



# SECURITY FORCE OPERATIONS IN A MECHANIZED INFANTRY TASK FORCE

**CAPTAIN EDWARD G. GIBBONS, JR.**

A security force for a defending mechanized infantry task force performs a grueling, critical mission — a mission that can mean the difference between victory and defeat. Unfortunately, there is a curious lack of doctrinal guidance on the subject in Field Manuals 71-1 and 71-2. In the absence of such guidance, the ideas offered here may help future company team and battalion task force commanders plan and conduct security force operations.

In designating a security force for a defending mechanized infantry task force, a commander must keep in mind that its main function is to guard the task force's main battle area (MBA) to prevent enemy ground observation of the MBA units and direct fire against them. Within its ability to accomplish its primary mission, a guard force also must be prepared to conduct combat operations. These can include reconnaissance, attack, defend, and delay missions, usually within range of the main body's indirect fire weapons.

It is important to note that the force's primary focus is on enemy reconnaissance elements; it focuses on the enemy's main body only within the conditions established by the task force commander. If a security force is successful, it will destroy the eyes of an attacking commander and deny him knowledge that is vital to the success of his attack.

Because the attacker's reconnaissance forces must give

their commander early warning, his divisional long range reconnaissance units may precede his main body by up to 100 kilometers, with the other elements up to 50 kilometers in advance. The regimental teams may be up to 25 kilometers ahead, and can be closer once contact has been made. Long range teams may begin to penetrate the forward edge of the battle area two or more nights before the lead echelon arrives, or they may already be in place on the night before an attack, supplemented by regimental teams. With a large number of dismounted infantry soldiers available, a dismounted night attack by part of this force is also a distinct possibility.

The organization of the security force must therefore be tailored to defeat all of these enemy reconnaissance units and to carry out subsequent missions as an integral part of the task force's main battle area (MBA) defense.

Recommended organizations for task forces equipped with M1 tanks and M2 Bradley fighting vehicles (BFVs) as well as M1 tanks and M113 personnel carriers are shown in the accompanying box. A force so organized can fulfill its assigned task of guarding the MBA, as it is capable of reconnaissance, defense, or attack, is relatively self sustaining, and can operate semi-independently while denying the enemy direct observation and fire against the

## TASK ORGANIZATION

M1/M2	M1/M113
Tank Team Headquarters	Tank Team Headquarters
2 Tank Platoons	2 Tank Platoons
1 BFV Platoon	1 Mechanized Platoon
Scout Platoon (HMMWV)	Scout Platoon (HMMWV)
Mortar Section	Antitank (TOW) Platoon
GSR Section	Mortar Section
Stinger Team	GSR Section
FIST-V (Team Headquarters)	Stinger Team
	FIST-V (Team Headquarters)

task force. A larger force would probably be too much for one commander to command and control. And a smaller one, possibly an ad hoc force, could not be expected to successfully execute its security mission with its attendant sub-unit missions, because it would have serious shortcomings in command and control, combat support, and combat service support.

Because time is absolutely critical to a security force, such a force must be constituted rapidly when the task force receives the warning order to go over to the defense. Any element that is not already either attached to the team or under its operational control should receive top priority in the cross attachment process so that the team commander can begin his troop leading procedures.

A warning order is issued with a place and time for all elements to assemble, and the security force commander confers immediately with the S-2 and S-3 regarding the task force security force area, the threat, the main battle area, engagement criteria, avenues of approach, and named areas of interest (NAIs). In addition, a line is designated for the handoff of the battle from the security force to the MBA units, along with an effective time. This usually becomes effective at EENT (end evening nautical twilight) of the same night and serves as a restrictive fire line for both the security force and the MBA units.

While platoon sergeants prepare the troops and equipment for the upcoming night's battle, the platoon leaders move out with the commander in their combat vehicles to conduct a thorough reconnaissance of the security force area. At this time, templated avenues of approach are confirmed, and others are identified. Both mounted and dismounted avenues are identified, with particular attention being paid to the flanks and boundaries. Target reference points (TRPs) are marked and thermal devices added. Hide and fire positions are confirmed as well as routes of occupation, withdrawal, attack, and control measures for the passage of lines.

Following the reconnaissance, the commander and platoon leaders return to the assembly area. Operations orders are issued, face-to-face coordination is conducted by the sub-elements, all TRP and vehicle locations are updated, and graphics are issued down to the squad and crew level.

