. (May not be accessible from all military computers.)
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/sets/72157692022475800/>
3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/281896/marines-master-entry-control-point-operations-khaan-quest-2018>



Marines of B Company, 3rd Law Enforcement Battalion, stand atop a Mongolian Armed Forces BTR-70 armored vehicle June 20, 2018, after Khaan Quest 2018 entry control point operations training at Five Hills Area, Mongolia. The purpose of Khaan Quest is to gain U.N. training and certification for the

participants through the conduct of realistic peace support operations, to include increasing and improving U.N. peacekeeping interoperability and military relationships among the participating nations. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. David Bedard/Released)



U.S. Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Anthony Cone, a platoon leader for B Company, 3rd Law Enforcement Battalion, confers with Sgt. Austin Vilardi after an encounter June 20, 2018, during Khaan Quest 2018 entry control point operations training at Five Hills Area, Mongolia. The purpose of Khaan Quest is to gain U.N. training and certification for the participants through the conduct of realistic peace support operations, to include increasing and

improving U.N. peacekeeping interoperability and military relationships among the participating nations. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. David Bedard/Released)



U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Tanner Yeager, B Company, 3rd Law Enforcement Battalion, talks with a simulated civilian resident June 20, 2018, during Khaan Quest 2018 entry control point operations training at Five Hills Area, Mongolia. The purpose of Khaan Quest is to gain U.N. training and certification for the participants through the conduct of realistic peace support operations, to include increasing and improving U.N. peacekeeping interoperability and military relationships among the participating nations. (U.S. Army

National Guard photo by Sgt. David Bedard/Released)



U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Domenick DiGiovannangelo, and Lance Cpl. Tanner Yeager, both of 3rd Law Enforcement Battalion, take cover after two men initiated a simulated firefight June 20, 2018, during Khaan Quest 2018 entry control point operations training at Five Hills Area, Mongolia. The purpose of Khaan Quest is to gain U.N. training and certification for the participants through the conduct of realistic peace

support operations, to include increasing and improving U.N. peacekeeping interoperability and military relationships among the participating nations. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. David Bedard/Released)