

Targeting and Fire Support With the Brave Rifles Regiment

by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Christopher A. Saindon

As the First Field Artillery Warrant Officer to be assigned to the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, what you are about to read is unique to the regiment and their way of life. This is the ONLY active heavy ACR left in the ARMY. They rely heavily on their fire supporters. The regiment has a good understanding of fires and does not expect FA to KILL anything. They do, however, expect fires to disrupt, delay, neutralize, limit, suppress, and harass the enemy. The operations, personnel, fire support planning, organization, and targeting objectives are just some of the issues that are addressed.

To know the 3d ACR (“The Eyes and Ears of III Corps”), you must understand how the regiment is organized. *FM 17-95, Cavalry Operations* outlines the basic guidelines for the regiment. The regiment is made up of three maneuver squadrons, (headquarters troop, three cavalry troops, tank company and a howitzer battery), one aviation squadron, and a support squadron. Some of the elements within the squadron chain of command are a MI company with divisional assets, ADA battery, engineer company, and a chemical company. The regiment has 15 missions with unique training requirements.

Hot Troop Operations

A ground cavalry troop conducts combat operations to prepare the battlefield for follow-on operations by the squadron or regiment. The troop’s actions increase the commander’s flexibility, depth, and reaction time before becoming decisively engaged or committing his main body. The Hot Troop is deployed behind, but coordinated with, the regimental reconnaissance assets. It can consist of a ground cavalry troop, reinforced by ground surveillance radars, Fox Nuclear Biological Chemical reconnaissance vehicles, Stinger team vehicles, and Bradley

Stinger Fighting Vehicles (BSFVs). The troop would deploy along a screen line, with cav troop sections deployed forward utilizing one tank platoon and one scout platoon in hunter-killer configurations at the squadron commander’s discretion. The other scout platoon is deployed behind the screen line to provide depth and the remaining tank platoon in a hide position in reserve as a quick reaction force. Attached elements would be utilized as far forward as possible to increase the security and detection capabilities of the Hot Troop and the main body. The troop’s organic mortars and the squadron’s organic howitzer battery would provide indirect fire support. One platoon of the howitzer battery would be deployed as forward as possible to provide fires for the Hot Troop (the platoon would remain under battery control). The Hot Troop’s main mission would be to provide security for the main body while it prepares for future combat operations. The primary focus is the screen mission, but can include zone reconnaissance or movement to contact missions. The Hot Troop enhances the parent unit’s control of the battlefield through early presence in order to seize and control key terrain. The Hot Troop also should protect the main force by destroying enemy reconnaissance elements with indirect and direct fires.

Aviation

The regimental aviation squadron (RAS) consists of eight troops which include an HHT, three air cavalry troops (ACT), two attack troops (ATK), one assault helicopter troop (AHT), and an aviation unit maintenance troop (AVUM). The squadron can be expected to conduct reconnaissance and screening operations, and execute attack and lift missions in support of the regiment.

The squadron’s ability to collect and report and move unhindered across all

types of terrain makes it an integral player in all regimental operations.

Fire Support Personnel

The regimental commander (RCO) has overall responsibility for command, control, and coordination of the fire support systems. The direct support (DS) field artillery commander acts as the regimental fire support coordinator (FSCOORD). He provides his assessment of the current and future capabilities of all fire support assets supporting the regiment. He supervises the commander’s fire support coordination agencies to ensure the RCO’s intent for fire support is met.

The regimental fire support officer (RFSO), in the DS commander’s absence, acts as the regimental FSCOORD. He is in charge of all fire support operations in the regiment.

The squadron fire support officer (SFSO) acts as the squadron FSCOORD if there is no FA battalion in direct support of the squadron. He advises the squadron commander on fire support-related issues, supervises the troop/company fire support teams, and writes and disseminates the fire support plan and fire support execution matrix. He coordinates with the air liaison officer (ALO) for close air support (CAS)/joint air attack team (JAAT) missions.

