NTC Lessons Learned

The Scout FRAGO

LIEUTENANT COLONEL STEVEN W. GARDNER
CAPTAIN EDWARD C. ROTHSTEIN

Our experience at the National Training Center (NTC) has shown us that successful tactical operations result from good intelligence collection. And for a light infantry battalion, the scout platoon is the primary human intelligence gathering asset. Ideally, the scout platoon gathers intelligence before the battalion plan is final, transmits it to the battalion, and then provides updates as new information becomes available. The intelligence the scouts provide allows the battalion staff to validate and, hopefully, finalize their plans and conduct operations that focus friendly strength against enemy weakness.

The scout platoon insertion must take place as soon as possible after the operations order is received from higher headquarters. This early insertion may require that the scouts leave the battalion assembly area before the battalion staff has completed its planning for the tactical operation. In order to focus his scout platoon's efforts, the commander must give the platoon leader detailed guidance and a clear commander's intent for the operation. The scout fragmentary order (FRAGO) was developed to serve this purpose.

The scout FRAGO is in a matrix format that requires coordinated input and planning from all members of the battalion battle staff. The FRAGO provides key information that focuses the scout platoon's intelligence gathering. Without this focus, the platoon's effort may be wasted on gathering information that will not directly affect the battalion's operational plan.

The order is divided into several sections that provide the scout platoon with the essential information:

Task Organization. In this section, the task organization of the intelligence-gathering assets is recorded. The scout platoon rarely has a standard organization, and at the NTC higher headquarters frequently attach forces to the scout platoon or detach part of the platoon to perform brigade missions.

Situation. Weather and light conditions and enemy forces relevant to the mission are recorded in this section. The enemy situation in the vicinity of the objective and along the routes to the objective must be addressed. The assessment of the friendly situation, in addition to friendly maneuver units, must also include elements operating near the scout platoon's area of operations—ground surveillance radar, low-level voice intercept, and other friendly scouts.

Mission. The scout platoon mission block allows the commander to give the scouts a specific mission. The scout pla-

CLASSIFICATION:_____ DTG:_____

SCOUT FRAGO

TASK ORGANIZATION. (HQ TM.TM1.TM2.TM3.SNIPER TM.FO.ENG.GSR COLT.RIFLE SQD)

1. SITUATION LIGHT/WEATHER	ENEMY	FRIENDLY

2. MISSION BATTALION	SCOUT PLT

3. EXECUTION BATTALION	SCOUT PLT
INTENT	INTENT
CONCEPT OF OPNS	CONCEPT OF OPNS

COMMANDER'S RISK ASSESSMENT

CENTER MASS GRID	WIRE SIZE	MINES MARKED	OPs GRID	CREW SERVED WPNS	COMPLETE SKETCH
VERY LOW	LOW	MODERATE		HIGH	VERY HIGH

COMMANDER'S ENGAGEMENT CRITERIA

DIRECT FIRE				INDIRECT FIRE			
SELF DEFENSE ONLY	TARGETS OF OPPORT	ENEMY OP's	PRE-PLANNED TARGETS	SELF DEFENSE ONLY	TARGETS OF OPPORT	ENEMY OP's	PRE-PLANNED TARGETS

NAI's	OBSERVE	REQUIRED ACTION	TIME

toon must also understand the battalion mission so that the information it gathers will support the battalion's operational plan.

Execution. The execution section contains the commander's intent for the battalion and the scout platoon. It also outlines a general concept of the operation to the extent that the staff has developed the concept. The commander's risk assessment and engagement criteria require only Xs in the appropriate blocks. If the commander wants the scouts to pinpoint all crew-served weapons, he will have to accept a higher risk of the scouts being compromised. But if he wants the scouts to send back only a center-of-mass grid location of the objective, the risk is significantly reduced. In the engagement criteria block, the commander gives specific guidance regarding the scouts. On the basis of the commander's intent for the mission, the scouts can act as *lookers* or possibly as *killers*. Although the scouts are rarely used as killers, they may act as forward observers or deploy with attached sniper teams.

NAIs. The named areas of interest (NAIs) blocks designate specific areas the scouts must reconnoiter and report on. The intelligence gathered from these areas directly affects mission accomplishment.

Fire Support. Since the scouts may be used as forward observers, this section gives them target reference points, restricted fire areas, priority of fires, radio nets, and a codeword system that provides quick reference points to vital targets of opportunity.

Insertion/Extraction. Insertion and extraction are critical to the success of the scout platoon. Regardless of the method used (air, ground, or sea), this part of the operation must be planned in detail before the platoon is inserted into the area of operations.

Logistics. The scout platoon can sustain operations only if a sound logistical plan has been developed. The logistical section of the FRAGO requires the S-1, S-4, signal officer, medical platoon leader, and support platoon leader to develop a detailed and coordinated plan that focuses on the scout platoon mission. The matrix allows each support section to enter its information quickly and accurately.

Command and Signal. This section provides the command and control measures necessary to the accomplishment of the scout mission.

The scout FRAGO gives the battalion commander and his staff a fast way to issue guidance to the scout platoon and expedite their insertion. The completed FRAGO gives the scout platoon leader the critical information he needs to focus his planning.

Although this matrix and the specific information on it may vary from unit to unit, the scout FRAGO is designed to give the scout platoon leader fast, definitive guidance. In some situations, the scout platoon's speed in gathering critical information for the battalion commander may well determine the success or failure of the battalion mission.

Lieutenant Colonel Stephen W. Gardner commanded the 4th Battalion, 17th Infantry, 7th Infantry Division, when the scout FRAGO was developed. He has served in infantry assignments in the 82d Airborne Division, the 10th Special Forces Group, and the 25th Infantry Division. He is a 1973 ROTC graduate of Tulane University.

Captain Edward C. Rothstein, a Military Intelligence officer, was S-2 of the 4th Battalion, 17th Infantry, 7th Infantry Division, when the original scout FRAGO was developed. He previously served in an air defense artillery battalion in Germany. He is a 1985 ROTC graduate of Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania.