

TANK DESTROYER SCHOOL
Department of Tactics
Camp Hood, Texas

(C)

RECONNAISSANCE

OUTLINE OF CONFERENCE

PURPOSE: To discuss in conference the definition, and technique of, and responsibility for reconnaissance, and the employment of elements of the TD reconnaissance company.

References: FM 18-5; FM 17-20; FM 2-15; FM 21-45; FM 100-5; FM 31-20;
FM 31-25.

1. General:

- a. Definition of "reconnaissance": Reconnaissance is the operation of obtaining information in the field by units (RCN. CO) detachments (Patrols), or individuals (reconnaissance scouts) sent out for that purpose.
- b. Reasons for reconnaissance: Reconnaissance is necessary in order that a TD commander can:
 - (1) Make plans for the employment of his unit.
 - (2) Efficiently conduct his unit according to his plans.
 - (3) Guard against surprise by the enemy.
- c. Responsibility: The commander of every TD unit is responsible for initiating and maintaining reconnaissance for information which influences his own operations or which is required of him by a higher commander.
- d. Objectives for reconnaissance:
 - (1) Information of the enemy:
 - (a) Location (where, what time)
 - (b) Disposition (marching, resting, flanks, reserves, etc)
 - (c) Strength (personnel, weapons)
 - (d) Organization (proportions of what branches)
 - (e) Capabilities (attack, defend-where, when, with what)
 - (f) Movements (time and direction)
 - (g) Attitude (aggressive, defensive)
 - (h) Equipment (individual, unit)
 - (i) Morale (high, low, fresh, tired, hungry, ill-fed)
 - (2) Information of the terrain:
 - (a) Positions and areas (assembly positions, firing positions, cover positions, rallying positions, combat areas, bivouac areas, landing fields)
 - (b) Routes (roads, trails, bridges)
 - (c) Streams (width, depth, fords, banks)
 - (d) Cover and concealment (routes, areas)

c. "Essential elements of information"

- (1) Definition: Those specific items of information of the enemy and the terrain, which a TD commander deems necessary to:
 - (a) Revise or make new decisions
 - (b) Confirm his decisions or their soundness
 - (c) Complete his plans
 - (d) Facilitate execution of plans
 - (e) Conduct a maneuver
 - (f) Accomplish a mission
 - (g) Avoid surprise
 - (2) Purpose: "Essential elements of information" are designated for the purpose of focusing the attention and the activities of all elements of a TD command on that information which, from the viewpoint of the commander, is necessary at a particular time.
 - (3) Expression: To obtain this essential information, reconnaissance missions may be expressed as specific questions stating the essential items of information desired such as:
 - (a) How many enemy tanks are in _____ area?
 - (b) Is _____ road passable for TD's?
 - (c) What is the capacity of _____ bridges?
- (f) Routine information: (S.O.P)
- (1) Definition: That information which, in addition to items of essential information, TD reconnaissance units are required to obtain and report, at specified times or at the most practicable time, as a matter of routine without additional orders and in conjunction with the execution of specific missions.
 - (2) Purpose: Items of routine information desired are designated for the purpose of maintaining a continuous flow and building a record of pertinent information which may be of value to a TD commander from the standpoint of present or future operations.
 - (3) Items of routine information: (As a guide only):
 - (a) Routes and bridges (type, condition, load and traffic capabilities.)
 - (b) Landing fields (location and suitability)
 - (c) Utilities (water, power, communications)
 - (d) Supplies (amounts, location, type and condition, particularly food, fuel, and lubricants)
 - (e) Obstacles (location, extent, means of avoiding)
 - (f) Terrain estimation (fordability of streams; marshy and wooded areas; clear areas; areas unsuitable for tanks; commanding terrain; cover; concealment)
 - (g) Hostile aircraft (number, location, time, type, altitude, direction of flight)
 - (h) Hostile ground forces (location and time of all hostile contacts; strength and movements, with particular attention to location and movements of hostile mechanized forces.)
 - (i) Friendly troops and miscellaneous information (troops within the zone of reconnaissance and other intelligence data such as weather, visibility, traffic, etc.)

g. Source of information:

- (1) Actual observation of terrain or physical objects.
- (2) Information or intelligence reports from other units.
- (3) Examination of inhabitants, prisoners, documents, photographs, maps, and spies.

h. TD Reconnaissance agencies:

- (1) Liaison aircraft.
- (2) Reconnaissance company.
- (3) Liaison Officers
- (4) Personal reconnaissance by the battalion commander, staff officers, and subordinate commanders.
- (5) Scouts and patrols.

i. Classification of reconnaissance:

- (1) Distant - not usually performed by TD Rcn Co if adequately carried out by other reconnaissance agencies such as division and corps reconnaissance units.
- (2) Close - up to 10 miles - by TD Rcn. Co.
- (3) Battle - executed by TD Rcn Co.

