

Establishing and Using The Brigade Reconnaissance Troop

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The brigade reconnaissance troop (BRT) was formed out of the demand for more intelligence information on the modern battlefield. In this specific case, it was a direct result of the 1st Infantry Division restructuring. This concept, termed Limited Conversion Division XXI (LCD XXI), gives the brigade commanders more observers on the battlefield as well as more operational flexibility. Six months after its activation, the division's 2d Brigade's BRT was (and still is) an extremely useful tool in support of the Kosovo peacekeeping mission.

The primary mission of the BRT is to provide battlefield information directly to the brigade commander, who, along with his staff, determines the role of the troop in all brigade missions. Though not preferred, when augmented, the troop may also conduct limited offensive, defensive, and retrograde operations in an economy of force role. For combat oriented missions, the BRT has five essential tasks: route reconnaissance, area reconnaissance, zone reconnaissance, screen-line operations, and area security.

The fundamental role of the BRT is to perform reconnaissance and surveillance and provide limited security for the brigade combat team (BCT) in close and deep operations. The BRT facilitates the BCT commander's ability to maneuver, concentrate combat power, and apply it at a decisive time and place.

The 1st Infantry Division converted to the new concept of LCD XXI in December 1998. This meant that the infantry and armor battalions lost one company each, relinquishing either 14 Bradley fighting vehicles or 14 Abrams

tanks, as well as company support vehicles. This left three maneuver companies and a headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) in each battalion. Although both Infantry and Armor battalion commanders feel that they have lost firepower as well as manpower, combat effectiveness only shifted in the division and the brigades to other assets. At the brigade level, the BRT was formed, and the division gained a multi-launch rocket system (MLRS) battalion and eventually fielded unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) assets.

The first division to test this new BRT concept was the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood. The 4th Division took two reconnaissance platoons from the separate battalions and merged them with a command and a headquarters element to form the new BRT. The transition was relatively smooth. With the addition of artillery attachments and other support elements, the 4th ID BRT was an 82-man unit.

Pulling entire reconnaissance platoons out of battalions was entirely out of the question with the 1st Division. It

would have left the battalions without reconnaissance platoons and with little or no intelligence gathering capability. But if each of the battalion reconnaissance platoons relinquished four high-mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs) with their crews, the newly formed BRT would have 12 reconnaissance vehicles—exactly the number needed to form two reconnaissance platoons for the BRT (Figure 1). At a scout platoon leader course briefing in January 1999, the Armor School intended for this to happen. There were supposed to be six HMMWVs per recon platoon at battalion level instead of the current 10-HMMWV recon platoon.

The Armor School's intent has an apparent advantage and an obvious disadvantage. The advantage is the quick and fluid formation of a BRT. The obvious disadvantage is the limited reconnaissance at battalion level. In our BRT's case, the battalions kept their reconnaissance HMMWVs but transferred some soldiers. The brigade's three reconnaissance platoons and the division's cavalry squadron contributed

