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Employing the Brigade Reconnaissance Troop

by Lieutenant Colonel Bart Howard and Captain Jeff Ramsey

For over five months, Task Force Centurion (1-34 AR) of Fort Riley, Kansas, had the unique opportunity to deploy to Kuwait for Operation Intrinsic Action. It was organized with eight companies, one of which included D Troop, 4th Cavalry (BRT) which is normally organic to 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (M). Having a cavalry troop assigned gave the task force great flexibility and also allowed for the development and refinement of effective tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for BRT operations in an operational environment.

The BRT was formed in February 2000 and prior to Intrinsic Action had undergone extensive training exercises and a National Training Center rotation. Throughout all these missions, D Troop learned many valuable lessons.

The first lesson validated was the task organization of D Troop. A BRT is organized by MTOE with a HQ and two scout platoons. 1st BCT has opted to permanently task-organize the Striker

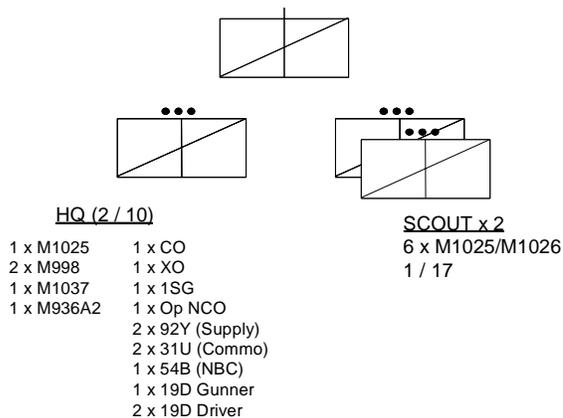
Platoon (formally COLT Platoon) of the DS artillery battalion into the troop.

The Striker Platoon allows the BCT commander to execute deep operations through the employment of precision indirect fires and close air support. During tactical operations, the platoons are further task-organized by having three Striker teams embedded in each scout platoon. The Striker platoon leader and platoon sergeant act as the fire support element for the BRT and move with the BRT headquarters. This organization produces a highly effective team of scout "eyes" and Striker "shooters." The combination proved to be highly effective, both at the National Training Center (NTC) and during force-on-force operations in Kuwait. Adding Strikers to the scout platoons significantly increases the effectiveness of the BRT. Strikers add depth to reconnaissance zones, provide further reconnaissance handover to the task force scouts, add more eyes and, most importantly, ensure the execution of crucial deep fires.

Additionally, 1st Brigade decided, when the BRT was activated, that the DS artillery battalion would have administrative control of the BRT. This includes all UCMJ and all logistical support in garrison. This command relationship has proven to be very successful as the BRT is included in all programs that would normally be controlled by a battalion HQ. Furthermore, the troop includes the permanent attachment of three mechanics, a PLL clerk, and a medic, which field operations have proven to be necessary for sustainment.

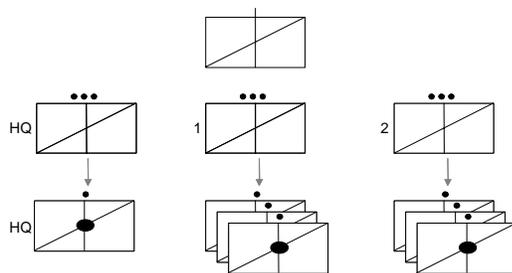
D Troop also validated a number of techniques of employment. Working in the high, rocky desert of the NTC and the relatively flat desert of Kuwait gave D Troop considerable experience in varying terrain. In most operations, the troop estimated as a planning factor that it could cover four Named Areas of Interest (NAIs) and four Targeted Areas of Interest (TAIs). Each platoon was responsible for two NAIs and two TAIs. The troop would normally man

Task Organization (MTOE)



* MTOE strength: Personnel: 4 / 44, Vehicles: 17

Task Organization (Tactical)



* Tactical Strength: Personnel: 5 / 70, Vehicles: 25

12 OPs. Scout OPs consisted of two scout squads and Striker OPs consisted of one.

This allows each NAI to be observed by one scout section and each TAI to be observed by one Striker team. This leaves one scout section (usually the C Section with the PL and PSG) for command and control, CASEVAC, resupply, and redundancy of one or both NAIs. It also leaves one Striker team for redundancy and possible relay. It is possible for the BRT to observe more than four NAIs and four TAIs, but this will reduce the duration of the OPs.

