

Rethinking the Transition between Intelligence and Maneuver: The Cavalry Squadron

by LTC Mark H. Hoovestol

There is healthy debate in the Cavalry/Armor community about the future of Cavalry in decisive action (DA). Some of this discussion centers on the role of the chief of reconnaissance and the integration of the squadron operations center into the brigade's operations center. I argue that the Cavalry squadron provides the brigade more than simply reconnaissance. A quality liaison officer can perform the same task as a "chief of reconnaissance" as long as the brigade commander and squadron commander share visualization of the battlefield.

The recently published Army doctrine on Cavalry operations, Field Manual (FM) 3-98 (July 2015), states that "[t]he fundamental purpose of Cavalry is to set conditions for successful operations of the unit for which they are conducting reconnaissance and security tasks." As such, the squadron provides the brigade commander with options. Often, simply the presence of the Cavalry squadron in the enemy's zone of operations takes options away from the enemy. Destroying or reducing the enemy's reconnaissance forces, protecting the brigade combat team (BCT) while it generates combat power and securing key terrain for future operations are all types of operations the modern BCT Cavalry squadron must be prepared to accomplish.

Some discussion centers on making reconnaissance a separate warfighting function. Again, I argue that reconnaissance, more specifically Cavalry operations, provides the transition between intelligence and maneuver. Therefore it is not a separate warfighting function.



Figure 1. PFC Alec M. Delzer, a Cavalry trooper with 6th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry, scans for the enemy from his observation post at NTC. (Photo courtesy of Cobra observer/coach team, NTC)

BCT in DA

To properly consider the role of the Cavalry squadron in a BCT DA, we must establish a template or a construct to understand the roles and responsibilities on the BCT DA battlefield. The brigade's fight is to identify the enemy's defeat mechanism and employ its assets to enable its maneuver battalions to achieve the brigade's objective. To achieve this, the brigade is primarily focused on the warfighting functions of intelligence and fires. The battalion fight is to close with and destroy the enemy. This is achieved primarily through the warfighting functions of maneuver and fires.

The Cavalry squadron fight overlaps both of these operations. Whether answering intelligence requirements in a recon pull of the maneuver battalions or providing time and early warning in a security operation, the Cavalry squadron must focus on fires, intelligence and maneuver. The squadron provides the transition of the brigade's deep fight to the battalions' close fight.

Figure 2 is provided by the National Training Center (NTC) as a template to help understand how the brigade fights and plans in DA.