Except for the scout observation posts (OPs), which should

have immediately moved out after the warning order, the security force must occupy its area before the time specified in the task force's fragmentary order. Every effort should be made to conceal this move so that an enemy unit that may have the security force under observation will not have much time to identify the force's locations and plan accordingly.

The occupation time that is set must give the crews enough time to prepare range cards and sector sketches and to conduct a thermal rehearsal with their night sights. The terrain's thermal image can then be interpreted against its actual visual appearance, and thermal TRPs can be integrated into the range cards. This technique greatly increases the accuracy of any grid locations derived from a thermal observation of the battlefield.

Since the security force must be capable of sustained operations forward of the MBA, it must also be as self-sufficient as possible. If the team is to succeed in its efforts to refuel, rearm, and reconstitute losses, the company trains must be present under the team first sergeant. The first sergeant is fully integrated into the planning and execution of the combat service support (CSS) plan. This plan specifies casualty collection points, and the platoon recovers vehicle and personnel casualties to these locations. Each member of the team must know where they are, as well as the route the first sergeant will use to and from each point. From there, the first sergeant will take the casualties to the task force jump aid station or jump unit maintenance collection point (UMCP).

The task force can take specific steps that will greatly assist the security force. Serious consideration should be given to positioning the jump aid station and jump UMCP forward during the security force battle phase of the defense. These assets should be masked from ground observation, but should still be as close as possible to the security force's rear boundary. This will increase the survival rate among wounded soldiers and the return rate of damaged vehicles, as well as keeping the team's organic assets available to deal with casualties as they occur. Forward units may also provide recovery and casualty evacuation elements, since generally they will not be engaged during the security force battle.

Above all, the task force as a whole must keep in mind that during security operations, the security force must be the number one priority if it is to succeed and enable the other units to prepare their defenses unobserved and unimpeded. An ad hoc force, without the organic trains element, will not be able to sustain the pace of operations that a security force requires, or the casualties that can be expected.

In the most likely scenario, a security force can expect to encounter one of several small incursions by one or two vehicles along difficult routes, especially at the boundaries between units where coordination is habitually poor. A sample array of the security force is shown here that seeks in several different ways to counter this threat. The security

force is made up of "listeners" and "lookers" for target acquisition, and "shooters" for target engagement:

First, the listeners are positioned along the forward boundary (usually the line where the battle is handed off from the brigade or other element); in most instances a vehicle is heard at night rather than seen as the first target acquisition. For this reason, the dismounted scout OPs and infantry squads are emplaced in concealed locations along restrictive entrances to the security force area.

The mechanized squads from the BFV platoon are usually employed along the flanks, but in any case along infantry avenues of approach to provide early warning and to conduct patrols. They can also execute limited antiarmor and antipersonnel ambushes to eliminate penetrations by single vehicles or small dismounted patrols.

These are not hard and fast rules but guidelines that capitalize on the capabilities of a small, concealed OP at night. The listeners can hear a vehicle from a great distance as well as cover terrain that is unsuitable for long range observation. It is important for them to be placed well away from mounted elements so that friendly engine noise does not prevent them from hearing the enemy.

Second, the lookers are provided with fields of observation and fire that overlap throughout the width and depth of the sector. The true lookers of the force are the infantry platoon's BFVs or the antitank platoon's improved TOW vehicles (ITVs) and the fire support vehicle (FIST-V). These can be supplemented or replaced by the scout platoon's BFV, if it is so equipped. Further assistance is provided by the commander's and the executive officer's vehicles.

The lookers, by way of the TRPs, are assigned overlapping primary and alternate sectors of observation. In this way, the commander has continuous and flexible coverage that allows him to see and hear the entire battlefield. The tanks

are assigned sectors that supplement those of the lookers to their front, from which they can then acquire and eliminate any reconnaissance elements that manage to evade the forward elements. This is especially helpful when there are multiple avenues of approach through compartmented terrain.

