

Moving Cavalry Forward: Summary of 2019 Gainey Cup Competition

by LTC Jeffrey Barta and CPT Patrick M. Zang

The Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) hosted the fourth biennial Gainey Cup Best Scout Squad Competition April 22-May 3 at Fort Benning, GA.

This international competition – named for retired CSM William Gainey, lifelong Army leader and the first senior-enlisted adviser to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – featured 25 squads representing each U.S. Army division, separate regiments and six North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) teams (Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), competing for the title of the world’s best scout squad.

At the conclusion of the nine-day, 10-event competition, the scouts from 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, were the 2019 Gainey Cup champions. Team members were SSG Matthew Brooks, SGT Tyler Kain, SGT Shane Wuchte, SPC Gabriel Cheek, SPC Christopher Lamaita, SPC Austin Thurman, SPC Emery Hanback and SPC Luke Hyland.

Finishing narrowly behind 5-73 Cav was the team from 42nd Reconnaissance Company of the Dutch 13th Brigade and the team from 2nd Squadron, 13th Cavalry Regiment, representing U.S. 2nd Infantry Division.



Figure 1. Scouts from 2nd Cavalry Regiment’s squad conduct land navigation. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Scott Peckham)

The initial assessment from this year’s competition shows a marked improvement in the skills of the U.S. Army’s scout squads to conduct their doctrinal mission “to rapidly and accurately answer critical information requirements in accordance with commander’s reconnaissance or security guidance.” Areas that need continued emphasis in home-station training and institutional curriculum are:

- Doctrinal knowledge;
- Application of commander’s reconnaissance guidance (CRG);
- Call for fire;
- Vehicle identification; and

- Gunnery-skills weapons proficiency.

This year's competition differed from the previous three biennial competitions by including the scout-squad vehicle platforms (Bradley, Stryker, humvee and the Canadian Light Armored Vehicle-6) and a shift away from discrete, individual tasks toward an adherence with the Integrated Weapons Training Strategy. Furthermore, this year's competition showcased how the U.S. Army expects its squad leaders and Cavalry scouts to perform in a complex, ambiguous environment against an adaptable enemy capable of employing multi-domain warfare, using multiple forms of contact simultaneously. This emphasis forced the competing scouts to operate degraded for significant periods during the competition.

The scout squads varied in size based on their brigade combat team (BCT) type of assignment. For example, teams from armored and Stryker brigades were defined as a six-trooper squad (one staff sergeant, one sergeant, four scouts) and their vehicle. Infantry-based teams comprised an eight-trooper squad (one staff sergeant, one sergeant, six scouts) and two humvees. To the greatest extent possible, the competition's grading was standardized according to applicable Army training strategies and methodologies to ensure a level, competitive playing field to compensate for the inherent differences among the size of the squads and their respective vehicle platforms.

Lessons from 2017

Following the 2017 Gainey Cup, four distinct areas of emphasis were identified and presented to the operational and generating forces as areas of necessary improvement. Those areas were integrated into multiple events throughout the entire 2019 competition.

- **Call for fire** – 29 of 48 scout teams could not begin a call-for-fire within three minutes of target presentation/identification or possessed a target-location error (TLE) greater than 250 meters, thus violating Task Number 061-283-6003, "Adjust indirect fire."
- **Land navigation** – only three of 24 squads found all assigned points during a six-hour, limited-visibility course. Six teams were unable to find a single point.
- **Vehicle identification** – the competitor average was 18 percent correctly identified.
- **Actions on contact** – tactical maneuver to gain and maintain contact with enemy forces was a point of weakness in multiple events during the 2017 competition. Competitor understanding of doctrinal language and, more importantly, the CRG, was lacking.

Assessed tasks, overviews

During the 2019 competition, the squads operated across 200 square kilometers of Fort Benning in a progressive-training strategy while being evaluated on multiple repetitions of 43 Combined-Arms Training Strategy tasks that progressed from individual to small-unit collective. The competition consisted of two distinct phases: Phase I (individual tasks) and Phase II (collective tasks). The Phase I events, while critically important and used to assess squad proficiency, were used for sequencing purposes and, for the event, in an overall tiebreaker. The entirety of the available points resided in Phase II, commencing with the reconnaissance run the morning of April 29 and concluding with the final charge May 3.

The scouts first applied their doctrinal and technical knowledge with a doctrinal knowledge exam, a vehicle-identification test, a call-for-fire simulation and a gunnery-skills test on weapons and vehicle platforms. Teams then conquered "Carter's Challenge,"¹ a grueling 20-kilometer dismounted reconnaissance exercise through wooded terrain during a seven-hour period that included day and night conditions to test the scouts' mental and physical limits. The events continued with the recon run, followed by the "scouts in action" live-fire demonstration.

