



INFANTRY DOCTRINE FOR DISMOUNTED PATROLLING

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Today, in Iraq and Afghanistan, infantrymen are going out on foot more and more often to patrol the streets and countryside to find the enemy and determine the situation, to report on conditions, provide security, and to defeat the insurgent while reassuring the populace that he will not return.

This increase in dismounted patrolling is part of a new effort to improve the security situation and counter the insurgency, but dismounted patrolling is not new to the Infantry. It is a continuation of a long history of small-unit combat that stretches back to the origin of our Army.

The American Infantry has a long and distinguished history of patrolling on foot. The unique conditions the English colonists faced on the new continent created a new type of military



Soldiers with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division patrol the streets of Al Haymer, Iraq, during a recent mission.

Senior Airman Steve Czyz, USAF

force, one with unconventional skills and a reliance on the initiative of the individual not often practiced by the armies of Europe.

The origins of one of our premier Infantry units, today's 75th Ranger Regiment, can be traced back to small groups of battle-hardened men "ranging the woods" over vast distances, relying on their skill at arms and their intimate knowledge of the forests and fields for their security and mission success. Their story came to be the story of the American infantryman, one of small groups of hardy, well-trained and disciplined warriors moving on foot, able to generate combat power far out of proportion to their actual numbers.

The early colonists had to adapt to the Atlantic seaboard's vast woodlands, with its rugged terrain and variable climate. They faced the fierce resistance of the native tribes head-on for more than a century, and in the process they created and matured their new tactics of small-unit warfare.

These new tactics emphasized being able to operate independently, and to move quickly and undetected across the countryside in day or night, unencumbered by plodding baggage trains, mass formations or heavy weapons.

The early American forces formed small lightly armed units that could remain undetected while seeking out the enemy. They could then either report back or make a sudden, decisive surprise attack.

As the years went by and the Army grew, these Soldiers passed the tactics and techniques of patrolling down from generation to generation. Eventually, they were written down and the writings became codified and orderly, transforming them from "tribal knowledge" into what we know today as doctrine.

The U.S. Army Infantry School is responsible for keeping our doctrine for dismounted patrolling up-to-date. It does this by reviewing what was written in the past, looking at what is being done by units in the field today, and developing what should be done as we face enemies yet unknown, on the battlefields of the future.

The newest Infantry School doctrine on dismounted patrolling can be found in FM 3-21.8, *The Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*. This manual, dated 28 March 2007, supersedes the 1992 version of FM 7-8 with the same title. Until it comes out in paper copy later this summer, you can find it at this Web site: <http://www.army.mil/usapa/>

doctrine / 7_Series_Collection_1.html.

This is how the new FM 3-21.8 describes a patrol:

"A patrol is a detachment sent out by a larger unit to conduct a specific mission. Patrols operate semi-independently and return to the main body upon completion of their mission. Patrolling fulfills the Infantry's primary function of finding the enemy to either engage him or report his disposition, location, and actions. Patrols act as both the eyes and ears of the larger unit and as a fist to deliver a sharp devastating jab and then withdraw before the enemy can recover."

The discussion of patrols and patrolling in the new manual is not totally new. It expands and builds on the doctrine that we have had in place for years and that has served us well in previous wars. However, there are some new terms and new definitions that infantry leaders should know about. These terms and definitions can be found in the new version of FM 3-21.8.

There are some issues concerning patrolling doctrine that always generate discussion and which are sometimes not understood clearly. The new version of the manual addresses these in more detail than the version it supersedes.

One of the issues that always comes up in discussions about patrolling is the need for commanders to be specific when they give a unit the mission to send out a patrol.

Units should not be sent out simply to "patrol." A commander must provide a specific combat, reconnaissance, or security task, with an associated tactical purpose. Upon completion of that task, the patrol leader returns to the main body, reports on his actions and describes the events that



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took place, the status of the patrol's members and equipment, and any observations the patrol may have made.

There is no standard size for a patrol. A fire team can be used for a patrol, but squad- and platoon-sized patrols are also appropriate at times. Sometimes, for combat tasks such as a large raid or an area ambush, a patrol may consist of most of the combat elements of a rifle company.

Unlike operations in which the infantry platoon or squad is integrated into the maneuver of a larger organization, a patrol is semi-independent and relies on its own resources and actions for security although it may have indirect fire and aerial support.

