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# Rifle Platoon Guides Conserving Scout Manpower

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One of the tasks for scouts (according to ARTEP 7-92-MTP, Infantry Scout Platoon/Squad and Sniper Team) is to provide guides. But ARTEP 7-8-MTP, Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad, does not list this as a task for rifle platoons. This may be the reason battalion commanders regularly task the scouts to provide guides when, in fact, the needs of the tactical situation would be better served by giving this mission to the rifle platoons.

This problem routinely comes up at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) during a battalion's deliberate attack. The usual scenario is for the scouts to leave friendly lines early, conduct an area reconnaissance of the objective, meet the rifle companies at designated link-up points, and guide them to their assault positions. This plan gives the scout platoon leader two critical tasks—to reconnoiter the objective and to provide guides. In many cases, the

ensuing developments of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time), particularly those pertaining to troops and time, will force him to choose between the two. If he reconnoiters the objective thoroughly enough, he may not have time to get back to the link-up points to meet the rifle companies, and if he gets the guides to the link-up points on time, he may not have completed his reconnaissance.

At full strength, a scout platoon leader has just 18 men, organized into three five-man squads. The squad leader, if two of his five men have to go back to the link-up point, has only two men left, and is faced with both a control problem and a manpower problem. These problems are made even more serious if the original five-man strength has been reduced through casualties or any of the other possible causes.

One solution is to attach two soldiers from each of the rifle companies to the

scouts for the purpose of serving as guides. These attached soldiers man the link-up points, make contact with their companies, and guide them to the company assault positions. This frees the scouts to concentrate on their reconnaissance task.

This plan can be implemented in at least two ways. The first is to have the attached riflemen move with the scouts all the way to the objective and provide security during the actual area reconnaissance (see Tactical Technique 2, page A-3, ARTEP 7-92-MTP). This again allows the scouts to concentrate on reconnaissance. It also gives the rifle company guides some first-hand knowledge of the area itself instead of just the location of the link-up point and the assault position. At some point, depending on the time available, the scout platoon leader instructs the riflemen to move to their link-up points and prepare to act as guides. But the scouts will



continue to conduct reconnaissance and maintain surveillance on the objective.

In some cases, however, this scheme of maneuver may not be desirable. Time or distance may prevent the riflemen from moving all the way to the objective and then getting back to the link-up points before their companies arrive. Additionally, the nature of the enemy and the terrain may increase the risk of compromise if additional personnel accompany the scouts to the objective. Finally, since the riflemen have to move to the link-up points alone, there is always some chance they will get lost.

If the commander is not willing to accept these possible disadvantages, he has another option. He can have the scouts drop the riflemen off at the link-up points on their way to the objective and have the scouts continue to the objective alone. Under this plan, the riflemen do not get any personal knowledge of the objective area, but they have plenty of time to familiarize themselves with the link-up site and to reconnoiter the route to the assault position. They are also relatively sure of being in the right place at the right time.

These are just two ways rifle company guides can work with the scouts. The best solution is probably to make the scout platoon leader aware of these and other alternatives during wargaming sessions and then let him decide how he is going to accomplish the mission with the available resources.

Whatever the actual scheme of maneuver, using rifle company guides frees the scouts to focus on their primary task. They can maintain constant surveillance without having to worry about pulling personnel off the objective to man link-up points. They can send SALUTE (size, activity, location, unit, time, and equipment) reports on the opposing force by radio to the battalion, and they can run communication wire from the rifleman guides at the link-up points through the assault positions to the scout squad objective rally points (ORPs). In this way, they can communicate directly with the guides, and eventually the rifle company commanders, and give them timely updates from the immediate vicinity of the



objective. If needed, the communication wire can also be used as a navigation aid to guide the company to the objective.

Using riflemen as guides benefits both the scouts and the rifle companies. Obviously, it prevents the scouts from being overtaxed and allows them to focus on their reconnaissance. But it also helps the rifle companies. Instead of linking up with a couple of scouts the company may not have trained with, the company is now linking up with two of its own soldiers. They have no problem with recognition, uniforms, or standing operating procedures. The company commander is the guides' real-world boss, and the guides have a vested interest in linking up with their own company, so the commander loses no manpower for the assault.

The plan has little chance of succeeding, of course, if the rifle company guides are not properly prepared for this task. Since they will be operating relatively independently, the commander must select soldiers who have the experience, training, and maturity necessary for the job. Each battalion should already be maintaining a pool of soldiers designated to serve as scout

replacements, and these are the obvious candidates for the mission. They also must have such equipment as radio and wire communication, compasses, night vision goggles, and chemlights, VS-17 panels, or whatever other devices the battalion uses as recognition signals. Finally, the guides must be attached early enough to participate in the scouts' troop leading procedures for the mission.

There may be times when the situation requires scouts to be the guides, and the allotment of tasks in the ARTEP MTPs suggests that they should be the experts in this area. But this is not usually the case in such circumstances as the deliberate attack at the JRTC. Using guides from the rifle companies helps both the scouts and the companies. It requires a little extra planning and coordination, but the results are worth the effort.

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