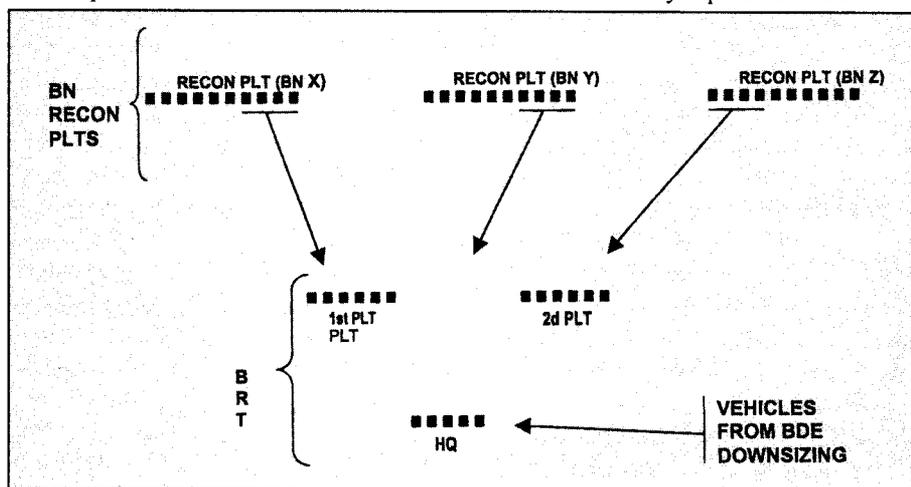


Figure 1

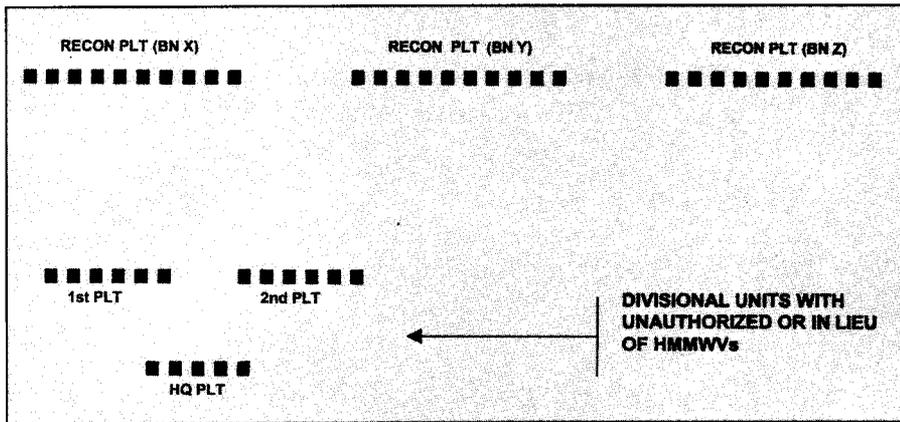


Figure 2

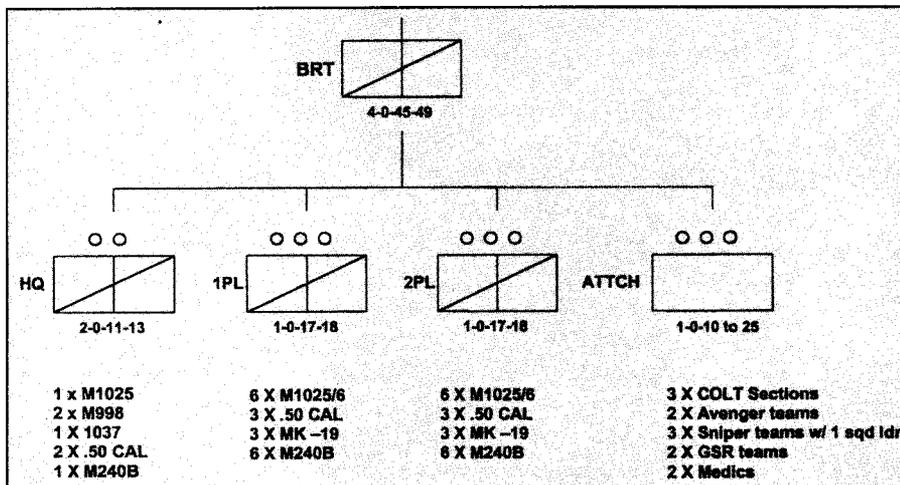


Figure 3

selected soldiers. The HMMWVs came from the divisional units that had the hard shell M1025s and M1026s (Figure 2). The BRT headquarters platoon vehicles were derived from excesses following the brigade's loss of three companies.