The squads then deployed to the field for a 72-hour series of missions that tested the scouts' physical and mental ability to conduct reconnaissance and security (R&S) operations in close proximity to opposing forces while answering the commander's priority intelligence requirements (PIRs).

Next up was "Romesha's Honor"² that challenged the scout squads' tactical abilities in 12 critical collective tasks across 20 kilometers comprised of four reconnaissance objectives in a complex environment. This part of the competition required the squads to collect key indicators in support of brigade commander's PIRs while operating

against a mobile and adaptive opposing force. This event was modeled after the scout-squad proficiency exercise that originated in 1971.

Then came “Old Bill’s Gallop” that assessed the scouts’ ability to navigate (mounted) to named areas of interest while operating within CRG and employing fires and high-frequency communication systems. “Buford’s Guard”³ then required the teams to provide reaction time and maneuver space for their follow-on forces by implementing direct and indirect fires in accordance with the commander’s engagement criteria in a live-fire scenario.

The Gainey Cup culminated with the “final charge,” a head-to-head 3.5-mile run to Brave Rifles Field in the Harmony Church area of Fort Benning. Once there, the teams completed a relay to establish an observation post.

Heading into the final event, nine teams remained mathematically capable of claiming the championship, a testament to the field’s competitiveness. The competition scoring used a weighted-scale concept, prioritizing critical R&S tasks over sheer physical fitness. The winning squad had to “answer the question,”⁴ providing their supported units the initiative on the battlefield. In keeping with the inaugural 2013 Gainey Cup, the most heavily weighted event in the competition was “Romesha’s Honor.”

Moving forward

The Phase I and II tasks were deliberately and redundantly built into the 2019 competition. They were reinforced with messaging to the force for the past two years to focus home-station training and division-level competitions. As a result, the scouts at this year’s competition performed admirably and exceeded previous results in most areas, especially in land navigation, with more than half the field finding all 12 objectives. Also, one of the most rewarding portions of the competition was the many Cavalry scouts who conducted their own self-assessment and vowed to take the knowledge learned at the 2019 Gainey Cup back to home station to increase the readiness of the force. To reinforce this effort by the competitors, the Gainey Cup emphasis going forward remains on the following five areas to continue to improve the readiness of our force.

1. Doctrinal knowledge. Three different tests were administered (one each for skill levels 10, 20 and 30). The average score for the tests was 44 out of 100 percent. The test was comprised of 50 questions (operational terms and graphics, R&S doctrine, skill-level specific questions and land-navigation questions). Just less than half of all competitors could not list the R&S fundamentals nor the components of CRG. Anecdotal evidence from multiple teams suggests a reliance on respective unit standard operating procedures (SOPs), tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) and operational-employment experience as opposed to a solid, doctrinal foundation.

While it appears proficiency and readiness has increased, a knowledge gap remains. During the past two years, the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) published CALL Handbook 17-01, *Scouts in Contact: Tactical Vignettes for Cavalry Leaders*, CALL Manual 17-12, *Reconnaissance and Security Commander’s Handbook*, and the *Reconnaissance Smart Card* graphic training aide. These publications focused on the section through brigade level to provide useful quick-reference pocket guides to train and educate leaders, whereas the *Scouts in Contact* manual provides many tactical-decision exercises that require nothing more than a sand table and/or whiteboard. The *Reconnaissance and Security Commander’s Handbook* is a synthesis of useful doctrine (e.g., Field Manual (FM) 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations*, FM 3-55, *Information Collection*, Army Technical Publication (ATP) 3-20.96, *Cavalry Squadron*, FM 3-20-2, *Reconnaissance and Security and Tactical Enabling Tasks Volume 2*, among others).

These publications are a starting point for increased proficiency in Cavalry operations. Leaders should regularly reach out to the combat training centers, to the schoolhouse (Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader’s Course, Army Reconnaissance Course (ARC) and Cavalry Leader’s Course (CLC)) and to the Army Publishing Directorate (apd.army.mil) to ensure the latest doctrine and TTPs are available to their respective formations. Cadre at the Gainey Cup this year observed that while most squad leaders performed above average, a gap exists between the career-path knowledge skills and the attributes expected/required of the staff sergeant in a scout platoon – current doctrinal, technical and tactical knowledge.