The troop FSO plans, coordinates, and executes fire support at troop level. He advises the troop commander on fire support matters, positions troop mortars, and requests, adjusts, and directs all types of fire support. He provides emergency control of CAS in the absence of Air Force personnel. All FSOs/FSCOORDs are responsible to their maneuver commanders for the status of FA fire support assets.

The regimental targeting officer is the regimental fire support officer in his absence. The targeting officer not only functions within the regimental fire

support element (RFSE), he must also supervise the targeting section in the analysis control element (ACE). He is wearing two hats at all times, targeting officer (TO) and field artillery intel officer (FAIO). He is responsible for the staff control of target acquisition (TA) assets organic or attached to the regiment. He assists the RS2 in all targeting matters. He also must be the radar expert for the regiment.

An Air Force tactical air control party (TACP) operates with the squadron to advise, assist the commander, request, and coordinate tactical air support, and to meet other requirements. The squadron often provides the TACP with an armored vehicle for protection when operating forward. The TACP is an integral part of fire support operations.

Scouts, ground and air, are the primary acquisition element in the regiment. The FIST or combat observation lasing team (COLT) can acquire targets when positioned in accordance with the commander's guidance. Additionally, field artillery target acquisition systems and intelligence-gathering systems provide targeting information that the fire support element can use. Information provided by artillery target acquisition systems is often useful to the RS2 in preparing and analyzing situation templates. The FSE and the S2 coordinate closely to take advantage of information provided by both systems.

Fire Support Organization

Field artillery organization for combat is dependent on the assigned mission and the availability of corps assets. The following are options for the squadron howitzer batteries (HWB):

HWB autonomous: This organization is normally used in the absence of supporting field artillery. Calls for fire (CFF) are submitted from the squadron observers through the squadron fire support element (SFSE) to the HWB platoon operation center. Positioning authority lies with the squadron commander.

HWB incorporated into DS battalion: When a FA battalion is given the mission of direct support to the squadron, the HWB becomes the fourth fir-

ing battery for the DS battalion. The HWB receives its fire missions from the DS FA fire direction center (FDC) and is positioned by the squadron commander. The regiment has NO organic radar (AN/TPQ-36 or 37) assigned. They must rely on the FA battalion or brigade that is attached to them to provide radar support. Along with the radar, that brigade also becomes the counterfire headquarters. The brigade's counterfire cell is responsible for planning and implementing the radar coverage to support the regiment's deep and close fights. The regimental targeting officer and the brigade counterfire officer must work hand in hand to get this accomplished. The following is a quick reference (checklist) to facilitate the integration of FA units into regimental operations.

One FA Battalion DS to the Regiment without FIST:

- Brief the FSCoord on the regiment's organization and how the regiment plans to conduct the current operation.
- Use the FA battalion's liaison officer (LNO) team to augment the RFSE.
- Use the FA battalion to weigh the main effort
- Establish both digital and voice FM fire control nets, FM voice fire support coordination net, and FM voice with higher controlling FS agency.
- Use the FA battalion's LNO radio for routine reports to and from the FA battalion.
- Ensure that all fire support elements receive copies of all regimental orders and overlays.
- Establish and maintain a regimental coordinated fire line (CFL) 3 to 5 kms in front of the lead squadron(s).

One FA Brigade Force Field Artillery Headquarters (FFA) to the Regiment:

- FSCoord and RCO determine how best to employ the available assets.
- Brief the FSCoord on the regiment's organization and how the regiment plans to conduct the current operation.



- Supplement the RFSE with the following: One FA MAJ or CPT, one SFC or SSG FSNCO, two enlisted soldiers (one Initial Fire Support Automated System (IFSAS) qualified) are needed to make a second shift for the RFSE. (The total number assigned to the RFSE is five — one major, one warrant officer, one FSNCO and two FS specialists).

