

Integrated Squads in the 6x36 Reconnaissance Formation

by CPT Jared D.L. Moore

What is a reconnaissance squad in the 6x36 formation? This is a topic frequently discussed among reconnaissance leaders as they prepare to certify their sections. The question affects how a unit qualifies and trains each echelon to meet its Objective-T (training) requirements.

There are two major answers to the question: 1) there are two types of squads within a platoon, mounted and dismounted; and 2) there are four comparable squads consisting of a vehicle and an associated dismount team.

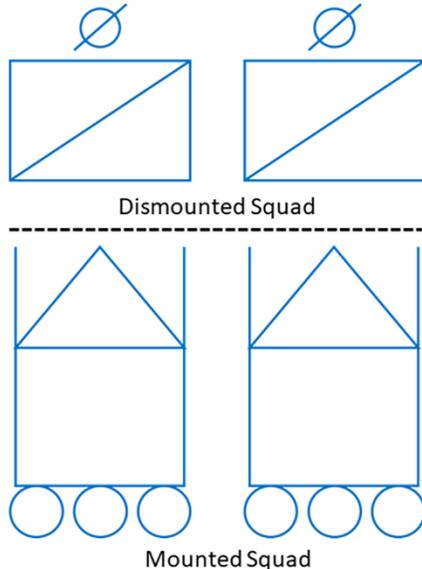
The modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) further complicates this debate because it does not define squad composition. The MTOE simply designates two squad leaders, two team leaders, four mounted scouts and four dismounted scouts per reconnaissance section. The only differences in the squad leaders is one has a Scout Leader's Course (formerly known as the Army Reconnaissance Course) identifier and one has a Ranger identifier.

As a reconnaissance-troop commander in 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, I discussed this issue with other leaders in the unit. Within the squadron, we generally agreed that a platoon was three sections, as the MTOE designates, with two reconnaissance sections and a headquarters section. Within the reconnaissance sections, we also agreed the 6x36 squad consisted of two vehicles and two dismount teams, aligning closely with the MTOE.

Some of us varied from the MTOE by the way we organized the headquarters section. Some leaders opted to leave the headquarters section with only eight Soldiers – nine with the addition of a platoon medic – and pulled the other four Soldiers who are allocated by MTOE into the reconnaissance sections.

Even with all these similarities among the leaders in the squadron, we remained divided on which squad concept to use. The debate ended with each troop leader choosing the squad concept he or she preferred to adopt because both configurations resulted in similar section and platoon compositions.

Configuration 1: Two Different Squad Types per Section



Configuration 2: Two Integrated Squads per Section

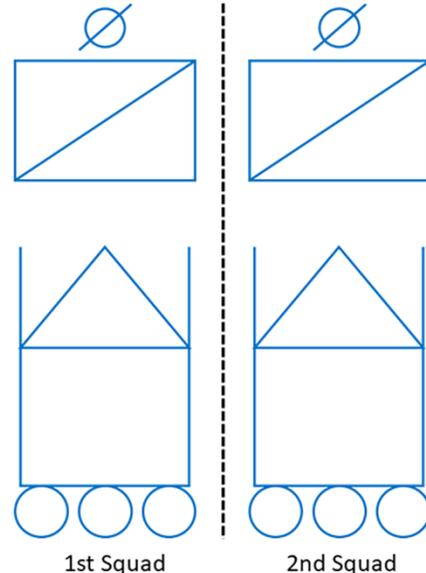


Figure 1. Line chart for 6x36 configurations.

Integrated squad best

Despite both concepts ending with similar compositions, fighting an integrated reconnaissance squad with vehicle and a dismount team is a better concept for maximizing vehicle and dismounted capabilities. It provides organizational flexibility and facilitates live-fire progressions.

With the 6x36 concept, the capabilities of the vehicle platform and the dismounted elements complement one another. The dismounted team provides local security for the vehicle, another observation team with multiple optics and an additional armor-defeating capability. The team can relay communications for elements separated by austere terrain. Likewise, the vehicle provides the dismounted team with basic sustainment, platform-based and amplified communications systems, mounted optic systems and additional standoff with higher-caliber weapon systems.

