

From the Screen Line

A Suggested Career Progression for the Cavalry Soldier

by MAJ Levi Thompson and MSG Jacob Stockdill

The past 14 years of war diminished the way the Army trains and employs its Cavalry squadrons in reconnaissance-and-security operations. Assigning areas the size of Rhode Island (or larger) to a Cavalry squadron and expecting it to achieve success along lines of effort focused on security, development and governance resulted in brigade commanders with the inability to fully develop their battlespace and make an actual impact on operations. This misuse of the Cavalry squadron comes from a lack of understanding how to conduct reconnaissance-and-security operations at all levels of leadership and is a primary result of not knowing what that reconnaissance Soldier brings to the fight.¹

Understanding this crisis within the Armor and Cavalry community – but also within the Army – Fort Benning, GA, developed the Department of Reconnaissance and Security in Summer 2014 to initiate a future career progression for Cavalry and reconnaissance leaders. The Department of Reconnaissance and Security falls under 3rd Squadron, 16th Cavalry, 316th Cavalry Brigade. This organization is made up of subject-matter experts dedicated to providing future leaders and Soldiers with the tools to rebuild these gaps within our training through professional development steeped in reconnaissance-and-security doctrine and personal experiences.

Enlisted career path

So how do we develop a young Soldier or officer and turn him into Cavalry leader well versed in reconnaissance and security? Through professional development and a proposed career path that provides specific training at essential points within the individual's career. The career path follows two separate developmental timelines defined as officer and enlisted. Eventually these training paths intertwine with each other as training and time in service progress.

Of note, the scout's career progression military-occupation specialty (MOS) is irrelevant within the Operations Division (maneuver, maneuver support, fires and Special Operations forces); the training path is what is important. This is essential to shaping and molding Soldiers who will serve in Cavalry organizations into reconnaissance-and-security leaders. Though this article will primarily focus on Cavalry and infantry Soldiers, these reconnaissance-and-security courses are essential to reconnaissance leaders at all levels.

After enlistment and identification of a 19D Cavalry scout MOS, transformation from civilian to Soldier to scout begins. At completion of one-station unit training, the young warrior's career begins upon assignment to a Cavalry squadron within an armor brigade combat team (ABCT), infantry BCT (IBCT) or a Stryker BCT (SBCT) to begin to master his fieldcraft.

The Skill Level 10 Cavalry scout should master individual Soldier tasks associated with reconnaissance and security – namely:

- Send and receive reports in SALUTE format;
- Adjust indirect fire;
- Camouflage self and equipment;
- Conduct land navigation, both dismounted and mounted;
- Emplace an observation post (OP);
- Identify vehicles; and
- Understand operational terms and graphics.

Before consideration for promotion to sergeant, that young scout should take part in at least one full gunnery cycle (Tables I-VIII) and one full multi-echeloned training exercise from squad to squadron level. This is in addition to his Soldier tasks of weapons proficiency, first aid and other general Skill Level 10

tasks. Throughout all of this, the young scout must maintain a level of physical fitness that allows the freedom to explore other training without having to conduct extensive physical conditioning to be at the needed training level. It is at this stage the scout pursues opportunities for airborne, air assault and weapons-training schools.

During his tenure within the platoon, this young Soldier should have been exposed to nearly all the leadership positions within the scout platoon, developing a strong understanding of the role each leader plays within the organization.

