

Nonverbal Communication

Every soldier in action is dependent on nonverbal communication with his comrades due to background noise or silence commands. The military uses universal hand signals for this purpose. Carter and his comrades also had to learn and internalize these signals.

On a sunny Tuesday, they had lessons at the hell trail, but Commander Annie Dalton stood there and waited for them. The group was completely confused.

»Good morning!«, she started.

»I heard your first exercise yesterday didn't go so well. Don't worry about it! Within the upcoming year, you'll have so many exercises that you'll end up laughing about yesterday yourselves. Major Banes likes to use the first exercise to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the groups. He's been listening to your radio and watching you from above via a satellite scan.«

They were surprised and wondered if they had said anything Banes could use against them.

Annie had to laugh. »Don't worry, you did well and he had little criticism beyond your accomplishments. It seems he noticed a talent for tactics in Leena Whittaker. He also noticed how effectively Carter Sanders moved through the forest. Roderick Tindall has a high hit rate and Gina Powell seems to have done well as a sniper. But he also said that some of you react too slowly and freeze completely when confronted spontaneously with something. Don't worry, that's perfectly normal in the beginning. A calm reaction in the face of a precarious situation

comes with experience.«

Her words made the recruits feel better. Annie had a way of talking to them that made her sympathetic and authentic. Her tone was always melodic and friendly, and although she was objective, she was warm and pleasant. Unlike Banes or Dunn, who had little patience and liked to let them feel what they had already experienced, Annie's vast wealth of experience could only be subtly heard on the sidelines. But that seemed much more competent than with any other of their teachers. Annie continued: »The first step to a successful assignment is communication between the individual team members. In real life, this process is supported by a team VI, but when you work with several comrades, direct consultation is of the utmost importance. But despite all the technology and communication devices, verbal exchange in the field is often not possible. Interference, sabotage, noise or silence make it impossible to talk to each other. For such cases, a visual form of communication has been developed that people have been using successfully for centuries. Soldiers in action use hand signals to communicate the most important incidents and commands. The commands are always the same, so you can save time by moving your hand.«

She showed them a representation of about thirty different hand signals.

»You have to learn and internalize these signs because they are universally used by every member of the military of the Initiative.«

She explained to them how to represent the numbers from one to ten with one hand. All hand signals were given with only one hand because usually the other hand was needed to hold the rifle. Carter found the hand signals very clever because they were silent and saved a lot of time.

He was enthusiastic about memorizing the signs Annie demonstrated to them. For example, the flat hand, which meant ›hold‹. If one held the closed fist upwards, this meant that the troop should not move. Annie showed them how to stretch the arm straight to the side when the team was to form a line. She also showed them how to portray different weapons or warn of snipers or vehicles. All this served to be able to master every situation nonverbally.

»If there is an enemy nearby who hasn't noticed you, this communication is very important. It's also often used by spies who explore uncharted and unsafe terrain.«

They practiced the different characters several times and went through situations where they were used. Before each field exercise, they should practice these signs again in order to be able to use them.