Scout and Striker integration is absolutely critical. Scouts must be able to infiltrate the Strikers into position by clearing the route and they must acquire and pass targets to them. The Strikers must identify tactical and tech-

nical triggers to destroy moving targets, and must also be prepared to pass targets to the task force scouts, usually screening behind the BRT. For survivability, most OPs operate dismounted. Mounted OPs are far too easy to detect and kill. This is always as determined by METT-TC (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, time and civilians).

In all operations, the critical importance of sharing situational awareness with task force scouts proved to be the key to reconnaissance success. The BRT and task force scouts must be accustomed to working together. They must train and rehearse together. They must understand each other's mission and the current friendly and enemy situation. In the defense, task force scouts must know what routes the enemy is using so that they may maintain constant contact. In the offense, task

force scouts must have a detailed picture of what enemy forces are in front of them, so that they may avoid contact and get to their final OPs. In operations at the NTC and in Kuwait, Task Force 1-34 AR and D Troop developed TTPs that ensured that both the BRT and task force scouts had common situational awareness, allowing all recon assets to meet commander's intent.

What techniques did we use? Task force scouts ensured that they continuously monitored the BRT command net. This allowed for instantaneous knowledge of BRT locations and contacts. Task force scouts and the BRT worked with consolidated R and S graphics, which aided in coordination. Both units practiced the drill of handing off contacts both forward and backward to ensure no enemy was bypassed or lost. All units used standardized brigade passage of lines checklists and conducted most coordination by FM radio.

What didn't work as well? Many times, attempts to link up face-to-face did not work and only led to compromised scouts and direct fire contact. Coming out of a good hide position to make coordination is often not worth the cost. Rely on FM. Units should not share NAIs and battlespace. When possible, both BRT and task force scouts need to have physical separation of battlespace to avoid confusion and possible fratricide. Finally, attempts to transfer command and control of Striker elements between task force units and the BRT during the battle were not as successful as wargamed. It is best to keep the Strikers under BRT control and have them continue to execute their critical fire support tasks. Priority of fires may change, but control of Strikers does not.

In all operations, the strong working relationship between the BRT and task force scouts proved to be the key to success. The 1-34 AR scouts had extensive pre-deployment training and had been working with D Troop for over eight months, to include an NTC rotation. All leaders knew each other's capabilities and limitations. All units recognized voices on the radio and understood the TTPs to keep each other informed. We would recommend including all task force platoons in brigade reconnaissance OPDs and, where feasible, participate in brigade recon STXs. As stated, we were able to exer-

cise our scouts with the BRT on a number of occasions and this helps build a solid recon team across the spectrum of brigade and task force.