In obtaining M1025 and M1026s from other division units, certain requirements should be carefully considered and analyzed. The property book office recognizes that the HMMWV should be handed over with full accessories—radio-installation kits, wiring harnesses, antenna mounts, radio mounts, amp mounts, weapons and ammunition mounts, bearing sleeves, etc. But when laterally transferring a HMMWV, one must specify what does, or does not, come with it. If the division does not request or specify, a losing unit will relinquish a stripped HMMWV to the gaining unit. The losing unit is under no obligation to sign over additionally needed equipment and items. All sub-components should be

transferred at the same time, so as not to piece together an incomplete truck. In our case, receiving HMMWVs without laterally transferred sub-components greatly reduced the newly formed BRT platoons' ability to train, shoot, and communicate.

MTOE Strength

Under the current MTOE (modified tables of organization and equipment), the BRT is authorized four officers and 45 enlisted men, for a total of 49. This does not include attachments or other supporting slice elements. The BRT has two maneuver platoons and a headquarters platoon. Each reconnaissance platoon consists of 18 soldiers and six HMMWVs. In the recon platoon there are three M2 .50-caliber machineguns and three Mk-19s, and each soldier carries an M16 or an M203. The platoons are assigned six M240Bs each, which can replace the truck-mounted Mk-19 or can provide crew-served firepower for a dismounted observation post (OP). The

headquarters platoon consists of 13 soldiers with an M1025, two M998s, M1037 w/S-250 shelter (command post, CP, vehicle), and an M923.

Within the division and the brigade, other reconnaissance assets can be attached. This BRT habitually trains with combat observation laser teams (COLTs), infantry snipers, air defense artillery (ADA) sections (Avenger), and ground surveillance radar (GSR) teams. Although medics have been recognized as a necessity, they are not on the MTOE (Figure 3).

The task organization of recon platoons can vary greatly. When given attachments to accomplish certain mission requirements, the platoon leader has considerable flexibility. If the platoon is fully manned, he can divide it into three different sections. Typically, mounted maneuver will be in two different sections. If he receives the attachments at full strength, he can configure the platoon into four different sections. The only drawback to the current manning strength lies in its restrictions on dismounted maneuver. It takes three soldiers to properly man each HMMWV, but the MTOE does not allow for additional dismounted reconnaissance. In order to have dismounted scouts, we must consolidate two or three HMMWVs and their crews upon reaching an insertion point. This type of consolidation is termed "garage siting," which is effective but wastes firepower on crewless HMMWVs. Although the addition of snipers would solve many problems, it may involve some issues regarding intent and usage. It would give the snipers a means of inserting deep, give the BRT dismounted scout capability, and give the snipers a means of exfiltration for refitting or medevac purposes. Snipers are trained in surveillance and are excellent observers and shooters, but the latter aspect is almost completely discarded, leaving them with only an observing mission. Snipers have trained with our BRT and proved to be a tremendous asset, but their attachment has not been guaranteed for training deployments or real world missions.

Task organization also is chosen on the basis of the available equipment.

For the most part, the current MTOE has the BRT operating with satisfactory equipment. In order to maintain and excel with Force XXI standards, I propose changes to the MTOE authorizations as shown in the accompanying box.

Systems such as the tactical satellite (TACSAT) radio system are needed because of the extreme distances covered on the brigade front. Communication is the platoon leader's most lethal weapon in the reconnaissance fight. Other essential equipment includes M68, Ranger body armor, PAQ-4C, PAS-13 for the BRT's various contingency missions. Gunners on the HMMWVs should also have M9 Berettas for close-range enemy engagements. The M997 CP vehicles have proved far superior to the M1037s (with S-250 shelters) in space and adaptability, and they are more readily available.