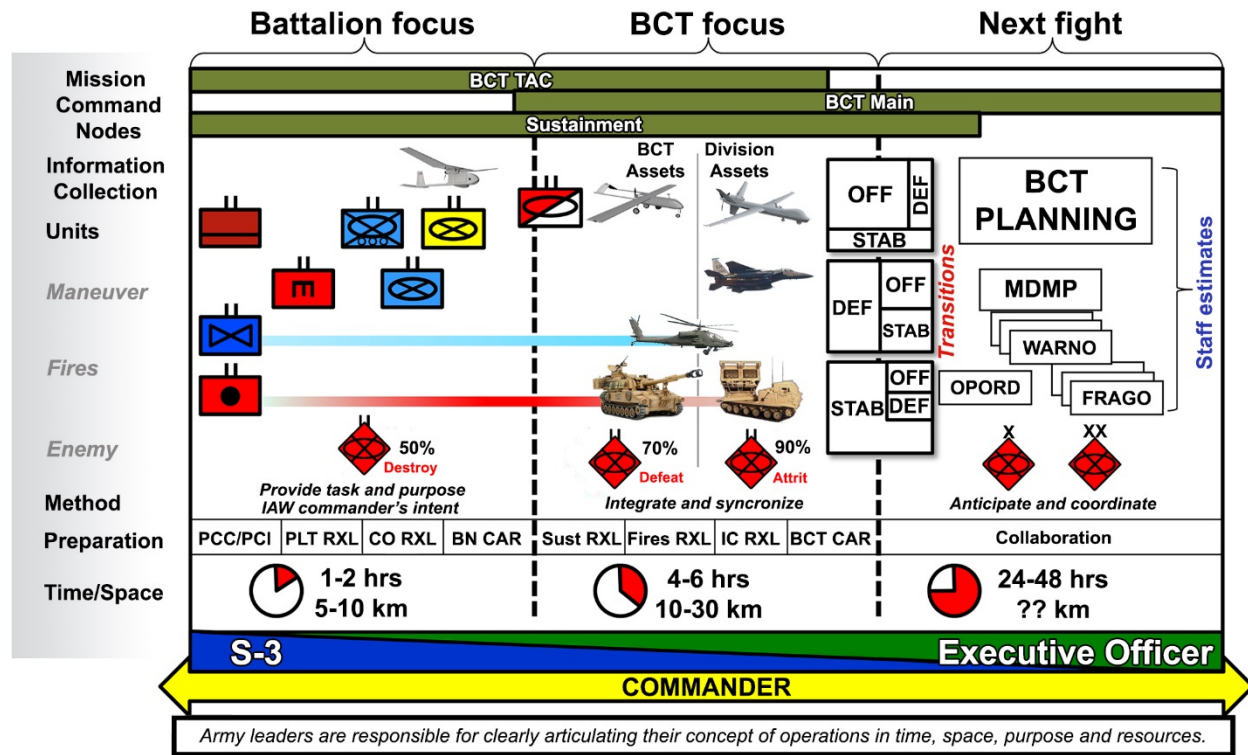


Figure 2. The BCT fight.

Figure 3 gives more fidelity to how the Cavalry squadron overlaps these operations, and the warfighting functions and where they overlap. The squadron is the brigade's maneuver force during the brigade deep fight. The squadron's operations generate intelligence for the maneuver battalions. This is passed through reconnaissance hand-over with the maneuver-battalion task-force scouts.

