

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## SECURITY MISSIONS

The two articles on counter-reconnaissance in INFANTRY's January-February 1996 issue are likely to continue to foster confusion as to what a security mission is. (See "Counterreconnaissance in Task Force Security Operations," by Major Victor A. John; and "Battalion Counterreconnaissance: 'Flooding the Zone' at the NTC," by Captains Bradley R. Royle and Richard G. Hobson.)

The mission described in the second of these articles is a guard mission. What is not clear is where the command and control structure is, or what it is. The main problem is that we are trying to develop a doctrine for the National Training Center (NTC) instead of for what we expect the Army to encounter in the future.

Doctrinally, we attack in zone and defend in sector. The term "security zone" is incorrect, and it is not clear what graphic control measure a "counter-reconnaissance line" is. I assume it is the forward edge of the security sector. Our Army has enough problems with getting a grasp on our doctrine without further confusing the issue. We cannot change doctrine just to "win" at the NTC.

According to Field Manual (FM) 17-95, *Cavalry Operations* (page 4-2), "Counterreconnaissance is an inherent task in all security operations." It is not a mission. "It is those measures taken to prevent hostile observation of a force, area, or place," says FM 101-5-1, *Operational Terms and Symbols* (page 1-71).

In his article, Major John has some of the same problems but understands that counterreconnaissance is a subset of security, not the other way around. Security missions are broader in scope than counterreconnaissance tasks. Most of the problems he describes are caused by disjointed chains of command or organizations (such as the counterreconnaissance

force) that exist only at the NTC. For example, "Because of its often static role, the counterrecon force is separate from the main body and therefore vulnerable to enemy air attack." This sounds much more like a covering force, and no security force should be that static; observation posts are only one part of the screen or guard mission. It is a task or subset of the security missions of *guard* or *screen* that are conducted at brigade level or below.

As great a training experience as the NTC is, we cannot create a doctrinal mission that may apply there and nowhere else. The tasks listed at the end of the article are the critical tasks of a screen, as listed in FM 71-1, *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Company Team* (page 4-34). On page 4-36, the manual clearly shows that the counter-reconnaissance effort is a subset of the security mission.

These points may not seem so important, but it is critical that we all understand what every term means and that we use it correctly. The force cannot afford to have confusion between units that may or may not have worked together. Combat will be confusing enough without our contributing to the problem.

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## ASK THE OPFOR

We have read the article "Battalion Counterreconnaissance: Flooding the Zone at the NTC," by Captains Bradley R. Royle and Richard G. Hobson (INFANTRY, January-February, 1996, pages 42-44), and do not believe it reflects a thorough knowledge of opposing force (OPFOR) doctrine and tactical procedures. Rather, it smacks of NTC "games-

manship" and techniques that might create more casualties on a future battlefield. The following are some examples:

- The article contends that a battalion often covers a frontage of 12 kilometers or more in the defense. In our combined experience as commanders of opposing force (OPFOR) regiments at the NTC, we have never observed this. In fact, and discounting "no-go" terrain, a *brigade* is rarely given more than 12 to 14 kilometers to defend.

- The authors contend that "flooding the zone" with counterreconnaissance (CR) forces (since a company/team CR force is too small to be effective) will lead to effective deception operations against any OPFOR reconnaissance elements. Any student of OPFOR tactics, techniques, and procedures should know that the OPFOR will never assume that an enemy defensive posture is accurate until the first blade hits the ground and vertical obstacles are in place. The positioning of engineer assets defines the defense, not the location of maneuver forces. For deception to work, it must be believable, and then it must be resourced. If a brigade or task force wanted to make a shrewd deception story, it would start with its engineers and not with maneuver assets.

- The authors state that one of the keys to the "flood the zone" technique is to actually occupy the best observation posts in the main battle area. It would take at least a division (probably a corps) to cover all the key terrain in the NTC's Central Corridor from the Brown-Denum pass complex to Hill 876. To expect a battalion to conduct this task and prepare a defense is unrealistic. At the NTC, you don't have to be deep or high to *see* deep. Any vantage point will provide a relatively high level of intelligence of enemy composition and disposition. A simple map reconnaissance would confirm this fact.

• The statement that the tanks in regimental reconnaissance will “blow” a hole in the security zone to let follow-on reconnaissance assets through is inaccurate. Regimental reconnaissance is not authorized tanks, nor has it ever had any in it. And reconnaissance forces do not habitually begin at 2300 hours the night before the attack. Regimental and division reconnaissance does habitually receive a *no earlier than* time to initiate operations. We would never start them out at the same time, but would use time phasing operations to allow enough time to probe enemy security strengths and weaknesses. The key to successful reconnaissance infiltration is continuity and relentless pursuit.

The idea of flooding the zone with security forces is not feasible. There is a cause and effect analogy here: The more time used to focus on CR, the less time available to prepare for defense. You can’t effectively plan, prepare, and execute the defense if your force is committed to counterreconnaissance.

There is a much simpler method that requires fewer resources and will not consume the time of the battalion command group and staff. The OPFOR has been doing it for years. In fact, if you really want to understand NTC tactics, techniques, and procedures, observe the OPFOR. OPFOR and BLUEFOR tactics and processes are essentially the same. For every BLUEFOR mission type and design, there is an identical OPFOR

type and design. The difference is what the mission is called (*meeting battle* instead of *movement to contact*). If you think about it, it makes sense. Military tactics and techniques are common sense applied to the battlefield.

The simple reason the OPFOR habitually “wins” on the NTC battlefield is that we know and understand the terrain and what it can and cannot do for us. And an OPFOR unit has the luxury of being able to train year long without distractions. If we were asked how to do effective counterreconnaissance at the NTC, we would say first not to designate a CR force. The moment you tell Team A or Company C that it is the CR force for the battalion, the rest of the organization believes they are relieved of the mission. In the OPFOR, we split the sector into counterrecon zones with each motorized rifle company responsible for its piece of the terrain, and God help the sub-unit that is penetrated by recon assets. Now everyone, not just one specific unit, is tasked with the responsibility for CR. It doesn’t have to be more complex than this and, quite frankly, it works.

Our only recommendation to the authors of the article, or anyone else who wants to grasp tactics and techniques that work on the desert battlefield, is to ask the OPFOR. We will be happy to share everything we have, and we certainly have a vested interest in seeing that misconceptions and half-truths are not spread throughout the infantry community.

Regardless of the OPFOR or BLUEFOR uniform, we are all in this business for the same reasons—pursuing excellence, defeating any potential adversary, and saving American lives in combat. The OPFOR is an Army treasure; learn from its time-tested tactics, processes, and procedures. It will only make the Army better.

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### 25th INFANTRY DIVISION CONVENTION

The 25th Infantry Division Association will hold its 55th Anniversary Convention, 24-29 September, on the island of Oahu, Hawaii.

For additional information, call LTC VanDyke at DSN 455-4420, commercial (808) 655-4420; or CPT McCord at DSN 453-0267, commercial (808) 653-0267.

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