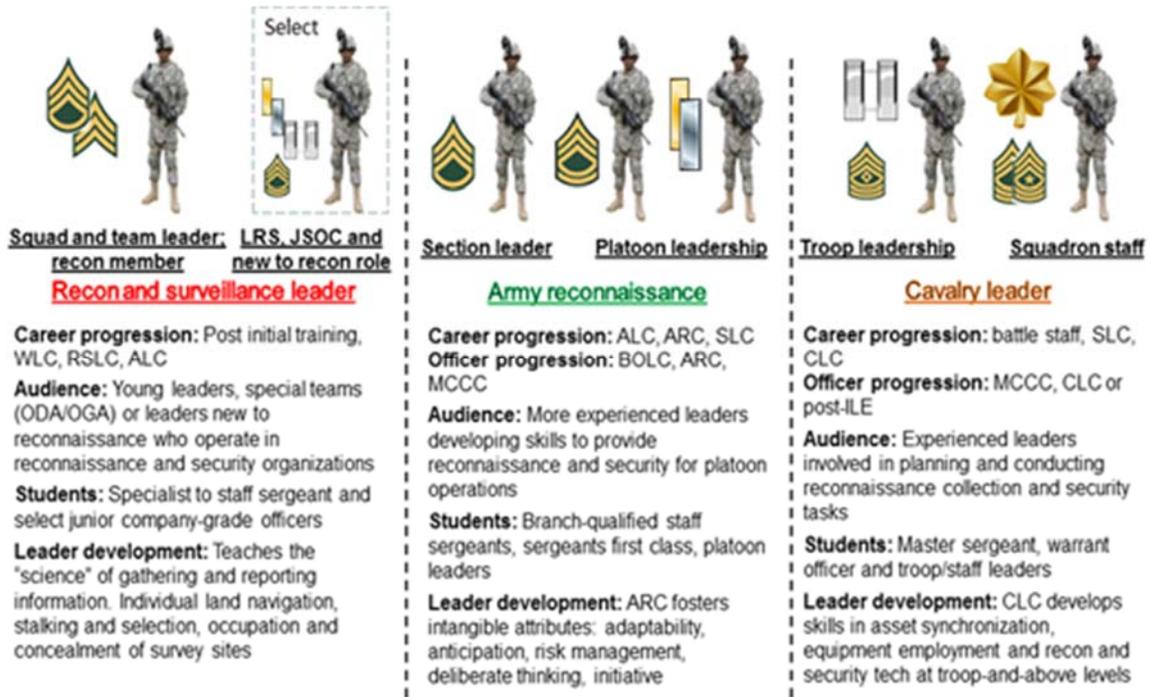


Figure 1. Course career timeline. The Army trains scouts in a variety of developmental schools, including RSLC, ARC, Ranger, Pathfinder, Sniper, mountain warfare, master gunner and Javelin.

Officer career path

Simultaneously, the commissioned officer's career path begins upon completion of his respective Basic Officer Leader's Course (BOLC) and receipt of orders assigning him to a Cavalry squadron. Unlike the enlisted Soldier, the future platoon leader will attend further schooling before he arrives at his unit.

Upon graduation from BOLC, future scout platoon leaders will attend the Army Reconnaissance Course (ARC). ARC must be priority for officers on assignment to a Cavalry squadron and should be highly sought after by those graduating in the top third of their BOLC course.

If an individual has recycled his BOLC course for failing to maintain standards, then Armor Branch, Human Resources Command (HRC), evaluates the Soldier for continued service within the Army or the Armor Branch and he loses his Cavalry assignment. These future leaders must be able to display a higher level of thinking. They must be able to anticipate where a supported unit might fail and work to mitigate those factors.

Leader grooming

As the enlisted Soldier spends more time within the scout platoon, he is eventually identified through performance and potential for more responsibility and leadership, thus beginning the trek of becoming a reconnaissance-and-security leader. Once identified for a position of greater responsibility, the Soldier is simultaneously groomed for attendance in the Warrior Leader's Course (WLC) and the Army's Ranger School.

WLC will teach young leaders basic skills to lead small groups of Soldiers, with emphasis on leadership. WLC is the initial course preparing these leaders to transition to noncommissioned officers (NCOs). Attendance at Ranger School after WLC will hone core leadership skills, transforming that future leader into a competent, tactically and technically smart leader in small-unit tactics.

Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader's Course

Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader's Course (RSLC) is an essential course to follow Ranger School. Though not the fourth phase of Ranger School, RSLC will provide the transition from the small-unit direct-action thought process to a leader who understands the importance of reconnaissance operations. In particular, if the reconnaissance leader failed at his mission, then in turn the supported unit's mission was a failure as well.

RSLC is a 29-day, live-in course that focuses on training and preparing young reconnaissance leaders for the conduct of dismounted long-range surveillance in support of a larger overall area reconnaissance mission.² RSLC will sharpen, hone, instill and enforce good habits of camouflage, infiltration and exfiltration techniques, small-unit dismounted patrolling and land navigation. The course's focus on conducting surveillance in support of area-reconnaissance objectives enhances the leader's adaptability and understanding of gathering and identifying information, which supports his higher commander's information requirements.

Also, the exposure to communication platforms while attending this course is world-class, using current issued equipment as well as soon-to-be-fielded communication equipment. The training, knowledge and expertise these young leaders receive ensures they are prepared to report information from anywhere on the battlefield during extreme conditions.

As a graduate of RSLC, the warrior possesses the knowledge and ability to operate in small teams under extreme mental and physical conditions on the edge of the battlefield. Enlisted Soldiers who graduate the course are awarded Additional Skill Identifier (ASI) B6.

