

# Cavalry In Force XXI

by Major General Lon E. Maggart



Photo by Greg Stewart

As the U.S. Army rapidly transforms itself into the decisive force of the 21st century, the requirement for specially organized, trained, and equipped cavalry forces must be re-evaluated and stated. While some suggest that cavalry forces are no longer needed in an era of electronic sensors and battlefield information technologies, our Force XXI developmental efforts to date indicate the opposite — a dedicated, specialized cavalry force, enabled by new systems, is paramount to fighting and operating within this new strategic environment. This article lays the foundation for the continued evolution of cavalry as the “eyes and ears” of the combined arms team.

## A Fundamental Role

As a start point, the role of cavalry needs to be restated, given the new operational conditions within which we will fight in the 21st century. We believe that the importance of cavalry operations to provide security and conduct reconnaissance in Force XXI will dramatically increase. Cavalry is uniquely capable of providing the decisive force commander the *assured* means to gain information, secure the force, and control battlefield tempo necessary to concentrate overwhelming combat power against the enemy at decisive times and places.

As an enabling capability of the Army's new capstone doctrine on information operations (FM 100-6), cavalry forces will be tasked to significantly enhance the decisive force commander's ability to set conditions for success.

The ability for the combined arms force of Force XXI to achieve simulta-

neity and depth will be based on the success of cavalry operations. Cavalry provides a critical maneuver capability to larger forces conducting deep and simultaneous attacks. To rapidly defeat the enemy, commanders will employ cavalry to set favorable conditions for maneuver by gathering information and shaping the battle space. In this context, maneuver is used to attack the enemy's vulnerabilities, such as flanks, rear, lines of communication, logistics, and combat support capabilities. Tactical commanders in the future will need an unprecedented, high degree of situational awareness to protect their forces and successfully maneuver. This awareness is acquired by reducing uncertainties on the battlefield through aggressive security and reconnaissance operations by digitally equipped cavalry units.

## Information Age Warfare: Key Assumptions

The Armor Center, in concert with our TRADOC partners and the Experimental Force (EXFOR), have performed extensive work to define future operating conditions and concepts for Force XXI and beyond. From this effort, key assumptions relevant to the role of Cavalry in Force XXI have emerged that shape our thinking:

- Reconnaissance and security tasks require specialized organizations, equipment, and training.
- Battlefield information collection and force protection are assured capabilities that tactical commanders must possess organic to their force.
- Tactical commanders require independent maneuver forces to shape

the battlespace and facilitate movement of the striking force.

- Tactical commanders will require accurate, manned, real-time information that can be gained in all weather, terrain, and varying degrees of enemy threat to supplement and verify information gained by other sources.
- Tactical units will be required to fight for information and expand the battlespace in space, time, and purpose *without* the expenditure of combat power from the decisive force.

## Future Battlefield Requirements

Success in Force XXI operations will require unique capabilities which only cavalry units possess and can employ for the decisive force commander. With digital systems, cavalry units will provide information with unprecedented levels of timeliness, accuracy, and redundancy. Cavalry's ability to provide confirmation for other information sensors, as well as to provide security for the decisive force, allows cavalry forces to fulfill vital battlefield requirements for the commander.

**Provide Time and Space to Regulate Tempo.** Tactical commanders will think and plan in terms of battlespace. Cavalry units will operate to continually expand the battlespace, which in turn provides more time and space for the commander to assess the situation, determine courses of action, and take action. Security operations will delay enemy movements and deny or deceive force information to the enemy, ensuring reaction time for any necessary follow-up actions. Further, cavalry possesses the lethality to destroy enemy

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reconnaissance and security elements, which is essential to setting the conditions to gain information dominance prior to engaging the enemy.

**Obtain Current Information.** In the future, tactical commanders will have a wide variety of digital information assets available. However, the ability to use these systems may decrease on contact with the enemy. As a result, the force commander relies primarily on his cavalry to provide him the information that he needs to fight current engagements. Information gathering can then be focused on collecting information the commander will need in subsequent actions, or in other physical areas of the battlefield. Technical and procedural connectivity between cavalry forces and other units employing joint and Army reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition systems is imperative to the effective integration of all information functions supporting the commander. Thus, cavalry collects, confirms, and interprets real-time battlefield information, wholly dedicated to the tactical commander's needs, and fills gaps left by other intelligence assets.