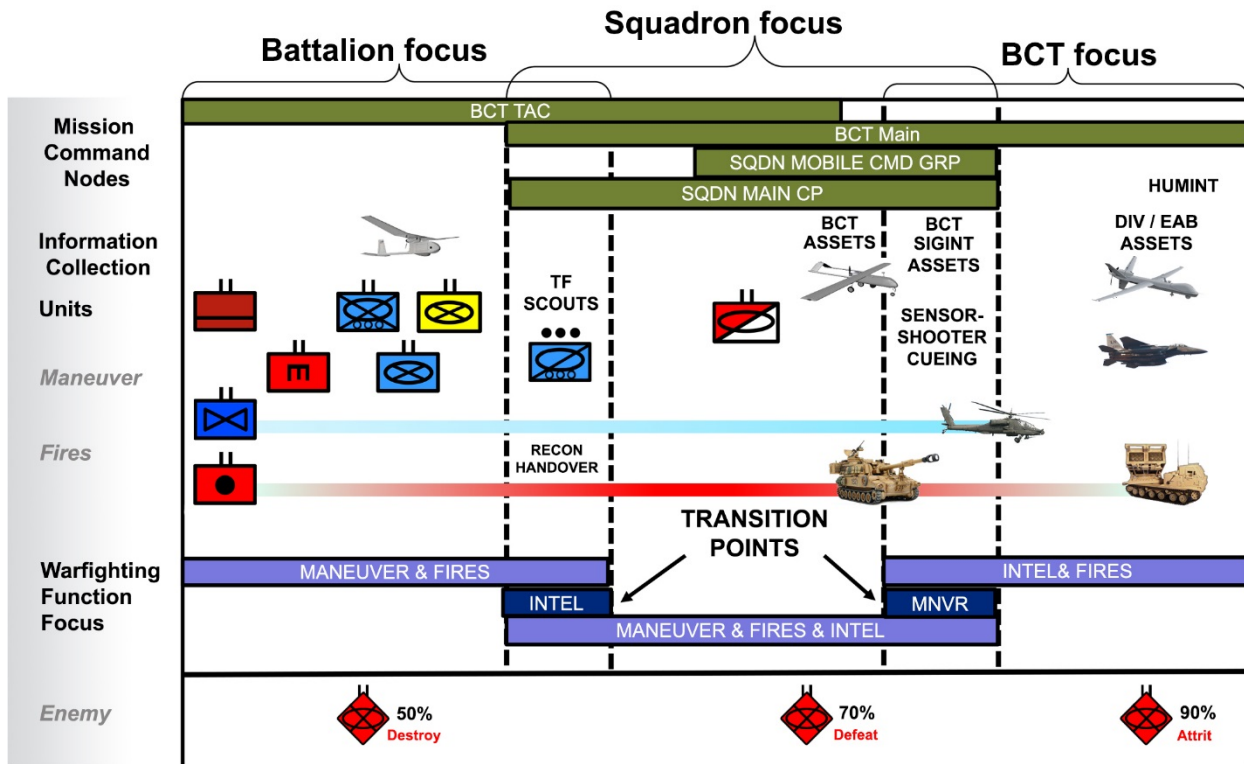


Figure 3. The Cavalry squadron fight.

Solving nonexistent problem

Earlier draft versions of FM 3-98 included discussion about establishing a “chief of reconnaissance” at the brigade command post to direct and synchronize reconnaissance and security operations. I liken this to an attempt to solve a problem that doesn’t exist. The published version of FM 3-98 wisely deleted any reference to this method. Chapter 4 of FM 3-98 describes the collaboration required among all elements of the BCT staff and the squadron staff to properly synchronize the brigade’s intelligence-collection plan. Some of my peers have argued that this function belongs in the squadron command post as an attachment to the brigade tactical-operations center. Our current doctrine (FM 3-98) provides the proper method.

My view is that planning, resourcing and synchronizing Cavalry operations is commander business. Commanders and staffs use the understand-visualize-describe-direct model of the operations process to execute effective Cavalry operations. Dialogue – either face-to-face or over collaborative means – between the BCT and squadron commanders and their staffs are key to shared understanding during the planning and execution phase. An officer detailed as the “chief of reconnaissance,” a billet that is not authorized on any manning document, would likely be a secondary additional duty for either an assistant operations officer at the brigade or squadron. Cavalry operations are too important to the success of the BCT fight to entrust to the level of an additional duty.



Figure 4. CPT Dan Wagner, commander of Troop A, 6th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry, plans his next operation at NTC. (Photo courtesy of Cobra observer/coach team, NTC)

Another perspective is that making the squadron commander the chief of reconnaissance would be a slippery slope to the squadron becoming the brigade S-2. Recent thought regarding the chief of reconnaissance has tilted toward making the squadron commander fill that role, similar to how the BCT's artillery-battalion commander is also the BCT fire-support coordinator and the brigade engineer battalion commander serves as the brigade engineer officer. Just as a commander provides guidance for fires and engineer efforts, a commander must provide guidance for Cavalry operations (reconnaissance, security and other operations).

The brigade S-3 and S-2, through the military decision-making process (MDMP) and guided by the commander's vision, must identify the tasks and purpose for the Cavalry. This "what" and "why" provides the framework for synchronizing intelligence collection and fires for the brigade's fight. The squadron commander, through his liaison officer, can advise and guide the implementation of intelligence-gathering assets he controls (the "how"), but this process must remain separate from determining the "what" and "why" of intelligence-gathering. Should the squadron commander become the sole owner of all intelligence as others propose, the brigade S-2 would become a backbench player.

