
Mounted Reconnaissance Patrolling

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In mechanized infantry units, reconnaissance patrolling seems to be a lost art. Although a mounted *combat* patrol is a common task for a mechanized infantry platoon, a mounted *reconnaissance* patrol is less common and a task that is normally assigned to the battalion scout platoon. All infantry platoons must be proficient in reconnaissance patrolling, and must integrate mounted reconnaissance tasks.

A mounted reconnaissance patrol is just another type of patrol whose mission is to gather information on the enemy or the terrain. One difference, though, is that mounted patrols involve moving to or near the objective in a vehicle of some kind. The key to successful mounted reconnaissance patrols is the proper integration of the vehicle with the mission and terrain.

Another difference is that light infantry platoons are equipped and trained to gain detailed information from vantage points close to the enemy, while mechanized platoons are not. Mechanized patrols do have the ability to gain information at greater standoff ranges. Their targeting, sighting, and night vision capability is excellent in open terrain, but when tasked to conduct close reconnaissance, mounted patrols must dismount and work the same way as light infantry patrols, while continuing to integrate the vehicles into their operation. Mounted reconnaissance patrols cannot just drive up to the objective, collect information, and then drive away.

Mounted patrols are bound by the same principles as other types of patrols—planning, reconnaissance, security, and control. During mounted reconnaissance missions, however, leaders must pay particular attention to security and control.

Security for a mounted movement may take the form of flanking vehicles, a point vehicle, the integration of dismounted soldiers with vehicle movement, overwatch, or a combination of these. Speed itself does not usually provide security for a mounted reconnaissance. Although a mounted unit can dash across small danger areas, this is especially dangerous in daylight. A proper dismounted reconnaissance of the danger area will provide a much safer crossing.

A platoon leader should dismount his troops when halted. He should conduct a reconnaissance of the immediate area, looking for all routes into and out of the location, covering them with fire, and immediately designating an escape route.

The leader should shut down his vehicles when halted to reduce the audio and visual signals. He should use a short or long count to shut down and restart all of them at the same time. At these halts, the drivers and the soldiers manning mounted weapons must be prepared to react quickly. The patrol leader and several others should remove their CVC (combat vehicle commander) helmets and listen for the enemy. Vehicle and engine noise may be easy

to detect but difficult to pinpoint.

Controlling a mounted reconnaissance can be much more difficult than controlling a dismounted one, especially during periods of limited visibility. Target identification is more difficult, and the possibility of friendly casualties is greater. Communicating and navigating from a moving vehicle can present difficulties. Communicating clearly may even require short halts. It is better to move slowly and deliberately, and the leader may even have to dismount to check his route, because the terrain may look completely different from that vantage point.

During troop-leading procedures, every vehicle commander should prepare a 3x5 index card showing a strip map of his route, and the patrol leader should check it. This "prep to move" strip map will familiarize everyone with the route and identify key terrain features along it. The map is a handy reference when bouncing around on a moving vehicle. This map does not replace the standard 1:50,000 map with operational and fire support graphics that every vehicle commander must have, but it should provide greater detail than the large-scale map affords.

A mechanized reconnaissance patrol relies heavily on the dismounted infantrymen. The vehicle is a means of moving and sustaining the dismounted soldiers as well as communicating with them and providing direct fire support. Before the actual reconnaissance, the dismounted infantrymen must be

trained in several critical collective tasks. Some of these are the following:

- Prepare for combat.
- Cross danger area.
- Infiltrate and exfiltrate.
- Occupy objective rally point (ORP).
- Perform link-up.
- Move tactically.
- Cross water obstacles.
- Employ fire support.
- Occupy patrol base.
- Dismount and remount.

Although many of these are familiar to mechanized infantry soldiers, several are more common to light infantry soldiers and therefore require more attention from leaders.

The mounted soldiers—driver, vehicle commander, and team leaders—also have critical tasks that they should already know. But most infantrymen have not been trained in the finer points of mounted reconnaissance, and it is wise for the leaders to talk with the battalion scouts before a mounted reconnaissance mission. Any MOS 19D scout can provide good tips on mounted reconnaissance. For example, running silent and invisible is the preferred technique for movement; any light source, even inside a vehicle, will reveal its location; all panel lights and radio call lights should be taped up, radio speakers should be turned off, and in cold weather, heaters should be turned off.

