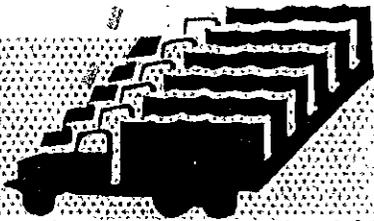


# RECONNAISSANCE PLANNING: A NEGLECTED ART

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In countless cases, the dramatic success or dismal failure of a unit on the National Training Center's battlefield has been traced directly to the unit's patrol effort before the execution phase of its operation began. The reconnaissance effort for any attack mission must be an integral part of the operation and must be planned and supported with the same degree of detail as the scheme of maneuver or the fire support plan for that mission. The importance of the patrolling effort has been emphasized in after-action reviews, lessons-learned packets, and many articles written about the NTC, but many task forces still fail to send out a single reconnaissance patrol during their entire NTC training period.

Conversely, the infantry of the NTC opposing force (OPFOR) regiment conducts aggressive pre-attack reconnaissance patrolling. As a result, the thorough intelligence picture available to the OPFOR command group is often the key to the regiment's ability to bring its mass, speed, and firepower to bear in a well-orchestrated, violent attack. The OPFOR's standard reconnaissance procedures can easily be adapted and employed by any U.S. task force.

This reconnaissance effort consists of the following five phases, which are depicted in the accompanying sketches:

**Phase I:** Seize and maintain a line for the security force.

**Phase II:** Determine the enemy's front line trace.

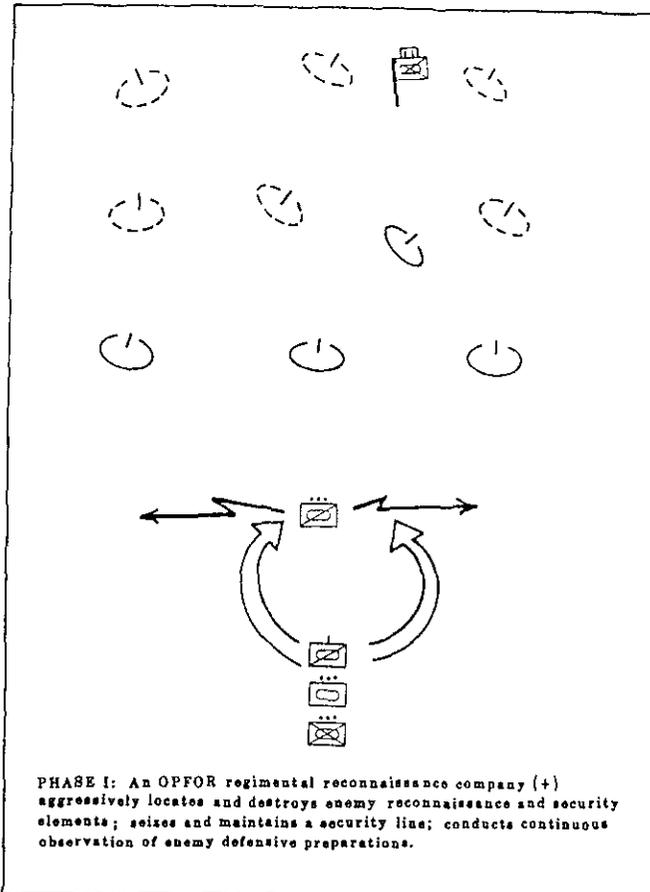
**Phase III:** Conduct a shallow reconnaissance (2-10 kilometers).

**Phase IV:** Conduct a deep reconnaissance (10-40 kilometers).

**Phase V:** Conduct continuous reconnaissance during the execution of the mission.

The patrol effort begins as the regiment moves into its forward assembly area to begin preparing for its mission. The reconnaissance company pushes as far forward as the enemy will allow, or to the limits of its supporting fires, to gain and maintain control of the terrain necessary for protecting the main force and supporting subsequent reconnaissance operations. If it encounters enemy reconnaissance or security elements, the company destroys these elements immediately to take away the enemy's ability to observe the regiment's preparations and also his early warning capability before he can use it to advantage. If necessary, the reconnaissance company is reinforced with tanks or infantry combat troops to repel any enemy counterattacks aimed at regaining this critical terrain.