The brigade S-2 is a key player in the brigade's operations. The brigade S-2 plays critical roles during the planning phase and MDMP, specifically with intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) and wargaming. The brigade S-2 also integrates echelons above brigade intelligence assets, national-level feeds and human intelligence (HUMINT) into the collection plan. These roles must remain the brigade S-2's sole purview. The analysis section of the military-intelligence company (MICO) and the brigade S-2 section provide the capability to integrate many feeds of

different forms of intelligence into a cohesive assessment, so this must remain a capability and responsibility of the brigade S-2.

Some of the brigade’s military-intelligence capabilities are inside the operations dominated by the Cavalry squadron. Giving control of the brigade Shadow platoon and signals-intelligence (SIGINT) assets would streamline active intelligence-gathering and would not undermine the brigade S-2’s responsibilities. Unity of command under the squadron simplifies tasking authority and synchronizes the overlap of the squadron portion of the brigade fight.

Figure 5 summarizes recommendations of functions that should remain in the brigade S-2 and MICO vs. those that should be moved to the squadron’s control. These assets should be reorganized into the squadron’s headquarters and headquarters troop to avoid standing up another company-level organization.

Brigade S-2 area of responsibility	Squadron S-2 area of responsibility
Echelons-above-brigade intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets	Brigade-level UAV assets (Shadow)
National-level intelligence feeds	SIGINT (Prophet, Low-Level Voice Intercept)
Special Operations Forces liaison	Squadron MDMP and IPB
Brigade MDMP and IPB	
HUMINT	
All-source analysis section from MICO	

Figure 5. Recommended brigade and squadron S-2 areas of responsibility.

Also, the current table of organization for the squadron’s S-2 section is not significantly different than that of an infantry-battalion S-2 section. Since the squadron’s focus is generating intelligence for the brigade and its maneuver battalions, the squadron’s internal intelligence section must be augmented with an intelligence warrant officer and a sergeant first class. This additional experience level would provide the capability in the squadron operations center to properly analyze information gathered by the Cavalry troops and other assets into quality intelligence assessments and streamline answering the brigade commander’s priority intelligence requirements.



Figure 6. A Cavalry trooper with 6th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry, camouflages his observation post at NTC. (Photo courtesy of Cobra observer/coach team, NTC)

After 13 years of Cavalry squadrons serving with distinction as economy-of-force infantry battalions, it is time to start some serious thinking about Cavalry operations. FM 3-98 provides an excellent starting point for the conversation and has captured recent trends from the combat training centers. The Cavalry squadron plays a crucial role in the BCT's DA fight. Massive organizational changes are unnecessary, and our Cavalry doctrine is sound. I argue the squadron is truly the transition between intelligence and maneuver, and it's also the transition between the brigade and the battalion fights. Minor modifications to the organization of intelligence functions – specifically the Shadow unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) and SIGINT capabilities – at the BCT level will empower the brigade's fight for intelligence and streamline Cavalry operations.

There is power in the current organization of our Cavalry squadrons, but we can make them better by synchronizing our intelligence-gathering and analysis capability into the squadron while maintaining the planning and analysis sections at the brigade level.



Figure 7. SSG Michael J. Viger, a Cavalry trooper with 6th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry, directs his scout squad at NTC. (Photo courtesy of Cobra observer/coach team, NTC)

LTC Mark Hoovestol commands 6th Squadron, 1st U.S. Cavalry, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Fort Bliss, TX. Previous assignments include brigade executive officer, 4th Infantry BCT (IBCT), 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO; squadron executive officer and operations officer, 3-61 Cavalry, 4th IBCT, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson; commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2-9 Infantry, 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), 2nd Infantry Division, Camp Casey, Republic of Korea; commander, Company C, 1-72 Armor, 1st ABCT, 2nd Infantry Division, Camp Casey; and tank-platoon leader, Company A, 1-68 Armor, 3rd ABCT, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson. His military schooling includes Command and General Staff College, Engineer Officer Advanced Course and Armor Officer Basic Course. LTC Hoovestol has a bachelor's of science degree from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, NY, and master's of science degree from the University of Missouri.