

Gunner's Seat: Security through Tradecraft and Discipline

We Armor Branch noncommissioned officers must be masters of our trade. Whether it is a cavalry scout focused on his reconnaissance-and-security tasks or a tank crewmember focused on the decisive destruction of enemy formations, our tradecraft determines the effectiveness of not only individual Soldiers and small units, but also organizations at scale. Individual NCOs lacking in mastery of their craft will result in their Soldiers failing to grasp their individual and squad/crew tasks, which are vital to a unit's success on today's modern battlefield.

The tradecraft NCOs must master and teach to subordinates includes often-overlooked skills: camouflaging themselves, their equipment and battle positions, and mounted and dismounted observation posts; effectively communicating on the radio and with digital systems; operating with degraded communications, including cellphones; and maintaining overhead concealment as a part of route planning. These skills are vitally important in today's fight and require deliberate training and enforcement on behalf of NCOs. By instilling the discipline and skillset to do the hard right, the NCO enables a unit to not only survive but to seize opportunities before and during an engagement.

Here are two recent examples during both combat and training that force a return of our focus to tradecraft and discipline:

- In Eastern Europe, a mechanized battalion was annihilated by a Multiple Launch Rocket System attack from across an international border. The unit's location was initially identified through multiple sources; once its location was confirmed, the rocket attack followed shortly with devastating effects.
- At the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, 1-4 Infantry Battalion (the opposing force) continuously has success against U.S. and allied/partner forces by leveraging sensors to build data on coalition forces' communications. Once the communication hubs' locations are confirmed, 1-4 Infantry quickly deploys armed quadcopters or calls for artillery to engage the discovered element, catching it by surprise and with crippling effects.

Although the Army doesn't have policies prohibiting field cellphone usage or strict guidelines for acceptable radio and electronic transmission volume, leaders must understand the risk associated with large electronic signatures on the battlefield and how an adversary can use our signature against us, leveraging appropriate countermeasures. This electronic signature not only degrades the stealth and therefore the effectiveness of our scouts, but also exposes our armored main body to early detection and targeting.

We at the Armor School always stand ready to provide the institutional foundation for leaders to be effective on the modern battlefield, but it requires accepting short-term risk during the immediate training cycle to send leaders to functional courses like the Army Reconnaissance Course, Cavalry Leader's Course, Master Gunner Course and the upcoming Bradley Commander and Gunner Certification Course. The long-term reward is better-trained NCOs in the operational force with the tradecraft and discipline to facilitate organizational success. Success builds pride, and **PRIDE IS CONTAGIOUS!**

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