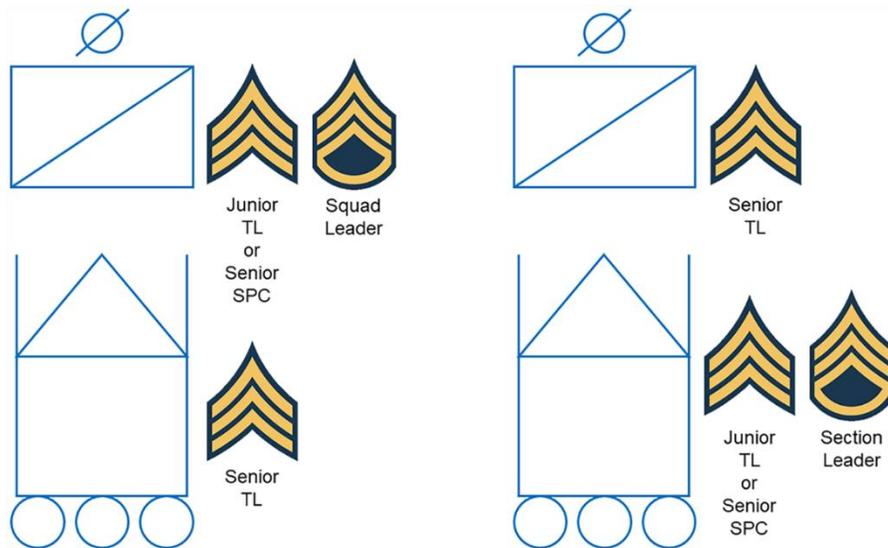


Figure 2. Organization of a reconnaissance section with integrated squads.

It is a symbiotic relationship because each element works together to develop the situation and answer information requirements for the supported unit. While certain mission sets demand a more dismounted or mounted reconnaissance focus, completely divorcing the two elements for extended operations negates the advantages of the 6x36 formation.

For example, if a Stryker-based unit such as 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, decides to air-insert a troop beyond the forward-line-of-own-troops to conduct an area reconnaissance during an attack's initial phase, the troop significantly increases the supported unit's situational awareness with a very-low-signature element. However, as the vehicles advance, the troop assumes risk with this movement since its dismounted elements are unavailable to clear danger areas or assist with pulling vehicles into observations posts.

Leaving the vehicles behind and going completely dismounted is also a possibility. However, this surrenders a significant portion of a Stryker unit's capabilities and limits its ability to support follow-on operations.

With that in mind, the 6x36 configuration is a mixed reconnaissance force that allows reconnaissance leaders to maximize the capabilities of their dismounted and mounted elements. Disassociating the vehicles and their dismounts is a deliberate decision and an assumption of risk by a reconnaissance leader to fulfill a specific reconnaissance task.

Lowest possible level

With this type of a relationship between the mounted and dismounted elements of 6x36 formations, integrating these capabilities at the lowest possible level maximizes their effectiveness and flexibility. The lowest level at which a reconnaissance formation can combine these capabilities is the squad level. Each vehicle in a reconnaissance section contains a staff sergeant and one sergeant. With the addition of a senior specialist or

sergeant from the headquarters section, this gives the section the basic leadership elements for a squad: one squad leader and two subordinate team leaders.

The difference for the reconnaissance squad leaders is that they have one mounted and one dismounted team, an integrated squad. This leaves the squad leader with some decisions to make in terms of organization and his or her own positioning depending on the mission.

With two integrated squads per section, every leader within the section understands the other squad's capabilities. Training these formations as dismounted or mounted squads denies the leaders within each squad familiarity with the opposite formation's capabilities and ultimately negates the mixed-reconnaissance advantages offered by 6x36 formations. However, an integrated squad maximizes those advantages, but it also has the flexibility at section level to organize into unique dismounted and mounted squads if necessary.

To facilitate this flexibility, Troop O, 4-2 Cav, dismounted the junior squad leader, and the senior squad leader remained mounted. On each mission, the senior squad leader, who acted as section leader, discussed his organization with his platoon leadership and adjusted his formation accordingly. At times the section leader dismounted and left the junior squad leader on the vehicles or opted to place both squad leaders with the dismounted elements.

Training

Training as integrated squads allows the section leader and his or her subordinate leaders to achieve organizational flexibility because of the understanding they have of mounted and dismounted capabilities within their formation. Some of this flexibility is inherent in the fact that an integrated squad mitigates certain issues with live-fire training for reconnaissance formations.

