

The Brigade Reconnaissance Troop

Profiling a New Kind of Unit

by Captain Thomas M. Feltey

Brigade Scouts? The answer to this for many years was simply task force scouts performing reconnaissance and security for the brigade commander, leaving the task force commander with limited recon and security capabilities. Well, thanks to one of the many Force XXI initiatives, brigade scouts now exist in the form of the Brigade Reconnaissance Troop (BRT). The first BRT was activated on 15 May 1996 at Fort Hood, Texas, as part of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, and participated in the year-long Advanced Warfighter Experiment (AWE). The purpose of this article is to introduce the armored force at large to the BRT's missions, organization, capabilities and limitations. It will also share tactics, techniques, and procedures developed during the year-long Advanced Warfighter Experiment, and discuss the future direction of the BRT.

The fundamental role of the BRT is to perform reconnaissance/surveillance and provide security for the brigade in close and deep operations. The digitized BRT consists of four officers (12C) and 81 enlisted soldiers. It is organized into a headquarters platoon and two scout platoons. The BRT's primary mission is to provide battlefield information directly to the brigade commander. The brigade commander and his staff determine the role of the BRT in all brigade missions and, by virtue of their digitized capabilities, provide the brigade commander near-real-time information regarding the enemy's disposition and direction of movement. The troop can man up to eight long-duration observation positions (OPs) and 16 short-duration OPs. The troop's frontage is typically 6-10 kilometers, but the troop is capable of up to 15-20 kilometers in a desert environment.

The Headquarters Platoon. The headquarters platoon is organized and equipped to perform command and control and logistical support functions for the troop. The platoon consists of the commander, executive officer, first sergeant, supply sergeant, motor sergeant, mess sergeant, communications sergeant and 16 enlisted soldiers. The platoon's major features include the HMMWV-mounted TOC, a 1,000-gallon tank and pump unit, a mess section, and a maintenance/recovery section with a 1½-ton wrecker. The maintenance and commu-

nications sections are organized and equipped to diagnose and repair most equipment faults at the troop level.

The Scout Platoons. The BRT scout platoons are organized and equipped to conduct reconnaissance and security operations in support of the parent troop. The platoon consists of the platoon leader, platoon sergeant, and 29 scouts. It is equipped with nine HMMWVs (four with Mk-19 and five with the M2 .50 Cal.) of which one HMMWV is a long-range surveillance system, either the Hunter Sensor Surrogate Suite (HS3) or the Long-Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System (LRAS3). Although not organic, the scout platoons usually operate with an attached COLT, an engineer recon squad, an MI ground-based sensor (GBS) squad, and a medic. The platoons can organize into various configurations, but normally operate with three sections of two HMMWVs (A, B, and C sections) each, a surveillance section with the LRAS3/HS3, and the platoon sergeant, leaving the platoon leader freedom to maneuver. The vehicles of the platoon leader, platoon sergeant, and A and B sections are manned with three scouts each, including the leaders. Charlie section's vehicles are manned with four scouts each and are normally utilized for any specified dismounted missions. The LRAS3/HS3 is manned with four scouts who are trained to operate their specific systems. These platoons are essentially TF scout platoons (-) and behave similarly, with a few exceptions in command and control as well as positioning on the battlefield.

Force XXI Special Equipment

The bedrock of Force XXI lies in the Applique Information System. Every platform in the BRT had applique systems installed during the AWE. The applique is a suite of computing hardware, an installation kit, system software, applications software, and integrated logistics support. The system provides situational awareness and command and control at all echelons. The applique software provides a point-and-click-type menu, similar to Microsoft's Windows environment for operating the applique. The applique supports battle command tactical mission requirements, including:

- Real-time situational awareness for the commander, staff, and soldiers.
- A shared, common picture of the battlefield.
- Graphic displays.
- Friendly and enemy unit locations (enemy unit locations are based on reports).
- Target identification.
- Integrated logistics support.
- Communications-electronic interfaces with host platforms.

Applique enhances battle command by providing a seamless command and control capability through interfaces with other Army C2 systems (ABCS). This allows the user to send or receive C2 information and situational awareness data across and within the battlefield, irrespective of the task organization. Its ability to interface with and use SINC-GARS (SIP), EPLRS VHSIC, SDR, and the MSE TPN communications systems results in vertical and horizontal integration of the battlefield. The end result of all these systems is the tactical internet. The tactical internet's main benefit is situational awareness (SA). To Force XXI, SA is defined as sending and receiving individual platform locations and having them graphically displayed on the applique system. These blue icons reflect the real time locations on the battlefield and are continuously updated. Situational awareness for the enemy is based on SPOT reports. When a user clicks on a red icon, the size and type of the unit are listed, as well as the observer and time reported. As time elapses, the icon begins to fade to represent an older report. Generally these reports were digitized at the battalion and brigade level to avoid erroneous reports.

