

# Scouts Fashion Victory in Gainey Cup Competition

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*“Effective reconnaissance and security [R&S] tasks confirm or deny the commander’s and staff’s initial understanding and visualization of the tactical and operational situation and further develop the intelligence picture for the [brigade combat team (BCT)] to allow the commander to describe, direct, lead and assess military operations as well as make effective decisions.” –Field Manual (FM) 3-98, **Reconnaissance and Security Operations**, July 2015*

## Competition overview

The third biennial Gainey Cup Best Scout Squad Competition, named in honor of retired CSM William “Joe” Gainey, the first senior-enlisted adviser to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, took place at Fort Benning, GA, May 1-4. The competition featured 24 six-man scout squads from our allies and across the U.S. Army. Three Army National Guard (Illinois, West Virginia and Nevada) and four allied partners (two teams from Canada, one from the Netherlands and one from the United Kingdom) competed alongside 17 teams representing active Army divisions and separate brigades.

Within the context of the competition, a scout squad was defined as a squad leader in the ranks of staff sergeant to first lieutenant, a team leader in the ranks of sergeant or staff sergeant and four scouts in the ranks of private to sergeant. This rank structure and organization aligns with Special Manual (SM) 3-20.96, **Cavalry Squadron Universal Operational and Organizational Concept Volume III, The Standard Scout Platoon (6x36)**, February 2017. Paragraph 3-38 of SM 3-20.96 states that “the scout squad consists of six personnel and one reconnaissance vehicle.”

The competition design focused on reconnaissance and Soldier skills that atrophied in the midst of the global war on terror. With a reinvigorated approach to R&S operations, the Gainey Cup stresses the importance of area reconnaissance, route reconnaissance and the establishment of an observation post focused on answering the commander’s priority intelligence requirements within the constraints of “latest time information is of value.” The competition further challenged scouts through the evaluation of common tasks such as land navigation, call for fire, medical skills and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) events. To add physical stress to the mental aspect of the competition, a 22-station obstacle course as well as two running events bookending the competition stressed competitors.

The competition scoring used a weighted-scale concept, prioritizing critical R&S tasks over sheer physical fitness. The most heavily weighted event in the competition was the area-reconnaissance lane. The weighted grading concept was a takeaway from the inaugural Gainey Cup in 2013. Weighting competition events ensures that a well-rounded scout squad wins the competition.

The competition was close throughout, with four teams consistently in the running for the Best Scout Squad: 1-1 Cavalry Squadron from Fort Bliss, TX; 6-8 Cavalry Squadron from Fort Stewart, GA; 2-106 Cavalry Squadron from the Illinois Army National Guard; and 104<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Squadron from the Netherlands. However, on Day 4 with just the “final charge” remaining, only 1-1 Cavalry and 6-8 Cavalry were mathematically in contention for the Gainey Cup championship. Ultimately, 1-1 Cavalry consisting of SSG Eric Atkinson, SGT Zachary Diglio, SGT Joseph Main, PFC Timothy Wood, PFC Ryan French and PV2 Jeremy Blevins won the competition.

## After-action review

The 2017 Gainey Cup Best Scout Squad competition provided a useful metric to evaluate the state of R&S training at the level of tactical execution – the scout squad – throughout the force. The 24 teams who competed in the event represented Active, Army National Guard and allied formations. (The Active Component represented each force structure: armored BCT, Stryker BCT and infantry BCT.) While the competition did not control for all variables, each team did participate in the same events that paired fitness with -10 level tasks. They also competed under the same terrain, weather and light conditions with the same equipment, evaluated against the same standardized training and evaluation outlines.

The 2017 Gainey Cup differed slightly from the 2015 version. A squad stress shoot was added, while hasty demolitions and “establish a helicopter landing zone” were removed. Moving forward to the 2019 competition, a wholesale overhaul of the concept of operations isn’t expected. The 2017 competition, like the 2013 and 2015 versions before it, captured lessons-learned, particularly those identified by the competitors themselves.