2. Employment of the TD Reconnaissance Co:

- a. TD Rcn Co is the principal reconnaissance agency of the TD Bn. Its mobility on roads or cross country and its firepower make it capable, to a limited extent, of both offensive and defensive action when necessary in the execution of its information gathering missions.
- b. The assignments of missions and the issuance of reconnaissance instructions will be greatly expedited by S.O.P., especially with reference to information which is habitually desired.
- c. When the Battalion is marching, the Rcn Co (plus one TD plat. attached) will furnish the forward security element. One Rcn Plat. will constitute the advance party, which sends forward a portion of its strength as the point. The balance of the Rcn Co., including the attached TD Plat. and less detachments employed on other missions, will constitute the support of the forward security element. At least one Rcn Plat will usually be employed well forward on reconnaissance missions. The third Rcn Plat if not already employed, will be available for further reconnaissance missions either to intensify reconnaissance to the front or to initiate reconnaissance in a new direction.
- d. The reconnaissance company as a whole will usually be given a dual mission, i.e., involving both reconnaissance and security. However, subordinate elements of the reconnaissance company should each be given only one primary mission at a time. For example, the reconnaissance company with an attached TD platoon usually will be assigned missions of conducting reconnaissance and, at the same time, providing the forward security elements and possibly other security detachments. But the reconnaissance platoon acting as advance party should be given no other mission, and a reconnaissance platoon engaged on reconnaissance should not at the same time be given an additional mission of security.
- e. Zones: When the enemy is disposed on a broad front, or when his location is in doubt, a zone of reconnaissance may be assigned.
- f. Hostile route: When it is known that the enemy's advance is by a definite route, the "route" over which the enemy is advancing may be assigned for reconnaissance.

- g. Area: When accurate information has disclosed the presence of the enemy in a definite area, then the "area" or "locality" may be assigned for reconnaissance.
- h. Coordination: TD reconnaissance elements usually advance on scheduled phase lines and make scheduled reports. Latter may contain either positive or negative information or both. A limit of reconnaissance may be designated as a further method of control.
- i. Distances: TD reconnaissance elements will be employed on missions taking them more than 10 miles from the battalion only under exceptional circumstances.
- j. Frontage: The frontage which a Ren Plat can reconnoiter cannot be definitely stated. It will be limited by the following factors:
 - (1) Terrain (points of observation, open terrain, close terrain, etc)
 - (2) Visibility (darkness, fog, dust, etc)
 - (3) Speed of forward movement of reconnaissance.
 - (4) Proximity of enemy.
 - (5) Degree of detail of information required.
- k. Pioneer platoon: Reconnoiters routes, bridges; improves routes; executes demolition missions; constructs or removes obstacles.
- l. Primary missions: Since the Ren Co is the principal reconnaissance agency of the battalion commander, and since it is organized and armed primarily as an information gathering unit, it should not be needlessly expended on other missions. It should be given missions requiring it to engage in combat only when no other element of the battalion can perform such missions equally efficiently.
- m. The speed at which elements of the Ren Co can advance while on a zone reconnaissance mission will vary with the width of the zone, the terrain, and the enemy situation, but will rarely exceed 15 mph.

3. Technique of reconnaissance by elements of the TD Ren Co.

a. Scouts:

- (1) The success of reconnaissance by elements of the TD Ren Co depends upon the ability, intelligence, and aggressiveness of the individual scout.
- (2) A TD reconnaissance scout is a soldier especially trained to reconnoiter. His primary mission is to obtain information and to relay it to the next higher reconnaissance echelon in time for it to be of maximum value.
- (3) In order to accomplish his mission the scout must keep his mind constantly on his mission and be thoroughly trained in scouting technique and methods and must know:
 - (a) Terrain features (horizon, crossroads, fill, saddle, right and left banks of streams, etc.)
 - (b) Map reading (orientation, use of coordinates, symbols, contours, etc.)
 - (c) How to determine direction at all times, with or without a compass (By use of stars, watch, etc.)
 - (d) Signs, tracks, and tracking.
 - (e) How to estimate the enemy's strength, composition and actions.
 - (f) How to report via messages, simple sketches, and overlays.