The standard background displayed on the applique monitor is a 1:50,000 map of the current area of operation. Other size maps are available, including satellite imagery. Each platform's location is correctly positioned on the map. Graphics are also present, which are generated at all levels, and can be disseminated digitally from one vehicle to any number of platforms.

The final application of applique is command and control, defined as the ability to digitally send and receive pre-

formatted reports and operations orders as well as free-text messages. Applique possesses numerous formats, to include SPOT reports, contact reports, call for fire formats, OPODS, FRAGOS, and NBC 1 reports. These formats are either type-in-the-blank or scroll-down windows and are generally user-friendly.

The Dismounted Soldier System Unit (DSSU). Each squad in the BRT was equipped with the DSSU. It is essentially a man-portable applique system that utilizes the same software and is a part of the tactical internet. The DSSU weighs about 20 lbs. and is composed of a notebook-sized, militarized computer with a heads up display that is mounted on the soldier's helmet. The DSSU is linked to the tactical internet by a hand-held SINC-GARS (SIP), which is very similar to the old PRC-126, and a GPS. These items are attached to the rucksack and are powered by a number of lithium batteries. The DSSU possesses the same capabilities as the applique and provides the platoon leader with exceptional situational awareness as to the location of his dismounts. Likewise, the dismount possesses unparalleled situational awareness of the entire BCT which allows them to move faster and safer than ever before. Limitations of this system include the obvious additional weight the soldier must carry, the number of batteries necessary to sustain continuous operations, and the overall fragility of the system.

Surveillance Systems. Each platoon is augmented with a special surveillance system, either the Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System (LRAS3) or the Hunter Sensor Suite Surrogate (HS3). These systems have the ability to identify and provide an accurate location of targets between 10 and 15 kilometers.

The LRAS3 is a lightweight, extended range, line-of-sight reconnaissance and surveillance system. The LRAS3 provides all-weather, day and night real-time target acquisition and target detection. The LRAS3 is employed on a HMMWV and consists of a second-generation FLIR, MELIOS laser rangefinder with compass/vertical angle measurement, GPS interface, and a low-light television camera. The LRAS3 is capable of remaining ready to use during mounted cross-country movement. Once an enemy target is located, the data is entered into the applique and transmitted to the troop TOC that disseminates it throughout the brigade. This system will also be capable of dismounted use away from the vehicle. During the AWE, this vehicle operated with the 2nd platoon leader and was mounted with a .50 cal MG.

The HS3 consists of an M1026A1 HMMWV with a sensor package consisting of a second-generation FLIR, two day cameras, and a MELIOS with GPS interface, all mounted on a hydraulically operated 10-foot mast. The vehicle provides the troop with long-range target acquisition and the ability to transmit target range, position, and still imagery to the troop TOC or other designated stations. This system can digitally compress and send digital still imagery using phototelesis software. This sensor package cannot be dismounted from the vehicle. During the AWE, the HS3 operated with the 1st platoon sergeant and was not mounted with any external weapon system.

The Reconnaissance

The BRT conducts reconnaissance for the brigade commander in order to confirm or deny enemy disposition. The brigade S3 and S2 provide the recon objective based on the commander's guidance, SITEMP, and projected friendly course of action. The BRT also aids in the brigade's deep fight through target acquisition. The BRT issues its order following the brigade's "choosing a course of action." Stealth is the primary method the BRT utilizes in recon operations. A stealthy recon is the most time-consuming method that emphasizes avoiding detection and engagement by the enemy. The BRT does this by exploiting the technical advantages of the brigade's robust reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, targeting and acquisition (RISTA) capabilities. Prior to the start of the recon, the BRT commander and his platoon leaders gather in the brigade MAIN and collect real-time enemy information from JSTARS and UAV downlinks. This information allows each platoon leader to infiltrate his platoon through the enemy security zone to assigned NAIs. The enemy information is sent to each BRT platform for the vehicle commander to utilize.

Prior to LD, each platoon's long-range surveillance system is positioned to overwatch the LD for security. Each section uses its own infiltration routes and enters the zone using the shuttle method. During certain missions, a squad or an entire platoon may infiltrate by means of an air insertion. The rest of the recon is similar to that of the TF scout platoon. However, TF scout platoons benefit from the BRT's initial reconnaissance. The BRT essentially pulls the TF scout platoon into the zone through FM communication with the TOC or digital communications. As with TF scouts, the BRT's ability to penetrate or fight for reconnais-

sance is limited. In order to assist the troop, the brigade commander may slice a heavy combat force to assist the BRT scout's reconnaissance, at least through the enemy's most forward security elements.