As the reconnaissance leader grows within the reconnaissance community and his organization, his next step is to take what he learned at Ranger School and RSLC and apply those lessons and techniques to home-station training. It then falls on the individual Soldier to not only perfect his own skills but also to mentor and develop younger Soldiers within his unit. This process starts the next training cycle of the next generation of leaders trained in reconnaissance-and-security operations.

As the enlisted Soldier continues to excel and develop, the next hurdle this Soldier will face is the Advanced Leader's Course (ALC). Upon graduation, he should prepare to assume the role of the section sergeant and eventually the senior scout and scout-platoon sergeant.



Figure 2. RSLC students use specialized communication equipment during the course. (Photo by Company D, 3-16 Cavalry)

Army Reconnaissance Course

Immediately after graduating ALC, these NCOs must attend ARC. Attendance at ARC hones and develops these core skills, raising them to a higher fundamental level. The Army doesn't currently require ARC of NCOs to obtain the position of senior scout or scout-platoon sergeant, but the Army needs the best-qualified individuals in those positions.

ARC will provide NCOs and recent BOLC graduates with a higher understanding of reconnaissance-and-security operations. RSLC's program of instruction focuses on developing team-level reconnaissance missions, specifically:

- Occupying OPs/surveillance sites;
- Enabling detailed reconnaissance of named areas of interest (NAIs) and targeted areas of interest (TAIs); and
- Subsequently allowing commanders to make decisions on the battlefield.

ARC further develops this skillset by testing the scout-platoon leader's ability to layer his reconnaissance effort through multiple OPs and to incorporate air and ground assets. The ARC graduate builds on the instruction provided at RSLC and walks away with a higher fundamental understanding, nesting his mission within the commander's reconnaissance guidance. Through further refinement of higher NAIs/TAIs and developing platoon reconnaissance objectives associated with priority intelligence requirements, the platoon leader is able to provide time-sensitive information to enable the commander to make a decision on the battlefield.

Potential reconnaissance-and-security leaders must demonstrate an ability not only to persevere under physical and mental pressure but also be able to make the right decision in tough circumstances and be able to provide sound recommendations to higher-level leadership under those same conditions.

For recent BOLC graduates, attendance at Army Ranger School is highly recommended before attending ARC. If they are unable to do so, it is imperative that these future reconnaissance-and-security officers attend Ranger School immediately following their graduation from ARC. Though not a requirement, Ranger School is and has been a proven small-unit leadership course. The Army's future reconnaissance-and-security leaders must be experts in leadership; they must know and understand the limitations and capabilities of not only their own organizations but also of themselves. Earning the coveted Ranger Tab

will set them apart from their peers and will bring with them to follow-on units initial credibility, especially those serving in infantry organizations who are not branched infantry.

ARC is a 27-day course spread over five weeks and two days that focuses on section- and platoon-level reconnaissance-and-security operations. The Adaptive Soldier Learning Training and Education methodology is the baseline for teaching students, fostering adaptive intangible leader attributes while reinforcing doctrine as a basis for solving problems. While attending the course, the student acquires:

- Additional communication- and sensor-platform training;
- Higher skills of land navigation and route planning; and
- Ability to conduct reconnaissance-and-security operations regardless of the platform he is assigned to or terrain on which his mission occurs.

Throughout the course, students will conduct reconnaissance-and-security operations, not only dismounted but also across multiple mounted platforms – from the individual to section and finally graduating at platoon level. An ARC graduate is awarded ASI R7, regardless if the student is enlisted or commissioned, and is a confident and agile reconnaissance leader who can operate in unpredictable combat environments within his commander’s intent.³

After completing his initial schooling, a young officer trained in reconnaissance-and-security operations arrives at his duty station and is prepared to step into the role of a scout-platoon leader. The NCO returns to his unit, where he applies the tactics and techniques he was taught, working directly with fellow ARC graduates in creating a team that understands reconnaissance-and-security operations. This pivotal time is where those leaders and Soldiers hone and improve their skills, providing their higher command with a lethal asset that can be employed to answer the commander’s information gaps.

Natural progression of the platoon leader is to assume the duties of either another scout platoon or an executive-officer position within a Cavalry troop or company.

