
Monroe Doctrine
Volume VI

By
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Foreword

We have some exciting extras we are sure you will enjoy as you read this book. On our [website](#), we have a recap of Operation Middle Kingdom, and the one thing all of our fans always seem to ask us for...battle maps. To access this content, please click [here](#).

Chapter One

Terracotta Killers

May 20, 2026

2nd Group, 1st Detachment “Arrow”

Kunming, China

During their previous exercise three days ago, Captain Xu Biao’s company had been made to look like fools against a force of just sixteen of these Terracotta Killers, or TKs as everyone was calling them. Considering his Arrow Company had one hundred and twenty-four soldiers, it was embarrassing that such a small number of machines had hurt them like they had. Despite any remaining flaws, the Terracottas had proven adept at firing while on the move, and they had managed to advance while operating as a cohesive unit. They would attack in one location and then swiftly shift to another, overwhelming a couple of his platoons in the process. The Arrows were an elite Special Forces unit within the PLA, so this defeat had not sat well with the rank-and-file soldiers. A win here would go a long way toward restoring their individual and unit honor.

A small reconnaissance drone darted carefully from tree to tree. Captain Xu watched as Junior Sergeant Liu deftly maneuvered the Scorpion quadcopter around the edges of the foliage, ready to pull the device back behind the canopy if necessary. It was a good thing these microdrones were so highly maneuverable; the Special Forces needed any advantage they could get in fighting an adversary like the TKs.

Captain Xu patted the young man on the soldier. “You have done a good job mastering the terrain, Sergeant Liu.” Liu had perfected the tactic of maneuvering his drone from one covered position to another like a soldier would. It had become necessary to adapt and change tactics after the TKs had gotten wise to the little drones attempting to track their movements. The TKs might have been using sim rounds instead of real bullets, but even these paintball projectiles could travel fast enough to knock a drone out of the sky and disable it.

The young man kept his eyes on the controller as he casually replied, “Well, nothing increases the will to live quite like being hunted by mechanical killing machines. The speed at

which the TKs learn from past mistakes gives me the creeps. I just hope we fare better this iteration than we did two days ago.”

Xu grimaced at the young sergeant’s candor. If they hadn’t been fighting together for nearly two years, he likely would have chastised the man. Then again, after all the battles and missions their Special Forces group had fought in these past few years, Captain Xu figured his soldiers had earned the right to speak freely amongst each other.

In a strange way, Xu had come to understand something he wasn’t sure the more senior officers had picked up on yet—when his soldiers felt like they could speak freely in front of him, they became more candid, more honest. In turn, they were more loyal and dedicated to accomplishing the mission. They shared ideas that could lead to better mission success because they felt they could speak without being punished for giving an alternative idea or suggestion from those above them. It seemed in Xu’s mind that dispensing with the political doublespeak was proving to be far more effective than trying to enforce compliance through fear.

“I share your sentiment, Sergeant Liu, but let me reframe your perspective. There is an old saying: iron sharpens iron. But what does that mean? We, our Arrow unit, are one blade of iron. These TKs are another blade of iron, but they are dull and unsharpened. As they practice against us, learning and refining their own tactics, they are becoming a razor-sharp blade—a blade that will be turned against our adversaries. This blade will assist us in defeating the capitalist nations that seek to destroy China and turn us into slaves to their ideology. Instead of being angry that we have been chosen to work with these TKs, let’s focus on the positive experience we are gaining from this and how they will be fighting alongside us in the near future.”

“Yes, of course, Captain,” Sergeant Liu replied. “Those are wise words indeed. I shall redouble my efforts to make sure we are giving these machines a real ‘run for their money,’ as those Yankees like to say. They will not know what hits them once they come face-to-face with these Terracotta Killers.” A devilish smile crept across Liu’s face, and a fiery look burned in his eyes.

Xu patted Liu on the shoulder again before he walked away. He looked off in the distance toward where he had heard the thumping of helicopter blades. He knew from the sound of the approaching Harbin that the TKs were now being inserted to begin the fourth training exercise they’d run in just ten days.

