

Area Reconnaissance Techniques

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A scout platoon or any other unit conducting an area reconnaissance faces a difficult task. This operation must be planned and executed so the scouts see the enemy without the enemy seeing them. This can be accomplished by involving a dedicated security element in the reconnaissance; by having a "best guess" idea of what the objective looks like before even crossing the line of departure (LD); and by approaching the objective slowly, deliberately, and patiently, allowing the enemy to disclose himself through his routine activities.

ARTEP 7-92-MTP, *Infantry Scout Platoon/Squad and Sniper Team*, and other references identify two techniques for conducting an area reconnaissance: Using separate reconnaissance and security (R&S) elements (Figure 1) and combining them (Figure 2).

Although most infantrymen have heard references to "the R&S team," many assume that this means reconnaissance and *surveillance*, which it does sometimes, but not when describing area reconnaissance techniques. This inattention to the security aspects of an area reconnaissance often results in the patrol's compromise or destruction.

A patrol's decision on whether to use separate or combined R&S elements depends upon an analysis of METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops available, and time). If the objective is very restrictive and clearly defined, and if it has specific avenues of approach, separate R&S elements may be appropriate. The security teams are positioned along the avenues of approach to seal off the objective for the reconnaissance element. This allows the reconnaissance

element to focus its attention on reconnoitering the objective with a fair degree of assurance that the security teams will

provide early warning of any enemy approach. But rarely is the objective this clearly defined and its avenues of ap-

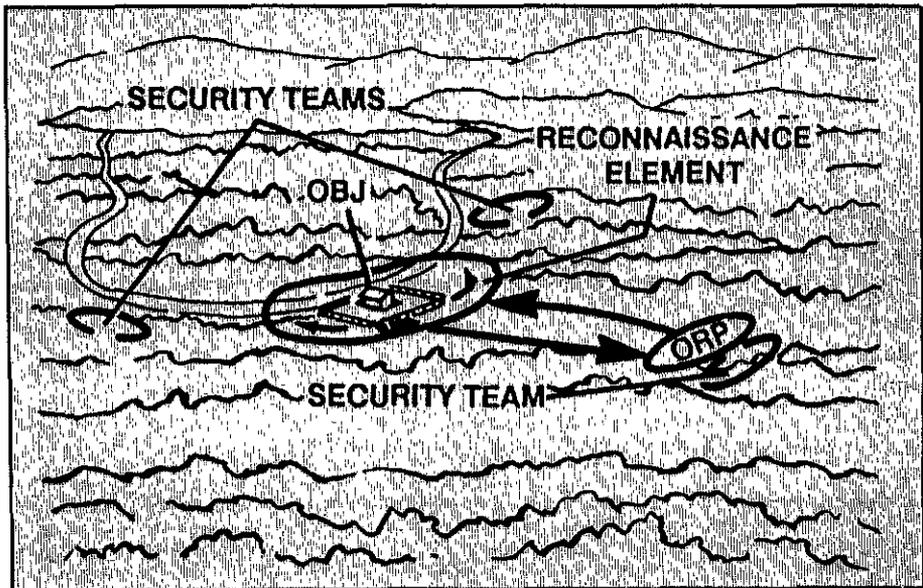


Figure 1. Separate reconnaissance and security elements.

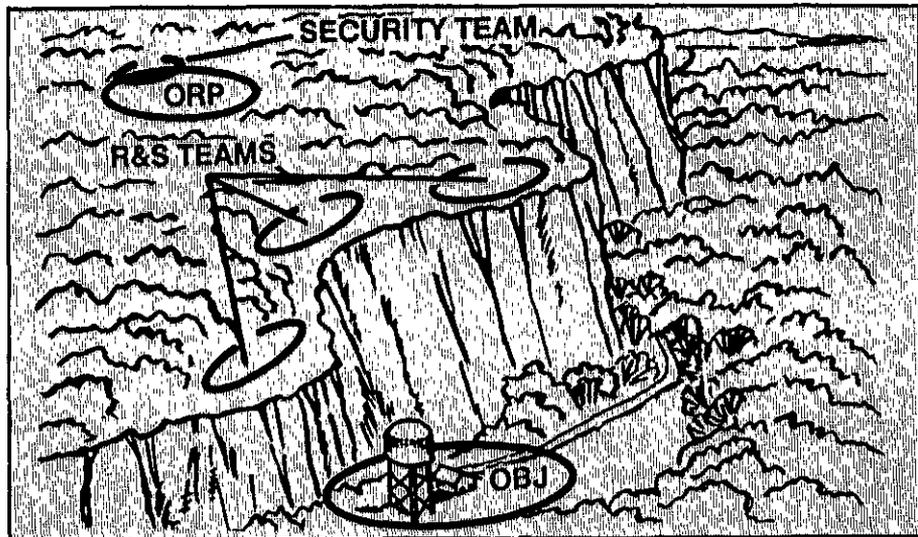


Figure 2. Combined reconnaissance and security elements.

proach this restricted. Therefore, scouts and other patrols conducting area reconnaissance are most likely to be driven by METT-T to use combined R&S elements.

