

# Canadian Officer Explains How Outnumbered Tutsis Defeated The Hutu In Rwanda

(from an old FreeRepublic article by Major B.P. Beardsly, former(?) Canadian Army)

**Note:** The Tutsi's invaded the area around Rwanda 500 years ago from Ethiopia. They became a landowning aristocracy thinly settled among Hutu's. In the '90's the Hutu's of Rwanda were 85% of the country and took it over and started killing every Tutsi they could find. Around 750,000 were killed in 3 months. While the UN played with its dick the Tutsi's in neighboring countries organized themselves into militia's, invaded Rwanda, and defeated the Hutu's despite being grossly outnumbered. This work explains how.

I have made some changes from the original, changing '*Rwandese Patriotic Forces*' to 'Tutsi' and '*Rwandese Government Forces*' to 'Hutu' for additional clarity.

## **\*Section Attack - The Double Envelopment \***

### **\*Background\***

In the fall of 1994, I had occasion to attend the CTC Tactics Seminar held at CFB Gaagetown. The focus of the seminar was on manoeuvre warfare. As this was my first exposure to the study of this subject, I listened intently as the principles, fundamentals and nature of this doctrine were presented. Early in the presentations it dawned on me that I had witnessed the application of this theory on a morning in April 1994, in Kigali Rwanda, during their tragic civil war. A rebel Section attack on a Hutu's (Rwandese Government Forces) Section used techniques and tactics I found different and strange. Now with the benefit of lectures and study, I have concluded that the rebels were successfully employing manoeuvre warfare. As the Canadian Army embarks upon a revision of its war fighting doctrine to manoeuvre warfare, this article is presented to my brother infanteers as an example of how this new doctrine can impact on tactics to as low a level as the Section attack.

### **\*The Double Envelopment \***

The key to Tutsi's (Rwandese Patriotic Army) tactics was the double envelopment; a tactic which embraces the fundamentals of manoeuvre warfare. The double envelopment is seldom used in warfare, but when it has been successfully executed, the enemy force is ultimately annihilated. The use of manoeuvre, speed, surprise and the application and concentration of firepower enables a force to:

- Surround An Opponent
- Attack Simultaneously From All Sides
- Cut Off Any Escape Routes
- Prevent Reinforcement, and
- Demoralize the Enemy

History offers several examples of successful double envelopment attacks like the Carthaginians over the Romans at Cannae, the Zulus over the British at Isandlawana, and the Russians over the Germans at Stalingrad. A key feature of these battles was that in most cases the victor attacked with equal and sometimes with inferior strength or equipment to ultimately destroy the defending enemy forces. The double envelopment, properly executed, can succeed without the benefit of a traditional three to one superiority deemed essential for the more conventional and attritional attack we have adhered to in our doctrine in the recent past.

#### **\*Aim\***

The aim of this article is to describe the double envelopment Section attack I witnessed, including how it was later explained to me by Tutsi's officers. Furthermore, I hope that the lessons learned will assist study and discussion in the Canadian infantry as we change our war fighting doctrine to manoeuvre warfare.

#### **\*Rwanda - 1994 \***

On 6 April 1994, the President of Rwanda was killed under mysterious circumstances and within 48 hours the civil war (which the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) had been deployed to stop), resumed with horrific ferocity. On 9 April 1994, from the window of my office at the Force Headquarters in Kigali, I observed a Tutsi's Section successfully conduct an attack against a Hutu's Section. Later the same day, our Tutsi's Liaison Officers returned to the Headquarters, and spirited and enthused by their initial successes in Kigali and elsewhere in Rwanda, I was able to engage them in a tactical discussion where they freely described their tactics and more specifically, their emphasis on the use of the double envelopment in offensive operations from Section to Brigade level.

#### **\*The New Tutsi Army \***

Major Kagame withdrew his battered forces from Rwanda to training camps in Uganda and boosted his men's morale and effectiveness with:

- Discipline
- Intense Political Indoctrination
- Tough Military Training
- Development of Proven Leadership and Tactics

During guerilla operations in Rwanda Starting in 1990, Major Kagame organized the Tutsi's from the bottom up starting with the Section level. Sections of 8-12 men were trained and disciplined together under battle proven leaders into cohesive units. Leaders in the Tutsi to retain or advance in rank had to excel in three areas:

#### The Three Assessment Factors

(1) **\*they had to be successful in achieving their assigned missions (failure was inexcusable and not tolerated) under minimum or no supervision (directive control)\***

(2) they had to use minimum resources to achieve assigned missions. (ie. men, weapons, ammunition) This requirement led to the interesting action of subordinate leaders who refused or returned attached support arms, additional personnel, and so on, in order to husband the precious few resources of their guerrilla Army for the higher good.

(3) they had to turn in low casualties. The Tutsi's was recruited largely in exile, and therefore was a small Army. Furthermore, the Tutsi's in Rwanda comprised only 15% of the population and even with recruits from this possible pool of manpower, the size of the Tutsi's could not sustain an attritional war. In comparison, the Hutu's could recruit from the other 85% of the population to augment the largely Hutu government Forces.

These three assessment factors were critical in determining whether a leader retained his rank. Leaders who could not meet any or all of these criteria were lucky if they were demoted to a level of command they could handle, or they were transferred to support arms and services such as signals, indirect or direct fire units, logistics, staff units, and so on. *\*If unlucky, especially if an assessment factor was seriously violated, commanders were disciplined for their failure with punishment or even death.\**

In addition, there was no direct commissioning into the Tutsi's. Leaders started as "fighters" and advanced to Section, Platoon, Company level, and higher rank by virtue of their performance in battle, based on the three assessment factors. Tutsi leaders first served as fighters (soldiers) and then served an apprenticeship as a second in command under a proven leader. For example, the Section commander trained his 2IC in the leadership and tactical skills necessary to eventually command the Section. In battle, the 2IC would prove his ability before taking command of the Section. The Section commander (a proven leader), in turn would advance to become the Platoon 2IC under the tutelage of the Platoon leader. In effect, it was on the job training. If a leader was promoted, killed or fired, there was always a replacement. The OJT process was repeated throughout the chain of command, and ensured that leaders were competent, successful, and battle proven.

Successful commanders remained in the infantry. Commanders who had "Peter Principled" were transferred to the support arms, services, or to the staff. There appeared to be no shame in being fired and sent to a non-infantry organization. It was quite common in the Tutsi's to meet two officers, such as a 28 year old Battalion commander and the other a 28 year old signals Lieutenant, who had joined and served together until the signals officer had "Peter Principled" at the Platoon commander level and was subsequently transferred to a signals unit. There never appeared to be any animosity between officers. As a group and as individuals, they subordinated their own careers and promotion desires to the "cause", and honestly believed their system was fair. They believed they were still contributing to the ultimate success of their war.

The development of proven, competent, and successful leaders, who excelled in managing limited resources, and who were genuinely concerned with limiting casualties, and looked after the health and welfare of their men, created an Army in which the leaders were adored by their subordinates. In my ten month tour, I never saw a Tutsi's soldier display anything but complete obedience and reverence towards his commanders. Commands were stated without fuss and the men executed their orders immediately and on the double. This incredible leadership, and the resulting high morale and discipline throughout the Army, was a major factor in the Tutsi's victory during the 1994 civil war.

### **\*The Second Offensive\***

Major Kagame's development of the Tutsi's began in 1990. He first launched Sections across the border into Rwanda to conduct recesses, raids, and ambushes against government military forces. As Section level ops were mastered, and leaders were proven, the operations were subsequently enlarged to Platoon, then Company, then Battalion, and ultimately to the Mobile Group (Brigade) level. By the time the Tutsi's were conducting Battalion and Mobile Group ops, they no longer returned to Uganda to rest and replenish. Instead they remained in what they called "liberated areas" of Rwanda. The Army, during this process of training and enlargement had grown from a 4000 man rabble to a battle hardened force of 20,000 men organized into 3 mobile groups and 7 infantry Battalions (with other support arm and service units). Their growing strength, competence and effectiveness were proven in their highly successful offensive of February 1993 that resulted in a cease fire and a peace agreement after they shattered the Hutu's. The Hutu's used the cease fire to rejuvenate their forces, and then decided to fight again on 6 April 1994. The Tutsi's easily defeated the government forces and seized the entire country by July 1994.