The following will serve as an event breakdown in those areas deemed to contain capability gaps not only in the competing squads but in identified shortfalls in the larger Army as a whole.

**Land navigation.** Competitors performed unevenly conducting unaided land navigation across broken terrain. Only three of 24 teams successfully located all three points over a six-hour period of darkness on the land-navigation lane. Six teams were unable to locate any points. Some teams struggled with unaided navigation of less than one kilometer in a variety of environments. It became readily apparent that certain teams consisted of individuals lacking the personal experience of a non-self-correcting land-navigation course. For others, land navigation had not been practiced since basic training. Skills such as G-M angle conversion, intersection, resection and terrain association – the core of land navigation – did not appear to be internalized and “trained” by most of the competitors.

This is disconcerting, as the Gainey Cup reflected the probable battlefield occurrence of a cyber-electromagnetic-activity denied environment. Satellite-enabled position tracking may be contested, spoofed or denied by a modern threat actor. The competition reflected the likely loss of technical assistance, requiring teams to navigate without Global Positioning System (GPS) or electronic aids. Instead, teams were forced to employ the basic land-navigation tools of map, compass and protractor throughout all lanes during the competition. To build this capability, home-station training should be designed to and deliberately use electronic-warfare assets against the respective unit’s ability to use GPS devices (either Army-issued or personal).

Unit training should address requirements for conducting land navigation across varying conditions in a tactical environment. A first step is to get the land-navigation manual off the computer and into scouts’ hands. Training Circular (TC) 3-25.26, **Map Reading and Land Navigation** (November 2013), represents a repository of best practices for the science of land navigation. It includes sections on individual and unit training plans. Not infrequently, an Army Reconnaissance Course (ARC) or Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader’s Course (RSLC) student will ask an instructor where he learned a particularly successful navigation technique, only to find the instructor opening to a page in TC 3-25.26. Doctrinal techniques work!

Also, training should routinely occur on land the scout has not operated on previously. The disorientation that naturally occurs to an individual in terrain never before experienced needs to be replicated in training. Orienteering in state parks or other accessible unfamiliar terrain could be an option for incorporation into training plans. Together these techniques can assist scouts in becoming more confident navigating without technical aids.

**Vehicle identification.** Competitors struggled to correctly identify military vehicles. Overall, competitors correctly identified only 18 percent of vehicles presented. The modern battlefield will likely include multinational forces operating with an array of military vehicles. Military ground and air vehicles from Israel, Germany, China, Japan, Korea, India, France, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Brazil, among others, will join common American and Russian vehicles on the battlefield. Scouts may have seconds to identify and react. The proliferation of friendly and threat unmanned aerial systems further exacerbates this difficulty.

This year’s vehicle-identification lane took on a different-than-usual approach to the Army’s traditional computer-based methodology in teaching and evaluating vehicle identification. An observation post (OP) was built with 12 vehicles placarded to wooden stakes at distances of 15 to 25 meters from the OP. Competing teams had standard M22 binoculars and a spotting scope to choose from to aid them in the task’s completion. This easy-to-replicate environment can be more value-added to today’s scouts. While computer-based training such as Recognition of Combat Vehicles (ROC-V) is a phenomenal foundational approach, moving training beyond “what we’ve always done” and thinking outside the box in exciting and challenging ways is the best way to engage a Soldier in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. One of the underlying principles in lane creation at the 2017 Gainey Cup was the ability for the competitors, coaches and respective command-team representatives to easily, and in a resource-constrained environment, take the competition events back to home station.

Training should also address the growing diversity of battlefield equipment if scouts are to be successful in rapidly and accurately providing battlefield information to the commander. This can be a daunting task. Initial training in this area should start with the development of methods for identifying vehicles. For example, a common method in identifying vehicles is use of the acronym HATS (hull, armament, turret, suspension). Training scouts to methodically evaluate vehicles and equipment enables them to adapt as equipment changes over time. It also applies systematic analysis to what otherwise becomes a very haphazard “guessing game.”

