

INFANTRY LETTERS



JRTC RECONNAISSANCE LESSONS

I enjoyed the articles "The JRTC: Platoon and Squad Lessons Learned," by Lieutenants Robert F. Toole, Jr., and Stanley G. Genega, Jr., and "Zone Reconnaissance," by Captain Kevin J. Dougherty (INFANTRY, March-April 1992). Since the 112th Military Intelligence Brigade here at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, routinely sends observer-controllers to the JRTC for the intelligence battlefield operating system, I would like to offer some observations.

A common problem has been the S-2s' overusing and overtaking the scouts. As the articles described, the scouts usually become casualties when they are misused. In this case, it appears that the S-2 did not do a good estimate of the enemy situation. If he had, he would have noticed immediately that the opposing force (OPFOR) operated in squad-size elements of six to nine men. Knowing that, he should have realized that the scout platoon was too small an element for the task. A better choice for a complete zone reconnaissance would have been an infantry company.

While a platoon could conduct a fan as part of an overall zone reconnaissance, a complete company would be required to conduct three fans at the same time. Within a single-fan movement to recon an NAI selected by the S-2, a platoon could use successive sectors and converging routes. The soldiers could do a good job, not just stroll through. This would also give them at least a 3:1 force ratio over enemy units that were expected (or templated) to be in the area of operations, and it would prevent unsuccessful engagements with OPFOR elements of equal size. They would have enough mass and firepower to lay down a strong base of fire and conduct aggressive flanking movements to close with

and destroy OPFOR elements. The platoon leader could maintain momentum for the pursuit, avoid or flank ambushes and, if necessary, evacuate casualties. In addition, as Lieutenants Toole and Genega pointed out, it would be helpful if the mortar platoon leader had previously coordinated his priority targets with the company commander to support his patrols.

What we're really talking about here is effective decision making and wargaming. The cardinal rule should be to get the entire staff and the subordinate commanders together, and not leave anyone out. Crosswalk all facts and assumptions, and visualize the battle from start to finish. I fail to understand why we have to go through so much painful experience to learn and relearn basic lessons. The after-action reviews at the JRTC can be brutal, and the authors have done us all a valuable service in pointing out the correct tactics.

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EMPLOYMENT OF SCOUTS

During Operation DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, those of us serving in the 3d Battalion, 7th Infantry, 24th Infantry Division, found that the scouts could not adequately develop the situation because there was so little time and space between them and the task force's lead elements. This was especially true during movements to contact when our scouts could not maintain enough distance between themselves and the lead companies, and the M1/M2 task force could not afford to lose momentum by reducing its rate of march.

After many hours of discussion, the officers and men of the battalion devel-

oped what we believe are some answers to this problem.

According to FM 71-2, the scout platoon should be two to six kilometers ahead of the advance guard to provide adequate warning and allow enough maneuver space. But this is not enough to allow the scout platoon to develop the situation properly. Either the task force must slow its rate of march (not always tactically feasible), or the scouts must be placed farther out in front. We believe the answer is to assume some risk and increase the distance between the scouts and the task force.

We recommend that the scouts push out 15 to 20 kilometers in front of the task force so they will have more time to develop the situation. Although the commander assumes more risk by placing them 15 to 20 kilometers forward, this risk can be reduced through training and coordination.

A major risk at that distance is fratricide from indirect fire or aviation systems. A forward observer, attached to the scouts, can help the scout platoon leader control those fires. Additionally, a restricted fire line, or other fire coordination measures, can help prevent fratricide at that distance. Likewise, if the scouts should make contact and need help, MLRS (multiple launch rocket system) rockets or aviation fires can be used to help them break contact.

The scouts should maintain their security through deliberate movement. The added distance between the platoon and the task force will allow them to achieve the stealth they need to accomplish their objective without being discovered.

If it is not advisable for the task force to slow its momentum—because of conditions of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time)—the scouts must get out of the way. At this stage, they are not providing any additional

security for the task force anyway, and the lead units can usually see the same things they can see.

At this point, the scouts can be replaced by a company team that is trained and equipped to fight and protect itself. If the scouts are only two kilometers in front of the task force, they are already within direct fire range of most of the task force's weapons, and this is fratricide waiting to happen. At that point, the scouts can move to screen a flank or fall back within the task force formation to undergo supply operations in preparation for their next mission.