In the combined R&S technique, the patrol is responsible for both the reconnaissance and the security functions. A five-man scout squad might therefore organize into a two-man reconnaissance team and a three-man security team. (As part of the backbrief process, the platoon leader should ask the squad leaders to name the members of each team.)

As the squad nears the objective, it will probably use the bounding overwatch technique. Once the reconnaissance team reaches its surveillance/vantage point (S/VP), the security team takes up an overwatch position to provide security. This pattern continues through subsequent S/VPs.

The common complaint against this technique is that moving five people in the vicinity of the objective invariably leads to compromise, but this need not be the case if the patrol moves with patience and stealth. ARTEP 7-92-MTP states, "By moving only one or two team members at once, a team of three to five men can move as quietly as a team of two men."

Even after the patrol is properly organized into either separate or combined R&S elements, it is still far from ready to begin its reconnaissance. The patrol must first have a scheme of maneuver or, even better, a "scheme of reconnaissance." The development of this scheme begins with a situational template, which is the part of the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) that portrays the most probable disposition and location of enemy forces (based on enemy doctrine) within the constraints imposed by weather and terrain. If the patrol begins the area reconnaissance without first studying the situational template, it reduces its chances of success.

The situational template gives the patrol some specific things to look for. Figure 3 shows a rudimentary template that portrays obstacles, key weapons, observation points, and counterattack and main supply routes. Of course, the situational template can and should be as

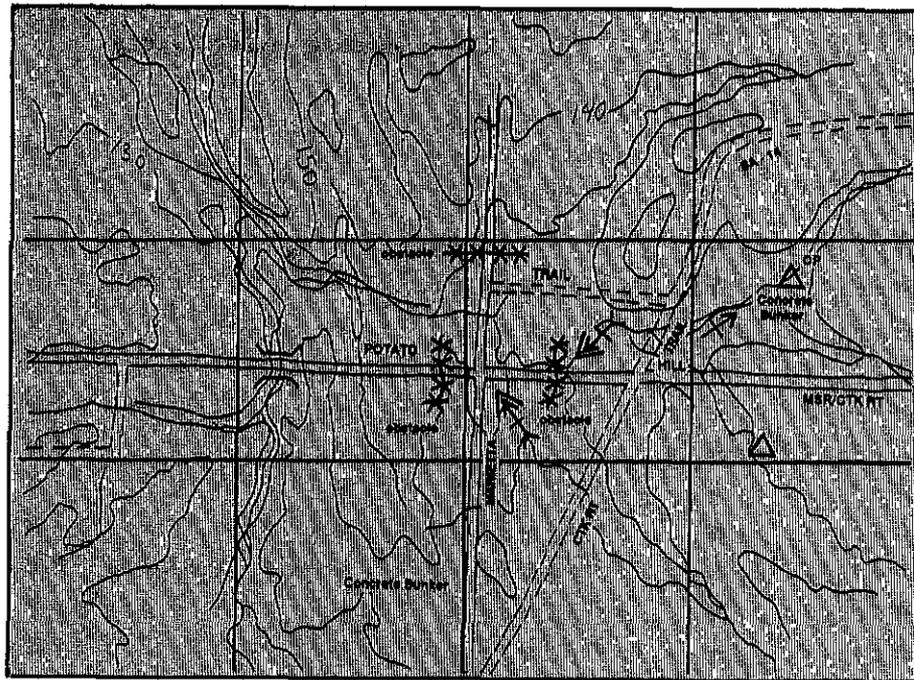


Figure 3. Situational template.

detailed as time and intelligence allow.

Based on this projection, the patrol can identify S/VPs from which to observe the suspected enemy activity. Activity observed at these points often provides valuable indications of what the rest of the objective looks like. For example, vehicles entering the objective along the suspected main supply route (MSR) will probably drive close to the center of the objective to unload troops or to an obstacle or fighting position site to unload Class IV supplies (construction and barrier materials). Much information can be gained simply by confirming or denying the situational template.

The situational template more than likely depicts suspected enemy activity all around the objective—not just at the suspected center-of-mass grid identified in the operations order. The scheme of reconnaissance must exploit these peripheral locations by using long- and short-range surveillance, instead of just making a beeline for the suspected center.

A sample scheme of reconnaissance technique uses a series of concentric circles around the objective to serve as control measures. Ideally, these circles are not circles at all but irregular graphics drawn along recognizable pieces of terrain. Although this is sometimes possible, more often it is not. Even if

the circles do not correspond to the terrain, they will accomplish the same intent of controlling the approach to the objective, but navigation will have to rely more on pace count than on terrain association.