Other assets the BRT scout platoons utilize are the OH-58D and the UAV. When the situation is vague, the troop commander requests, through the brigade, the use of the UAV. The UAV is then directed by the troop TOC to overfly the scout platoon's infiltration routes. This is a great technique that helps prevent scout casualties. The other asset is the OH-58D, which provides critical information to the brigade, as well as overwatching the scout platoon's movement. Since the OH-58D possesses target designation and direct-fire capabilities, the helicopter works extremely well in protecting scouts forward of the LD/LC. As both of these assets identify enemy vehicles, the brigade S2 enters the enemy into the applique, and immediately the entire BCT is aware of the SPOT report.

During the recon, the TOC operates on the troop command, brigade O & I, and brigade command nets. The troop TOC is manned by the XO and is positioned as the critical link between the troop and the brigade main. The troop commander operates on the troop and brigade command nets and is positioned apart from the troop TOC and functions as the critical link between the scout platoons and the troop TOC. The BRT scout platoon leaders are tasked to ensure effective communication is maintained with their scout platoons and either the commander or the TOC.

Habitual attachments travel with the scout platoon to accomplish their missions for brigade. These attachments include two engineer recon squads, two COLTS, and MI GBS teams. A maximum of three vehicles travel together at one time to prevent revealing a large signature entering the zone. The scout platoons also have a medic who rides with one of their vehicles.

Sometimes, when the situation dictates, only one scout platoon conducts the reconnaissance while the other rests and conducts troop-leading procedures for the next mission. This technique allows the BRT to sustain continuous operations. In this case, the scout platoon leader staying behind co-locates with the brigade planner to facilitate parallel planning. At culmination of the previous mission, the second platoon deploys immediately as the other platoon retrogrades.

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Security Missions

Security is an essential part of all offensive and defensive operations. The BRT provides security for the brigade to the front, along an exposed flank, or to the rear of the main body where a potential threat may exist. The digitized BRT with the LRAS3 and HS3 have significantly increased long-range observation and detection capabilities during screening operations. The digitized BRT provides enhanced situational awareness to the brigade commander through its ability to transmit rapid reports through applique. Applique, through its linkage with other ABCS, enhances the scout's ability to hand off targets between the TF scouts, direct and indirect fire platforms, and Army helicopters.

Surveillance is continuous during security operations. Even during security missions that involve fighting the enemy, gathering information remains the BRT scouts' primary task. Scouts do this by establishing OPs, conducting patrols, and performing limited reconnaissance. If aviation elements support the surveillance operation, then air and ground scouts coordinate to synchronize their digitized and complementary capabilities. This is usually done at the troop level or with the brigade S-2.

Counterreconnaissance is an inherent task in all security operations. It is not a mission, but a sum of actions taken at all echelons to counter enemy reconnais-

sance and surveillance efforts through the depth of the brigade's AO. Counterreconnaissance denies the enemy information about friendly units. It is both active and passive and includes combat action to destroy or repel enemy reconnaissance elements.

The BRT conducts security as the most forward friendly unit. The BRT usually deploys with two scout platoons abreast and in-depth, assigned to observe brigade NAIs. As enemy recon elements are identified in sector, they are reported, tracked, and handed off to the TF scout platoons, who then hand them off to a combat force to be destroyed. With the addition of the BRT, the brigade security zone is extended up to 20 kilometers, providing enhanced early warning and reaction time to BCT elements. The brigade security zone is layered with BRT scouts, OH-58Ds, TF scouts, and killers, which all protect the brigade MBA.

As the enemy main body approaches, the BRT reports and utilizes indirect fires and CAS to disrupt or delay the enemy's attack. In some instances, the BRT directs attack helicopters and CAS against second-echelon enemy forces.

Command and control remains the same, and the critical link is between the BRT scouts and the TF scouts. Leaders at all levels facilitate this by dropping to the TF scouts' net to warn them of the enemy vehicle moving into their sector. With proper reporting and target handover, the

effectiveness of the brigade's extended security zone is unsurpassed.

The Future

The BRT concept was deemed a success by the Army, and since the AWE another BRT was activated, for the 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. However, the organization of the BRT and TF scout platoons were slightly modified. All scout platoons now consist of six vehicles each in the BRTs and TF scout platoons, and all platforms are equipped with an updated version of applique known as FCBC2. These changes are based on the recently unveiled conservative heavy division redesign. Whatever the numbers eventually total, the brigade scouts concept makes sense. Through more training and critical thinking by its leaders, sound TTPs and doctrine will evolve, giving the Army another edge on the modern battlefield.

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