The scout platoon can be useful to a task force if it is given enough time and space to perform its mission. But when it has only two to six kilometers in which to develop the situation—especially if the tempo of operations is similar to those in DESERT STORM—then we need to look again at how and under what circumstances we expect our scouts to provide us with accurate information.

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FIRE SUPPORT IN LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT

I would like to thank and congratulate Major Garnett Arnold for raising some important points in his article "Fire Support in Low-Intensity Conflicts," in the November-December 1991 issue of *INFANTRY*. He hits the nail squarely on the head in identifying and elaborating upon three challenges for fire support in low-intensity conflict (our most likely future): "fire support on the non-linear battlefield, avoiding fratricide, and avoiding collateral damage."

In spite of restrictions on the use of force and other "low-intensity" characterizations of LIC, combat at the squad, platoon, company, and even higher echelons can be terrifyingly intense. The squad, platoon, or other unit in the thick of it will want all the fire support possible to be immediately at its call.

Unfortunately, meeting the three challenges requires measures that tend to inhibit the use of current fire support systems as Major Arnold discusses in the context of today's weapons, organizations, and doctrine.

There are technologies in hand and a weapon system on the horizon that is ideally suited to meeting the three challenges while providing fire support of unprecedented responsiveness, precision, inherent fratricide avoidance, and "focused lethality." That weapon is the fiber optic guided missile (FOG-M). It is now known as NLOS-CA (non-line of sight-combined arms). By "focused lethality" I mean the concept of each missile with high assurance, being able to actually hit and kill its target without causing undue collateral damage. There are three important aspects of NLOS-CA's "focused lethality": The precision placement of its impact on the target, the power and favorable shot-line of its shaped-charge warhead, and the system's insusceptibility to the errors common to other fire support systems that cause a significant fraction of their lethal effects to be outside the target area (wasted firepower or, worse, fratricide and collateral damage).

An important capability of NLOS-CA that can greatly reduce the three challenges in LIC and other fluid battles is its real-time video overview of the target area. This imagery information can allow the maneuver commander to gain an accurate appreciation of the nature, extent, and disposition of the enemy in relation to his own forces (that is, "non-linearities" are revealed) and in relation to civilians and infrastructure facilities that are to be protected from injury or damage. With this "overview" information, commanders can maneuver and apply both conventional firepower and additional NLOS-CA firepower to destroy the enemy with minimal cost of friendly or civilian casualties and collateral damage.

Another important capability inherent in NLOS-CA stems from its precision, long range, battlefield overview (including self target acquisition and battle damage assessment) and its ability to

attack into defilade—the ability to perform some close air support (CAS) missions. This could be especially crucial for targets close to friendly forces and during the earliest phases of conflict when available air power is fully employed in air superiority and battlefield air interdiction missions. NLOS-CA can accomplish some CAS missions more precisely, responsively, and cost effectively than air power.

There is an important issue concerning fire support in low-intensity conflict that Major Arnold did not raise—the strategic deployment of fire support assets to the conflict area. Most current fire support systems are too bulky and heavy to be deployed by air, except in limited numbers. The first-in, first-to-fight light infantry in many scenarios will be fire-support poor. NLOS-CA is light and compact enough to accompany the lead elements of a strategic air-lifted contingency force. Once there, NLOS-CA is equally suited to providing fire support to maneuver units and to base defense forces.

NLOS-CA is not limited to providing a "knock-out punch" for only light forces in LIC situations. Its light weight, good tactical mobility, and highly lethal, multiple target, precision kill capability make it an ideal fire support force multiplier for both heavy and light forces at any level of conflict intensity.

While the Army's acquisition system struggles to bring NLOS-CA to the field, it is not too early to begin thinking of the best way to integrate and use its many unique capabilities. That is, an early and thorough appreciation of the NLOS-CA system by tactics and doctrine writers, fire support planners, and maneuver commanders can lead to early development of (hopefully) near optimal tactics, techniques, and procedures to allow future warriors to meet the challenges of fire support in LIC and to fully realize its battle-winning and life-saving potential.

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