

The All-Weather Reconnaissance and Security Asset: The Cavalry Scout

by CPT Nathan Sitterley

The scout's purpose will not be fulfilled without making contact with his adversary. In most cases, the scout will accomplish reconnaissance and security (R&S) operations with little to no notice, under the cover of darkness and over challenging terrain. He or she does this to set conditions and enable the brigade combat team (BCT) to destroy the enemy.

This article will enhance the understanding of reconnaissance management and where to apply certain assets within the commander's intelligence-collection plan.

Although used differently in infantry, armor and Stryker BCTs, a cavalry organization's main purpose is to paint the picture of the battlefield by answering questions about the enemy, terrain, infrastructure and societal factors. This is the cavalry's main purpose because it enables commanders at all echelons to make the most informed decision in the shortest amount of time. The journey to understanding the role of a cavalry scout begins with understanding certain capabilities within a cavalry troop in a Stryker BCT (SBCT).

Squadron force structure

An SBCT cavalry squadron consists of six cavalry troops. There are three reconnaissance cavalry troops, one weapons troop, one forward-support troop and one headquarters troop in the squadron. This article will be limited to the discussion of the reconnaissance troop to explain how to incorporate scouts into the brigade's scheme of information collection.

A reconnaissance cavalry troop organically has two scout platoons and one mortars section. Each scout platoon consists of six Infantry Carrier Vehicle Variant (ICVV) Strykers that can comfortably fit some 11 personnel, including the driver, gunner, vehicle commander and eight dismounts. The Strykers are equipped with an M151 Remote Weapon Station (RWS) that can detect heat signatures of up to 10 kilometers, positively identify vehicles at four kilometers and engage hostile forces up to two kilometers with a .50-caliber M2 machinegun or at 1.5 kilometers with an Mk-19 40mm grenade launcher.

Fitted on a Stryker is a Long-Range Advance Scout Surveillance System that can observe thermal signatures in multiple contrasts up to 20 kilometers away. It can also pinpoint a 10-digit military grid-reference system grid to allow accurate reporting, thus enabling a more effective and rapid call-for-fire mission.

The ICVV Stryker can travel up to about 250 cross-country miles with a top speed of 62 mph. It has an operational rate of some 12-72 hours based on usage and can hold about 53 gallons of JP-8 fuel. The average M1126 Stryker ICVV version can have up to two 1152F Advanced System Improvement Program radios that are line-of-sight-based and can communicate up to 10 kilometers away on power-amplification mode.

In the vehicle-commander station, there is one Joint Capabilities Release communications platform that uses satellite communications, which can send encrypted data and assist the vehicle commander on digital means of navigation.

Cavalry's main asset

The Stryker, no matter how comfortable, is not the Scout's main weapon system. The scout dismounted on the ground with a radio is a cavalry organization's main asset. Dismounts generally carry two radios per a three- to five-Soldier team and about three radios in a seven- to eight-Soldier Squad. These radios can potentially range up to 10 kilometers, but they rely heavily on line-of-sight communications and atmospheric conditions.



Figure 1. A team of scouts assigned to Apache Troop, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cav, maneuvers up challenging terrain in snowy conditions as they try to get to their tentative OP location during troop leaders' training time at Training Area Bravo, Fort Carson, CO. (Photo by CPT Nathan Sitterley)

A scout platoon consists of 37 Soldiers, 36 being organic and one is an attached military-occupation specialty 68W combat medic.

For planning consideration, the troop commander at minimum gives the necessary R&S guidance to include focus, tempo, engagement, disengagement and displacement criteria. He or she will then specify the squadron's priority intelligence requirements (PIR) and begin to assign tasks to subordinate units.

The platoon leader confirms that he or she understands the R&S guidance given by the troop commander during a confirmation brief. He or she must brief the latest-time-information-is-of-value (LTIOV) or the duration of the security operation within his or her scheme of maneuver to his/her platoon. This will allow platoon sergeants to coordinate for more logistical resupply prior to crossing the line of departure or during the operation. A scout organization planning factor for self-sustaining logistical supply is three days' supply or 72 hours.

Within our organization, we also have other modified table of organization and equipment assets to assist in answering the commander's PIR. Three critical assets that enhance scouts' abilities will be covered in the article. Optics to be discussed are:

- Command launch units (CLU);
- Lightweight Laser-Designator Rangefinder (LLDR); and
- RQ-11 Raven.

The CLU can be used to observe or fire a Javelin missile (FGM-148) up to about four kilometers. It has a tracking mechanism that will lock on a heat signature that allows a 90- to 95-percent hit-to-kill ratio at its maximum effective range of 2.5 kilometers. It can penetrate anything from a T-90 tank to a *boyevaya mashina pekhoty-3* (Russian fighting vehicle). This secondary weapon of choice is the scout platoon's key asset when it comes to encountering an armor threat within the commander's engagement criteria.



Figure 2. PFC Bryan Brereton from Apache Troop, 2-1 Cav, low-crawls with a Javelin missile on his back to get into a hide position during squad live-fire certification at Fort Carson, CO. (Photo by CPT Nathan Sitterley)

The PED-1 LLDR is essential for dismounted operations. It provides scouts the ability to laser targets for an accurate call-for-fire mission using precision or near-precision munitions. It has a Global Positioning System, day sight and thermal that can range up to seven kilometers during the day and three kilometers at night. It weighs about 35 pounds and can fit in a Soldier's rucksack. It's essential for setting up short- or long-duration observation posts (OPs).

