



TSM STRYKER/BRADLEY CORNER

Huddle Begins ISR Synchronization

LIEUTENANT COLONEL J.R. SANDERSON
MAJOR JEROME T. SIBAYAN

Lieutenant Colonel J.R. Sanderson, chief of the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) Transformation Team, leads a team of seven officers at Fort Benning and eight officers and NCOs located at four TRADOC Forward Cells focused on coordinating, synchronizing and supervising doctrinal, training, organizational and leader development events associated with the transformation of all SBCTs.

“See First” means answering information requirements. The central element of the SBCT (as well as all of our newly designed brigades) is the change in how we make contact with our enemy. Although we have conceptualized for years about the potential of seeing the enemy from a distance and therefore turning old style movement to contact missions into deliberate attacks with no wasted organizational energy, we may now be on the verge of having that capability.

In the past, our doctrine focused on the step-wise process of first making contact, developing the situation, and then maneuvering our forces. The SBCT, however, is based on developing the situation out of contact and building an early understanding of that situation, moving the forces necessary, then making contact on our terms and finishing decisively. In effect, we are attempting to turn all attacks into deliberate attacks where we know the enemy’s strengths, disposition and composition, and most importantly his weaknesses prior to our main body crossing the line of departure.

The key SBCT task is to acquire information, transform the information into intelligence, and finally to transform the intelligence into situation understanding before we begin movement and/or maneuver of the main body. This is a tough task requiring a highly trained and skilled Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) planning staff. The internal ISR, based primarily on input from the reconnaissance squadron, organic scout platoons, and the external ISR, based on intelligence feeds from higher directly to the organic military intelligence (MI) company, contribute to the commander’s ability to visualize, describe, and direct forces as required. In essence, SBCTs have the organic resources available (as well as the organic ability to pull external information) to see and shape the enemy prior to the execution of decisive operations and in effect attempting to turn all attacks into deliberate attacks.

In the past, a common “baseline” used to determine the difference between a deliberate attack and a movement to contact was knowledge of 70 percent of the enemy disposition and

composition. If we had 70 percent or greater knowledge, we presumed ourselves to be planning for and conducting a deliberate attack. Conversely, if we had less than 70 percent we considered ourselves conducting a movement to contact and planned accordingly. Our reconnaissance success or failure then determined what our movement rates, formations, and movement techniques were going to be as well as our probable line of contact and when we would transition from movement to maneuver. With an entire squadron devoted to seeing the enemy and pulling the main force into decisive maneuver, coupled with the ability to pull critical information from higher on an as needed basis, we may be closer than ever to realizing this concept.

The creation of the SBCT reconnaissance squadron solves many existing intelligence collection challenges. The enhanced ability to focus collection efforts and rapidly share intelligence supports the commander’s ability to plan, prepare, and execute without losing energy and momentum during operations. Information technology enables commanders and their staffs to obtain unprecedented common operational pictures and to plan and execute follow-on missions in the midst of a current operation.

Perhaps the most significant change in the SBCT formation is the preponderance of intelligence and surveillance assets. Commanders have long recognized the need for organic reconnaissance capabilities at the brigade level. Doctrine continues to task brigades with planning and conducting ISR operations to gain information about the enemy. The creation of the SBCT organization with a reconnaissance squadron and military intelligence company gives SBCT commanders unprecedented situational awareness and situational understanding — hallmarks of SBCT operations.

One of the challenges for the SBCT commanders and staff is developing standard procedures as part of the military decision-making process (MDMP). A recommended part of the process is the ISR huddle. The SBCT receives warning orders and begins initial movement of reconnaissance forces in preparation of upcoming operations. Knowing what the ISR huddle is, its intent, the format and who should be in the huddle is important for officers and NCOs bound for SBCTs. The huddle is a meeting with all of the key players physically co-located.

The Pre-operation ISR Huddle

The ISR huddle is a proven technique for quickly beginning ISR synchronization. It can occur as early as receipt of the mission from higher headquarters, or as late as the conclusion of the formal

mission analysis brief. It is variable and METT-TC (mission, enemy, terrain, troops and time available, civilians) dependant. In a time constrained or fast developing situation, the huddle will go as early as the commander has enough information to give adequate guidance. The key determinant in deciding when to execute the huddle is the type and amount of intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) products developed by the staff from division or higher level warning orders. A trained staff will know what products the commander needs and when he needs them in the process. Most commanders will need as a minimum some key IPB products prior to initiation of the huddle. An example of this is the event template that will include potential movement times as well as initial named areas of interest (NAI) and other NAIs (or other recon objectives) tasked by higher headquarters. During the huddle, the SBCT commander can also begin to determine his initial commander's critical information requirements (CCIR). Although this will be thoroughly staffed throughout the decision-making process, an initial cut on CCIR based upon his experience will greatly enhance the planning process and focus the staff planning.

