

# From the Screen: The Guidance Problem

by CPT Korey Gaines and CPT Jared Hampson

*“The failure to communicate the commander’s security guidance results in unresponsive, inflexible units during contact.”<sup>1</sup> “The biggest gap we see here is with engagement, disengagement and displacement criteria.”<sup>2</sup>*

The commander’s reconnaissance and security guidance is consistently the topic most poorly understood by students in the Cavalry Leader’s Course (CLC). Despite three weeks of intensive instruction, the questions related to commander’s reconnaissance and security guidance on both the tactics and final exam are those most likely to be answered incorrectly by students. In addition, it is rare for students to enable the execution of their plan during tactical-decision-making exercises by developing comprehensive reconnaissance and security guidance.

The most-often-confused components of this guidance is *tempo*, *disengagement criteria* and *displacement criteria*. This is primarily due to the confusing and conflicting language used for these terms in the Field Manual (FM) 3-98, **Reconnaissance and Security Operations**, and FM 3-90-2, **Reconnaissance, Security and Tactical Enabling Tasks Volume 2**, compared to the more common definitions contained in other publications and the English language. With this in mind, the instructors of CLC recommend changing these terms to limit confusion among reconnaissance and security leaders across the force.

## Tempo

Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, **Operations**, defines *tempo* as “the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy.” FM 3-98 defines *reconnaissance tempo* as “the level of detail and covertness required of the cavalry organization to best accomplish either reconnaissance or security tasks.”

These conflicting definitions lead to students confusing reconnaissance tempo (level of detail and covertness) with operational tempo (speed). This confusion is compounded by reconnaissance tempo including the term “rapid.” Students intuitively understand *rapid* to be synonymous with speed rather than the doctrinal definition of “the level of detail for the reconnaissance operation is limited to a certain prescribed list of tasks or priority intelligence requirements.”

Changing the terms “tempo” and “rapid” to terms that can be intuitively understood will limit or prevent this confusion.

## Disengagement, displacement criteria

Leaders across the Army as well as CLC students confuse the terms *disengagement criteria* and *displacement criteria*. This is primarily due to the definition of *displacement* as part of the commander’s reconnaissance and security guidance being very different than the definition of *displacement* in all other contexts.

FM 3-98 defines displacement criteria as “triggers for planned withdrawal, passage of lines or reconnaissance handover between units.” Displacement criteria therefore is criteria for transitioning to a new task, mission or phase of the operation.

However, in all other contexts, *displacement* is used to describe movement from one position to another, and it is often linked to the term *disengagement*. For example, FM 3-90-1 includes in the description of disengagement the phrase “displacing from one position to the next.” The definition of *disengagement line* also includes the phrase “signals to defending elements that it is time to displace to their next position.”

As a result of these confusing definitions, students often use the terms *disengagement criteria* and *displacement criteria* interchangeably and therefore incorrectly. Changing *displacement criteria* to a term that better reflects the definition of “triggers for planned withdrawal, passage of lines or reconnaissance handover” will limit or prevent this confusion. In addition, the triggers for displacement criteria should be unified between the commander’s reconnaissance guidance and security guidance to eliminate another unnecessary source of confusion.

## Guidance solution

The CLC instructors recommend that the components of commander’s reconnaissance and security guidance be changed to terms able to be intuitively understood:

- The term “tempo” as part of reconnaissance guidance changes to “instructions,” with the descriptions of levels of detail changing from “rapid or deliberate” to “limited or broad.”
- The term “tempo” as part of security guidance changes to “duration.”
- The term “displacement criteria” changes to “transition criteria,” with the triggers to be unified (as either time- or event-based) between reconnaissance and security guidance.

These changes would result in commander’s reconnaissance and security guidance reading as shown in Table 1.

Reconnaissance guidance	Security guidance
<b>Focus:</b> threat, infrastructure, terrain/weather effects or society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recon objective</li> </ul>	<b>Focus:</b> threat, terrain, friendly or civil <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security objective</li> </ul>
<b>Instructions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited and forceful</li> <li>• Limited and stealthy</li> <li>• Broad and forceful</li> <li>• Broad and stealthy</li> </ul>	<b>Duration:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short</li> <li>• Long</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement criteria</b>	<b>Engagement criteria</b>
<b>Disengagement criteria</b>	<b>Disengagement criteria</b>
<b>Transition criteria:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event-based</li> <li>• Time-based</li> </ul>	<b>Transition criteria:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event-based</li> <li>• Time-based</li> </ul>

**Table 1. Reconnaissance and security guidance.**

If implemented, these changes will reduce confusion among CLC students, with a resultant increase in understanding of commander’s reconnaissance and security guidance among cavalry leaders across the force.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *National Training Center Update*, “Defensive Operations Against a Near-Peer Threat,” March 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Center for Army Lessons-Learned, “CTC R&S Trends,” *Bulletin*, July 2016.

## **Acronym Quick-Scan**

**ACR** – armored-cavalry regiment

**CLC** – Cavalry Leader's Course

**FM** – field manual