Once this terrain has been secured and all enemy elements between the screen and the main force have been located and destroyed, Phase II of the reconnaissance operation begins. The reconnaissance company occupies hide positions as soon as it can so that it will be able to observe the enemy's main force elements. It also begins continuous surveillance of the enemy, with emphasis on determining where the enemy units are concentrating. Dust trails from vehicular movement or bar-



rier construction, for example, are tell-tale indicators of significant activity. During late afternoon, particularly if there are indications that feeding or refueling operations are taking place, motorcycle scouts are sent forward to determine what is taking place in the vicinity of these dust trails.

(By contrast, many of the task forces in training at the NTC seem to concentrate on only one task at a time and appear willing to tolerate enemy infiltrators during periods in which security is not the specified priority. Unit training and SOPs must stress the need to conduct counter-reconnaissance activities at all times, for the OPFOR's — or the Soviets' — relentless approach to reconnaissance will discover and exploit any lapse in security, no matter how temporary.)

## TASKS

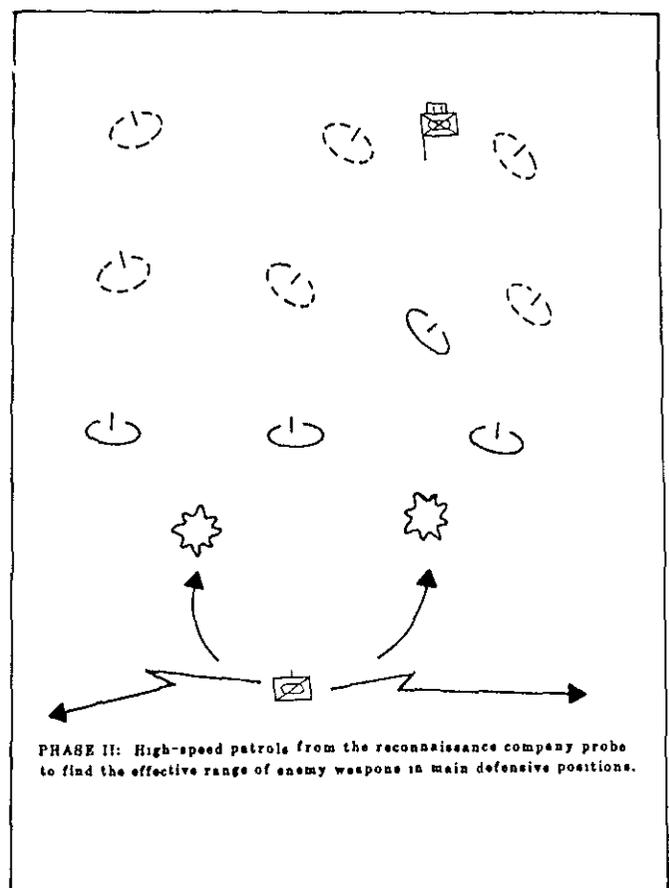
Three important Phase II reconnaissance tasks are done by the OPFOR just before dusk. First, high-speed patrols are sent forward to try to draw enemy fire at its maximum range. As soon as they see direct fire signatures, these patrols break contact and usually return with one very important bit of information—the limit of the enemy's forward ability to detect and engage armored vehicles. To do this, the patrols report their location at least every 500 meters until they make contact, so that if they are destroyed the reconnaissance company commander will know how far they got.