Also, there are some tools available to the unit to assist with vehicle-identification training. The Army maintains the ROC-V Website at <https://rocv.army.mil>. The Website takes individuals through the basics of thermal optics and using visual cues, and introduces a large number of friendly and threat ground and air vehicles. A similar tool can be accessed from the Joint Battle Command Platform console in Army vehicles that have received that platform.

Finally, many units commit the “sin” of minimizing the vehicle-identification component of gunnery training. TC 3-20.21-1, **Individual and Crew Live-Fire Prerequisite Testing**, requires crew members to correctly identify 18 of 20 vehicles and all U.S. vehicles, with at least four of the vehicles being identified using only thermal signatures. Occasionally, this becomes a slideshow drill where the master gunner familiarizes the crews with the slides and the test follows rapidly thereafter. While this may meet prerequisites, it does not assist our scout crews or dismounts in the incredibly complicated task of combat-vehicle identification. Options to improve gunnery vehicle identification include permitting more vehicle types in the conduct-of-fire trainers, building mock-ups or using different slide decks between practice and testing.

**Call for fire.** It is a matter of faith that the scout’s best weapon is his radio. In reality, it is the lethality provided through fires at the observer’s command that gives the scout the ability to have a disproportionate lethal impact on the battlefield. However, competitors performed unevenly in completing an accurate and timely call for fire. As with land navigation, competitors were forced to employ the basic tools of map, binoculars, compass and protractor. These basic tools proved uncomfortable for competitors.

Scouts have been empowered with position navigation-enhanced laser range-finders and digital integration. From the Long-Range Advanced Scout System to the Lightweight Laser Designator Range-finder and M2/M3 Bradley call-for-fire quick message, scouts have been enabled to initiate and receive precise, accurate and timely fires. We’re not saying that scouts shouldn’t use these tools; the efficiency and precision created should continue to be maximized when possible. However, since the likelihood of a threat actor spoofing or denying these systems is high, expertise in the high-end capability cannot come at the expense of the scout’s basic ability to employ fires.

Target-location error (TLE) greater than 250 meters accounted for more than half of competition deductions. Army Technical Publication (ATP) 3-09.30, **Techniques for Observed Fire** (August 2013), notes that while 250-meter TLE is the mean for observers employing map, binoculars and compass, it is unacceptable for first-round fire-for-effect mission or target suppression. Several competitors misestimated the range to the target in excess of two kilometers. Upon debriefing, many proved unfamiliar with the mil-relation formula (commonly called the WORM formula), which enables an observer to determine range if known-size equipment is present. While we note that a live event vice a virtual event is more substantive training, on the whole, competitors did not blame the simulator or their unfamiliarity with the system for their shortcomings.

A second large source of competition deductions was the inability to initiate the call-for-fire within three minutes after being given a five-minute block of time to conduct familiarization with the map and simulator screen.

Unit training can start with getting ATP 3-09.30 into scouts’ hands. In particular, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 provide in-depth discussion of locating, initiating and adjusting timely and accurate fires. Beyond this initial step, an easy point of departure may be borrowing training plans from the annual brigade forward observer (FO) certification. It may not be possible to replicate the depth of full FO training; however, scouts must approach the same level of observed-fires capability. Copying those who hang their hat on providing timely and accurate observed fires seems a good idea.

**Actions on contact.** Scout success and survivability is tied indelibly to minimizing and managing signatures. Employment of stealth as a necessary tool of the trade does not mean that scouts do not or cannot develop the situation through contact with enemy forces. In fact, many situations will require developing across the forms of

contact to gain more and better information. As sensors proliferate on the battlefield, the need for scouts to fight for information grows, not declines. During the Gainey Cup, competitors struggled to execute meaningful actions on contact. When chance or deliberate enemy contact occurred during reconnaissance or live-fire events, some squads appeared uncertain how to develop the situation. In particular, competitors failed to apply engagement and disengagement criteria. Though lane fragmentary orders included commander's reconnaissance and/or security guidance, many competitors confessed to not understanding, never having heard of or never been taught its use. To execute the mission, scouts need clearly defined and understood guidance.