Maneuver and Intelligence

As stated earlier, the BRT's role is to provide information to the BCT commander on today's three-dimensional battlefield. On a linear battlefield, we had more depth and lethality with indirect and direct fire. Having additional deep reconnaissance assets created more depth as well as more effective indirect fire. The BRT also closes the intelligence gap between division or corps long range surveillance detachments/units (LRSD/U) and battalion reconnaissance. Most mechanized divisions do not have LRSDs; therefore (before the BRT) the battle hand-over distance between corps LRSUs and battalion scouts was immense (Figure 4). On the other hand, with limited availability, units may find themselves working within a more restricted area. Whether the addition of the BRT increases depth or just puts more assets within the same depth, the BCT commander now has additional "eyes on" confirmation than he normally would not have. In the past he may have been tempted to pull from the battalions' platoons to recon his own named areas of interest (NAIs), leaving the battalions themselves with less intelligence capability.

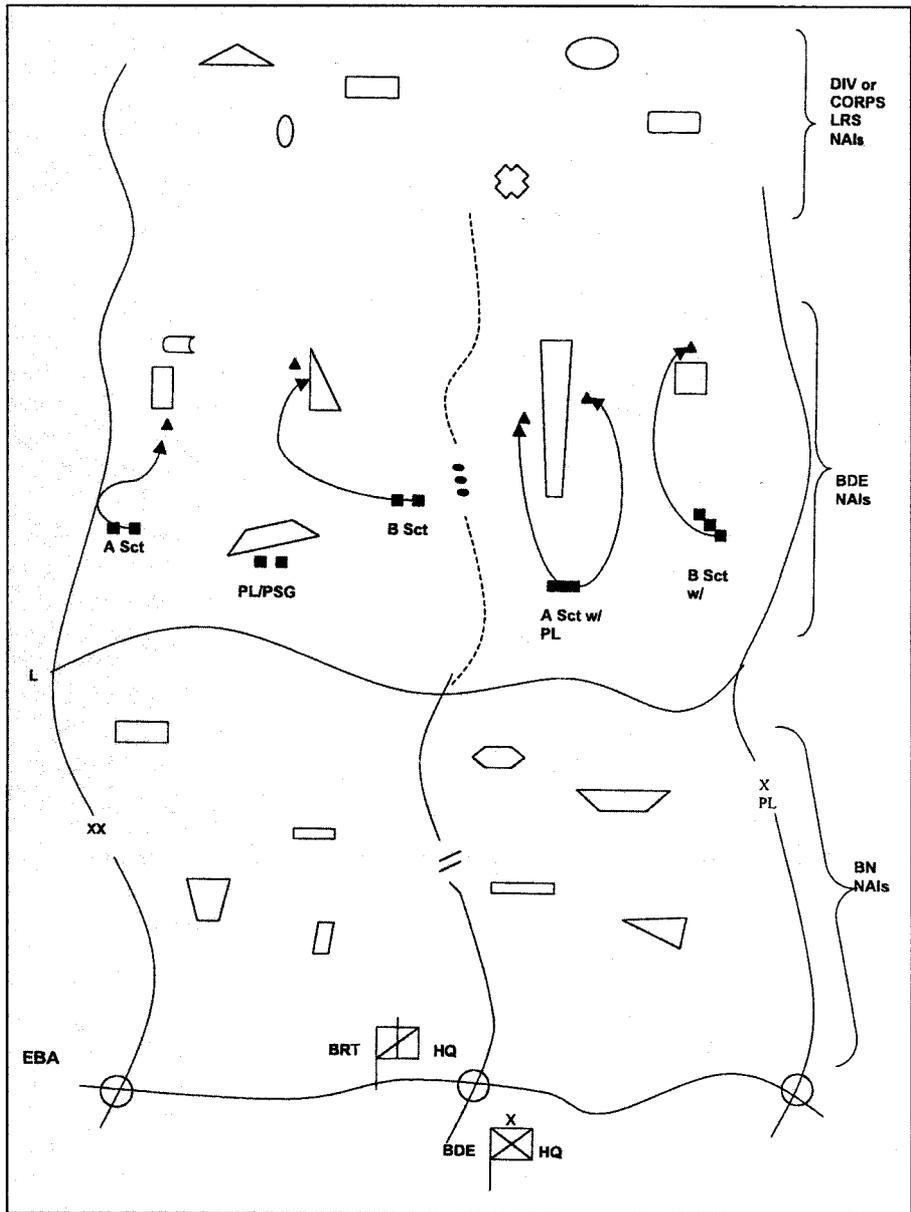


Figure 4

Having separate control measures for the BRT platoons in a BCT attack is simple. If the BCT attacks (or defends) with two battalions abreast, the border separating the two is extended to give each of the BRT platoons an area of responsibility. The control measure between the BRT and battalion reconnaissance could be termed an information hand-over line (IHL), which is much like the battle hand-over line during a relief in place. This makes for a good transfer of information.

Information transfer is critical in the intelligence process and in the indirect firefight. BRT platoon leaders are trained to disseminate key information on an advancing enemy. In addition to

reporting enemy activity to the troop CP, the platoon leader also reports it to the gaining unit. More than likely, the gaining unit will be a battalion reconnaissance platoon. Before any operation that ties in frontal activity, platoon leaders must coordinate face-to-face. Left and right coordination with adjacent units can be difficult as well, but front and rear coordination is imperative to the lives of men. Preventing fratricide will be a direct result of situational awareness between all the reconnaissance units arrayed on the battlefield.