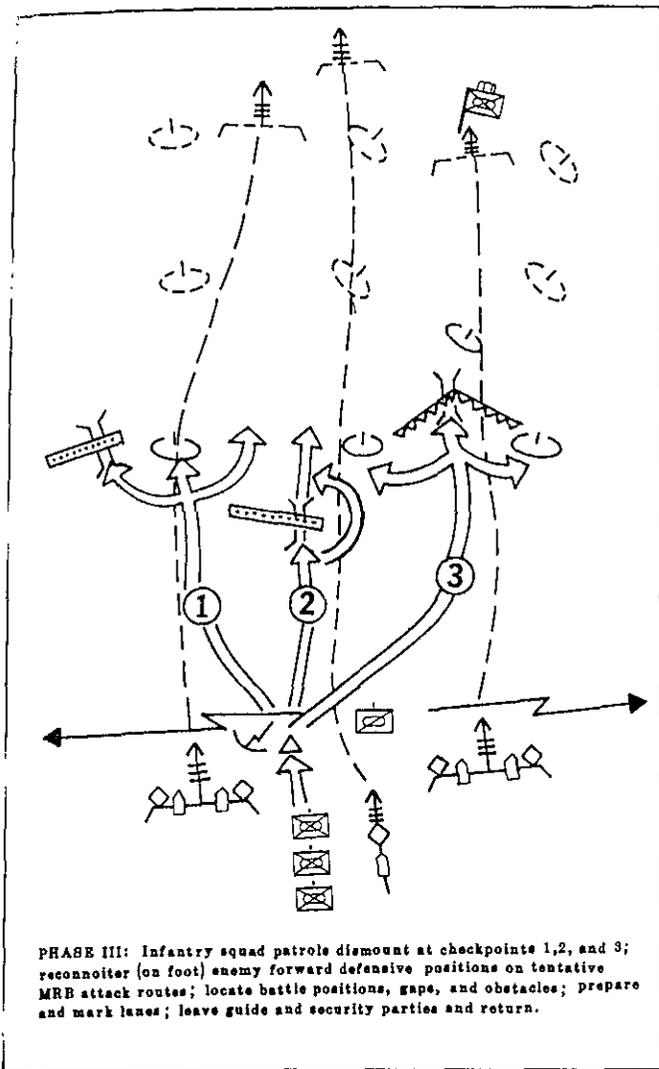
The second pre-dusk OPFOR event is the link-up of a ground surveillance radar (GSR) team with the company commander. The GSR co-locates with the reconnaissance command post

and works directly with the company commander. There are several advantages to this arrangement. First, it provides security for this valuable asset so that the team members can concentrate on surveillance without being distracted by local security requirements. Second, although surveillance priorities are assigned by the regimental S-2, the face-to-face contact between the radar team and the company commander allows the commander to do several things: direct the efforts of the GSR to confirm other possible sightings; monitor the progress of friendly patrols; and ensure that all avenues of approach are scanned to identify any enemy reconnaissance patrols moving toward the regiment. Most important, however, the reconnaissance company commander, as an experienced combat arms officer, can make sense of the hundreds of sightings a GSR team will make during the pre-attack phase. This allows him to adjust his reconnaissance effort as the enemy situation begins to become clearer and, if necessary, to modify (with the concurrence of the S-2) the surveillance plan to fit the situation and terrain.

The third important Phase II event that takes place at dusk is the establishing of wire communications between the regimental forward command post and the reconnaissance company CP. This allows direct, secure communications between the regimental intelligence officer and his reconnaissance and security elements. All spot reports from the reconnaissance company of the GSR are sent immediately to the regimental S-2, who analyzes the information as it comes in and uses it to help plan for the next phase of the intelligence effort.

If a second GSR team is available, the S-2 co-locates it with the regimental forward CP, once again for the security and





control advantages of co-location. The forward command post is in itself also a command observation post, usually situated so that the command group and staff can directly observe the battle area. This second GSR set is the S-2's personal eyes, which he can direct to areas of interest that develop as he receives more information. Additionally, the GSR can be directed into some of the deadspace of the forward unit caused by terrain masking. More important, it serves as a back-up to monitor any enemy movement behind the security screen. If the GSR with the reconnaissance company fails, this second set can quickly replace it.

By the time Phase III of the reconnaissance effort begins, the OPFOR regimental commander and his S-3 have devised the tentative concept of operation for the mission. This concept is based on a preliminary analysis of the mission, early enemy information, the terrain, and the assets available. Each of the regiment's battalions is assigned an axis of advance and objectives. Each battalion provides at least one patrol to the regimental S-2, who assigns that patrol a route reconnaissance mission that covers the same ground its parent battalion will cover during the maneuver phase of the operation.