The Army employs scouts to turn ambiguity into definitive information. However, scouts should initiate and react to contact intuitively. Unit training should include the requirement for scouts to develop contact through all training events. The best weapon may be the radio, but the M240L is on hand for a reason. Training actions on contact may take the form of opposing OP occupation during a situational-training exercise. Likewise, ambiguity should be brought into live-fire training events. While safety will remain important, forcing crews, squads and platoons to think through the enemy presentation to properly employ engagement criteria will pay off in improved decision-making and confidence later. It further translates to the scout's ability to generate options and make recommendations.

The ability to generate options only remains if you survive first contact with the enemy, retain freedom of maneuver and develop the situation. All these benefits accrue from scouts empowered and understanding solid commander's R&S guidance.

## Way forward

It is evident that a knowledge gap exists in the Army today, so scouts should read the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) Handbook 17-01, ***Scouts in Contact: Tactical Vignettes for Cavalry Leaders*** (December 2016), and CALL Handbook 17-12, ***Reconnaissance and Security Commander's Handbook*** (April 2017). These two publications, focused on leaders at the section through brigade level, provide useful quick-reference pocket guides to train and educate leaders. Whereas the ***Scouts in Contact*** manual provides many tactical-decision exercises requiring nothing more than a sandtable and/or whiteboard, the ***Reconnaissance and Security Commander's Handbook*** is a synthesis of useful doctrine (FM 3-98, ***Reconnaissance and Security Operations***; FM 3-55, ***Information Collection***; ATP 3-20.96, ***Cavalry Squadron***; FM 3-20-2, ***Reconnaissance and Security and Tactical Enabling Tasks Volume 2***, among others).

The two CALL handbooks are a starting point for increased proficiency in cavalry operations. Leaders should regularly reach out to the combat-training centers (CTCs), to the schoolhouse (RSLC, ARC and the Cavalry Leader's Course (CLC)) and to the Army Publishing Directorate ([apd.army.mil](http://apd.army.mil)), to ensure that the latest doctrine and tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) are available to our respective formations.

Learning is a lifelong event. According to U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-8-2, ***The U.S. Army Learning Concept for Training and Education 2020-2040*** (April 2017), "The objective of Army learning is to provide forces as part of joint, interorganizational and multinational efforts that are trained and ready to accomplish campaign objectives and protect U.S. national interests. To achieve this objective, the Army will create and maintain a learning environment that develops agile, adaptive and innovative Soldiers and Army civilians, [building] cohesive teams that conduct training and education under tough and realistic conditions. This environment is centered on the learner (learner-centric), who learns through a combination of training, education and experience through the three training domains of Army learning: operational, institutional and self-development." This model is based on a series of assumptions, but arguably none are more important than "The learner-centric, career-long learning model will produce the training and education outcomes to sustain Army effectiveness and ethical application of the Army profession."

As we mentioned previously, the Gainey Cup was built off doctrine as the means to evaluate and grade competitors. Doctrine is the baseline for the U.S. Army. Doctrine is the language by which the U.S. Army communicates. Words mean things, and as one of the authors' former squadron commanders stressed while he served as an assistant S-3 and troop commander, we must use "precise terms used precisely" so as to avoid confusion, particularly in stressful environments. One must first understand the baseline (doctrine) before he attempts the hip-pocket approach (TTPs). Too many times it is heard around Fort Benning, the home of maneuver

doctrine and foundational training, “that is how I did it in my unit.” Point blank, that is an unacceptable answer. Avoiding shortcuts, reading doctrine and committing to the elusive self-development domain of the Army learning methodology is a relatively easy starting point for increased understanding and subsequent capacity to execute successful R&S operations.

## Conclusion

The reader should not walk away from this article with the belief that the tactical and technical expertise of the 24 competing teams was below average or that the Gainey Cup has identified gaps requiring wholesale re-evaluation moving forward. The competitors demonstrated proficiency in their ability to establish OPs and conduct evaluation and evacuation of casualties. Competitors in the 2017 Gainey Cup improved vastly on their peers in the 2015 competition in their understanding and execution of route-classification tasks and of CBRN decontamination and reporting procedures.

