

From the Screen Line: Enhance Disciplined Initiative to Enable Mission Success: Commander's Reconnaissance Guidance

by CPT Anthony D. Capozzi

Greetings from Observation Post (OP) Harmony Church. Observations of students within the Department of Reconnaissance and Security (R&S), mixed with combat-training-center trends, show that the application of commander's reconnaissance guidance (CRG) and commander's security guidance is an area where cavalry squadrons and scout platoons need to improve. In this installment of "From the Screen Line," guidance beyond doctrine will be developed.

When a plan meets first contact during execution, organizations must maintain flexibility and be prepared for an operational environment of unprecedented ambiguity and speed. With that in mind, leaders must set subordinate troops up for success to accomplish the brigade or higher commander's intent. That begins with understanding the higher commander's intent. Once understood, the squadron executes the military decision-making process (Field Manual (FM) 6-0) or rapid squadron planning (Chapter 2, Army Technical Publication 3-20.96). At the conclusion, the squadron develops its mission statement comprised of the commander's intent nested in purpose with the higher commander, the CRG, operations graphics and a synchronization matrix from the squadron. All are linked and collectively provide subordinates with the tools to operate with disciplined initiative.

Maneuver elements are intimately familiar with the aforementioned essentials for mission execution, but CRG is unique to cavalry operations. It is often misused or misunderstood by those who perform these important roles, but CRG is vital to the planning and execution of cavalry operations.

Commander's recon guidance

Focus, tempo, engagement/disengagement and displacement criteria are critical components subordinates need to plan and execute. CRG's purpose is to enable flexibility to develop the situation and provide adequately detailed guidance to accomplish stated reconnaissance within a required timeframe (FM 3-98).

Following is an example of a simple narrative form of CRG from a squadron commander (SCO) to a troop commander that will be referred to throughout the rest of the article:

*Troop B, your focus is threat to find company-sized battle positions, indicating the enemy main battle zone. Your tempo is forceful and deliberate, using bounding movement technique beyond the probable line of contact, and collecting detailed information about enemy battle positions and engagement areas. Engage enemy reconnaissance elements with AT systems and disengage when faced with 3/7 [three tanks/seven BMP2s]. Bypass dismounted teams without AT systems and hand over to TF scout platoons. Displace east along PL Blue to provide early warning for potential enemy counterattack from the northeast and establish OP 21 to observe NAI 205.*¹

Focus

According to FM 3-98, the *focus* helps narrow the scope of operations to get the information most important to develop the situation; it is the information most important at the time. It is comprised of four categories: threat, infrastructure, terrain and weather effects, and society.

A commander and staff further refine the focus into *reconnaissance objectives*, which must be of such importance that they directly support the endstate defined in the commander's intent or information requirement that greatly assists satisfying a priority intelligence requirement (PIR) (FM 3-98). A reconnaissance objective is a terrain feature, geographic area or an enemy force about which the commander wants more information (FM 3-98).

A cavalry unit's *displacement criteria* is often linked to the reconnaissance objective. As in the preceding example, the displacement criteria for company-sized battle positions should be the unit's reconnaissance objective. It should be threat-focused but also refined to provide subordinates with the specific enemy element or capability within the focus; in the example, the commander refined the *threat* to company-sized battle positions.

In summary, the focus enables the cavalry element to prioritize information-collection assets to satisfy reconnaissance objectives and meet the higher commander’s intent.

Tempo

This is often the most confused portion of CRG. *Tempo* is comprised of two mutually exclusive categories: *level of covertness* and *level of detail* (FM 3-98). The terms that describe the level of covertness are *stealthy* or *forceful*.

Another way to think of covertness is *signature*. The mission may sometimes dictate a low signature or stealthy level of covertness. A different mission may dictate a high signature or forceful tempo.

Both tempos may also be used by two platoons in the same troop during a given mission. For example, one platoon may be tasked to remain undetected when performing reconnaissance on several named areas of interest (NAI) (most likely *stealthy*), while the other may be tasked to operate with a higher signature (most likely *forceful*) to bring the enemy above his detection threshold.