To lay this out: As we know, the subordinate echelon needs to certify before executing each echelon of training; similar to tank formations, vehicle-based reconnaissance elements need to qualify as an individual crew before moving to section and platoon live-fires. Dismounted formations, of course, follow a similar certification pattern to infantry elements: individual, team, squad and platoon.

However, the 6x36 reconnaissance elements have a unique organization that integrates dismounted and mounted elements at section level. With a section organization of two vehicles and two dismounted teams, integrated squads provide units a huge advantage in live-fire progressions.

How so? If a formation trains separate dismounted and mounted squads, it requires a unit to conduct five unique live-fire scenarios to achieve section proficiency (see Figures 3 and 4). An element that trains integrated squads only requires four live-fire scenarios to achieve section proficiency (Figure 4), which saves the unit training days and resources by conducting one less unique live-fire event. Furthermore, this mitigates the risk associated with maneuvering mounted and dismounted elements at the section level because each squad would have already certified with a mounted and dismounted element.

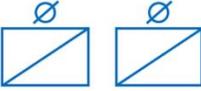
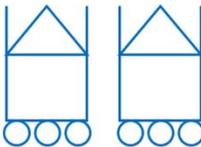
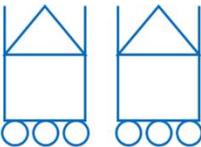
Echelon	Team/Crew	Squad	Section
Dismounted			
Mounted			

Figure 3. Live-fire events with mounted and dismounted squads.

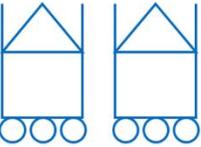
Echelon	Team/Crew	Squad	Section
Dismounted			
Mounted			

Figure 4. Live-fire events with integrated squads.

The integrated squad maximizes the capabilities of the 6x36 formation at the lowest echelon and provides reconnaissance leaders the maximum flexibility to task-organize for any mission. Also, using integrated squads increases the efficiency of a unit's live-fire progression and mitigates risk during section live-fires by integrating dismounted and mounted elements earlier in the progression. However, the concept does assume risk with the headquarters section by reducing its personnel strength to eight.



Figure 5. A reconnaissance-team leader overlooks the town of Dippersreuth, Germany, during Outlaw Troop's team/squad situational training exercise (STX) in August 2017. This was the final named area of interest (NAI) for the STX lane, which used the integrated-squad concept in preparation for squad and section certifications.
(Photo by 1LT Matthew Brooks, Outlaw Troop unit public-affairs representative)



Figure 6. A reconnaissance-squad leader provides security during a short halt after dismounting from the squad's Stryker and maneuvering toward the final NAI during Outlaw Troop's team/squad STX in August 2017. The STX used the integrated-squad concept.
(Photo by 1LT Matthew Brooks, Outlaw Troop unit public-affairs representative)

Granted, the integrated squad is not the one-size-fits-all answer, and units should not create situational-training progressions that only exercise the integrated-squad concept. However, a leader can organize the 6x36 formation

in many configurations to fulfill the needs of each specific reconnaissance mission. Leaders can also deliberately choose the organization for each mission based on the mission analysis and the commander's intent.

Success in reconnaissance missions relies on the ingenuity and rapid decision-making of leaders at the lowest level, and the integrated-squad concept provides leaders with the best capabilities and flexibility to achieve it.

CPT J.D. Moore is a graduate student studying educational leadership and policy studies at the University of Kansas, assigned to U.S. Student Detachment, Fort Jackson, SC. His previous assignments include task-force sustainment observer/coach/trainer, Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany; commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, Vilseck, Germany; commander, Troop O, 4-2 Cav; executive officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, Fort Carson, CO; and scout-platoon leader, Troop C, 4-10 Cav, Fort Carson. CPT Moore's military schools include the Stryker Leader's Course, Cavalry Leader's Course, Maneuver Captain's Career Course, Army Reconnaissance Course and Armor Basic Officer Leader's Course. He has a bachelor's of science degree in history (with thesis) from the U.S. Military Academy. CPT Moore is currently pursuing a master's of arts degree in social and cultural studies in education from the University of Kansas.

Acronym Quick-Scan

MTOE – modified table of organization and equipment

NAI – named area of interest

STX – situational-training exercise

TL – team leader