PROFESSIONAL FORUM

Counter-Reconnaissance Planning

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The Soviet Army recognizes the fact that fast-paced, high-tempo offensive operations require an aggressive reconnaissance effort. This effort takes on a definite combined arms flavor with the employment of fixed-wing and rotary aircraft, chemical and radiological reconnaissance, artillery target acquisition units, engineers, and radio intercept and direction finding—not to mention the numerous ground elements bent on seeking out information necessary for them to formulate and confirm their operations plan. The Soviets recognize how critical this effort is to their operations and therefore devote a great number of resources to its execution. That effort bears fruit.

One lesson that has been learned from the battles fought at the National Training Center (NTC) is that a successful reconnaissance of a defending force leaves it practically naked to a numerically superior foe. A corollary of this is that surprise is just as important in the defense as it is in the attack, if not more so. If a unit's lack of effort, resources, planning, or execution allows the enemy's reconnaissance forces to succeed, that enemy commander can then plan his attack with what amounts to his opponent's operations order. If a friendly force succeeds in defeating the OPFOR reconnaissance units, however, the OPFOR commander will have only a foggy and incomplete intelligence picture on which to base his plan. Denying the enemy any essential elements of friendly information has an important if not critical effect on the outcome of any battle.

The S-2 usually has the primary responsibility for planning the counter-reconnaissance battle; he does this by closely coordinating his actions with and working under the direction of the battalion commander and the S-3. Analyzing the factors that establish the counter-reconnaissance plan is a complex task in which proper organization is essential, and a unit needs to develop a format or an SOP for doing this.

The format presented here, called the combat counter-reconnaissance plan, is designed to provide a relatively quick way to construct a plan through which estimated enemy ground reconnaissance actions can be completely choreographed. Named areas of interest (NAIs) are developed for each enemy action, and a counter-response is planned at each NAI. In sum, it provides a framework within which staff members can plan their counter-reconnaissance operations according to their own tactical preferences.

It is important to understand, though, that this process does not stand apart from a doctrinal intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). Indeed, the products derived from the IPB are essential. Without a good terrain analysis, for example, a counter-reconnaissance plan is doomed to failure. Furthermore, the first step of the plan involves the use of a doctrinal template. In fact, much of this counter-reconnaissance plan is a mirror of the regular IPB tailored to accomplish the necessary mission of defeating the enemy's reconnaissance effort.

The process includes four steps:

Step 1: Identify the Threat. To defeat the enemy's reconnaissance missions, an S-2 needs a picture of what his unit is up against. This is where the doctrinal template comes in. Just as the S-2 makes an estimate of the forces he expects his unit to encounter during its main attack, he does the same for the enemy reconnaissance forces.

The S-2 uses the enemy order of battle, the doctrinal template, and recent reports of enemy activity to make an initial estimate of the force his unit could encounter during the enemy's reconnaissance phase. For example, let's assume a battalion task force is preparing to defend an area that is believed to be in the zone of attack for a motorized rifle regiment. The S-2 must determine what forces the enemy will commit against the task force sector. Using his doctrinal template, he decides that in this situation

the enemy will normally commit the regimental reconnaissance company, two deep reconnaissance teams from the regiment's parent division, and one motorized rifle squad from each motorized rifle battalion.

Of course, the S-2 can and must update this model on the basis of new intelligence reports and his situational template. It is critical, too, that he address the particulars about the enemy force so that a proper response can be planned. The enemy may commit more reconnaissance units, or different types of units, on the basis of the terrain, the mission, and the makeup of the friendly force. If the terrain offers an unusually large water obstacle, for example, the enemy will probably also commit engineer reconnaissance units. As another example, if the S-2 has information that the enemy's reconnaissance company is at only 75 percent strength, or if he receives a report that one of his own task force's companies has just killed an enemy deep reconnaissance team, he will have to adjust his estimate.

Step 2: Identify the Threat's Reconnaissance Plan. Once the S-2 has identified the enemy's reconnaissance units, he must determine what he is going to do with this information. The objective of this step is to get inside the enemy's decision-making cycle and predict what the enemy commander wants to do and how he plans to do it. The S-2 does this by wargaming the enemy's objectives and possible courses of action. If he is successful, he should end up with what amounts to the enemy's reconnaissance operations order.

A tool that will help the S-2 in doing this is the counter-reconnaissance table shown in Figure 1. The table consists of four columns, the first two of which—Time and Action—are used during this step. The phases of the enemy's plan are recorded in the Time column and the enemy's activities during these periods of time in the Action column.

For example, in the first entry in Figure 1, the S-2 believes that enemy deep reconnaissance teams will be observing the task force from inside the task force's sector. He puts this information in the Action column and the time he believes this will occur in the Time column.