- Establish digital and voice FM fire control nets, FM voice fire support coordination net, and FM voice with higher controlling FS agency. Use the FA battalion's LNO radio for routine reports to and from the FA battalion.
- Ensure that the attached radars are on the fire support coordination net.
- Establish and maintain a regimental CFL 3 to 5 kms in front of the lead squadron(s).

If the RCO wants to control the FA brigade fires (mass fires), then the mission of the FA battalions following the lead squadrons is general support reinforcing (GSR) and not DS to the lead squadrons. If the regiment is covering a wide area, then strongly consider assigning FA battalions DS to the squadrons. LNO requirements for the FA units are to maintain close coordination between the lead squadrons and the follow-on FA battalions. Either the FA



battalions or the FA brigade should send a LNO to the lead squadron. This will facilitate the movement of the artillery through obstacle breaches, real time enemy situation, etc. Regimental deep fires are 15 to 30 kms in front of lead squadrons, targets are located either by regimental-controlled assets or higher HQ-controlled assets. Regimental close fires consist of targets located 5 to 15 kms in front of lead squadrons.

Fire Planning

The regiment uses top-down fire planning with bottom-up refinements. The regiment uses the D3A methodology to develop its sensor-to-shooter fire plan. The number of targets allocated to subordinate squadrons will be based upon the tactical situation and mission, enemy, terrain, troops and time available (METT-T). Mission, concept of operation, S2 intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB), commander's intent, and the results of wargaming form the basis for regimental fire planning; from these, the RFSE develops the top-down fire plan. The RFSE considers, phases/sequence of operations, critical events, critical areas, key terrain, resources available (firing units, ammunition, time, effects, etc.), main attack/main effort, and enemy situation (IPB). Fire support planning is inte-

grated with the development of the scheme of maneuver. At regimental and squadron level, all members of the fire support element are involved in the process. The best use of fire support resources is to support the chosen scheme of maneuver, which is determined by the following considerations:

- Priority of fire for subordinate units
- What targets to attack
- What is the targeting objective?
- What target effect to achieve
- What fire support means to use?
- Priorities for engaging targets
- Allocating fires
- Ammunition restrictions.

The fire support plan outlines the way fire support assets will be used to complement the scheme of maneuver, and it provides instructions for executing those fires. It ranks targets in priority order, matches them with the available fire support systems, and eliminates duplicate targets. It allows fires to be executed quickly, without specific direction from the commander, once the operation is underway. The fire support plan may include the following:

- A general concept of how fires will support the battle.

- Known enemy locations should be carefully targeted. Too many targets complicate the fire plan and delay fires.

- A priority of fires that tells which element will receive fire support in case of conflicting needs.

- A high-payoff target list.
- An allocation of priority targets and final protective fires, if available.
- Fire support execution matrix for indirect fire weapons.
- Informal airspace coordination areas.
- Coordination measures for providing troop safety and synchronizing supporting fires.
- Target overlay.
- Attack guidance matrix.

The fire plan is constantly refined or modified as the operation gets underway to continue providing responsive fires wherever they are needed. Formal planning is the deliberate process when adequate time is available and usually flows from higher to lower echelons. Informal fire support planning is a far more dynamic process that responds to the immediate problems on the battlefield and generally flows from lower to higher echelons. Informal planning is

common within the squadron and the SOP should facilitate this.

The RFSE consolidates the squadron fire support plans, eliminates duplications, and ensures that targets of interest to the regimental commander are included. They coordinate with the ALO to determine targets appropriate for attack by close air support. Hasty fire planning is necessary when the regiment, squadron, or troop commander receives a FRAGO requiring immediate execution. The fire support plan is tied closely to IPB. IPB identifies critical terrain or avenues of approach that should be targeted and target areas of interest. It also provides templates of known or suspected enemy positions or likely offensive actions.

Troop FSOs accompany troop commanders to receive the squadron operations order (OPORD). This permits the troop FSOs to hear the concept of the operation simultaneously with their commanders. Within minutes after the OPORD is given, they can get together to develop their fire support plan. The squadron commander and FSO may develop an event-oriented scheme of fires to support the selected course of action. This fire support plan will require a specific scout, troop FSO, or other element to fire a specific indirect fire system at a designated target when or if a specific event occurs.