### **\*Tutsi Tactics \***

It is interesting to note that the Tutsi's employed basically the same tactics at the Section level as they did at the Brigade level. As stated earlier, the Tutsi's could not sustain a war of attrition, especially against the larger, better equipped and supported government forces who also had the advantage of air superiority.

The Tutsi's relied on manoeuvre warfare as a force multiplier. The use of manoeuvre warfare with its inherent superior mobility, focus on the enemy, swift tactical drills, and concentration on an opponent's weaknesses ultimately led to the defeat of the Hutu's. The Tutsi's constantly trained and conducted long distance moves by foot, carrying heavy loads, over the roughest mountain and forested terrain in record times by day and night in all climatic conditions, especially during the rainy season.

The Tutsi's also concentrated the timely and correct application of their limited firepower to strike the enemy at his most vulnerable locations (usually the flanks and rear). At every level (Section to Brigade), the favoured Tutsi's tactical method of attack was to fix the enemy in a position by using a fire base. Only after the enemy were fixed and suppressed, a double envelopment by assault elements around both flanks would be conducted. *\*The assault elements would avoid fighting through the objective, but would occupy mutually supporting fire positions on the enemy flank and rear. These fire positions, and the psychological threat of being flanked and surrounded (dislocated), invited the enemy to escape his secure and prepared defensive position and expose himself to their concentrated fire.\**

If the enemy remained in location, the position was not prematurely assaulted, but was subjected to well-aimed and concentrated fire from all sides except the rear, resulting in the attrition and strangulation of the Hutu's position.

*\*It was always made to appear that the rear was not cut-off, so that the demoralized and attritted enemy would be lured into withdrawing or fleeing through this escape route. If the enemy fled, they would find that their escape route was a kill zone where they would be ambushed.\**

Only when the enemy fled and were killed, and little danger existed in approaching the Hutu's positions, would the objective be assaulted and cleared. The Tutsi's force would consolidate prior to resuming the offensive. It is interesting to note that the Tutsi's considered a 1 to 1 ratio for this form of attack to be ideal (Section vs Section, and so on).

Notably, the Tutsi's were not fixated on seizing ground nor on hastily assaulting and fighting through the objective. Their battle drills were conducted with incredible speed to fix and envelop the enemy, but they stopped at recklessly attacking through a position, where they believed too many friendly casualties would occur.

The Tutsi's firmly believed in speed of manoeuvre and deployment in order to get inside the enemy's decision making cycle and make any Hutu's reaction irrelevant and dated. By the time the Hutu's usually reacted to a threat on its front, they were invariably flanked and cut-off.

Furthermore, the Tutsi's recognized, quite correctly, that an isolated, suppressed and demoralized enemy position on a certain piece of ground is nothing more than a target to be fired at, and not an objective to physically seize. The focus was on destroying the enemy's ability to cause harm to the Tutsi's, and not on the capture of the ground the Hutu's was defending.

The Tutsi's also believed that whether the defending forces were defeated immediately, or in an hour, or a day later was not important. However, it was important to render the enemy impotent through isolation and suppression. The Tutsi's excelled in the use of time and firepower to demoralize and attrit the Hutu's. More often than not, the Hutu's would oblige the Tutsi's and attempt to flee/breakout, making it much easier for the attacker to destroy the enemy in well prepared ambushes.

### **9 April 1994 - The Tutsi's Section Attack**

Given the above background, the following description is of a Section attack I witnessed 9 April. As I was unable to observe or understand everything that took place, subsequent conversations with the Tutsi's Liaison Officer in UNAMIR Force Headquarters filled in the missing details. The attack will be described in sequence in accordance with Canadian Army Section Battle Drills for purposes of clarity.

Tutsi Sections were organized with a maximum strength of 12 men. Soldiers fought in fighting order which included rations, water and ammunition. There was no Section radio or other equipment. Tutsi's Section commanders were frequently seen inspecting their soldiers, and (from my observations) the soldiers and their fighting equipment were always well turned out. Uniforms were camouflaged. Excellent drills emphasizing speed for the advance and attack were well known and used.