Mechanized infantry units conduct reconnaissance patrols as part of a battalion offense or defense. A mechanized infantry company commander in such operations receives a general or specific mission. A general mission, for example, is to provide local security for a battle position. A specific mission is most likely to be filling gaps in a scout screen or gathering priority intelligence for an offensive mission. These missions can be mounted, dismounted, or both.

In the offense, a mechanized unit can execute an area reconnaissance, a zone reconnaissance, or a surveillance mission in preparation for a battalion or brigade mission. A rifle platoon may also be tasked to conduct a route reconnaissance if the battalion scouts, for some reason, cannot conduct it. For all of these missions, the mechanized lead-

ers must follow basic patrolling principles and tactics while integrating the use of the combat vehicles as they are needed.

For an area reconnaissance, the vehicles can be used to move the patrol toward the objective area. The leader designates mounted rally points, uses dogleg routes, maintains security, and treats the mounted movement as an integral part of the patrol. He calls a halt away from the objective (two terrain features is a good guideline, depending on the terrain and the mission), then sends a dismounted patrol forward to secure an ORP. Once the vehicles are in the ORP, the dismounted patrol moves to conduct the actual reconnaissance of the objective.

The patrol leader uses the basic vantage-point technique with single or multiple reconnaissance teams. (Probing is a lost skill in mechanized units and is used only if vantage points are not available.) If the dismounted patrol runs into a large enemy force, the vehicles can be called forward for suppression and extraction. Commanders should plan for and rehearse such a contingency.

Once the dismounted patrol returns to the vehicle ORP, it disseminates information and returns to its parent unit. This is one of the patrol's most vulnerable moves, and the soldiers must remain on the alert. If the enemy has detected the patrol's movement into the objective area, he will have had time to prepare an ambush, lay mines along the route, or detect the higher unit's location, possibly all of these.

For a zone reconnaissance, the combat missions are used to move the patrol toward or actually into the zone. Depending on the mission and the enemy, dismounted soldiers are used either outside the zone or in the zone itself.

The basic zone reconnaissance techniques of *fan*, *box*, *converging routes*, *successive sectors*, or *multiple routes* are used. *Tracking*, an advanced zone reconnaissance technique, may also be used along with one of the basic techniques or if fresh vehicle tracks (usually tanks) are located. Vehicles may be

used to move dismounted infantry within the zone, to overwatch for dismounted infantry, or to conduct a separate mounted reconnaissance of part of the zone.