The 2017 Gainey Cup acted as a signpost on the road to recovering scout ability; as such, clear improvement was seen but much work lies ahead. The competitors demonstrated a lack of proficiency in some of the core reconnaissance tasks (land navigation, calling for indirect fire and vehicle identification). A cavalry scout who cannot navigate, cannot call for fire and cannot correctly identify a vehicle on the battlefield is nearly useless to commanders. The authors also can attest to similar gaps from their time in command of cavalry troops.

Many of the capability gaps identified in this article can be addressed through Sergeant’s Time Training. Training in these fundamental skills costs few resources and little additional time if incorporated into a regular training program that focuses on building and sustaining skills. Sergeant’s Time is just such a recurring event.

In conclusion, the Gainey Cup will continue to move forward, capturing lessons-learned and best practices from this year’s competition and striving to make the 2019 competition better than the 2017 competition. However, it is more imperative that the operational Army captures these lessons-learned and reaches out to the institutional Army and the CTCs for ways to execute innovative and effective training. The proof will be in the pudding: are we as an Army comfortable with merely coming together every two years, trying to prove our worth in the Gainey Cup, or will leaders at the highest echelons place emphasis on R&S operations? Will lessons highlighted by the Gainey Cup be taken back and improved on by junior leaders at installations across the U.S. Army and by our allied partners?

The 144 competitors in the 2017 Gainey Cup represented the very best of the Army and its future. Are your scouts up to the test? What will they be working on in the meantime?

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## Acronym Quick-Scan

**ARC** – Army Reconnaissance Course

**ATP** – Army technical publication

**BCT** – brigade combat team

**CALL** – Center for Army Lessons Learned

**CBRN** – chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear

**CLC** – Cavalry Leader’s Course  
**CTC** – combat-training center  
**FM** – field manual  
**FO** – forward observer  
**GPS** – Global Positioning System  
**OP** – observation post  
**R&S** – reconnaissance and security  
**ROC-V** – Recognition of Combat Vehicles  
**RSLC** – Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader’s Course  
**SM** – special manual  
**TC** – training circular  
**TLE** – target-location error  
**TRADOC** – (U.S. Army) Training and Doctrine Command  
**TTP** – tactics, techniques and procedures

## Photos



**Figure 1.** A team member from Team 5, 1-1 Cavalry, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division, assembles/disassembles a machinegun during the competition’s “final charge” event. Team 5 was named the Army’s latest Best Scout Squad on the final day of the 2017 Gainey Cup competition May 1-4. Scout squads competed on a soggy, rainy day in the “final charge,” a “gut check” that tested the squad’s ability to complete a 2.78-mile run, followed by seven tasks executed on Brave Rifles Field, Fort Benning, GA. *(Photo by Markeith Horace, Maneuver Center of Excellence Public Affairs Office)*



**Figure 2. A team member from second-place finisher 6-8 Cavalry, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, checks a radio during the Gainey Cup's "final charge" event. (Photo by Markeith Horace, Maneuver Center of Excellence Public Affairs Office)**



**Figure 3. Scout squads compete in an obstacle course, squad live-fire and stress shoot in the Harmony Church area of Fort Benning during the biennial Gainey Cup competition, which is designed to identify the most competent and versatile scout squad in the U.S. armed forces and partnering allies through an extremely challenging contest centered on essential R&S tasks and skills. (Photo by Patrick A. Albright, Maneuver Center of Excellence)**



**Figure 4. A scout from 4-3 Cav, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Regiment, observes “enemy” movement during the Gainey Cup competition. Competitors were challenged with physically and mentally challenging events centered on essential R&S tactics, techniques and procedures. (Photo by Markeith Horace, Maneuver Center of Excellence Public Affairs Office)**



**Figure 5. A competitor from the United Kingdom’s Queen’s Dragoon Guards low-crawls in the Gainey Cup competition’s obstacle course. (Photo by Markeith Horace, Maneuver Center of Excellence Public Affairs Office)**