

# Light Scouts in Korea

## A Recommendation for Success

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Any professional soldier who keeps up with current events realizes that there is an increasingly high probability for overt hostilities on the Korean peninsula. Agreements between the United States and South Korea call for an immediate U.S. response to any North Korean aggression against South Korea. Implied in this is the rapid deployment of U.S. forces in the event of hostilities. The leaders of these forces can begin their preparations for such a contingency by conducting an analysis of the circumstances under which they may fight.

An examination of the terrain and its effects on operations, as well as the tactics and organization of units forward deployed in Korea, provide the basis for a solid preparation plan. The leaders of light infantry scouts can prepare to play a particularly important role in preparing their own units for combat operations.

The Korean Peninsula is the ideal place for combined arms operations. Because the terrain is characterized by mountains and valleys, armored and mechanized columns absolutely must work closely with light dismounted forces.

The steep mountains present significant obstacles to an attacker while providing excellent fields of fire to the defender. The Koreans have developed the valleys into scattered villages and rice paddies. In the winter months, the frozen paddies can support any type of vehicular traffic. The rest of the year, armored and mechanized columns are confined to the road networks, which weave throughout the

mountains. Regardless of the time of year, military traffic generally sticks to the roads, converging every few kilometers at tactically critical choke points. The heavy columns required to defeat an armored threat must maintain the initiative and freedom of movement, and the light forces that can secure the choke points will contribute to the success of armored and mechanized elements.

The 2d Infantry Division in Korea is tailored to the threat and the terrain. It has two U.S. brigades with three battalions each. The 1st Brigade has one armor and two mechanized infantry battalions; the 2d Brigade has one mechanized infantry and two air assault battalions.

During operations, the two air assault battalions would fall under division control. The division would then attach them to the brigades as necessary to seize critical terrain and clear choke points. This arrangement facilitates a habitual relationship in which it is second nature to plan and train for combined arms operations.

The typical brigade field exercise mirrors the way the unit would conduct combat operations. The brigade alerts and forms into tactical assembly areas. The light battalion air assaults to seize a critical choke point, after which the heavy forces pass through to destroy the bulk of enemy forces several kilometers beyond the choke point. Ideally, this entire brigade operation takes about 72 hours to execute. Given this operational relationship and arrangement of forces, the

light battalion commander must be prepared to execute operations within 24 hours of an alert notification and to complete his mission within 48 hours.

The light battalion is crucial to the continuous movement of forces on a Korean battlefield. The unit must have planning procedures that are as brief yet as thorough and deliberate as possible. Before committing the entire battalion, the commander also needs a clear picture of the enemy forces he will fight. This is necessary to ensure that the battalion can accomplish its mission within the limited time available.

Of all the forces available to the light battalion commander, his scout platoon has more indirect influence on the outcome of the operation than any other. When employed in accordance with the conditions to be encountered on the Korean battlefield, the scouts increase the efficiency of the entire battalion. An examination of scout actions in the framework of four of the battlefield operating systems (BOS) reveals the benefits of minor modifications to the traditional scout mission essential task list (METL):

**Maneuver.** By performing an area reconnaissance of the battalion landing zones and objective areas, as well as a route reconnaissance from the landing zone to the objective, the scout platoon can greatly reduce the time a battalion needs to infiltrate to the objective. Upon completion of the reconnaissance, the scouts can position guides to link up with the battalion. This decreases the maneu-



a kilometer may find themselves unable to communicate unless one or the other occupies the high ground. On one particular mission in 1993, a battalion had just conducted an air assault and formed for an infiltration to attack an objective. The battalion commander landed with the battalion main body and attempted to communicate with the brigade commander in a UH-60 flying several kilometers away. The brigade commander continually called the battalion commander for situational reports, but neither commander could reach the other directly. The scout platoon command post, which could hear both commanders, acted as a relay station until the battalion commander moved to a higher elevation along the infiltration route. The scout command post also relayed communications between the company commanders and the battalion commander, since the battalion had three separate infiltration routes to the objective. In this capacity, the scouts provided the means of instant communications between all maneuver commanders in the area, enabling the commanders at all levels to maintain control of their units.

As demonstrated in the analysis of these BOSs, the scouts can greatly influence the outcome of an operation. By planning and training to execute certain critical tasks, they can efficiently and accurately help the battalion and brigade commanders develop the first 24 hours of the battle plan. Success in these first 24 hours directly determines a mission's overall success.

A recommended approach to light scout platoon preparations for operations

in Korea begins with a suggested Mission Essential Task List (see table), a one-month (20-day) training calendar (Figure 1), and a sample field training exercise (FTX) (Figure 2) and also includes live-fire training and threat training.

The live-fire training consists of close quarter battle (CQB) exercises and immediate action drills (IADs). CQB live-fire training develops individual reflexive firing techniques. One soldier tactically travels down range inside a fire lane. Targets pop up at various distances and angles with respect to the firer. This training enables the soldier to develop the ability and confidence to acquire and engage targets while moving tactically. Each team member should go through this exercise, but it is especially helpful to the team point man.

IAD training accomplishes the same objectives except that it develops the team instead of the individual. The training calls for the team to conduct live-fire maneuver drills in accordance with ARTEP 7-8 Drill, *The Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*. The exercises should include the following drills: *React to contact*, *Break contact*, and *React to a near and a far ambush*.

The terrain for these exercises should mirror that of Korea—narrow ridgelines and steep uphill and downhill routes. The immediate action drill live-fire training gives the team and individual members the confidence to maneuver in any type of terrain without worrying about the abilities and intentions of the other members.

Threat training acquaints the soldiers with the potential enemy. An unclassi-

fied guide to the North Korean threat produced by the 2d Infantry Division G-2 covers dispositions, forms of maneuver and doctrinal templates, unit structures, and equipment. (Any service member can get copies of the guide by asking his unit intelligence section to request them from the 2d Division G-2.) Practical exercises should follow any form of threat classes. Threat weapons familiarization and firing, slide shows, and model identification all provide excellent ways to reinforce classroom instruction.

Given the U.S. Army's relationship to the situation in Korea, it would benefit every American soldier to gain an understanding of the circumstances under which he may be called upon to fight. Leaders must have the foresight to develop solid training plans that address the challenges of the potential battlefield in Korea.

Leaders at all levels can use these recommendations as they apply to their units. Light scouts are a valuable asset, and can give the commander the edge he will need to meet and defeat even the most determined of enemies.

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