Patrols are never administrative, never conducted casually, even if the situation on the ground may seem almost nonthreatening. The leader of every patrol, regardless of the type or the mission, has an inherent responsibility to prepare and plan for possible enemy contact. During operations within the United States, in support of civil authority, there may not be an actual "enemy" force, but leaders must always consider the possibility of violence



Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division patrol an area of Baghdad June 3.

Staff Sergeant Bronco Suzuki

and lawlessness. There are several specific purposes for dismounted patrols:

- Gathering information on the enemy, the terrain, or the populace;
- Gaining or regaining contact with the enemy;
- Making contact with adjacent friendly forces;
- Engaging the enemy in combat to destroy him or inflict losses;
- Reassuring or gaining the trust of a local population;
- Preventing and controlling public disorder;
- Deterring and disrupting insurgent or criminal activity;
- Providing unit security; and
- Protecting key infrastructure or bases.

The two major categories of patrols are combat and reconnaissance. Patrols that depart the main body with the clear intent to make direct contact with the enemy are called combat patrols. The three types of combat patrols are raid patrols, ambush patrols, both of which conduct special purpose attacks, and security patrols.

Patrols that depart the main body with the intention of avoiding direct combat with the enemy while seeking out new information or confirming the accuracy of previously-gathered information are called reconnaissance patrols.

The traditional types of reconnaissance patrols are area, route, and zone. The new FM 3-21.8 introduces and describes a fourth type, the point reconnaissance patrol.

Point reconnaissance patrols are tasked to move to a very specific location, such as a power station, a mosque, or a school, and gather detailed information on the conditions there, often by interviewing members of the local populace or the workforce.

Point reconnaissance patrols are often used during stability operations or during operations in support of civil authority when the general situation is confusing and normal reporting systems

are not functional. They provide the commander with a trusted set of eyes on the scene to provide him with “ground truth”.

Leaders can also dispatch reconnaissance patrols to track the enemy, or to establish contact with other friendly forces. Tracking patrols follow the trail and movements of a specific enemy unit, often for long distances. Contact patrols move to and make physical contact with adjacent units and exchange information on their location, status, and intentions.

In the Army today, electronic position reporting and information transfer systems have reduced the need for contact patrols between U.S. units, but they are still vital when working with allies and coalition partners who may not have fielded such high-tech systems.

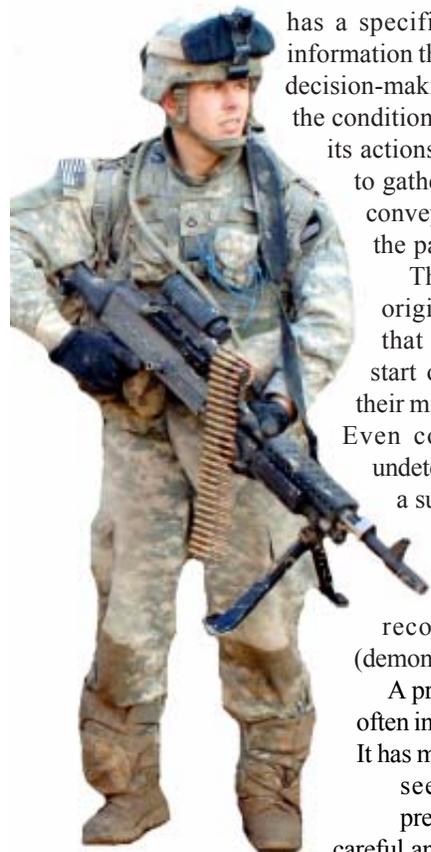
There is another type of patrol that has been very controversial since the fighting in Iraq began — the presence patrol.

Presence patrols are not new. They have been a part of Infantry doctrine since the publication of FM 3-21.21, *The Stryker Brigade Combat Team Infantry Battalion*, in April 2003. In fact, under a different name, the same sort of patrol was described in the 1967 version of FM 21-75, *Combat Training of the Individual Soldier and Patrolling*.

The presence patrol is not a new concept, but because of confusion about the execution of a presence patrol, FM 3-21.8 discusses it in much more detail than has been done in any previous publication.

Some leaders have not understood the doctrinal principles behind the planning and execution of presence patrols. Some units have misunderstood the term and even disagree with its utility. To better explain the concept, the new manual goes into significant detail describing and explaining the operational environment and the set of METT-TC (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, time, civilians) conditions under which presence patrols are appropriate.

A presence patrol, like all other types of reconnaissance patrols,



has a specific task and purpose. It gathers information the commander needs to support his decision-making process. However, because of the conditions under which the patrol operates, its actions are carefully calculated not only to gather specific information but also to convey a message to those with whom the patrol comes into contact.