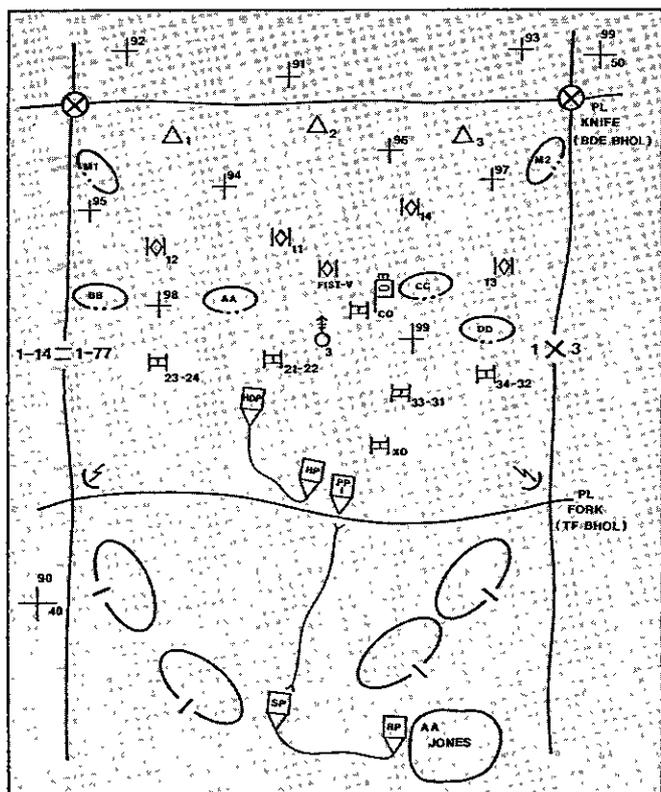
All of the thermal lookers are supplemented by the ground surveillance radars (GSRs). In open terrain such as a desert, with their planning range of 10 kilometers, the GSRs can be placed well back in the depth of the sector while still ranging out to the battle handoff line, and possibly beyond, to help localize and refine a target that has been acquired by other means.

Finally, along with the listeners and lookers, the shooters consist of the tanks supported by the mortars and the artillery. From their location two to three kilometers to the rear of the lookers, the shooters can see the gaps between them and are close enough to provide a quick response to a target acquisition. At the same time, their placement to the rear of the lookers allows them to reacquire targets that may have eluded the lookers.

The tanks are the mobile killers of the security force. Once a target is acquired and identified, a tank or tank section should be dispatched to localize and destroy the enemy. Other tanks from the company can also patrol a flank or boundary to seek out a vehicle that may not have been acquired but is either suspected or templated.

Friendly casualties are an inherent danger in any night engagement, but this danger can be reduced. The first and most important item is a thermal rehearsal to familiarize every element with the location and signature of the friendly forces in relation to the terrain. Second, in this scenario, only the tanks move and only the tanks shoot. Since the friendly units are stationary, and the enemy is generally





moving, the tanks are less likely to engage a friendly unit, especially with the reinforcement provided by the thermal rehearsal. And because the BFVs and ITVs do not shoot, the tanks are also safe from them.

If the task force commander specifies it and if the IPB (intelligence preparation of the battlefield) process indicates the possibility, the next encounter could pit the security force against a large dismounted infantry force. This force will attempt to infiltrate in small groups or move in large elements to acquire intelligence, seize key terrain to help the main attack, destroy the security force, and breach obstacles in its zone. It is therefore critical for the security force to spot this enemy force as soon as possible and engage it with mortars and artillery.

Friendly dismounted elements should hide to survive and update the commander with spot reports. The lookers relocate, if necessary, to keep from being destroyed. If the enemy infantrymen are not killed by the combined mortar and artillery fire, it may be necessary to attack them with a portion of the tanks or even with the BFVs and their chain guns. The important point is that this force is dangerous and the security force commander should fight to the limit of his ability to protect the MBA as well as to preserve his own force.

Once the night battle is over, and assuming it has been successful, the security force commander has several things to consider. First, his force must be integrated into the task force's MBA scheme of maneuver. Second, while preparing for this mission, he must institute a rest and resupply plan and keep enough assets forward to continue his security mission.

One idea is to make this force the task force reserve. Since the security force at some point will terminate its guard force mission and conduct a rearward passage of lines into the MBA, usually to an assembly area, this mission makes sense. The force can then counterattack from this same assembly area in any manner the task force commander chooses, and the requisite planning, reconnaissance, and rehearsals can be conducted during the day when the threat is reduced by the increased alertness of the task force, as well as by the enemy's usual desire to penetrate at night. Whatever the plan, it is important to realize that the security force is in no way a "write-off" and that there will be ample opportunity to use its considerable combat power in the MBA defensive plan.

The security force performs such routine tasks as boresighting, maintenance, refueling, and rearming in increments. It rehearses passage of lines, as well as portions of the ground tactical plan. While this is in progress, the scout platoon leader can be placed in charge of the security force forward of the battle handoff line, with enough assets to be able to listen, look, and kill. Following this daylight phase, the security force is once again ready for another night of battle.

The security force's final task is to disengage and hand the battle off to the task force MBA units. All of the usual preparations for a rearward passage of lines are made and coordinated among the various task force elements.