2. Application of CRG. It was made abundantly clear to the competitors that the winner of this year’s competition would be the squad that could “answer the question,” using doctrinal reporting formats and in accordance with the CRG. Many squads were able to successfully accomplish the mission to doctrinal standards. The margin

separating the top squads came down to discrepancies on route overlays and timely actions on contact. However, multiple squads relied upon flawed SOPs and TTPs, which resulted in missed indicators and insufficient or untimely reports. While ATP 3-20.98, **Scout Platoon**, moves its way through the Army's review and editing process, scouts at platoon level must rely on doctrine non-traditionally thought to apply at their echelon.

In particular, FM 3-98 (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) provides the doctrinal foundation and language necessary for all Cavalry scouts to achieve shared understanding and build trust at echelon. It is acknowledged that the current state of R&S doctrine requires significant improvement; however, for the Cavalry community to increase its proficiency, leaders and troopers at all levels must be able to speak the same language. According to FM 3-98, Paragraph 4-38, "Commanders provide clear reconnaissance guidance that offers both freedom of action to develop the situation as well as adequate direction to ensure that their organic Cavalry organizations can accomplish stated reconnaissance objectives within the required timeframe. The commander's [R&S] planning guidance provides a clear understanding of the Cavalry organization's task, purpose and objective. [R&S] guidance explains focus, levels of detail required, levels of covertness, and guidelines for engagement, disengagement and displacement of the organization." This simplistic language, often misunderstood due to a lack of knowledge, must be inculcated among Cavalry troopers to enable the execution of disciplined initiative within the construct of mission command the Cavalry claims to have been executing since its inception.

3. Call for fire. There were 27 of the 50 scout teams that scored an overall zero due to TLE or the time elapsed. The event comprised two call-for-fire missions to destroy or obscure using grid and polar missions. Outside the simulator, squads continued to struggle with TLE in live scenarios due to improper bracketing. Those who struggled reacquired grids with their optics or made inaccurate small adjustments. Repeated instances of this occurred during the competition where competitors relied solely on digital means without conducting a check-and-balance with their analog map and graphics. This over-reliance on comfort technology resulted in hundreds of lost points. To remedy this situation, training at home-station needs to be deliberately planned from individual to large collective tasks, with an emphasis on a return to the basics. This cliché needs to be taken seriously given the likely propensity of known adversaries to possess robust capabilities to contest the electromagnetic spectrum.

Of note in this event is that our international partners placed five squads in the top 10 and continued excellence with live munitions. Future competitions will continue to encourage increased proficiency in this area with the inclusion of more complex fire missions such as obscuration, moving targets and coordinated illumination.

Comments from the 2017 Gainey Cup after-action review pertaining to the state of readiness of our scouts to accurately deliver first round effects still echoed true in 2019.



Figure 2. SSG Kristofer Sprunger from 5-7 Cav, 3rd Infantry Division, reports information about opposing forces during the Romesha's Honor event. (U.S. Army photo by LTC Jeff Barta)

“It is a matter of faith that the Scout’s best weapon is [his] radio.”⁵ In reality, it is the lethality provided through fires at the observer’s command that gives the scout the ability to have a disproportionate lethal impact on the battlefield. However, competitors performed unevenly when completing an accurate and timely call for fire. As with land navigation, competitors were forced to employ the basic tools of map, binoculars, compass and protractor. Scouts have been empowered with position navigation enhanced laser range finders and digital integration. From the Long-Range Advanced Scout System to the Lightweight Laser Designator Range Finder to the M2/M3 Bradley call-for-fire quick message, scouts have been enabled to initiate and receive precise, accurate and timely fires. The efficiency and precision created should continue to be maximized when possible. However, the likelihood of a threat actor spoofing or denying these systems is high. Expertise in the high-end capability cannot come at the expense of the scout’s over-reliance on technology.

A TLE greater than 250 meters accounted for more than half the competition’s deductions. ATP 3-09.30, **Techniques for Observed Fire**, notes that while 250-meter TLE is the mean for observers employing map, binoculars and compass, it is unacceptable for a first round fire-for-effect mission or target suppression. Several competitors misestimated the range to the target in excess of two kilometers. Upon debriefing, many proved unfamiliar with the Mil Relation Formula (commonly called the WORM formula), which enables an observer to determine range if known-size equipment is present. While noted that a live event vs. a virtual event is more substantive training, overall competitors did not blame the simulator or their unfamiliarity with the system for their shortcomings.



Figure 3. Members of the German 230th Mountain Reconnaissance Battalion assemble the M2 machinegun during the Final Charge event. (U.S. Army photo by MCoE Public Affairs Office)

A second large source of competition deductions was the inability to initiate the call for fire within three minutes after being given a five-minute block of time to conduct familiarization with the map and simulator screen.