**Preserve Combat Power.** Sustaining and preserving the combat power of a smaller force will be critical to winning in the future. Cavalry units possess sufficient combat power to serve in an economy-of-force role. Cavalry units, when performing security operations (screen, guard, cover), protect the decisive force from prematurely engaging the enemy, thus preserving combat power and retaining freedom of maneuver. Furthermore, cavalry units exponentially increase the effectiveness of their parent organizations. For example, in many instances, a divisional cavalry squadron is the equivalent of another maneuver brigade to the division commander because it frees a brigade for use in other places, or relieves it of duties it would otherwise have to perform.

**Facilitate Movement.** We posit the future battlefield to possess non-linear or non-contiguous relationships among friendly and enemy forces. This condition places a premium on the ability to command and control unit movements. Operating within such a fluid environment will demand rapid establishment

and security of lines of communications between widely dispersed units. Enabling the decisive force to execute continuous movement will require security and support of highly mobile cavalry forces.

**Support Area Operations.** The fluid nature of future combat also increases the criticality of locating and securing support areas. This requires allocating assets to establish and retain their use. Future adversaries may also be capable of attacking throughout the depth of the battlefield. Thus, support areas and our decisive force may be engaged simultaneously. While other capabilities exist to secure these areas, the versatile nature of cavalry units makes them suitable to perform critical reconnaissance and security tasks of support areas when required. These tasks may include several of the base reconnaissance missions (route, area, or zone), area damage control, restoring command and control, guiding movement of forces, and combat escort.

### **Cavalry and Force XXI: Patterns of Operations**

The Force XXI operational concept centers around six patterns of operation that provide a conceptual framework that enable us to think about and develop future warfighting capabilities. We firmly believe that cavalry forces are fully suited to perform tasks and functions within all of these patterns. A brief description of the versatile nature of cavalry follows.

**Project the Force.** Cavalry is uniquely organized as a self-contained, combined arms force suitable for early entry into a theater of operation to expand lodgments, and set the stage for ease of entry of the decisive force. Cavalry can also conduct combat operations directly from the port of debarkation upon arrival, also setting favorable conditions for the arrival and employment of decisive forces.

**Protect the Force.** Cavalry will perform critical force protection activities for the decisive force. The performance of security and reconnaissance missions will be essential in providing early warning of enemy dispositions, capabilities, and activities. Moreover,

cavalry units will be capable of physically guarding friendly forces from enemy contact, as well as providing the real-time information needed to effectively employ passive security measures to further protect the force.

**Gain Information Dominance.** Gaining and denying information has been, and remains, cavalry's core capability. Cavalry forces are capable of employing active measures to gain information in all weather, terrain, and varying threat conditions. Whether through raids or active security measures, cavalry can seek out and destroy the enemy's capability to gain information. Cavalry is a dedicated force that augments, supplements, and verifies information collected throughout the information build-up period. It provides large-scale human intelligence that can only be gained through close contact with the enemy — validating the predictive analysis of threat intentions and capabilities. The performance of force-oriented reconnaissance will enable the decisive force commander to focus his cavalry on finding and staying with specific enemy forces, wherever they may maneuver on the battlefield. The cavalry force performing force-oriented reconnaissance will provide the updated information needed to set conditions and conduct decisive attacks upon the enemy from positions in depth. The dynamic and fluid nature of this type of operation will rely minimally on terrain-oriented control measures and maximize the use of situational awareness gained by digitization of the cavalry force.

Additionally, cavalry performs terrain reconnaissance and verifies mobility data bases prior to the commitment of the decisive force. This allows the commander to fill in the gaps in terrain data and to identify environmental changes due to natural and man-made factors over time.

**Shape the Battlespace.** The cavalry force will be operating to shape the commander's battlespace in order to set the conditions for decisive operations. Cavalry can perform a multitude of tasks to alter the tempo and dispositions of the enemy, such as forcing the enemy to expend resources by having to cope with multiple threats simultane-

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ously. Cavalry can identify the enemy's capabilities and intentions in real-time by observing enemy reactions to friendly contact. Only an armed maneuver unit can delay a force and make it show intent. Cavalry will operate to deceive the enemy as to the decisive force's intentions.