When Captain Xu had originally been told about Project Terracotta, he had thought it was some sort of joke. It sounded to him more like one of those older American Hollywood-style fantasy or science fiction books than reality. Back in 1984, the Americans had made a movie called *The Terminator* that spoke of a dystopian future where a computer AI had taken control of the world and created mechanical killing machines called T-800s that they referred to as Terminators. Xu had seen a pirated copy years ago. It had starred an Austrian bodybuilder with a strange last name as the lead actor. He hadn't really gotten into the movie, but the concept of it had stuck with him. Once they had begun working on the Terracotta program, Xu wondered if something like that just might be possible one day.

Captain Xu pushed the disturbing thought of rogue machines aside. He looked down at his trousers; a small splash of dry red paint remained from the previous day's exercise. He reached a hand down to the flakes of dried paint and brushed them off as he reflected on the realism of the exercise the developers were having them run the machines through. While his soldiers were using live ammo to give the machines' developers and AI software some practice being shot at, blown up, and enduring the full experience of combat, the TKs were limited to using simulator rounds when battling his Arrow soldiers. This was being done to limit the kind of injuries that could occur during this intense and realistic training. The goal wasn't to physically kill the PLA operators, just train against them.

A voice broke the early-morning silence as Sergeant Liu declared excitedly, "There they are!" He waved to get Xu's attention.

Xu made his way back to the drone operator and saw what the junior sergeant was pointing to. The group of sixteen machines was already moving swiftly through the woods toward them. Thankfully, rays of sunlight had begun to push aside the darkness of night, illuminating the forest, so they wouldn't need to rely on their night vision lenses too much longer.

Hearing some rustling of leaves, Xu turned and caught sight of his righthand man approaching from behind. A few months back, Geng Aiping had been promoted to master sergeant. Xu had convinced his commander to allow Geng to stay on as his company sergeant. He'd valued the man's insight as a platoon sergeant and wanted to keep him around in the final stages of this war.

Master Sergeant Geng Aiping spat some tobacco on the ground as he looked at the drone footage before commenting, “Damn, those things sure do move quick. Looks like they are heading right for us—just like you said they would for this scenario.”

“Yeah, well, this exercise is supposed to test their ability to assault a fixed position and reach its command post,” Xu explained to his new company sergeant. “Wasn’t hard to figure out what they would do. The challenge is anticipating how they will attack us and how we are going to defend against it.”

Xu then pointed to the guidon in the center of the Arrows’ command post. The TKs’ primary mission objective was the capture of the Arrow unit’s flag attached to the CP. “That, Master Sergeant, is what we have to protect. Capturing our flag and bringing it back to their extraction point is the only thing those machines are going to care about. Are we sufficiently ready to prevent them from taking it?”

The seasoned noncommissioned officer revealed a mouth of tobacco-stained teeth as he smiled. “Oh, we are ready, sir,” Master Sergeant Geng replied. “The men are eager to move past that last exercise. It kind of embarrassed them, so they are eager for some payback.”

“That’s good to hear, Master Sergeant,” said Xu. “You checked up on the platoons? Making sure they have the likely routes and approaches mined and ready, and the machine gunners set up to provide interlocking fields of fire to support each other?”

Geng nodded as he pulled his map out. He pointed to a series of positions on it leading to their CP and the ambush points they had established along the way. When their company had had to choose a site for this next exercise, they had chosen one that best utilized the terrain they had to work with. This location would force the machines to advance from a limited number of approaches and concentrate their fire in a smaller area. Time would tell if the Arrows had chosen wisely or if the TKs would luck out again and find a way to outfox them as they had during the last exercise.

“These are good positions, Master Sergeant. Just stay ready with our reserve force once we know where they are going to press their attack from,” Xu commented. He looked down at Sergeant Liu’s monitor and watched as his spotter drones continued to track the progress of the TKs steadily advancing toward them. “I’m not an expert on those Terracottas, but I’d wager a guess that our scouts will make contact in less than ten minutes. Let’s go check on the platoons and make sure everyone is ready.”

They split up so they could cover more positions with the limited time they had. It wouldn't be long now before the scouts they had placed in a picket line position in front of the company would make contact. Once that happened, it would be a free-for-all until the little buggers had been finished off.

When Xu started walking back toward the CP, his drone operator waved his arm to get his attention. As he headed toward the young man, he hoped it wasn't anything serious.

"What do you have for me, Sergeant?"

"Sir, I was tracking the group just fine, when suddenly, two of my shadow drones lost track of six of them. They just disappeared out of sight."

