

# Updating the Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader Course

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The Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader Course (RSLC) provides conventional maneuver commanders with a leader they can trust to train and lead their scout squads. During a 26-day program of instruction (POI), junior officers (O1-O3) and NCOs (E4-E6) learn how to employ reconnaissance elements in accordance with a commander's information collection plan and reconnaissance guidance.

Historically, the course has remained a product of its heritage with the curriculum focusing on tactical tasks of long-range surveillance (LRS) units. RSLC identified a need to modernize its curriculum based on observations of units at Combat Training Centers (CTCs), force-wide surveys, and reviews of doctrine. Over the past year, the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade reviewed and updated RSLC's lesson plans to better align with the needs of dismounted reconnaissance organizations in infantry brigade combat teams. The alterations to curriculum manifested as newly redesigned land navigation instruction, alignment of tactical scenarios with an infantry battalion scout platoon, and situation-dependent squad employment techniques. The updated curriculum is broken into three phases: foundations, techniques, and a culminating field training exercise (FTX).



A Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader Course (RSLC) student participates in a graded patrol during a field training exercise (FTX). (Photos courtesy of the Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader Course)



**RSLC students plan their last FTX mission before graduation.**

The first nine days of the course form the foundations phase, which starts by providing students with advanced land navigation training. Students arrive with a solid foundation in map reading and land navigation, enabling instructors to develop proficiency in route planning and movements to objectives at the maximum range of infantry battalion organic weapon systems. Students conduct night movements as they would in a real-world situation by using night-vision goggles (NVGs) and avoiding roads and trails. In between land navigation practical exercises, students become familiar with the equipment they need to collect information. They receive hands-on training with binoculars, spotting scopes, cameras, and thermal devices. Students learn how to convert that information into sketches and NATO reports in analog and digital form. To complete this phase, students spend three days learning how to employ ultra high frequency (UHF), high frequency (HF), and satellite communication (SATCOM) radio platforms to send both voice and data information to their higher echelons.

The techniques phase builds on foundations by teaching planning and tactical employment of their squad. During this phase, students conduct six practical exercises across 11 days that teach doctrinally sound small-unit tactics, observation position construction, urban surveillance, and mission planning. These exercises train students to employ their squads in more than just traditional static surveillance sites. Rather, they will learn multiple squad employment options, including multiple active reconnaissance elements and use of security teams, providing battalion commanders with agile leaders who can adapt to the situations they face.

Finally, students complete the course by conducting a series of graded patrols that present students with multiple scenarios and force them to determine courses of action. Students rotate through graded positions, serving as team leader, assistant team leader, and radio-telephone operator (RTO). They experience multiple insertion methods, including airborne and vehicle insertions. At the end of this phase, students have demonstrated their ability to lead a dismounted squad ahead of the forward line of troops in support of a commander's information collection plan.

At the end of the course, students will have a firm understanding of reconnaissance fundamentals, confidence in the use of optics and cameras, and demonstrated competence with multiple radio platforms. They will be able to plan, prepare for, and execute a reconnaissance or security mission in support of their battalion operation. RSLC graduates provide a marked advantage to dismounted reconnaissance units, providing leaders able to develop and lead reconnaissance teams.

To learn more about the Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leaders Course, view the course page on the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade website at <https://www.benning.army.mil/Infantry/ARTB/RSLC/> or visit the course Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ReconSurvLeaderCourse>.

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**CPT William Gerhardt** assisted in editing this article.



**RSLC students receive training on basic individual and equipment camouflage techniques.**