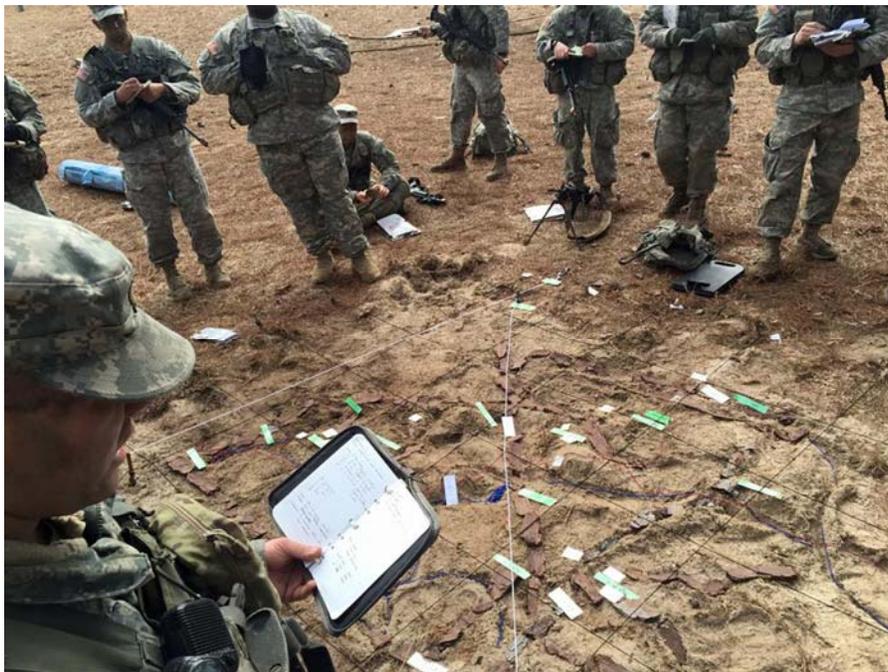


Figure 3. ARC students conduct troop-leading procedures in preparation for a reconnaissance-and-security mission. (Photo by Troop B, 3-16 Cavalry)

Cavalry Leader’s Course

When the officer has successfully graduated the Maneuver Captain's Career Course (MCCC), the focus is on developing skills and understanding in reconnaissance-and-security planning at the troop and squadron levels and not on trying to earn more skill badges before arriving at his unit of assignment. Through attending the Cavalry Leader's Course (CLC), those Soldiers are developing the necessary skills. This course is pertinent for those who are scheduled to take command or serve as primary staff within a Cavalry squadron.

This same concept is applied to the NCO as the Soldier progresses in rank to the grade of master sergeant or is assigned to a staff to gain an understanding of reconnaissance-and-security planning at the troop and higher.

ARC culminates at the platoon level, with a greater understanding of the commander's intent nesting the Cavalry troop mission with the squadron operation. CLC bridges this gap by teaching students how to plan and understand reconnaissance-and-security operations at the Cavalry troop, squadron and brigade level. The experience gained at RSLC and ARC enables the CLC student to consider tactical implications in his planning while developing realistic reconnaissance objectives and missions.

CLC is a three-week course (15 days) that prepares leaders for assignments in Cavalry units or BCTs as troop commanders. The course prepares staff officers/NCOs for tactical employment of Cavalry units and BCTs to conduct reconnaissance-and-security operations in unified land operations – as well as integration and synchronization of all warfighting functions in combined, joint and multinational operations.⁴

In addition to CLC, another reconnaissance-and-security course is offered to majors attending Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth, KS. This elective provides future squadron operations officers and executive officers who have not previously attended CLC with a grounded understanding in reconnaissance-and-security doctrine. For those who have already attended CLC, attendance at this elective is highly encouraged to broaden their previous knowledge.



Figure 4. CPT Jared Graham, a CLC instructor assigned to 3-16 Cavalry, 316th Cavalry Brigade, provides insight on reconnaissance-and-security mission planning to two senior leaders within 1-7 Cavalry during a mobile-training-team CLC course at Fort Hood, TX. (Photo by CPT John Farmer, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Concerns and discussion

CLC elective at Sergeants Major Academy. However, why is this same opportunity not afforded to our sergeants major when they attend the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, TX? It is

imperative for the development of senior NCOs. The Sergeants Major Academy needs to have an elective that is mirrored off the CGSC's CLC elective. This is essential because command sergeants major or operations sergeants major are the senior-enlisted personnel advising the commander or senior staff officer during the planning and execution of Cavalry operations. Command teams should be thinking and speaking alike, and understanding the same doctrine, ensuring continued success in training for and on the battlefield.