- (h) How to move across country by day or night to a destination and return without being observed by the enemy.
- (i) How to observe.
- (j) How to judge distances.
- (k) Action with prisoners.
- (l) What to do if captured.
- (m) How to look for booby traps.
- (n) How to approach and cross barbed wire.
- (o) What to do in case hostile flares are encountered.
- (p) That scouting is best performed by SNEALTH rather than by force and is accomplished by:
 - (1) "Side-slipping" hostile interference.
 - (2) Use of "sneak and peek" method.
 - (3) Seeing and not being seen.

b. Patrols:

- (1) Definition: A patrol is a detachment of two or more men sent out from a larger body on an independent or limited mission of reconnaissance or security.
- (2) A reconnaissance section constitutes a suitable reconnaissance patrol.
- (3) Missions: Reconnaissance patrols may be assigned missions of obtaining information of the enemy, and the terrain of the area to be reconnoitered.
- (4) Preparations for patrol duty:
 - (a) Orders issued by patrol leader will include:
 - (1) Information of enemy and own troops.
 - (2) Mission, plan, objective, routes and initial information desired (mission to include mission of parent unit, when practicable)
 - (3) Designation of duties of individuals; first and alternate assembly points; details regarding general conduct of the patrol, including combat; axis of movement.
 - (4) Instructions as to rations, water, oil, fuel, sufficient rations and water for the duration of the mission should be carried. Extra oil and fuel should be carried.
 - (5) Point or points where messages are to be sent.
 - (b) Patrol leader makes certain all personnel understand orders and assignments.
 - (c) Patrol leader and second-in-command should know the location of the command post of the Rcn Co. and its route of movement.
 - (d) Patrol leaders should carry wire cutters, watch, compass, message blanks, pencil, flashlight, field glasses, maps, and firearms.
 - (e) Codes and other documents of possible value to the enemy will not be carried. Insignia will not be worn.
- (5) Conduct of patrols:
 - (a) Varies with mission, situation, terrain, and proximity of the enemy.
 - (b) When a large area must be reconnoitered or when there is no indication of the presence of hostile elements, reconnaissance patrols move rapidly in open formation, halt-

activity is noted.

(c) In the presence of the enemy:

- (1) Movement is by bounds. In close country bounds are short; in open country they are longer.
- (2) Halt briefly on successive objectives.
- (3) Elements mutually support each other during the advance.
- (4) Movement between objectives is rapid.
- (5) Armored car (light) covers movements of leading $\frac{1}{4}$ ton vehicles.
- (6) Minor resistance is "side-slipped" and combat thereby avoided.
- (7) When moving cross country, formations vary with terrain. May be column, wedge, or diamond.
- (8) Important objectives should be reconnoitered by dismounted scouts.
- (9) Dismounted scouts precede patrol when reconnoitering a village, crossing a bridge, or moving through a defile.
- (10) Patrols reconnoitering a hostile column on the march can best perform this mission by observation from several successive positions on the flanks of the hostile column.
- (11) Reconnaissance of halted enemy elements is best performed by dismounted scouts.

4. Summary:

- a. Reconnaissance is a continuous process.
- b. Reconnaissance provides a measure of incidental security.
- c. The nearer the approach to the enemy the more intensive is the reconnaissance.
- d. Orders for reconnaissance must state definitely the information desired, where it is to be sought, and the destination and time of reports.
- e. TD Reconnaissance elements gain and maintain contact with the enemy and by working through gaps and around the flanks and rear endeavor to ascertain the strength, movements, composition, and disposition of the enemy's elements.
- f. Reconnaissance is best performed by stealth rather than by force.
- g. Detailed reconnaissance is a slow process during which much dismounted scouting must be performed and for which adequate time must be allowed.
- h. The success of TD units depends substantially on surprise of the enemy tank forces. Without timely information, surprise is unattainable.
- i. All personnel of a TD battalion must be highly proficient and trained in scouting technique.
- i. Prior to combat, personal reconnaissance is made by every unit commander, regardless of the size of the unit. There is no substitute for personal reconnaissance.