The security force is generally given two criteria for withdrawal. First, the task force commander specifies a certain level of force destruction that triggers the return of the security force. Second, he states a time when the security force must have all of its component parts in place for the task force's main battle.

## PHASED WITHDRAWAL

When either of these two criteria have been met, the security force commander begins a phased withdrawal of his forces. The scout OPs and the GSRs can be left in place to provide early warning of the approach of the enemy's main body; if not, they are repositioned by the S-2 at this time. The team XO moves to the contact point, and the scout platoon leader moves to the redeployment point (RDP).

The first element to move to the RDP is the team trains element, followed by the infantry platoon. At the RDP, it moves into a column formation and prepares to move through the passage lane. The next element is the antitank platoon (if one is used), followed in order by the mortars, the team headquarters, and then the tanks, one platoon at a time.

In an average sector, this process takes about two hours, and the commander must plan accordingly. The scout platoon leader helps units find the RDP, orients them on the route to the passage point, and keeps the team commander informed of their arrival at and departure from the RDP. The XO performs the same actions at the passage

point and coordinates with the stationary unit representative. The team XO remains in place at the passage point until the last element has completed the passage. The units then make their way to the release point and on to the assembly area or battle position as specified in the ground tactical plan.

Because a passage of lines operation has many inherent dangers and opportunities for mistakes, it should be planned and executed to the same level of detail as the fight itself. If the passage operation does not succeed, the task force commander may be robbed of a significant portion of his combat power just when he is about to engage the main enemy force.

In fighting the security force battle along these lines at the NTC, some units have quickly encountered several command and control issues. In these units, one solution was to have all elements controlled on the force's command net, which was "red." Although it required training to conduct operations in this manner, it paid big dividends in that it increased the speed of and actually decreased the number of radio transmissions. The value of this technique was illustrated time and again and was the single most valuable lesson learned in command and control.

When a spot report was generated by the scouts, for example, the commander did not have to call the BFV or ITV to ask one of them to orient on the suspected location for a visual sighting. Since the Bradley commander could hear the transmission from the scout, he automatically sought the target and informed the commander (and thus every other unit) either of the target grid or of the fact that he could not acquire it. This was true for all the other elements, which either sought the target (if it was in their assigned sectors) or adjusted their sectors (to account for the vehicle that was now tracking the target). The commander could adjust coverage with a quick fragmentary order if he had a specific purpose in mind, and all of the units could hear it simultaneously.

Additionally, the security force commander could call any station immediately, get a radio check "in sequence" (have the force call off in order), and generally be aware of the team's alertness. This integration was arrived at only by thorough training, but once attained, it was very effective.

Soldiers who keep transmissions short, know how to send a spot report — using only SALUTE (size, activity, location, unit, time, and equipment) or the shorter SALT — and

are disciplined will adapt quickly to this system.

Another command and control issue is the security force's relationships with the task force tactical operations center (TOC). The TOC and the night battle captain must be aggressive and help the security force commander by actively seeking information from higher headquarters and passing information back to him. OH-58D helicopters, military intelligence, and other assets under brigade control, for example, can ease the security force's burden. Also, the security force commander must have the authority to task main battle area units for support if his force should lose a target that then penetrates the force's battle handoff line.

Several points need to be reemphasized:

- First, within the overall scheme of the task force defense, the security force mission has the potential to be very important.

- Second, the principles of positioning the security force's elements to make the most of their capabilities and arraying them in depth as listeners, lookers, and shooters will improve the security and effectiveness of both the security force and the task force and will work under most conditions and against any opponent.

- Third, the security force must be as self sustaining as possible, and all units of the task force must be trained to participate as part of the security force should the task force commander choose to commit one.

- Finally, there is no substitute for the estimate process or for considering every mission within an analysis of METT-T (mission, enemy, troops, terrain, and time).

This method of executing a security force battle is from the perspective of a mechanized task force. This article, and some of the lessons learned, may provide a basis for discussion and development and help future security force commanders perform this grueling, critical mission — one that may mean the difference between victory and defeat in the defense.

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Captain Edward G. Gibbons, Jr., commanded an antitank company in the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, and a rifle company in the 1st Battalion, 10th Infantry in the 4th Infantry Division during training at the National Training Center. He previously served in the 82d Airborne Division and 325th Airborne Battalion Combat Team in Italy. He is now assigned to the Directorate of Combined Arms and Tactics at the US Army Infantry School. He is a 1982 ROTC graduate of Auburn University.

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