#### Tutsi's Section Organization Diagram

- 1 - Section Commander
- 2 - Section 2IC
- 3/4 - Two man LMG (RPK) group
- 5/6 - Two man Hutu group
- 7-12 - Up to 6 riflemen (AK variants).

**The Approach and the Assault.** The remainder of the Tutsi's Section divided into two four man groups armed with assault rifles (AK variants). Despite intense observation I could not identify at any time the leader or his 2IC. They were dressed and acted identically to the other soldiers. In discussion later with the Tutsi's LO, he stated that they had no fixed rule on the leaders' location, but one would usually lead the left flanking assault group and the other would lead the right flanking assault group.

The fire base controlled itself as it was manned by the senior and proven soldiers in the Section. The left flanking assault group crossed the road in the photo and crawled up a ditch until directly parallel to the author. At this point the right flanking assault group could be seen moving to the right, but I lost sight of them. After this point, they only could be heard yelling or firing from time to time from the right flank.

The left flank group split into two teams when they arrived at a point where effective flank fire could be brought to bear. One team remained at this left flank location and opened aimed fire at the objective while the second team moved further up the ditch and recrossed the road into the enemy rear. The second team did not fire and disappeared from view among the buildings. The same action was taking place on the right flank.

Throughout this period covering fire in the form of aimed short steady bursts and another rocket was fired by the fire base. It appeared to me that the Tutsi's was running the risk of firing into their own men from each flank. This point led to an exhaustive discussion with the Tutsi's LO who stated that ***only single aimed shots were fired from flanking teams*** and that the risk of being hit by friendly fire was remote in a covered fire position. He also stated that the advantage of demoralizing the enemy by firing at him from the front and both flanks far outweighed the risk of friendly crossfire.

*Their aim was to panic the defender out of his prepared position, where the defender has the advantage, and to provoke him into exposing himself by withdrawing to the rear or attempting to breakout. Such an action by the defender would pass the advantage to the attacker, who from a chosen fire position could easily deal with a demoralized, confused and exposed enemy. The Tutsi's assault was therefore an assault by manoeuvre and fire, not by direct assault or what we would term fighting through the objective.*

The Tutsi's viewed fighting through the objective as engaging the enemy on the ground of the defender's choosing and surmised it would result in unnecessary friendly casualties. In their opinion, it was better to manipulate, force or entice the enemy to move into an area where the Tutsi's held the advantage. *The Tutsi's LO insisted that the enemy must be left what appears to be an escape route but that it must be a covered kill zone.* In discussion with the Tutsi's LO he used the parallel of cornering a rat, who will ferociously attack if it has no observed route of escape. The Tutsi's left an escape route but ensured it was covered by fire.

**Consolidation.** After 30 minutes of firing, and much yelling and exchanges of verbal abuse in their native language, a surviving Hutu's soldier ran from the house down the alley to the rear of the house to what appeared to be an escape route, but was covered by the hidden Tutsi's rifle teams on the left and right flanks (positions C and E). These riflemen fired and killed the soldier.

The attack was not over until the left flank team (position B) used fire and movement to advance to the house. The fire base ceased fire and began to move forward. The left flank team threw in a grenade, entered and fired in the building killing any survivors. The Section rapidly consolidated around the house, posted security with their support weapons and proceeded to loot the Hutu's soldiers of weapons and personal effects. To the winner go the spoils of war. A short time later the Section continued its advance.

**\*Conclusion \***

In this attack one Tutsi's Section successfully attacked and destroyed one Hutu's Section without suffering a single casualty. The Tutsi's Section effectively used manoeuvre and assault by fire to double envelop their enemy. The enemy force was isolated, attrited, dislocated and finally were destroyed.

As the Canadian Army commences to adopt manoeuvre warfare as our war fighting doctrine, I believe that there are some valuable lessons to be learned by studying the Tutsi's and its tactics at the Section and at other levels. We should consider the advantages to the attacker, and the impact of the double envelopment on an enemy, and the use of manoeuvre and assault by fire vice our more stereotyped left or right flanking and our obsession with physically fighting through the objective with its attritional results.