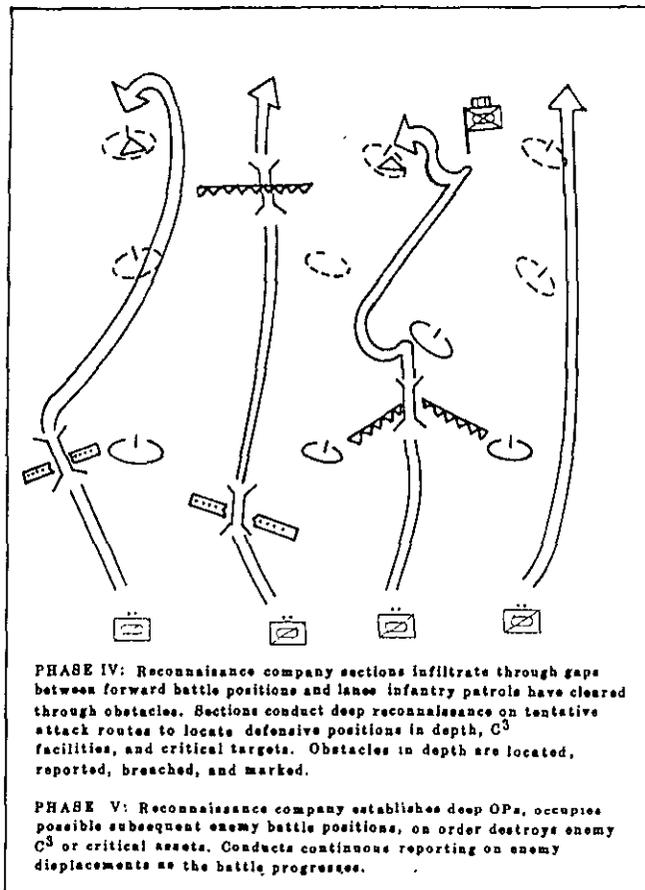
These patrols typically consist of a squad of infantry and an armored carrier. Depending upon the particular situation, the squad may be accompanied by a tank or a BMP that has a tank-killing capability. After a personal briefing by the regimental S-2, the patrols report to the reconnaissance com-

pany commander at his CP, where they receive a final update on the situation forward of the lines and coordinate for support and re-entry.

Once forward of the reconnaissance company, the patrols send their important spot reports or pre-arranged location reports to the commander on the reconnaissance company net, which the S-2 monitors. This reporting procedure has several advantages: First, the reconnaissance company continually monitors the activity of all the patrols so the commander does not have to be briefed on the results of the individual patrols before his company moves out on its Phase IV deep reconnaissance mission.

Next, since all elements on the screen know what is going on with the friendly elements forward, it is much easier for them to sort out friendly from enemy patrol activity. Finally, the patrols can normally use their radios on low power, decreasing the possibility they will be monitored or detected. In addition, specified sections of the reconnaissance company may be assigned to answer the traffic of an individual patrol. This disperses the electronic signature of the company and helps keep the important CP location from being identified and targeted.

The patrols initially move forward mounted to the point where the Phase II high-speed patrols drew long-range fire earlier. Here the infantry dismounts and moves forward to conduct a close reconnaissance of the enemy's positions and barriers. Their armored support element overwatches from its position and surveys the enemy's positions with the vehicle-mounted telescopic and night vision systems. The vehicle can also act as a relay for the dismounted element and, when ap-



appropriate, can provide fire support, long-range reconnaissance by fire, or a diversion. If the dismounted element is killed or captured, the carrier team can render at least a partial patrol report, and some information is always better than none at all.

The dismounted element is sometimes called upon to perform other clandestine tasks in addition to information gathering. It can breach and mark lanes in the enemy's obstacle system, for instance, or it can emplace range markers so that the maneuver commanders know when to expect enemy fire and when they themselves can begin to engage the enemy effectively. Stay-behind elements are often left at key locations to continue to observe enemy activities or to secure key terrain or obstacle breaches. They can also disable enemy systems by stealth, preferably in a way that will not be discovered until each system is needed. (In the real world, an explosive charge or solid obstruction in the barrel can be used to destroy a gun tube when the weapon is fired. In the MILES world, a roll of toilet paper or an empty sand bag can block the breech-mounted laser and effectively take the system out of action.)

But the most important mission for the patrols is still information gathering. The patrols are trained, and reminded, to look for specific key indicators that can help the S-2 determine the enemy's concept. These indicators include such basic items as gun-tube orientation, extent of position preparation, range to obstacles, and location of range or sector markers such as panels or chemical lights.

When a patrol returns, its members are debriefed three times. The first debriefing takes place at the reconnaissance company CP. The commander is not as interested in where the enemy is as in where he is not, because the next mission for the reconnaissance company will be the Phase IV infiltration and deep reconnaissance, in which the company will use the gaps the dismounted patrols have found in the enemy's forward battle positions to move undetected and gather intelligence in the depth of the enemy's defenses.