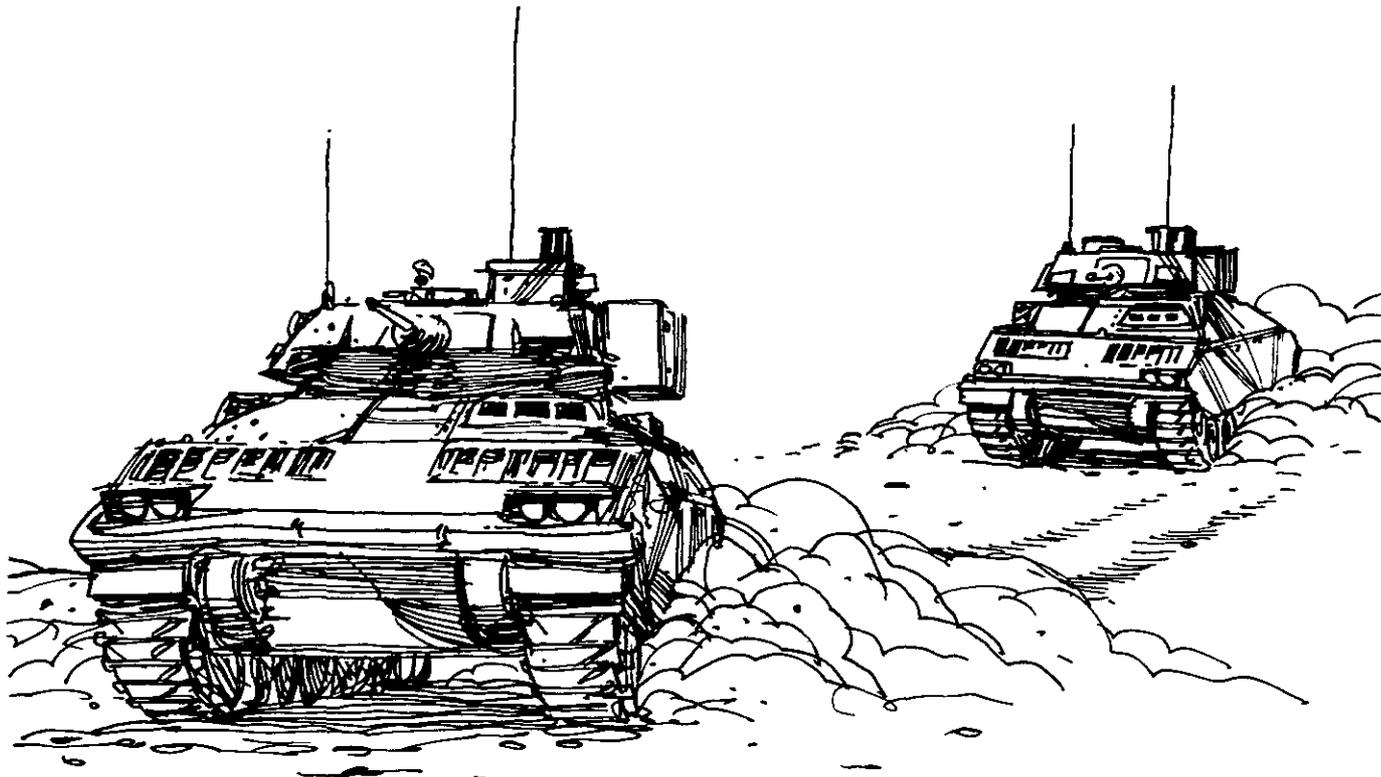
For a surveillance mission, the vehicles are used to move the dismounted patrol toward the surveillance site; then the same techniques are used as in an area reconnaissance. Another technique is to use vehicles in the actual surveillance site to provide greater siting, communication, protection, and sustainment. This is a good technique when the enemy is not known to be in the vicinity of the surveillance site but is expected to move within visual range.

Dismounted infantry soldiers should reconnoiter and secure the site before bringing the vehicles in. The site should provide covered positions and lots of natural camouflage for the vehicles. The camouflage should protect the site from air detection and from ground detection by both mounted and dismounted soldiers.

Security must be provided during the entire surveillance period. The dismounted soldiers can also be sent to close alternate surveillance points. Whenever possible, the patrol leader should use field telephones and wire to communicate with the dismounted troops.

Leaders planning a surveillance should include extra ammunition, rations, batteries, and water so they will be prepared for an extended mission, because surveillance teams are often hard to recall once they are deployed and performing their mission.

In the defense, mechanized units are proficient at providing local security while preparing a battle position. This security usually takes the form of a battalion scout platoon screen and squad-sized dismounted patrols from the rifle companies. A patrol that combines mounted and dismounted soldiers can be used to cover a larger battle position. Combat vehicles can be integrated into the patrolling plan when the terrain and the mission allow. Zone reconnaissance and surveillance techniques can also be used during defensive security patrolling.



Successful patrolling requires sound planning and careful rehearsal, and the integration of combat vehicles intensifies this need. Clear and concise orders should be issued down to the soldier level and must leave junior leaders time to plan and prepare for their mission. The patrol leader should use a checklist for all orders and inspections (the Ranger Handbook is always useful for this), and he should have a fire support plan and know how to use it.

Communications are critical. Any time communication devices stop working, they must be fixed or replaced; otherwise, the reconnaissance is over. When mounted and dismounted ele-

ments are separated, five-point contingency plans should be used in case communications between them break down.

The patrols should relay all information quickly and accurately using SALUTE (size, activity, location, unit, time, and equipment) reports, and whenever possible should draw reconnaissance sketches. Each patrol should get updates from the battalion S-2 section before going out on a mission and should be debriefed upon returning from each mission.

Mechanized infantry leaders must train their junior leaders in reconnaissance patrolling techniques. This train-

ing should begin with the basics, then include the finer points and the integration of combat vehicles. Leaders must use their ingenuity during the planning phase of each operation. They must integrate their dismounted and mounted assets, then employ them using good reconnaissance techniques.

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