**Decisive Operations.** Cavalry's main function is to support the maneuver of the decisive force. It accomplishes this by controlling the tempo of operations — by destroying enemy information or security forces and allowing the decisive force to attack the enemy unhindered. Cavalry is uniquely capable of performing real-time battle damage assessment that allows the decisive force commander to re-orient combat power to finish the fight or exploit battlefield opportunities. Cavalry must also locate and maintain contact with the enemy; as the decisive force attacks in depth simultaneously, enemy forces will relocate to meet friendly forces. Cavalry provides the commander with real-time information on changing enemy dispositions. Cavalry can also secure critical friendly assets, such as logistical units, command and control nodes, and intelligence facilities. Additionally, cavalry can operate independently of the decisive force to perform economy-of-force operations that allow the commander to allocate more relative combat power at critical and decisive points.

**Sustain and Transition to Future Operations.** Cavalry provides security so the decisive force can transition between missions and reorganize for future operations unhindered by enemy forces. It can survey and secure lines of communications and sustainment areas while the decisive force conducts resupply. During post-conflict operations, cavalry units are ideally suited to perform activities such as separating forces and controlling buffer zones immediately upon cessation of hostilities.

### **Organizing the Cavalry Force For Force XXI**

Clearly, for Cavalry to fulfill the roles and missions described in this operational concept will require change through modernization of current organizations and equipment. To support our efforts, we have established some

broad precepts that guide our future organizational and materiel developments.

Cavalry or reconnaissance forces must be organic to all major warfighting echelons, from battalion to corps — and must be organized as combined arms teams. Cavalry units exponentially increase the effectiveness of their parent organization.

Further, they must maneuver faster than the decisive force they support. This mobility differential is gained by the synergistic effects of air and ground cavalry units working together.

Future cavalry units must also have greater operational endurance than the decisive force. Organized as self-contained units possessing organic combat support and logistics, cavalry units must be capable of operating for 72 to 96 hours without external support.

Lastly, cavalry units must be capable of performing multiple missions in a simultaneous fashion in order to set con-

ditions desired by the decisive force commander. These characteristics are some of the design principles for guiding the development of cavalry units for the future.

### **Conclusion**

While much work remains to be performed, it is clear that cavalry is an essential warfighting capability for Force XXI. New operational conditions caused by non-contiguous operations, new warfighting doctrine, new technical capabilities, and diverse threats increase the value of cavalry. The soldiers and leaders of cavalry units will operate in the face of the enemy to gain information, shape the battlespace, secure friendly forces, and set conditions for decisive maneuver throughout the depth of the battlefield. Armed with the best equipment in the world, trained to fight, and led by aggressive, competent leaders, cavalry will continue its long tradition of leading America's Army into battle well into the 21st Century.

## **Fort Knox Cavalry Branch Will Host Reconnaissance Symposium in October**

Fort Knox Directorate of Training and Doctrine Development (Cavalry Branch) is hosting a Reconnaissance Symposium from 28-31 October 1996. The focus of the symposium is on the planning and execution of reconnaissance operations at the tactical level. The purpose of the symposium is to assemble all organizations in one location and discuss issues pertinent to reconnaissance operations and to provide recommendations in accordance to those issues. The tentative schedule is as follows:

**Day One** - In Processing (Gaffey Hall) and No Host Social (Brick Mess)

**Day Two** - Large Group Seminar (Gaffey Hall)

**Day Three** - Small Group Discussion (Boudinot Hall)

**Day Four** - Small Group Presentations (Gaffey Hall)

All TRADOC installations will be invited to participate as well as representatives from active duty and reserve component divisions and regiments. Fort Knox needs participation from outstanding professionals from the field and various organizations in order to have a successful and productive symposium.

Information regarding the symposium can be obtained on the internet via the Cavalry Branch Web site at <http://www.awwg.org/~dave/cavdiv.htm>. The Fort Knox point of contact is CPT Vic Harris, DSN 464-3154/5576 or commercial (502) 624-3154/5576. PROFS: CAVBRANC@knox-emh1.army.mil.