The final critical asset for a cavalry troop to highlight is the RQ-11 Raven. This unmanned aerial system is crucial for aerial reconnaissance of up to some 10 kilometers with an ideal operational rate of up to 60 minutes. It has thermal and forward-looking infrared laser capabilities, which can observe heat signatures from both vehicles and individuals at its max ceiling of 500 feet above ground level. (Caution: This asset is extremely loud and cannot be launched in a wind factor of 30 mph or greater.) This system is remotely controlled from a hand-held ground-control station and can be programmed, launched and recovered in a matter of minutes at the troop level.

Lethality

Lethality is not about having the best weapon system. Lethality encompasses the knowledge on where, when and how to tactically employ the best weapon system against the adversary. The final portion of this article will describe how to ensure continuous reconnaissance by using reconnaissance-management processes.

BCTs require continuous information collection throughout all phases and critical events of the operation. Some of the reconnaissance phases of operation include infiltration, counter-reconnaissance and transition to security operations. If not deliberately planned, the enemy can exploit these transitions between phases and isolate reconnaissance units.

Commanders must direct information collection throughout all operations. To this end, they should direct task-organized cavalry assets to collect required information, leading to more informed identification and possible executions of sequels and branch plans. Continuous reconnaissance provides commanders at all echelons the ability to confirm or deny enemy courses of action (CoAs), and it provides reaction time and maneuver space for levels above as well as for themselves.

Reconnaissance management is designed to provide commanders and platoon leaders the ability to match certain asset capabilities required to gather certain PIRs. PIRs are broken down into sub-tiers. Indicators are used to assist in spotting signs, which lead to finding answers for PIRs. Are assets capable of answering types of specific information requirements?

Why are PIRs important? PIRs should drive certain decision points that commanders must make to confirm or create a CoA (reconnaissance push and pull techniques). To support commanders' decision-making, reconnaissance management can help gain and maintain threat contact as part of a larger defensive or offensive operation.

There are three types of reconnaissance management: cueing, mixing and redundancy. *Cueing* is the integration of one or more types of reconnaissance or surveillance systems to provide information that directs follow-on collection of more detailed information by another system (Field Manual (FM) 3-90-2, **Reconnaissance, Security and Tactical Enabling Tasks** Vol. 2). These systems may signal other ground or air reconnaissance assets to investigate specific areas to confirm, deny or verify information.

For example, a dismounted OP may observe a named area of interest (NAI) along a specific or most probable axis of advance, while the Raven observes an avenue of approach for the most dangerous CoA of the enemy at a specific trigger. If the LTIOV has reached its limit and there is no threat contact from the dismounted OP, this will trigger a Raven to be launched to identify whether the enemy is using its most dangerous CoA on its most dangerous axis of advance.

Cueing is based on time, threat, friendly or established triggers. Cueing helps preserve combat power, but it limits maximizing reconnaissance assets forward at one particular time.

Mixing is using two or more different assets to collect against the same intelligence requirement (FM 3-90-2). Employing different systems is always desirable if the situation and available resources permit.

This recon management allows multiple perspectives from different vantage points. This method enhances the probability of collection and tends to provide complete information. Mixing can also help defeat deception attempts by highlighting discrepancies in information reported by different collection assets. However, this has to be an ongoing process until LTIOV – for example, if one OP with an LLDR and one RWS on a Stryker focused on one NAI from different depths of observation.

Should the NAI be covered with micro-terrain and vegetation, different elements on the ground can have the opportunity to paint the picture for the commander from different angles.

Redundancy is using two or more like assets to collect against the same intelligence requirement (FM 3-90-2). Redundancy increases the chances the reconnaissance element collects the required information and provides depth should one element become compromised. For example, two OPs focused on one NAI can work well. Should an OP need to displace to avoid compromising its location, another OP team can observe that particular NAI.

The commander will know exactly the capabilities of the two OPs and the time it generally takes to answer certain PIRs. Redundancy maximizes R&S efforts, but it lacks the preservation of combat power. Warfighter and equipment management must be emphasized when using this management tool.

Making contact

Someone will have to go forward and make contact. This job falls on the BCTs' cavalry squadrons. Continuous and focused collection efforts do not mean to employ all available assets at the commander's leisure. To maintain warfighter management, one must consider the human dimension within the all-weather reconnaissance asset. BCTs task and position the right combination of humans, sensors and technical means to capitalize on their impact, allow rapid analysis of information, disseminate intelligence and aid decision-making at all appropriate echelons.

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Acronym Quick-Scan

ABOLC – Armor Basic Officer Leader Course

BCT – brigade combat team

CLU – command launch unit

CoA –course of action

FM – field manual

ICVV – Infantry Carrier Vehicle Variant

LLDR – Lightweight Laser-Designator Rangefinder

LTIOV – latest-time-information-is-of-value

MCoE – Maneuver Center of Excellence

NAI – named area of interest

OP – observation post

PIR – priority intelligence requirement

R&S – reconnaissance and security

RWS – Remote Weapon Station

SBCT – Stryker brigade combat team