Unit training can start with getting ATP 3-09.30 into the hands of scouts. In particular, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 provide in-depth discussion of locating, initiating and adjusting timely and accurate fires. Beyond this initial step, an easy point of departure may be borrowing training plans from the annual brigade forward observer (FO) certification. It may not be possible to replicate the depth of full FO training; however, scouts must approach the same level of observed fires capability. Copying those who hang their hat on providing timely and accurate observed fires seems like a good idea.

4. Vehicle identification – The vehicle-identification exam was comprised of 50 vehicles, each worth two points, in accordance with current gunnery manuals. The average score was 39 out of 100. While this doubles the 2017 results, it is still an area of weakness that requires improvement in our force as several competitors misidentified threat and friendly real vehicles in the tactical scenarios. The fix for this continued deficiency is simple, yet difficult. Conducting a progressive-training path in preparation for unit gunnery is the answer. In the modern, increasingly

complex operational environment, vehicle-identification proficiency needs to return to pre-Global War on Terrorism emphasis. Units should continue to employ recognition of combatants/vehicles in their integrated weapons training strategy and not rely on potentially outdated or overly simple PowerPoint presentations. Nation-states, friend and foe alike, use the same vehicles in the contemporary operating environment. The difference between success and failure, between life and death, is the ability of a combat-arms Soldier to readily identify nuances, clearly indicating whether the vehicle is friend or foe, through optics and under limited visibility.

5. Gunnery-skills testing – Results suggest that gunnery-skills testing is conducted at varying standards across the force, and it is particularly deficient within infantry brigade combat team Cavalry squadrons and scout platoons. Multiple vehicle commanders and gunners could not properly reassemble their assigned machineguns and perform a functions check. This continued to manifest itself during live-fire when malfunctions prohibited squads from destroying the advancing enemy force. The average live-fire lethality accuracy was less than 2/3 of the targets destroyed.

An interesting secondary observation from the 2019 Gainey Cup was the importance of institutional broadening assignments in the career of a noncommissioned officer to prepare him or her for future operational-force assignments. A third of the squads selected by their brigades and divisions were developed at home station by platoon sergeants who were former Advanced Leader's Course or ARC instructors. Similarly, the winning squad was mentored by a platoon sergeant and first sergeant who had recently left a broadening assignment as an instructor. In these instances, the depth of foundational knowledge gained as an institutional instructor directly improved the operational force's readiness.

Conclusions

The continued partnership with allied nations through competition continues to improve interoperability and shared techniques across different armies. The six international teams that competed in the 2019 Gainey Cup were determined and raised the standard for everyone. Significantly, the average international score beat U.S. teams in six of nine events and tied in three. The only event where U.S. units outmatched NATO partners was the U.S. doctrinal-knowledge test. Future competitions will continue to invite international allies and encourage them to employ their country's reconnaissance platforms.

One of the five premier competitions hosted at MCoE, the 2019 Gainey Cup continues to drive improved performance of Cavalry scouts across the force, and it serves as a biennial assessment of readiness and the focus of instruction conducted within institutional training. Selected as the best of their units, the 25 squads in this year's competition demonstrated improvement across the force in our Army's crucial ability to perform R&S operations to gain the advantage, fight and win in a complex environment. The observations collected from these squads will continue to be analyzed by institutional experts with the continued goal of informing change both in the focus of home-station training and in the refinement of institutional courses and professional military education at MCoE and across U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command.

From 2017 to 2019, this competition has provided indicators of marked improvements in the capabilities of Cavalry scouts. Many reports from the combat training centers indicate the increased proficiency and lethality of scout platoons, which is a true testament to the guidance, direction and training of Cavalry leaders across the force. The preceding observations are presented so that American and allied Cavalry scouts inculcate the lessons they learned at the 2019 Gainey Cup, spread their knowledge at home station, conduct critical self-assessment and continue to raise the bar and push the limits in all training events. Marked improvement has occurred; that is evident. However, there remains significant work to be accomplished.

It is the sincerest hope of the MCoE, Armor School and 316th Cavalry Brigade that this year's competition fueled the fire within scouts across the U.S. Army and allied armies around the world. This year the stakes were raised and complexity was increased, and scouts rose to the challenge, demonstrating change. Moving forward, more will be expected of Cavalry scouts and their leaders. Units should continue to focus on doctrinal knowledge, application of CRG, call for fire, vehicle identification and gunnery skills/weapons proficiency. Improved performance must be the norm, not the exception. There was tremendous performance all-around from the 176 competitors who comprised the 2019 field. Best of luck to all moving forward, and we look forward to moving the Cavalry forward to 2021.