Troop Fire Planning

Upon receiving the squadron execution matrix and target list, the troop FSO will review the matrix and target list for targets the squadron has assigned the troop FSO to execute. The troop FSO will identify the targets on the ground. The troop FSO will ensure that the targets can be observed. If targets cannot be observed, the troop FSO will request target refinement. The squadron FSE will delete the old target and input a new target.

NOTE: Criteria established are a function of METT-T. In many instances, such as a movement to contact, targets will not be observed because of the distances involved. Target observation requirements are a planning factor that a troop FSO has to consider when developing his plan. Once the troop FSO has plotted and identified his assigned targets, he will develop the trigger points to support executing the target. Squadron/troops will finalize targets during reconnaissance. The squadron FSE will consolidate troop lists and

refinements. The squadron FSO will resolve duplications and then forward the revised target list to RFSE and troop FSOs. Upon receipt, the RFSE will plan, analyze, resolve duplications, approve/input refinements, and produce a consolidated target list and updated fire support execution matrix. The RFSE will provide a copy of the consolidated target list and updated fire support execution matrix to the following: FA commander/FSCoord, DS FA S3, squadron FSEs, and corps FSE. Squadron FSEs will provide a copy of the consolidated target list and updated squadron execution matrix to the following: RFSE, troop FSOs, howitzer battery — if organic, DS FA battalion FDC if DS to squadron. Troop FSOs will provide a copy of the matrix to the mortar section NCOIC, platoon leaders, and the troop commander.

Fire Support Rehearsals: Outcome of the rehearsals are the verification of the target list; observers primary and alternate position; observation plan (target execution responsibility); triggers for events; fire unit assignments; volume of fire needed for a desired effect; priority targets; communications nets, primary and alternate; fire support coordination measures; and clearance of fires. The regimental fire support rehearsal will take place after the regimental maneuver rehearsal, the squadron and troop fire support rehearsals, and after the field artillery technical rehearsal.

Clearance of Indirect Fires

The purpose is to explain the procedures for clearing fires within the 3d ACR. Elements for clearance of fires are that all fires require “positive” clearance prior to firing if target is located short of the squadron’s CFL. The troop commander is responsible for clearing fires in his zone. However, the troop XO or troop tactical operations center (TOC) personnel have the best information on unit locations, and will assist the commander in clearing fires. Positive clearance of indirect fires requires a positive verbal response from the supported unit before firing a mission. This is true even when fires are directed within the supported unit’s boundaries. The FSE at the maneuver headquarters initiating the request for fires is responsible for obtaining internal clearance and, as necessary, clearance from adjacent units in whose areas the targets lie. The unit level of the boundary that is being fired across is

the level at which clearance of fires is required (if firing across a squadron boundary, clearance must come through that squadron’s FSE).

Targeting Objectives

Targeting objectives, combined with the desired commander’s intent for fires, articulate target effects. Targeting objectives are the desired outcome resulting from the placement of indirect fires on the enemy. Terms such as disrupt, divert, delay, limit, and isolate are used by the RCO to convey his intent for the use of indirect fires against enemy targets. These enemy targets may be known targets that are identified through IPB and the intelligence collection efforts. Enemy targets may also be unknown until contact is made. This is particularly true during reconnaissance and security operations when information about the enemy is vague. In some cases where the intelligence information about the enemy does not identify known targets, targeting objectives allow the commander to clearly articulate how he plans to use artillery once contact is made.

Conclusion

With all the assets available to the 3d ACR, not only organic but also attached, they are a dominating force on the battlefield. Targeting in the regiment is a group effort. All the sections play a part in the military decision-making process. The targeting team members are constantly rehearsing and synchronizing as they go through the process. This is difficult when you are trying to plan fires for a unit that literally flies through the battlefield.

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