The commander's initial integration concern will be priority intelligence requirements (PIR). He must have a clear understanding of what he knows and conversely does not know about the enemy. By prioritizing those things he does not know, he has provided focus for not only his staff but also for his recon squadron and MI company. By conducting this huddle with key leaders including the recon squadron commander and possibly the MI company commander, the SBCT commander begins immediate integration of his key ISR players and his staff.

Additional benefits of this "huddle" include:

- An immediate assessment of the mission by the two most experienced ISR commanders,
- An immediate assessment of the limitations and constraints of the upcoming mission with regards to reconnaissance as well as an assessment on the priorities placed upon known NAIs based upon the initial IPB products, and
- An initial synchronization of joint and organic fires available to the SBCT and



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the recon squadron.

Getting the proper "stance" in terms of terrain management as well as movement sequence out of the area prior to continuing the mission. This is especially significant for the initial positioning of organic fires assets in order to provide immediate support for all elements within the SBCT.

The huddle also serves as the initiation of movement of the reconnaissance forces. This provides an additional measure of force protection to the SBCT by expanding the SBCT battlespace. It also begins to provide the SBCT main body with trafficability analysis data before the main body begins movement. This allows for parallel and collaborative planning at both the SBCT and recon squadron level.

In order for the ISR planning staff as well as the recon squadron and MI company to successfully meet the brigade commander's intent, the commanders and staff must first have an understanding of how the collected intelligence information will be used to develop the brigade's plan and to facilitate execution. Both the SBCT ISR planning staff and the recon squadron leadership must understand the three doctrinal concepts of employing the squadron. As with all terms used in our doctrinal language, these conceptual terms have precise meanings and all involved must have a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the terms in order to facilitate execution. Although we have used these conceptual terms in the past, this is

the first time they are formally written in our doctrine. ISR planners and executors must all have a common understanding of the terms and their meanings in order to meet the SBCT commander's intent. According to FM 3-20.96, a cavalry squadron (reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition) identifies the reconnaissance purposes for employment as — Reconnaissance Push, Command Push, and Reconnaissance Pull.

Reconnaissance Push — The recon squadron is deployed early in the planning process. The brigade staff uses the intelligence information collected to develop the plan. This purpose requires the brigade staff to develop facts and assumptions on the threat early enough to focus the squadron's effort. These facts and assumptions are generally based on threat templates, predictive analysis, and a thorough IPB. As the squadron confirms or denies these facts and assumptions, the information is reported back to the squadron staff, analyzed, and disseminated throughout the brigade and to the brigade staff in order to complete the plan. Reconnaissance push requires the brigade to develop a detailed ISR plan prior to the planning of the brigade's (main body) mission. The information must be gathered, analyzed, and reported in a timely manner in order to influence the brigade's planning process. The result of reconnaissance push operations is a detailed plan, based on reliable intelligence, for the employment

of the brigade. To be successful in a time-constrained environment, the staffs must dedicate enough time on ISR planning, and then use the intelligence information collected to develop or adjust their initial plan.

Command Push — This purpose is similar to reconnaissance push in that collected information is used to develop the brigade's plan. The difference is that the brigade staff develops several detailed courses of action (COAs) before the squadron deploys. The SBCT staff must also develop a detailed ISR plan, but the ISR plan is more directive in nature with associated recon NAIs and objectives that directly support the SBCT maneuver COAs. The recon squadron is deployed to gather detailed information based on the brigade commander's PIR. The brigade commander uses the information to select the appropriate COA — massing the brigade's strengths against the threat's weaknesses. This method also results in a detailed plan, based on reliable intelligence, for the employment of brigade.