The platoons can use various techniques for mounted and dismounted operations (Figure 4). One technique that has proved extremely successful is

EQUIPMENT	CURRENT	PROPOSED	CHANGE
	MTOE	MTOE	
AN/PSC-5 TACSAT	0	3	+ 3
AN/PRC-139	0	13	+13
SINGGARS RT	33	45	+12
UAS-11 (thermal sight)	8	2	- 6
AN/PAS-13 (thermal sight)	0	13	+13
M16A2	48	0	-48
M4 carbine	0	48	+48
M9	1	15	+14
M68 (reflex sight)	0	48	+48
PVS-14 (monocular sight)	0	24	+24
LRAS3	0	2	+ 2
M1037 (w/5-250 shelter)	1	0	- 1
M997 (converted ambulance)	0	1	+ 1
PAQ-4C (IR laser pointer)	0	48	+48
MK-64 (single weapon mount?)	6	0	- 6
MK-93 (dual weapon mount?)	0	13	+13
Ranger body armor	0	72	+72
AN/PSN-11(PLGR)	15	0	-15
PLGR-2	0	15	+15
5K generator	1	0	- 1
15K generator w/ trailer	0	1	+ 1

emy movement toward an established engagement area (Figure 5).

Stability and Support Operations

For stability and support operations, the mission and focus will drastically change with the environment and various tasks. In addition to the five essential tasks of the BRT in combat, tasks for such operations are route clearing, border operations, checkpoint operations, cordon, search and seizure, convoy escort, village assessment, quick-reaction force, and presence patrols. The main advantage of the BRT is the mobility and quickness it offers, as it did during Task Force Falcon in Kosovo. When a specific task force maneuver company is assigned a particular sector, it is very difficult for its units to react quickly without the use of HMMWVs or air assets. Having mechanized infantry and armor is an excellent way to show force, but the rapid flexibility of the BRT is preferred.

If the BRT is allotted COLTs (which it has in Kosovo), these teams may be used in a noncombative manner. The BRT commander can actually use them as a third fully operational maneuver platoon, thus giving him three maneuver platoons with up to six HMMWVs each. Another option is to integrate the three platoons by having the reconnaissance platoons relinquish a section each and the COLT platoon relinquish two sections to the recon platoons. This fosters a habitual relationship between the scout and COLT. Further integration of GSRs and Avenger teams is also encouraged and is most effective for surveillance in night operations. The ADA Avenger teams have excellent sights, which were originally designed for watching the skies but are also very effective for observation of ground activity at great distances.