To use the concentric circle technique (Figure 4), first draw the outside circle so that it encompasses the templated locations farthest from the suspected center of the objective. Draw subsequent circles that work inward to the center-of-mass area. Then use the reverse planning process, beginning with the time the report of the reconnaissance must be sent to higher headquarters. On the basis of this time, determine how long the patrol can spend in each circle to gather the required information in time for the report. Ideally, more time is spent on the outer circles, where there is less risk of compromise. After the area is divided into sectors, each subordinate leader can select S/VPs from which to observe suspected activity in his sector.

In this example, the scout platoon leader must make his report to the S-3 no later than 1900. Backing off from that time, he requires his squad leaders to report their information to him no later than 1800. This gives him an hour to compile and send his report. He de-

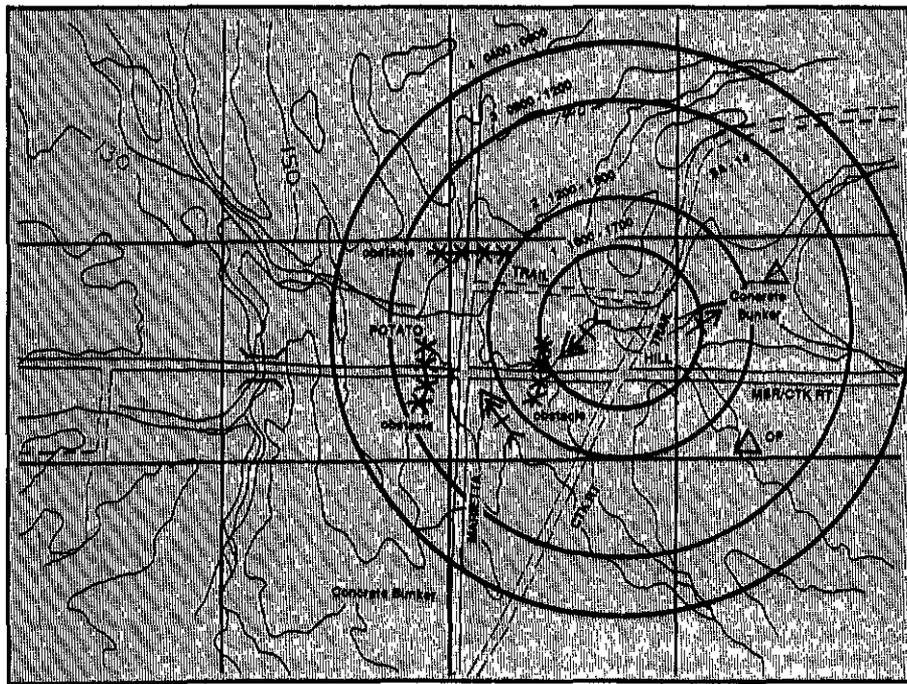


Figure 4. Concentric circle technique.

its function as a control measure to eliminate conflict between the reconnaissance and the battalions' harassing and interdictory fires. For example, when the scouts are outside circle 4, the battalion is clear to fire within circle 2. When the scouts are within circle 1, the battalion is clear to fire outside circle 3.

An area reconnaissance is probably the most dangerous mission for the scouts, because it usually requires them to get so close to the enemy. The mission therefore requires planning considerations that allow for security, exploitation of enemy indicators, and patience. These considerations can be gained through the use of the doctrinal R&S techniques, a scheme of reconnaissance that is based on the situational template, and the concentric circle method of controlling the approach to the objective.

cides to give his squads an hour to compile and send their reports also. Thus the squad reconnaissances must be completed by 1700. From that time, he reverse-plans a schedule for each circle. The squads will not cross into the next circle until the designated time.

This circle technique forces the platoon to be patient. The enemy, given enough time, will always reveal him-

self, particularly if he is involved in an inherently noisy operation such as constructing a defense. By slowly working from the outside toward the center of the objective, the patrol reduces its risk of compromise. Often, the patrol will be able to gather the required information without advancing to the innermost circle.

Another benefit of this technique is

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Antiarmor

What To Do With a Delta Company

CAPTAIN MICHAEL P. LERARIO

When I was assigned to command a Delta Company in the 82d Airborne Division, I was not very happy about it. Like most infantry captains, I wanted to command a "real" infantry company. After a few weeks in command, how-

ever, when I realized what a great opportunity commanding an antiarmor company really is, I changed my mind.

Compared to its counterpart, an Echo Company in a mechanized infantry battalion, the antiarmor company of an air-

borne or air assault battalion has more mobility, firepower, and protection than the rifle company it supports. When its resources and capabilities are at their best, Delta Company is the most versatile and possibly most important com-