"Whoa, hold up there," said Xu. "Don't you have a couple of your drones following them like a shadow while a few others watch from different angles and positions specifically to make sure this doesn't happen?"

The drone operator nodded glumly. "I do. That's why I'm not sure what happened. One minute, we had sixteen figures roughly two kilometers out. Then it dropped to just ten. I've been searching for the other six, but I haven't found them yet."

"Ah, this is crap, Sergeant. Figure it out and get back to us once you've found them," Xu barked angrily.

Crack!

The morning tranquility was suddenly punctuated by the sound of a single shot. No one spoke, and there was no chatter on the radio, either. Everyone just lay low and waited to see what was going to happen next.

Finally, Master Sergeant Geng spoke over their comms. "Report. Who fired that shot? Is anyone hit?"

A call came from one of their scout teams. The person on the other end whispered into the mic. "They took a shot at us. It missed—barely, but it missed. Maybe there was an animal nearby—they're still a bit trigger-happy and don't always properly distinguish between a human and an animal if it's somewhat close in size. Either way, we are unsure where it came from other than we believe it came from the direction of grid..." The soldier read off the section of the map where they believed the shooter was located.

Crack!

Another shot rang out, followed by additional silence. A moment later, a different scout team called in to let them know his partner had just been hit. He'd taken a paintball splat to his helmet, and he was out for the exercise.

A few minutes went by, and the tension continued to grow. Xu was adamant about Liu finding those Terracottas and where they were attacking them from. A third loud crack echoed through the woods, and another scout team reported that one of their team members had been eliminated.

Damn it. Being slowly picked off like this was exactly what I wanted to avoid..., Xu thought angrily as he heard a fourth and then a fifth shot echo out, just moments apart from each other. The machines were doing what they did best, carrying out precision attacks from afar.

"Sir, you may want to see this," Sergeant Liu called out.

Xu felt his stomach tighten when he heard the voice of the drone operator. The TKs had gotten extremely close to the scouts' positions. Worse, Liu had found those missing six Terracottas; they had swung around their left flank and appeared to be scaling some tough terrain, climbing almost cliff-like edges in an effort to circle around the rear of their position. He passed the TKs' position along to one of his lieutenants, directing him to take a couple of squads to see if they could catch the Terracottas by surprise and take 'em out.

A series of single shots echoed within the forest, quickly followed by calls coming in from the remaining scout teams out front of their position, reporting they'd been hit. Pointing to one group of TKs, Xu directed the sergeant to follow them for a moment. The group appeared to be spreading themselves out in a wide battle line as they prepared to advance toward the three locations his soldiers had set up as ambush points.

While Xu was passing the information along to the lieutenants and sergeants overseeing those sections, a couple more shots rang out, and suddenly the image he was seeing went black.

"Ah, man. They got 'em," Liu exclaimed in frustration. "They're taking my drones out. I'm trying to save what I can, sir, but it looks like our eyes in the sky are done."

"Prepare for contact!" Xu directed. He wasn't going to sit around anymore. The fight was about to start.

Crack! Crack....crack, crack, crack.

Still more calls came in, announcing soldiers at various positions along the line that were out.

BOOM!

A slew of soldiers opened fire as the shooting started in earnest. Xu could hear some of the squads' machine guns joining in. The gunners were engaging whatever it was they saw with a series of three-second bursts. The venerable QJY-88 machine guns or 88s as they liked to call them could chew through ammo like men starved of food.

Then another blast went off, this time at one of the other ambush locations. Like the first, the soldiers watching that sector opened fire on whatever had stumbled into the kill box and likely tripped the first charge. Seconds into this new battle erupting, multiple explosions flared up at the third and final ambush site. Angry shouts soon picked up in intensity.

Zip, zip, zip.

Xu ducked instinctively as he rolled to the right and came up in a fighting position with his rifle tucked in his shoulder, looking for a target to engage. Whatever had just shot at him had barely missed, and he was determined to make sure it didn't score a hit because he was careless.

He scanned through the foliage, but he couldn't find the TK that had fired at him. It made him nervous, not knowing where that mechanical killing machine was.

"Over here, Captain. We'll cover you!" shouted one of the soldiers defending the command post and the guidon standing proudly inside.

Xu made eye contact with the sergeant in charge of the group and jumped to his feet as he took off. More explosions went off where his platoons had set up ambush points. More and more of his soldiers shouted angrily to anyone that could hear that they had been taken out, hit by one of the paintball simulator rounds.