TIME	ACTION	NAI	MISSIONS
010730 hrs until the beginning of main battle.	Deep recon teams observe friendly defensive preparations from the depth of sector.	16,17 18,19 20,21 22,10 9	C Co clear NAI 16,17. B Co clear NAI 18,19. A Co clear NAI 20,21. E Co clear NAI 22. Tm Tk clear NAI 9,10. Execute upon entering sector.
010900 hrs until 011300 hrs	Regimental Recon Co pushes forward to establish line or base to conduct operations from and to observe friendly sector. Will attempt to do this as far forward as OP Bone, jumping from OP Tony, Op Casey, and The Whale.	14,9 5,4 8,6 3,2	Scouts and Tm Tk move across FEBA at 0700 and establish a security line as close to FLOT as possible.
011300 hrs to 011800 hrs	Enemy attempts to infiltrate small mounted patrols to use in next stage of his recon plan.	3,4 6,8 9	Scouts and Tm Tk deny any penetration of these NAIs by vehicles.
011800 hrs to 011900 hrs	Enemy attempts to identify friendly force locations using high speed patrols to draw fire and thus identify battle positions.	11,12 13,15	Be prepared to encounter and destroy these vehicles, but engage them from locations other than battle positions. A Co watch NAI 11. B Co watch NAI 12. C Co watch NAI 15. E Co watch NAI 13.
011900 hrs to 012400 hrs	About three squad-sized patrols attempt to move into friendly sector to locate positions, mark routes, and breach obstacles. Patrols should be made up of 1-2 vehicles and dismounted soldiers.	3,4 6,8 9,11 12,13 15	Scouts and Tm Tk observe and target NAIs 3,4,6,8,9, from 011900 to 012400 hrs. Establish ambushes from 012100 to 012400 hrs at: A Co-NAI 11, B Co-NAI 12, C Co-NAI 15, E Co-NAI 13.
011900 hrs to 010400 hrs	GSR assist patrols by verifying locations and warning of approach of friendly security forces.	3,7 8	Scouts and Tm Tk be prepared to spot artillery fire or react physically if GSR locations are identified through friendly EW.
012300 hrs to 020300 hrs	Regimental recon patrols attempt to penetrate into the depth of our sector and conduct deep reconnaissance.	3,4 6,8 9,11 12,13 15	Scouts and Tm Tk observe and target NAIs 3,4,6,8,9, from 012400 to 020300 hrs. Destroy any enemy reconnaissance forces that attempt to penetrate our sector. Maintain observation on NAIs. Be prepared to react to and destroy any enemy infiltration attempt. A Co watch NAI 11, B Co watch NAI 12, C Co watch NAI 15, and E Co watch NAI 13.

Figure 1

Step 3: Terrain Analysis and Selection of NAIs. A terrain and weather analysis is absolutely necessary during this phase of the planning so that the S-2 can predict where the enemy will conduct his actions. The location of possible observation posts (OPs) and infiltration routes can be identified only through a close examination of the terrain and by using all of the available data. This data may include information gathered from ground reconnaissance of the terrain, aerial photographs, or fly-overs using available aviation assets.

Then, the S-2 selects a series of NAIs that correspond with the critical points where the enemy's reconnaissance effort will be located or spotted and, hopefully, killed. For instance, in the second entry in Figure 1, the S-2 expects the enemy's regimental reconnaissance company to