The terms that describe the level of detail for information collection are *rapid* or *deliberate*. The level of detail provides subordinates with guidance on the amount of information required to report to their higher headquarters. When a level of detail for information collection is rapid, it is limited to a certain prescribed list of indicators that contribute to answering PIR. When subordinates receive a tempo and the level of detail is deliberate, they’re required to report on all tasked indicators that support answering PIR. These terms are not defined by speed, but the nature of a rapid or deliberate level of detail suggests the amount of time subordinates may need to satisfy tasked information requirements.

There are only four possible combinations for tempo: *stealthy and deliberate*, *stealthy and rapid*, *forceful and deliberate* or *forceful and rapid*. (Table 1, adapted from Table 1.1 from the ***Reconnaissance and Security Commander’s Handbook*** published by the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL).) These terms, when used properly in conjunction with focus and the form of reconnaissance, provide clarity to subordinates on the “how to” of reconnaissance. However, commanders may take the liberty to elaborate on those terms and provide more guidance on how they envision their subordinate scouts to operate on the battlefield.

In the preceding narrative example of the SCO’s reconnaissance guidance to Troop B, he elaborates beyond simply two terms to provide clarity by saying, “Your tempo is forceful and deliberate, using bounding movement technique beyond the probable line of contact and collecting detailed information about enemy battle positions and engagement areas.”

Security-guidance tempo

Commander’s security-guidance tempo is described with two terms that dictate duration of operation: *short* or *long*. A short-duration tempo is defined as an operation of less than 12 hours, while a long-duration operation lasts more than 12 hours. This tempo enables subordinate troops to plan the number of OPs to establish. A short-duration tempo tells subordinates to establish more OPs due to minimal sustainment concerns. A long-duration tempo tells subordinates to take the sustainment and rest plan into consideration, which translates to fewer OPs.

Although FM 3-98 defines *security tempo* using the terms *short* and *long*, it may be beneficial for commanders to also consider reconnaissance tempo to provide further clarity when subordinate elements adhere to security fundamentals and perform continuous reconnaissance throughout the security operation.

	Rapid	Deliberate
Forceful	<p>Detail of information required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited information requirements Mission timeline emphasizes prompt collection <p>Scout’s signature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overt movement is acceptable Direct and indirect fire contact will not hinder or may even enhance collection efforts 	<p>Detail of information required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive information requirements Mission timeline allows comprehensive collection <p>Scout’s signature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overt movement is acceptable Direct and indirect fire contact will not hinder or may even enhance collection efforts

Stealthy	<p>Level of information required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited information requirements Mission timeline emphasizes prompt collection <p>Scout's signature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covert movement is required Direct and indirect fire contact will hinder collection efforts and/or freedom of maneuver 	<p>Level of information required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mission-completion time enables detailed collection Extensive information requirements <p>Scout's signature</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covert movement is required Direct and indirect fire contact will hinder collection efforts and/or freedom of maneuver

Table 1. Four possible reconnaissance tempos. (Excerpt from CALL manual Reconnaissance and Security Commander's Handbook)

Engagement/disengagement criteria

Engagement criteria establishes minimum thresholds for engagement (*lethal and nonlethal*) (FM 3-55). Engagement/disengagement criteria can either be *restrictive* or *permissive* (FM 3-98). To disengage from direct fire, you must first be engaged; otherwise, it may be viewed as bypass criteria. When discussing engagement criteria, all forms of contact must be considered.

For brevity purposes, I will focus on direct-fire contact. Following is a simple example to aid conceptual understanding.