Reconnaissance Pull — The brigade staff develops a flexible plan, based on several possible COAs, driven by the brigade commander's intent. In order to execute reconnaissance pull, the commander must ensure that all subordinates truly understand his intent for the operation as this type of operation calls for decentralized, but synchronized and integrated execution. The plan must allow for maximum flexibility as the squadron conducts reconnaissance and continually "pulls" the brigade's main body to a position of advantage against identified threat weaknesses. The brigade commander uses a series of decision points, based on the level of SU, to maneuver the brigade. This method does not alleviate the squadron commander and staff from planning reconnaissance operations. They must still focus the reconnaissance effort by providing the troops with reconnaissance objectives. The result of the planning process is a flexible plan, based on decision points, that allows the brigade commander to maneuver the brigade based on information/intelligence collected by the squadron and ISR assets in the brigade.

The objective of reconnaissance pull is to find weaknesses in threat dispositions that can be exploited by the main body. The recon squadron and other ISR assets are deployed over a broad area of operations (AO), which allows them to identify threat weaknesses to exploit and threat strengths to avoid. Reconnaissance determines which routes are suitable for maneuver, where the threat is strong and weak, and where gaps exist. Thus, reconnaissance should pull the main body toward and along the path of least resistance. Once these have been identified, the SBCT commander exploits the situation by choosing a COA that allows his decisive operation to attack the threat's weaknesses and penetrate gaps in the threat's defense. He then commits forces to widen the gap and envelop the threat. The recon squadron and other ISR assets continue to move, avoiding threat strengths and "pulling" the SBCT deep into the threat's AO.

Reconnaissance pull is also valid in defensive operations. Reconnaissance determines which routes the threat is using, where the threat is weak, and where gaps exist. Thus, reconnaissance enhances agility by identifying opportunities and pulling the SBCT along the path of least resistance to mass SBCT effects at the critical time and place.

It is easy to see that assumptions made early during an operation will have significant second and third order effects on the commitment of the main body of the SBCT and the outcome of

the operation. Having the right leaders in the ISR huddle is important to leveraging the full capabilities of the SBCT. The brigade commander will designate an ISR planning team, led by the brigade XO, which includes (at a minimum) representatives from the S2, S3, S4, S5 (civil affairs [when assigned]), and S6 (signal) sections; fire/effects coordination cell (FECC); Army airspace command and control (A2C2) cell; the reconnaissance squadron commander, XO, S3, or designated representatives; and the supporting MI company commander or XO. A key contribution of the recon squadron commander and staff to the brigade ISR planning is knowledge of what squadron intelligence assets (i.e., sensors) are available as well as their capabilities/limitations in acquiring needed intelligence.

ISR planning and execution are tough, challenging events. ISR is not a "come as you are" party. It must be trained and retrained with commanders and staff gaining an appreciation for the importance of the art and science of conducting the huddle. The huddle must become a team drill with subordinate commanders and staff efficiently and accurately understanding the SBCT commander's intent and quickly turn that intent into an executable reconnaissance operation. The end of the huddle (regardless of whether we conduct it prior to or after the mission analysis brief) signals the start of the ISR operation and platforms such as FBCB2 will allow the commanders and staff to continue to synchronize and coordinate the fight for information.

The goal of "See First" is to set the conditions for deliberate attacks. It is easy to argue that once either visual contact or direct fire contact is initiated, the enemy (who always has a vote) will reposition, thus placing the entire operation back into the movement to contact venue vice a deliberate attack. As with all combat operations, a thorough rehearsal coupled with adequate branch plans that are deep enough to cover the BLUFOR basic scheme of maneuver and fire distribution and control schematic will, as a minimum, allow BLUFOR to retain the tactical advantage.

ISR planning and execution are tough. ISR consistently challenges staff planning, coordination, and execution abilities. More often than not, when we fail in combat training center (CTC) rotational missions, there is a direct correlation to our lack of reconnaissance. The additional burden on staffs is that ISR is never ending; it is a continuous process requiring our fullest collective attention. Many staffs enjoy the thought of going to sleep once they have completed the orders process. This usually results in the opposing force (OPFOR) or enemy commander fighting your chemical officer who is the night battle captain in the tactical operations center (TOC); therefore it is imperative that we not stop the process after we produce the order but continue to monitor, supervise, and execute ISR operations. ISR planning and execution requires significant training and we only get out of it what we put in ... train recon as it will provide a significant payoff in combat operations. Good luck in your recon.

Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey R. Sanderson is currently serving as chief of the SBCT Transformation Team at Fort Benning, Georgia. His last assignment was commander of the 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment of the 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized).

Major Jerome T. Sibayan is currently serving as the doctrine officer of the SBCT Transformation Team. His previous assignments include serving with the 3rd Armored Division and 1st Cavalry Division.