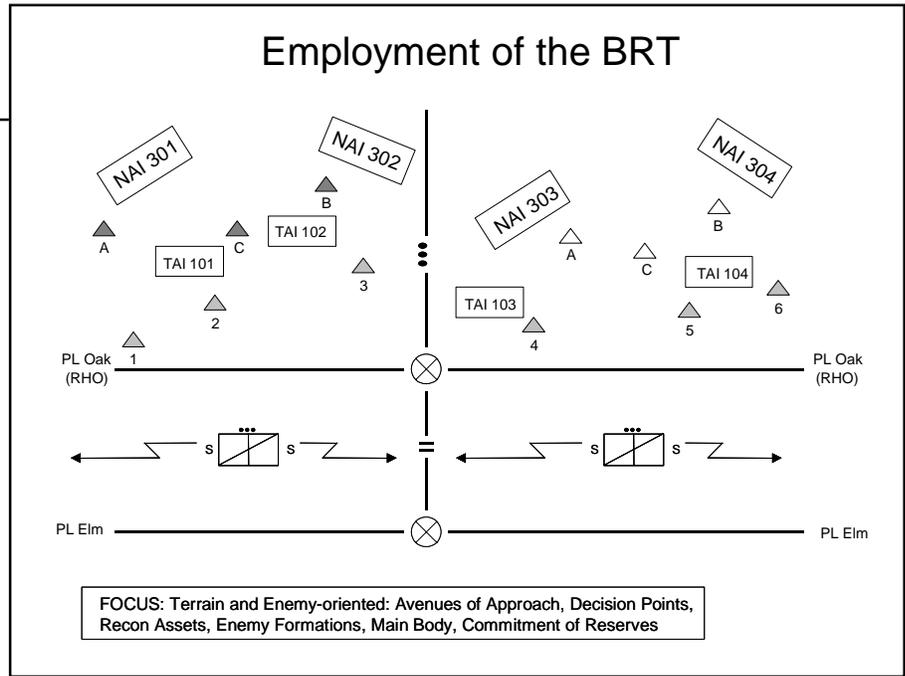
A few notes on D Troop's performance while deployed to Kuwait. The BRT concept has proven to be highly successful. The inclusion of D Troop in our task organization gave us enormous flexibility. D Troop was able to draw equipment quickly and immediately gave us the ability to conduct reconnaissance patrols and force protection missions. During our tour of duty, D Troop performed numerous security patrols, GDP rehearsals, QRF duties, convoy escort, and NBC reconnaissance. During live fire operations, D Troop validated its capability to control indirect fires and even designate targets for AH-64 attack helicopters. On numerous occasions, D Troop performed HUMINT by conducting patrols in our area of operations with augmentation from task force linguists. This offered us the ability to talk to the local populace about their observations and concerns. D Troop conducted coordination with LNOs and also executed a rehearsal of passage of lines operations, which always proves to be a complex and high-risk operation. The BRT is the brigade's most flexible unit to assign the mission of forward and flank coordination.

Undoubtedly, there are still refinements to be made in the employment of the BRT. CASEVAC is a reoccurring issue. The best method seems to task area support to the closest maneuver unit that can provide medical assets when necessary.

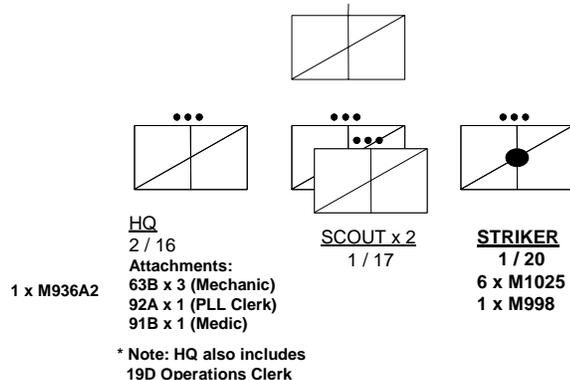
The difficulty lies in evacuating casualties that are far forward from their OPs back to a point where the maneuver unit can link up with them. It can work. Task Force 1-34 AR was able to satisfactorily execute this support, both at NTC and in Kuwait, during force-on force operations. Additionally, MOUT situations present an entirely different environment, which must be considered in METT-TC.

In conclusion, D Troop, 4th Cavalry validated the BRT concept while forward-deployed to Kuwait. Like cavalry units before and since, it consistently provided the commander a unit that could alert quickly, conduct complex missions, and get eyes deep in order to provide critical information to the command.

Employment of the BRT



Task Organization (Operational)



* Attachments in Bold (Personnel: 1 / 26, Vehicles: 8)

* Operational Strength: Personnel: 5 / 70, Vehicles: 25

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