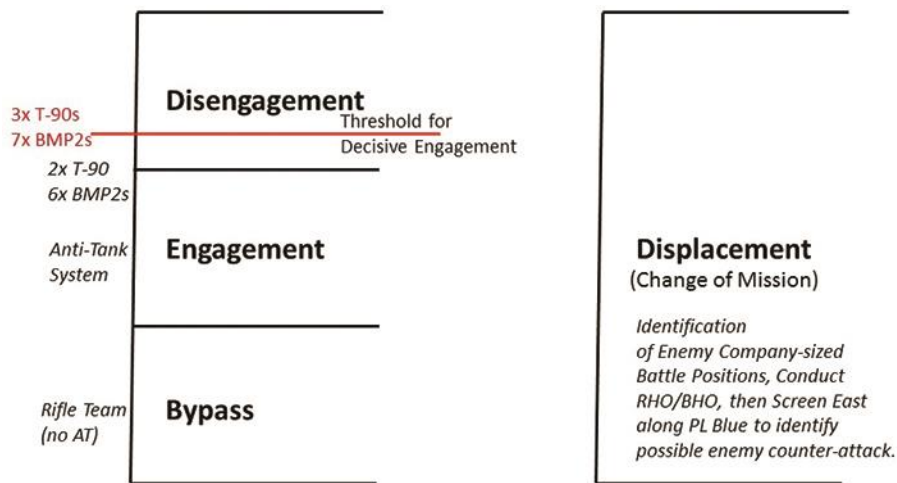


Figure 1. CRG.

In this example, an SCO provides guidance to a subordinate troop. This particular troop is a Troop B in an armored cavalry squadron. It retained both Bradley Fighting Vehicle (BFV) scout platoons (six BFVs x 36 scouts) and received one platoon of Abrams tanks under tactical control to accomplish its forceful and deliberate reconnaissance-in-force to identify enemy company battle positions. The SCO and staff specified that if this troop is in direct-fire contact with three T-90s and seven BMP2s (highlighted in red font on Figure 1), given the current relative combat power analysis, they will become decisively engaged; therefore, the SCO has determined their threshold for decisive engagement.

In an effort to ensure that his subordinate commander can retain freedom of maneuver, the SCO provides the Troop B commander with a disengagement criteria of two T-90s tanks and six BMP2s. The SCO is comfortable with Troop B engaging an element with an anti-tank (AT) system but does not care to eliminate an adversary team without an AT system, choosing a rifle-team bypass criteria instead. However, once contact is gained, there is an implied task to maintain that contact per the fundamentals of reconnaissance; the unit must have a plan to hand over that contact when gained to another element, preferably a combined-arms battalion's scout platoon or an adjacent troop within the squadron.

Displacement criteria

This defines triggers for planned withdrawal, passage of lines, battle handover or reconnaissance handover between units (FM 3-98). Conditions are event-driven (PIR satisfied), time-driven (latest time information is of value) or threat-driven (OPs compromised) (FM 3-98). Simply put, displacement criteria is a change of mission.

In the preceding example, the cavalry unit can begin displacement once it identifies enemy company-sized battle positions. However, the cavalry unit must maintain contact until an appropriate battle handover or reconnaissance handover is complete with an adjacent or the supported unit.

Conclusion

CRG is only one component, albeit a critical one, to the successful execution of R&S operations. Doctrine is a guideline, but our force must effectively use the doctrinal terminology in current circulation to execute R&S operations when in close contact with the enemy and a civilian populace. The ability for commanders to describe and scouts to understand the commander's R&S guidance creates the shared understanding necessary to shape the battlefield to achieve a relative advantage.

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Notes

¹ The example is not a checklist but a narrative explaining how a commander visualizes the reconnaissance fight while using key components of CRG in the narrative.

Acronym Quick-Scan

AT – anti-tank

BCT – brigade combat team

BFV – Bradley Fighting Vehicle

BHO – battle handover

BMP2 – *Boyeva Mashina Pekhoty 2* (second-generation Russian amphibious, tracked infantry fighting vehicle)

CALL – Center for Army Lessons Learned

CLC – Cavalry Leader's Course

CRG – commander's reconnaissance guidance

FM – field manual

NAI – named area of interest

OP – observation post

PIR – priority intelligence requirement

PL – phase line

R&S – reconnaissance and security

RHO – reconnaissance handover

RSLC – Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader's Course

SCO – squadron commander

TF – task force