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CPT Patrick Zang is a student in intermediate-level education. He previously served as the course director of ARC for 21 cycles and the Gainey Cup lead planner/officer in charge in 2017 and 2019. His other assignments include commander, Crazy Horse Troop, 2-13 Cavalry, Fort Bliss, TX, and Camp Buehring, Kuwait; assistant S-3, 2-13 Cav, Fort Bliss; and troop executive officer, mortar-platoon leader and tank-platoon leader, 3rd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Hood, and Iraq. His military education includes CLC, Maneuver Captain's Career Course, Infantry Mortar Leaders Course, ARC, Armor Basic Officer Leader Course and Airborne School. He holds a bachelor's of arts degree in political science/history from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He is a member of the Order of Saint George – Bronze and a spur holder from 3rd Cavalry Regiment.



Figure 4. 2019 Gainey Cup champions from 5-73 Cav are SSG Matthew Brooks, SGT Tyler Kain, SGT Shane Wuchte, SPC Gabriel Cheek, SPC Christopher Lamaita, SPC Austin Thurman, SPC Emery Hanback and SPC Luke Hyland. They are pictured with Chief of Armor/Armor School commandant BG David A. Lesperance (right), Armor School CSM Kevin J. Muhlenbeck (left) and retired CSM William Gainey (back row center). (U.S. Army photo by MCoE PAO)

Notes

¹ Named in recognition of Medal of Honor recipient and Cavalry scout Ty Carter.

² Named in recognition of Medal of Honor recipient and Cavalry scout Clint Romesha.

³ Named in recognition of BG John Buford, commander of 1st U.S. Cavalry during the Civil War.

⁴ Initial planning guidance from the Chief of Armor, BG David Lesperance.

⁵ Not attributed to any individual; sage wisdom from generations of senior Cavalry leaders.

Acronym Quick-Scan

ARC – Army Reconnaissance Course

ATP – Army technical publication

BCT – brigade combat team

CALL – Center for Army Lessons Learned

CLC – Cavalry Leader’s Course

CRG – commander’s reconnaissance guidance

FM – field manual

FO – forward observer

JMRC – Joint Maneuver Readiness Center

MCoE – Maneuver Center of Excellence

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NTC – National Training Center

O/C/T – observer/coach/trainer

PIR – priority intelligence requirement

R&S – reconnaissance and security

SOP – standard operating procedures

STX – situational-training exercise

TLE – target-location error

TTP – tactics, techniques and procedures

Gainey Cup at a Glance

Phase I – individual tasks

- Vehicle identification;
- Gunnery-skills testing;
- Virtual-based call-for-fire;
- “Carter’s Challenge” (dismounted land navigation); and
- Two physical fitness and scout knowledge events.

Phase II – collective tasks

- **Romesha’s Honor** – a 15-hour situational-training exercise (STX) comprised of four reconnaissance objectives in a complex environment against a mobile, adaptive opposing force. During the STX, squad leaders had to collect key indicators in support of the brigade commander’s PIR.

Squads were assessed on the following tasks:

- **Old Bill’s Gallop** – mounted land navigation course where the teams established observation posts at five named areas of interest across 40 kilometers, employing field-expedient high-frequency communications and call-for-fire.
- **Buford’s Guard** – a squad live-fire exercise comprising both direct- and indirect-fire engagements with both mounted and dismounted elements similar to a Table IX.
- **Evaluated tasks:**
 - 052-195-2101, “Percentage of slope”;
 - 171-300-0037, “Establish an observation post”;
 - 071-730-0014, “Armed forces vehicle identification”;
 - 081-COM-1005, “Evaluate a casualty”;
 - 081-COM-1054, “Evacuate a casualty”;
 - Battle Drill 1, “React to contact”;
 - 031-COM-1007, “React to chemical or biological hazard/attack”;
 - 071-COM-0510, “React to indirect fire”;
 - 052-196-2002, “Radius of a curve”;
 - 061-283-6003, “Call for fire”;
 - 171-COM-4079, “Reporting”;
 - 081-COM-1001, “Casualty evacuation”;

- 031-COM-1050, "Answer PIR";
- 171-123-1301, "Conduct an area reconnaissance";
- 171-123-1300, "Conduct a route reconnaissance";
- 052-196-3065, "Prepare a route reconnaissance overlay";
- 171-121-4051, "Prepare a situation report";
- 171-121-4074, "Conduct actions at a danger area";
- 171-121-3009, "Control techniques of movement";
- 031-COM-1050, "Report information of potential intelligence value";
- 171-121-4040, "Conduct tactical vehicle navigation"; and
- 171-123-4013, "Conduct the reconnaissance of an obstacle."