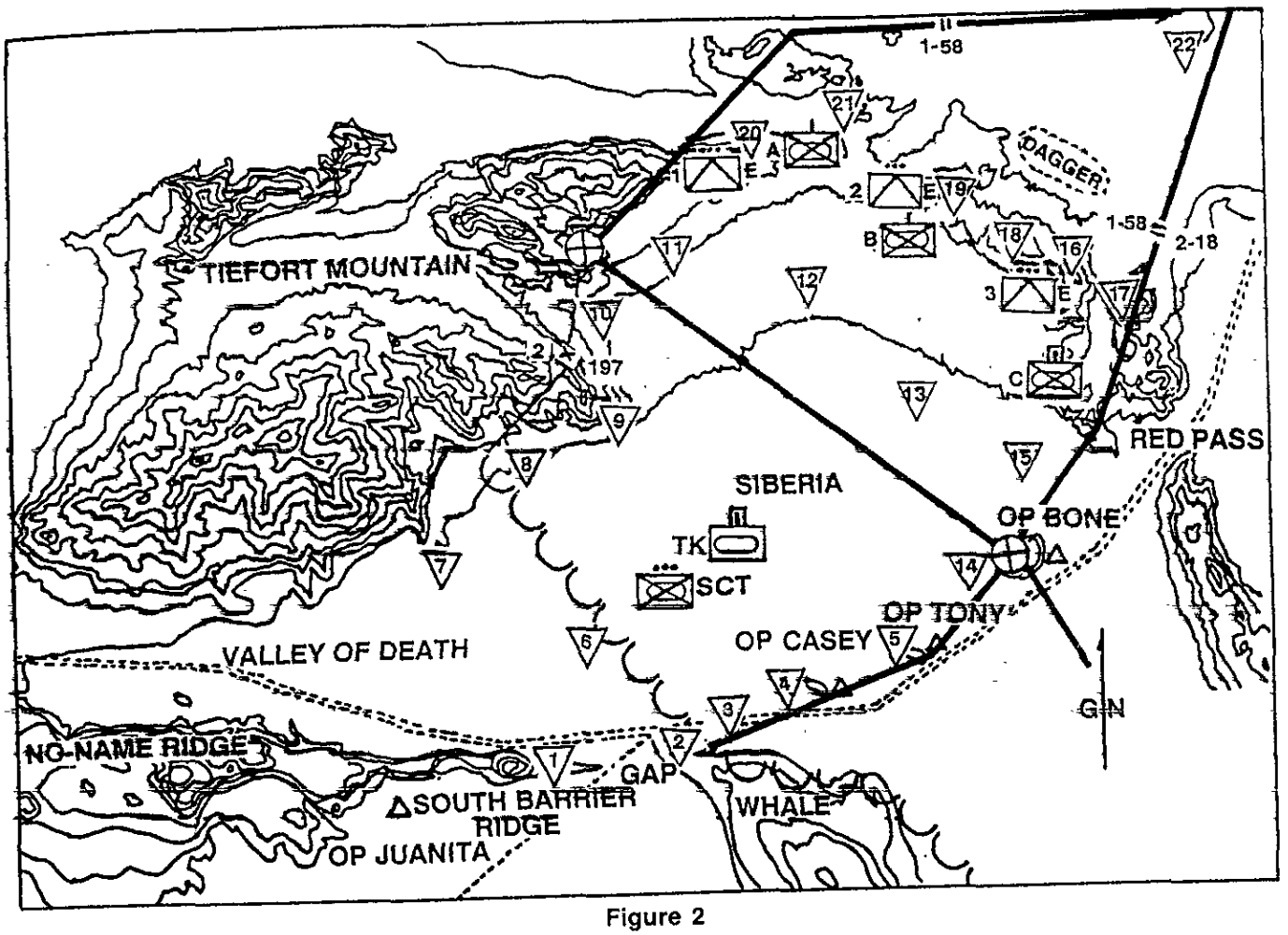

Figure 2

push forward to establish a base and a line of reconnaissance to conduct future operations. Critical locations where this effort is likely to take place are thus marked with NAIs. Or another example, if a suspected infiltration route is identified, as is done in entry five of Figure 1, an NAI should be placed on the route to spot the enemy's penetration efforts.

The placement of these NAIs should correspond with the activities identified in Step 2, and each NAI is then added to the combat counter-reconnaissance table in the third column next to its related activity.

Step 4: Observe and Target NAIs. At this point, the what, when, and where of enemy activity have been identified. Now each of these NAIs needs to be observed or targeted to locate and destroy the enemy's "eyes." This is accomplished through further use of the table.

Each activity and each NAI, or each series of activities and NAIs, is assigned to one of the task force units for action. For planning purposes, this is made an entry in the Missions column. The actual method and type of assignment will vary with an individual unit's SOP and the forces that are available for counter-reconnaissance. (An excellent article that offers suggestions on counter-reconnaissance methods is "Countering Ground Reconnaissance," *Combined Arms Training Tips*, HQ CAC, Volume 2, No. 2, December 1983. Another is "Counterreconnaissance," by Major David J. Ozolek, INFANTRY, September-October 1986, pages 34-37.)

A short mission and intent statement is written in the fourth column, describing the action that is to take place. For example, in the fifth entry in the table, the S-2 believes that between 1900 and 2400 hours (first column), enemy reconnaissance squads will attempt obstacle-breaching operations (second column) through and at a number of NAIs (third column), and that a gauntlet of resistance needs to be raised to stop these efforts. His entry in the fourth column details the plan he has devised to counter the enemy threat. After he completes the Missions column for all entries, the task force should have a comprehensive plan for defeating the enemy's reconnaissance effort. The completed counter-reconnaissance table, along with the accompanying map (Figure 2), provides an example of a finished plan ready for execution.

The use of this combat counter-reconnaissance planning process will greatly assist the S-2 as he goes about his task of producing a plan to defeat the enemy's eyes and ears during the defensive phase of the battle. Furthermore, he can use the same basic process and table to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance planning during the main defensive battle as well as in later offensive operations.

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