Zip, zip.

As Xu sprinted, he heard a sound like angry bees whizzing over his shoulder, causing him to run even faster. He juke to the right before stumbling into a quasi-dive, falling into a covered position in the CP.

Splat, splat!

Rounds hit the fallen trunk he'd just dived behind. Two soldiers who had been covering him got lit up with multiple paintball markers across their chest rigs, denoting them as KIA.

What the hell? Xu thought angrily. Are they already inside our positions?!

The two newly eliminated soldiers took a seat on the ground not far from him, their looks of frustration and anger evident on their faces.

“Captain Xu, heads up around the CP. You’ve got two of those TKs headed your way from the direction of First Platoon,” Master Sergeant Geng called out over the radio. “They just went right through that platoon like a hot knife through butter. I’m pulling another squad back from Third Platoon to head your way, but you gotta hold that spot until we can get more shooters to you.”

“Hey, we got a couple of TKs headed our way! Stay alert, guys!” Xu shouted to be heard over the cacophony of battle.

The soldiers nodded grimly at the news.

“Oh, hey. There’s one!” one of his guys shouted. He cut loose with his rifle, sending a barrage of bullets in the direction where he had seen the TK.

Xu moved up to a kneeling position, aiming his rifle in the same general direction as he looked for a target to shoot at. There was a cloud of movement—a couple of rifle cracks were followed by the outline of a TK as it raced toward another tree while firing right at them. Depressing the trigger on his rifle, Xu fired at the machine, which seemed to be incredibly adept at dodging their attempts at trying to kill it.

“Frag out!” shouted one of the soldiers to his right as he lobbed a grenade at the tree the machine was running toward next.

Crump!

The fragmentation grenade exploded, and sure enough, it caught part of the machine as it darted toward another tree for cover. The small explosion had peppered the Terracotta with shrapnel and appeared to have damaged one of its arms. Xu and the others in the CP zeroed in on the damaged machine, landing round after round into its torso and upper body.

The Terracotta continued to try and advance despite the damage it was taking, and it hadn’t stopped firing back at them. Then one of the light machine guns opened up nearby, spitting out a barrage of bullets in the direction of the damaged TK. The hail of bullets ripped the right leg right off the machine before tearing into its upper torso, permanently putting the machine out of action.

Before any of them could take a moment to celebrate the victory, the air around them came alive with the buzzing sound of more simulator rounds slapping into multiple soldiers who’d been defending the CP, all but wiping out the quick reaction force that had just arrived moments earlier. Then Xu felt several sim rounds slam into his chest and one hit his helmet for good measure.

Xu's brain barely had time to register what had happened before a blur of action moved past him. He turned in just enough time to catch a glimpse of a single TK that had leapt into the center of the CP with a rifle in one hand, still shooting at his soldiers while it reached over with its free hand to grab the guidon and yank it out of the ground. Then it moved with blinding speed out of the CP and started racing in the direction of those six TKs that were attempting to scale the backside of the base camp they had set up.

Xu might have been eliminated from the exercise, but that didn't mean he couldn't keep observing his soldiers and the battle as it continued to unfold. Looking at his little tracker device, which let him see how many of his soldiers had been taken out and how many of the TKs were still alive, he felt anger and a growing sense of frustration at the results he was seeing. The damn machines had once again figured out how to slice through their lines swiftly and efficiently, finding blind spots or weaknesses and ruthlessly exploiting them.

Less than five minutes later, a loud air horn sounded, alerting them to the end of the exercise. Either the TKs had reached their extraction point, or they had no other obstacles between them and it. When Xu looked at the end results, he hung his head low, wondering if his unit would still be considered part of Special Forces, given how terribly they had performed in these past few exercises.

Later that afternoon, as they sat on the helicopters taking them back to base, Xu received a private message from their commander. He was incredibly impressed with their performance against what he said were the most violent and extreme killing machines he'd ever witnessed. Xu breathed a sigh of relief.

The commander conveyed that he was abundantly proud of the work they had done to refine these Terracottas as the Army geared up to start mass production of this new superweapon—the weapon that would turn the tide of the war and ensure it was the People's Republic of China that would go on to become the dominant world power to lead humanity into the twenty-first century—not America.