Lessons Learned

Acquisition of troop personnel. Before the BRT flagged and was established, the commander was given a certain number of soldiers from each of the battalions. Some of the soldiers did not have retainability or had physical limitations, which created issues of combat effectiveness and bidding for

air insertion, which allows great freedom of stealthy movement, along with the reduced likelihood of compromise. With the distance of up to 40 kilometers, however, FM communications with the SINGGARS (single-channel ground and airborne radio system) can be extremely difficult. An air inserted team must take an OE-254 feed-cone with the antennas and cable. Once communications are established, a dismounted team is immensely combat effective and allows the BCT commander to use most of his combat multipliers on long range targets.

The placement of the BRT's CP is key to the fact that it must tie in communication with the platoons and also stay as far from the enemy as possible. Because logistical package (LOGPAC) operations are difficult during high-intensity combat, each platoon must handle at least three days of Class I and III supplies. Class V (ammunition) will have to be assessed on the basis of the threat and the number of engagements an OP expects to be involved in. Obviously, a direct fire engagement is the least desired in reconnaissance operations. If there is a logistical need among the platoons, the preferred technique is for the platoon sergeants to drop off an OP and go to the BRT CP site.

Further force multipliers are the additional use of attachments. COLTs, for

example, must be placed on the critical targeted areas of interest (TAIs) that make the best use of their laser designating capabilities. Open TAIs with roadways and intersections are best given to a reconnaissance section with a COLT. With the GSR line-of-sight system, they are also best suited to overwatch mounted and dismounted avenues of approach. With NAIs that are more wooded and less open, attached snipers are best trained for stealthy individual movement to a specified area or a point target. With a combination of all these assets, the platoon leader must deeply analyze METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time) to assign the proper missions to the most capable attachment.

Although this discussion has focused on using the BRT in a typical linear battlefield, some contingencies may involve the BRT in non-linear maneuver. Examples such as Vietnam and Somalia have shown that the enemy is not always to the front, which will dramatically alter the BRT's task and purpose. For instance, a BCT's objective may be a town that is populated with friendly and unfriendly civilians, a paramilitary force, terrorists, and local revolutionary factions. A BRT task might be to seal off outside avenues of approach with layers of security or even to provide early warning of desired en-

