

## Chief of Armor's Hatch

# Redefining and Relearning the Role of the Cavalry Squadron

With the inception of modularity in 2004, the Army transformed to a brigade combat team (BCT)-centric force to meet the needs of resourcing two theaters of operation. During these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, our Army operated within a division construct but essentially as BCT and battalion independent stability operations. This was most likely an appropriate decision to sustain 14 years of continuous actions; however, institutionally we lost many organizational procedures and processes that were in place to ensure accountability of readiness, training and maintenance management, and decisive-action skillsets.

Today, as we transition institutionally out of these wars, the Army is striving to regain our decisive-action or high-end combat-operation competencies while retaining the lessons of the last 14 years. With the Army Operating Concept guiding our efforts, the Maneuver Center of Excellence is re-evaluating "how we fight" within the context of the future complex environment.

The central idea of "how we fight" is based on formations that can continuously develop situational understanding; rapidly task-organize for purpose; and operate within the joint, inter-organizational and multinational environment to achieve positions of relative advantage and consolidate gains. Continuously developing situational understanding (SU) and consolidating gains are at the core of our reconnaissance and security operations, and thus the Cavalry squadron should be optimized to meet this requirement.

Cavalry squadrons have been employed as battlespace owners over the last decade, and observed trends from combat training centers demonstrate a significant degradation in our knowledge and abilities to conduct reconnaissance and security operations. Field Manual 3-98, **Reconnaissance and Security Operations**, published in July 2015, provides a doctrinal base for reconnaissance and security operations at the BCT level and below, and is a good foundation for leader-development programs to re-establish competencies. The Cavalry squadron is critical to develop continuous situational understanding – whether fighting for information within its means, developing SU by engagement with multinational forces and organizations or interacting with civilian populations. The skillsets required to operate within this construct requires us to reassess our training and development of our Soldiers. This effort is deemed as the scout-of-the-future concept, where fundamental reconnaissance and security skills, cultural understanding, language proficiency and regional expertise must be developed from accession and throughout a scout's career.

As important as our ground reconnaissance and security operations are, Cavalry interoperability with air assets is critical. The AH-64 is now the primary rotary-wing reconnaissance platform, and in this role, we need to develop how we employ the platform as part of reconnaissance and security operations. We should not think of them as air-weapons teams that respond to troops in contact, although the armed capability and our experience in Afghanistan and Iraq will drive scouts in that direction. The former division Cavalry organizational structure may offer insights, but we have yet to define how we organize the division battlespace given the lack of assets remaining at that echelon. Manned and unmanned teaming should be a central theme in the concept of employment, especially with the addition of the Grey Eagle unmanned aerial system.

Interoperability between BCT types is an essential element of task-organizing for purpose. However, our Cavalry squadrons are on multiple platforms that are not conducive to interoperability for communications and situational awareness. The Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) is the primary candidate for the interim Light Reconnaissance Vehicle for the infantry BCT. However, the JLTV cannot carry six scouts and therefore must be organized with nine vehicles per platoon. An alternative for the interim platform is the Stryker Reconnaissance Vehicle (RV); the RV provides room to accommodate the 6x36 scout platoon and would be interoperable with Stryker BCT Cavalry squadrons, as well as with some Special Operations Forces that employ a similar platform. Also, by fielding a common platform, task-organization for purpose is facilitated, and future initiatives such as the 30mm and Remote Weapon Station-Javelin could address lethality shortcomings found in the infantry BCT.

There are plenty of counterarguments such as size of the vehicle, logistical requirements and so on, but I would argue these will all be inherent in any other platform currently being considered. Interoperability, lethality and mobility are the key parameters in our future Cavalry squadrons, and the Stryker RV provides a viable solution now that does not require development (acquisition) and optimizes these operating characteristics.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on redefining and relearning the role of our Cavalry squadrons. Reconnaissance and security remains the core mission, but how we execute and how we are organized in the future complex environment needs more development. Further, as technology continues to evolve, the Cavalry squadron's ability to employ manned and unmanned teaming to extend its reach – coupled with an increased capability to link into lethal targeting assets – clearly demonstrate the mandate to revise doctrine and leader development.

Finally, I want to personally thank CSM Mike Clemens on his superb tenure as the Armor School command sergeant major. His dedication to the Armor and Cavalry force has been significant, and he truly leaves an indelible legacy in his role of Forging the Thunderbolt!

Treat'em Rough!

**BG SCOTT MCKEAN**

Chief of Armor/Commandant

U.S. Army Armor School

Armor School MilBook: ([www.milsuite.mil/book/Armored\\_Force](http://www.milsuite.mil/book/Armored_Force))

Armor School Facebook: ([www.facebook.com/usaarms](http://www.facebook.com/usaarms))

## **Acronym Quick-Scan**

**BCT** – brigade combat team

**JLTV** – Joint Light Tactical Vehicle

**RV** – reconnaissance vehicle

**SU** – situational understanding