



“Repeat” Is For Artillery!

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"This is Rambo 1...I can't hear you...repeat your last...over!"

With that comment, true warriors, those who honed their fighting skills someplace other than Sweden during the Vietnam War, turn to the person next to them and whisper, "**Repeat is only used for artillery!**"

In all aspects of life there is a snobbery in doing something well...doing it right...and holding those lesser mortals in contempt when they screw it up. Such is the case with combat communications. Those of us who did it, and did it well, take great pride in our craft. Even today, 35 years later, comrades will comment regarding various times when accurately placed artillery saved our lives.

I take great pride in that.

Combat communications is a relatively refined art form primarily designed to eliminate potentially fatal misunderstandings. When the bullets were flying, and the "pucker factor" was up in the 99% zone, there was no time for, "**Was that 'p' as in putrid...or 'd' as in desperate?**" The phonetic alphabet eliminated that problem by assigning each letter a specific word...one that sounded like none other:

Alpha ... Bravo ... Charlie ... Delta ... Echo ... Foxtrot ... Golf ... Hotel ... India ... Juliet ... Kilo ... Lima (Leema) ... Mike ... November ... Oscar ... Papa ... Quebec (Kee-bec)... Romeo ... Sierra ... Tango ... Uniform ... Victor ... Whiskey ... Xray ... Yankee ... Zulu

Additionally, calling in coordinates for med-evacs, artillery, night ambush locations, and daily patrols, required numerical accuracy to assure there was no accidental contact between friendly units. Therefore, since 5 and 9 can sound similar on a potentially static filled radio...

- **5 was "five"**
- **9 was "niner"..**

In the movies, when you hear a combat radioman calling in coordinates as "...three....seven....four....nine....", etc., you now may be the only person in the theatre who knows, with great authority, that...**it's supposed to be niner!**

As for Sylvester's mistake in the *Rambo* series, "**repeat**" was only used for artillery. The actual sequence was...

- **Fire one:** when we called in an artillery mission, we would first ask for one round to see how close it was to the target. Sort of an acid test of our map reading capabilities!
- **Adjust and fire one:** the requesting unit then adjusted in 100 yard increments "Up", "Down", "Left" or "Right" from their perspective. The artillery unit was responsible for plotting the "friendly" unit's location, listen to the adjustment, then adjust fire accordingly. "Left 1" simply told the artillery unit to adjust the fire left 100 yards **from the perspective of the unit in the field that has come under attack..** The unit under attack would continue to radio in an adjustment, then call for "fire one" until the artillery was zeroed in on the target.
- **Repeat your last...fire for effect:** target hit...no further adjustment; make the target disappear.

"**Say again your last**" is used exclusively when you didn't clearly understand the other party.

Each movie supposedly has a technical expert to monitor such mistakes. One can only wonder who and where the producers found the technical experts for this series of movies.

So, the next time you hear Sylvester Stallone, or any other hard charging warrior/actor screaming over the radio, "**....repeat your last....over....**" , you can look knowingly at someone near you and say, "**Repeat is only used for artillery!**"

Tim Duffie