The CLC elective priority at the Sergeants Major Academy would be dedicated to those on assignment to a Cavalry squadron. Once the course has established itself within the academy curriculum, the ability to offer a reconnaissance-and-security operations elective, in addition to a requirement for select students, would benefit senior NCOs across the Army. Some of these senior NCOs might have attended CLC in the past, but if not, the academy would offer a venue for further development of our future reconnaissance-and-security sergeants major before they are assigned to a Cavalry squadron. This is a logical follow-on because the Army has already invested in the individual's promotion selection and attendance to the academy.

Professional development at Allies' courses. Professional development of the enlisted and commissioned Cavalry leader not only follows courses offered at the U.S. Army Armor School's Department of Reconnaissance and Security but should also look at other military schools and reconnaissance courses offered by our North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies. Some of these schools include the Mountain Warfare School, Jungle Operations Training Course, Canadian Advanced Recce Course, Canadian Pathfinder Course, Battle Staff, Intelligence-Collection Planners Course, Joint Fire Power Course, Heavy Weapons Leader's Course and Airborne. Fellowships are extremely important in rounding out a Soldier, whether NCO or officer. The fellowship provides an opportunity for a leader to further develop on an academic level.

Instructor placement. Crucial to the continued development of RSLC, ARC and CLC is the proper placement of instructors, both enlisted and officer. To ensure the best-qualified Soldiers are selected to instructor positions, the use of DA 1059s (Academic Evaluation Reports) is essential to these courses. This provides cadre the ability to identify potential candidates as future instructors and allows HRC's Armor Branch to assign nominative positions based off experience and conduct within the selected course. For officers, upon handing over the guidon, the post-command captain should transition to a broadening assignment in either a fellowship or as an instructor in a nominative position in RSLC, ARC or CLC. For NCOs, upon branch certification at the section sergeant, platoon sergeant or first sergeant positions, those who have outperformed their peers should consider a nominative position as an instructor in RSLC, ARC or CLC.

Assignment as an instructor is the Army's opportunity to ensure that knowledge and experience is not lost but is instead ingrained into the next generation of reconnaissance leaders as they begin their careers. Assignment to one of these courses is considered as important – if not more important – than assignment as a small-group instructor at a captain's career course. This same thought process is applied to the enlisted Soldier; an instructor position at one of the three courses is considered a nominative position identical to drill sergeant. It is imperative not only for the individual but for the future of our Cavalry force that the right individuals are placed in the right positions. This cannot be seen as hindering their career but looked at as a position that continues to set them apart from their peers and sets the stage for continued advancement through promotion.

This article is an initial thought on how to create and develop a well-rounded leader steeped in reconnaissance-and-security doctrine and execution. Currently some Soldiers might not have had the opportunity to attend some of these courses in their careers. This should not necessarily mean they are not considered for promotion or advancement throughout the force. If applicable, now is the time to start providing Soldiers with the support to attend these courses.

In closing, the Army is at a pivotal point, one where the next generation of Cavalry leaders can either be lost or developed. The Department of Reconnaissance and Security is the foundation for the process at each vital point in the Soldier's career. These core courses – RSLC, ARC and CLC – are where we have the

ability to further train and develop those skills, building on each other while creating a more versatile reconnaissance and security professional. The onus is also on the individual Soldier and his leaders to ensure training based in doctrine occurs and that he employs his reconnaissance formation effectively. There is always a requirement for the information a reconnaissance leader confirms or denies as the threats on the battlefield constantly evolve.

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Notes

¹ Common recommendations from the combat training centers (CTCs) expressed during quarterly "CTC Review of Trends with [the Maneuver Center of Excellence]" via video teleconference.

² 316th Cavalry Brigade **Course Learning Outcomes Handbook**.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Acronym Quick-Scan

ABCT – armored brigade combat team

ALC – Advanced Leader's Course

ARC – Army Reconnaissance Course

ASI – additional skill identifier

BCT – brigade combat team

BOLC – Basic Officers Leader's Course

CGSC – Command and General Staff College

CLC – Cavalry Leader's Course

CTC – combat training center

HRC – Human Resources Command

ILE – intermediate-level education

JSOC – Joint Special Operations Command

LRS – long-range surveillance

MCCC – Maneuver Captain's Career Course

MOS – military-occupation specialty

NAI – named area of interest

NCO – noncommissioned officer

ODA – Operational Detachment Alpha

OGA – other government agency

OP – observation post

RSLC – Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader's Course

SLC – Soldiers Leader's Course

TAI – targeted area of interest

WLC – Warrior Leader's Course