The uniqueness of a presence patrol originates with the fundamental idea that all other reconnaissance patrols start out with the intent to accomplish their mission while remaining undetected. Even combat patrols intend to remain undetected until they reveal themselves in a sudden and deadly attack.

The presence patrol is different in that from the very beginning it intends to both see (conduct reconnaissance) and to be seen (demonstrate presence).

A presence patrol is normally used most often in stability or civil support operations. It has many purposes, but should always be seen in a specific manner, one predetermined by the commander after careful analysis of the existing situation.

The primary task of a presence patrol is to gather information about the conditions in the unit's area of operations. To do this, the patrol gathers critical (as determined by the commander) information, both specific and general.

The patrol seeks out this information, observes and reports. Its secondary role is to be seen as a tangible representation of the U.S. military force, projecting a particular image that furthers the accomplishment of the commander's intent.

In addition to the reconnaissance tasks, presence patrols can demonstrate to the local populace the presence and intent of the U.S. forces. Presence patrols are used to clearly demonstrate the intent, determination, competency, confidence, concern, and when appropriate, the overwhelming power of the force to all who observe it, including local and national media.

In Iraq, some units send out patrols made up of combined U.S. and Iraqi security forces. These are examples of presence patrols being used to demonstrate a national will, unity of effort, a growing Iraqi competence and responsibility, and a partnership in the counterinsurgency effort.

In some situations, presence patrols may be used to demonstrate that calm prevails and the situation is returning to normality. In such cases, the patrol members may deliberately adopt a friendly, nonthreatening, benign demeanor. An example of this was the presence patrols sent out by the 82nd Airborne Division in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The Soldiers were armed and ready to meet violence with force if necessary, but they did not wear body armor or Kevlar helmets. Instead, they wore the distinctive maroon berets of the airborne, and conducted themselves in such a way as to show the populace that the preceding days of anarchy and disorder were over, and that calm and normalcy were returning. Their presence did much

to restore that calm, and they were soon able to transition large areas of the city back to civil control.

The commander always plans for the possibility that a presence patrol may make enemy contact, even though that is not his intent. Rarely should a commander use a presence patrol in a situation where significant enemy contact is expected or likely.

Presence patrols work best for some types of stability operations such as peace operations, humanitarian and civil assistance, noncombatant evacuations, or shows of force. Before sending out a presence patrol, the commander should carefully consider what message he wants to convey, and then clearly describe his intent to the patrol leader.

To accomplish the "to be seen" part of its purpose, a presence patrol reconnoiters overtly. It takes deliberate steps to visibly reinforce the impression the commander wants to convey to the populace. Where the patrol goes, what it does there, how it handles its weapons, what equipment and vehicles it uses, and how it interacts with the populace are all part of that impression.

When the presence patrol returns to the main body, the commander thoroughly debriefs it not only for hard information, but also for the patrol leader's impressions of the effects of the patrol on the populace. This allows the commander to see to modify the actions of subsequent patrols.

Another type of patrol that the new FM 3-21.8 discusses is really an old type that had fallen out of Infantry doctrine after the Vietnam War but has now been reintroduced. It is the security patrol.

A security patrol is a small combat patrol sent out from a unit location, when the unit is stationary or temporarily halted, to search the local area, detect any enemy forces near the main body, and to engage and destroy the enemy within the capability of the patrol. This type of is normally sent out by units operating in close terrain with limited fields of observation and fire. It is a common type of patrol to be sent out during operations in the jungle or dense forests, or in some urban areas.

A security patrol detects and disrupts enemy forces that are conducting reconnaissance of the main body or that are massing to conduct an attack. Although this type of combat patrol seeks to make direct enemy contact and to destroy enemy forces within its capability, it should always attempt to avoid decisive engagement.

Security patrols are normally away from the main body of the unit for limited periods, returning frequently to coordinate and rest. They do not operate beyond the range of communications and supporting fires from the main body, especially mortar fires.

The mission of the Infantry, to close with and engage the enemy, requires many skills. Among the most important of them is the ability to patrol, to disperse across the countryside, to seek out the enemy and engage him at the time and place of our choosing.

For infantrymen to gain those skills, to truly master them, takes long hard training, dedication, physical fitness, initiative, and an intense will to win. All this has to begin with a well defined doctrine that clearly lays out the principles, tactics, techniques and procedures associated with patrolling. The newly published FM 3-21.8 provides the infantry rifle squad and platoon with that doctrine.

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