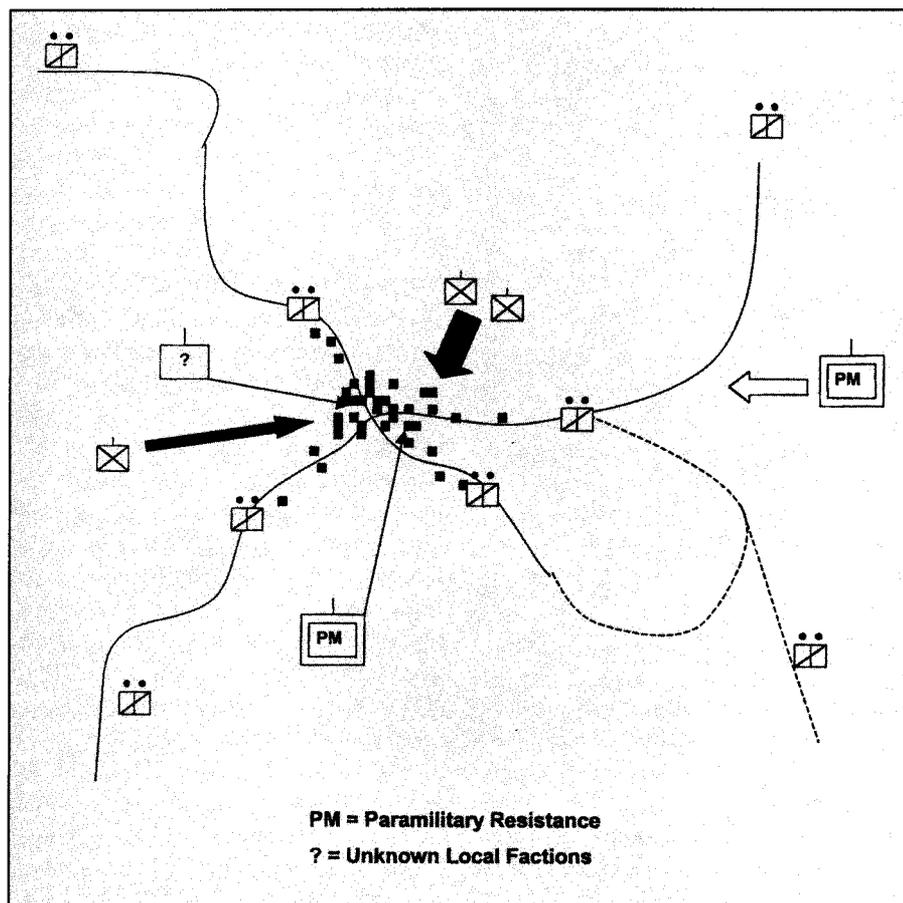


Figure 5

replacements. When establishing the BRT, the commander should have free rein in selecting 19D soldiers from the battalions. He should be able to actively recruit soldiers for the BRT.

Deployability. Six months after the BRT was formed, it was deployed to Kosovo; it was the division's first unit in Kosovo and did well. But deploying the BRT two or three months after standing up may not have been a wise decision because of the untrained status of the unit as a whole. This would have placed the unit in an awkward position.

For the first three months, the sole focus should be property and supply issues. The next three months should include two gunneries and at least one high-intensity rotation at a major training center. The unit should remain nondeployable until certified by a division or a brigade evaluation exercise.

Lateral transfer of property. Quality control on the gaining and losing units was not as thorough as desired. Establishing the BRT with functional equipment was the short-term goal. The

process was expedited to have the unit operational within a short time. Turning down incomplete equipment and property was not allowed. Major end items were short of various Class II and IX parts and equipment, or even defective equipment was laterally transferred to the BRT.

A field grade officer working for the brigade could serve as the quality control officer. The BRT should have a three-month window in which to accept or deny property, and to hold the losing units accountable as well.

Support. Most company-size maneuver units have their battalions to support them on various necessities such as ammunition, maintenance and prescribed load list, medical, etc. It was a slow process at first to incorporate all support assets that work for the brigade. The support improved dramatically after the outside supporting units officially recognized the BRT. The brigade's headquarters company shouldered more than its share of the task to ensure support for the BRT. Attaching

the BRT to a maneuver battalion created some ownership issues as well as unit administration and chain-of-command concerns.

Before the establishment of the BRT, combat service support elements should rehearse with the BRT and supporting units. The brigade will assist in all outside supporting requirements.

Brigade or regiment reconnaissance is not a new concept by any means. Reconnaissance assets at the brigade level have always been a necessity to maximize the depth of today's combat multipliers. With the formation of the BRT, one must consider the level of training the soldiers will require, as well as the advent of new equipment needed to fight on the modern battlefield. Gone is the time of acceptable massive losses in battle, especially among the scout community. The lack of training or the lack of modernized equipment will definitely put our deep brigade recon troopers at higher risk than anticipated. The formation and activation of the BRT is a painful but necessary process. Saving the training budget by eliminating three combat companies in the brigade is more than enough to justify spending extra resources on properly equipping the BRT.

Nevertheless, the BRT has proved itself in its first real world deployment, Operation Joint Guardian in Kosovo. Task Force Falcon (Multi-National Brigade, East) relied heavily upon the BRT to accomplish Task Force tasks that were set upon the BRT daily. It enabled the 7,000-troop Task Force to have a quick proactive and reactive unit that was controlled by the centralized command.

When the remaining divisions and brigades convert to the LCD XXI, they will definitely gain a tremendous asset to help accomplish the difficult missions of the future.

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