While the double envelopment is a part of our doctrine it is seldom (if ever) used on training or exercises. We will not be able to effectively employ it in war if we do not practice or understand how to do it in peacetime training. The intention of this article was to provoke rebuttal, discussion and professional discourse and to avoid what I fear is taking place with our doctrine; namely a change in terminology and business as usual. I believe manoeuvre warfare has implications for all levels of war and at all levels in the chain of command. Hopefully this paper will provoke a critical look at our traditional tactics and assist in developing our new war fighting doctrine.

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Comments

**(Editor's Note:** *inclusion of these comments in this pdf does not mean that any person apart from the commenters necessarily shares these opinions.*)

\*1\* A very serious study, on which I am only an interested bystander. I suspect, however, that the Tutsi were aided by the same superior aptitudes that put them over the Hutu in generations past. It is their history as high achievers that made them hated; and their misery was caused in part by Leftwing environmentalist nonsense that our Government promoted as aggressively as did the Communists. (See: [The Rape Of Tolerance](#).) Their success in adopting and executing so intelligent and disciplined an operation, as that which the writer documents, once again attests the truth, almost always denied by the Left, that traditional high achievers deserve their success. May God protect them in their reduced numbers.

\*2\* /Their success in adopting and executing so intelligent and disciplined an operation, as that which the writer documents, once again attests the truth, almost always denied by the Left, that traditional high achievers deserve their success/

The Tutsi's are much more economically successful than the Hutu's. Nelson Mandela is now trying to end the Tutsi-Hutu conflict. He keeps saying that the Tutsi's have to stop "*controlling*" the economy and treat the Hutu's fairly. This is just a way of treating the Tutsi's the way Hitler treated the Jews. They are more successful because of their culture, not because, as 15% of the population, they "control" the economy. As long as outsiders like Mandela tell the Hutu's that the Tutsi success comes from conspiracies, the hate and violence won't end. I consider the Tutsi to be the black Boer. They came from somewhere else hundreds of years ago and now they are fighting the same fight.

\*3\* We are basically in agreement. But the Tutsi culture reflects the Tutsi mental capacity, not the other way around. The thing which distinguishes people from most other creatures is that we create our own cultural environments. You're right on the mark about the analogy to Hitler and the Jews. (See: [The Lies Of Socialism](#).)

With regard to the Boers, however, although they migrated in about 350 years ago, they basically settled in areas where they are now the senior residents. The original Hottentot inhabitants of the Cape died out from Small Pox, and are survived basically in the mixed White/Capoid people known as the Cape Coloured. Mandela's tribe entered the present northern part of South Africa about the same time, and moved South, only coming in meaningful contact with the Whites in the early 1800s.

\*4\* The Hutus to a large extent were bothered by a 'slave' mentality, having been subservient to the Tutsi for generations and could not effectively combat their 'masters'. The same situation, basically, exists in South Africa where the numerically dominant Xosa were brought into South Africa as a semi-slave tribe by the Zulus. [The Zulus have not yet made a real attempt to gain control; if they do it will make the bloodbath in Rwanda seem like a game of hearts comparatively.]

\*5\* I think what bothered the Hutu was too much leftwing demagoguery- -the preposterous [Lies Of Socialism](#), which teaches people to blame the high achievers for their own failures.

\*6\* Thanks for reminder that outnumbered forces can be victorious. Ohioan, above link discusses lie #10 of socialism, a ploy much used by anti-conservatives who attempt (and succeed) to characterize us as akin to Hitler and the Nazis, all presumed to be "right wing fanatics" -- *\*LIE: 10. That, despite dependence on the same assumptions and the tactics that flow from them, National Socialism (Adolph Hitler and his followers) was on the far Right--the opposite end of the political spectrum from Communism and other Socialist movements.\**

\*7\* You're right. You should go to [this link](#). They have a great collection of translated nazi propaganda. If you read their own words you can see how leftwing they were. The picture above is a Nazi propaganda piece showing the disproportionate success of the Jews. To the Nazis success = evil. The site is worth visiting.