The second debriefing, which takes place at the regimental forward CP, is conducted personally by both the S-2 and the S-3. The S-2 concentrates on putting together an accurate enemy picture. Since by this point he knows the general locations of the enemy company-team units and specifically what each location contains, he can begin to account for all the elements the order of battle dictates that the enemy have. By using a template of the enemy's postulated tactical doctrine, he can determine where missing enemy units logically should be. These suspected locations are telephoned forward to the reconnaissance company to become checkpoints for its deep reconnaissance mission. The S-3 is interested in hearing the account first-hand from an operator's perspective. He uses this information to confirm or adjust his tentative plan in preparation for a final briefing of the line company commanders shortly before attack time.

The final debriefing takes place at the CP of the patrol's parent battalion commander. Here again, exact detail is important to the final formulation of the battalion commander's scheme of maneuver. As a final check, the patrol leader rides in the loader's hatch of the commander's vehicle to point out physically the locations of things he found the night before. The other members of the patrol may be placed in the loader's

hatches of company or platoon commanders' vehicles to provide face-to-face information for the sub-elements.

Phase IV, the company's infiltration and deep reconnaissance, begins either two hours before the attack or two hours before dawn, whichever comes first. (Since this is primarily a mounted operation, it must be conducted during pre-dawn darkness. Two hours of planning time has proved to be the best, both for ensuring that the company's information will be virtually current at attack time and for allowing sufficient time for the penetration before the attack begins.

The first tasks for the company in Phase IV are to confirm the location of gaps between enemy battle positions, to widen the breaches the dismounted patrols have opened in the enemy's barriers, and to make additional breaches if they can. Next, the company covers the assigned battalion's attack routes behind the enemy's forward positions and reports, clears, and marks lanes in any deep barriers. The company also reconnoiters the positions the S-2 has projected for likely enemy positions and searches all key terrain features for enemy preparations.

After completing these first critical information-gathering tasks, elements of the company may perform other combat missions. Key terrain features in the depth of the enemy's defenses can be occupied and denied to him once the maneuver phase of his defense begins. Often the enemy's defensive concept is totally disrupted when he finds he has to fight for a piece of terrain he expected to be his, while simultaneously being pursued at high speed by the regiment's main force elements.

The elimination of key enemy assets such as command posts or fire support elements is another common mission for the reconnaissance company. Usually these elements are not destroyed by the hidden company sections until the attack actually begins, thus increasing the effectiveness of the attack by disrupting the defender's command, control, and fire support at one of the battle's most critical moments and allowing him no time for recovery.

As with the shallow reconnaissance effort of Phase III, however, the primary mission for the company in Phase IV is still deep information gathering. By going deep behind the enemy, often as far as 25 to 40 kilometers (many times to positions beyond pre-battle radio range), reconnaissance elements can give important information on the enemy's displacements once he begins maneuvering. As the regiment comes within radio range of the deep elements, these spot reports allow the S-2 to keep track of enemy locations and strength, and allow the regiment to isolate, pursue, and destroy the enemy in detail.

The final phase of the reconnaissance effort takes place during the execution phase of the operation. (Reconnaissance does not cease until the last enemy element has been hunted down and destroyed.) During the attack, a well-organized spot report system is required. All enemy contact and all enemy major system losses are reported immediately. The S-2 keeps a running tally and constantly compares the enemy's losses to what the order of battle and the reconnaissance effort have shown that he should have. Because the S-2 continuously updates the command group on the expected enemy combat power at a given time, he can advise either picking up the pace or in-

creasing caution, depending on the risk the commander is willing to accept and the current combat power ratio.

The S-2 personally rides into the attack in the S-3's combat vehicle, while the BICC (battlefield information control center) officer (or assistant S-2) and the assistant S-3 control the TOC operation. Typically, the regimental commander and the fire support officer ride on the main attack axis, while the S-2, the ALO (air liaison officer), and the S-3 follow the supporting attack. This dispersal offers the command group greater observation of the battle and control of the regiment, allows the commander to concentrate on fighting at the decisive point, and enables the combat staff to make knowledgeable recommendations to the commander.

This simple, but aggressive OPFOR patrol effort can easily be transformed to fit the U.S. task force structure: The OPFOR reconnaissance company becomes the scout platoon, and the subordinate OPFOR battalions become the company teams. With a little practice, any unit can apply this "combat-proven" system and achieve the benefits accurate intelligence offers the maneuver commander.

But more important than the mechanics of this particular system are the principles that must govern pre-attack patrolling. First, an effective reconnaissance plan must be aggressive. Units must actively seek out detailed information on

the enemy in their sectors instead of simply waiting for reports from their higher headquarters. Next, patrolling must be continuous. The unit must have early information to facilitate planning and current information to allow for a constant revision of its plans as the time for the attack approaches. Finally, the reconnaissance effort must be redundant. All available systems must be used and must overlap to make sure every possible bit of information on the enemy is discovered and used to advantage.

Our doctrine is most effectively implemented when a high-resolution picture of the enemy is made available to the lowest possible level of command. The commander who hesitates to patrol aggressively because he is afraid of losing a few key men—and who therefore enters combat with less than a complete idea of the enemy's situation—is going to end up losing far *more* men and perhaps the battle as well.



Major David J. Ozolek, shown here in the uniform of the opposing forces regiment at the National Training Center, served as S-3 of the regiment and also as S-3 observer-controller of the NTC's operations group. A 1970 ROTC graduate of John Carroll University, he is now Public Information Officer at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe.

# SWAP SHOP

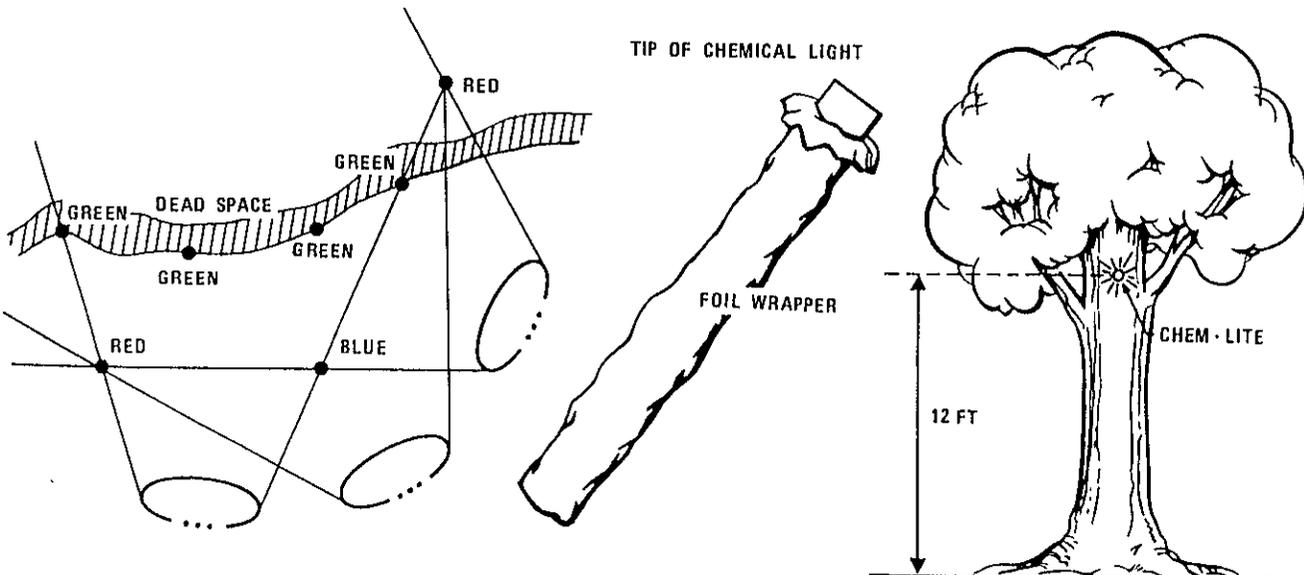


Chemical lights can greatly improve a defensive position at night: They can be used to clandestinely mark target reference points (TRPs), deadspace, and known avenues of approach.

These lights can also be used to make a combined height reference and aiming point. Since the tendency of many soldiers is to aim high at night, such a point at a known height off the

ground will enable soldiers who do not have night observation devices to keep their fires low enough.

Chemical lights in different colors can also be used to delineate sector responsibility and to augment other control devices for night firing.



(Contributed by Captain Timothy L. Canty, Company B, 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry, Fort Ord.)