

A Company/Team Guard Mission Technique

Planning to defeat enemy recon elements

by Captain Chad Young

The time is 1330 hours local. The radio crackles... "Cobra 6, this is Thunder Main, FRAGO follows, over." You scramble to pick up the handset lying on top of your tank. You answer the call, "this is Cobra 6, over." The battalion TOC responds, "this is Thunder Main, Cobra, execute tactical road march along Route Red and then guard from Phase Line Pine to Phase Line Oak. On order, conduct a rearward passage of lines along Route Red, occupy hide position Snake as the task force reserve, begin movement at 1500 hrs local, over." You respond and check your watch at the same time. "This is Cobra 6, WILCO over." Simultaneously you pick up the company net and announce, "Guidons, guidons, guidons, this is Cobra 6. Meet at my tank at 1400 hours for company FRAGO, WARNO for the operation will be given over this net in 10 minutes, over."

The time is 1340 hours local. It is time to get your thoughts together. First things first: what exactly is the **mission** that I have been given? **Guard.** Being a recent graduate of the Armor Captain's Career Course, you know the definition verbatim. "A form of security operation whose primary task is to protect the main force by fighting to gain time while also observing and reporting information, and to prevent enemy ground observation of and direct fire against the main body by recon, attacking, defending, and delaying."

As you continue through your abbreviated troop leading procedures, you understand your **task** is to *destroy enemy recon assets*. The **purpose** of this operation is to *prevent enemy ground observation of the main body*.

The time is 1345 hours local. You have done this mission many times before. You learned the Cobra guard technique from your first commander and, with a few refinements, have made it work for your team as well. You begin the Cobra seven-step planning process.

STEP ONE: List assets available.

- Two M1A1 platoons
- One M2A2 platoon
- One FISTV
- Task force scout platoon
- Eleven infantry dismounts
- One medic M113
- One M977
- One M978
- One 120mm mortar section
- One maintenance team with M113 and M88
- 1Sgt M113

STEP TWO: Determine likely enemy avenues of approach. After a thorough terrain, weather, and enemy doctrinal analysis, you conclude that the enemy has three likely avenues of approach. (Fig. 1)

You have studied the enemy in detail and know that the enemy Brigade Recon

Company will attempt to infiltrate into your sector beginning at EENT. According to *FM 100-60*, he is capable of committing two BRM-1Ks, two BMP 2s, and four BRDMs. The enemy forces have limited thermal sights, however they do have PVS-7B-type night vision goggles.

STEP THREE: Determine likely scheme of the recon company. The enemy commander has many choices, but will most likely choose to infiltrate along the three avenues templated earlier. You feel that avenues one and three are most likely because of their use of the terrain to mask movement, and you decide to accept limited risk along avenue of approach two. You assume the enemy commander will commit his tracked recon platoon along AA1 and AA3 and his wheeled platoon along AA2. You assume the enemy commander will task organize his BRM-1Ks with the tracked recon platoon. There should be no tanks in the enemy recon company's task organization.

STEP FOUR: Determine where to kill the enemy. Based on the task organization of the enemy, his use of terrain, and the enemy likely scheme of maneuver, you decide to focus your killing systems on three primary areas. You label these three areas as counterrecon boxes one, two, and three. (Fig. 2)

STEP FIVE: Task organize and emplace your direct fire systems. You

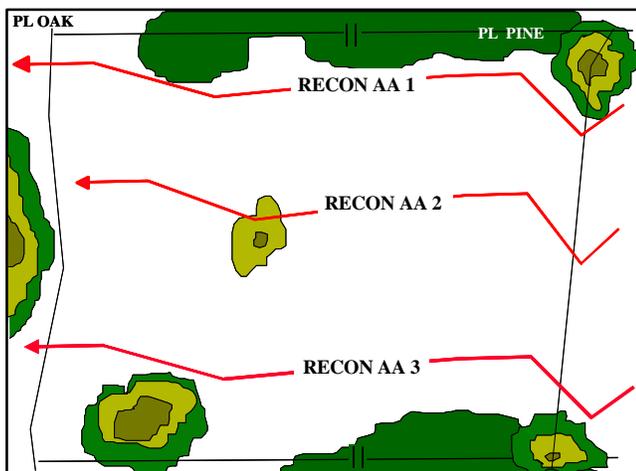


Figure 1

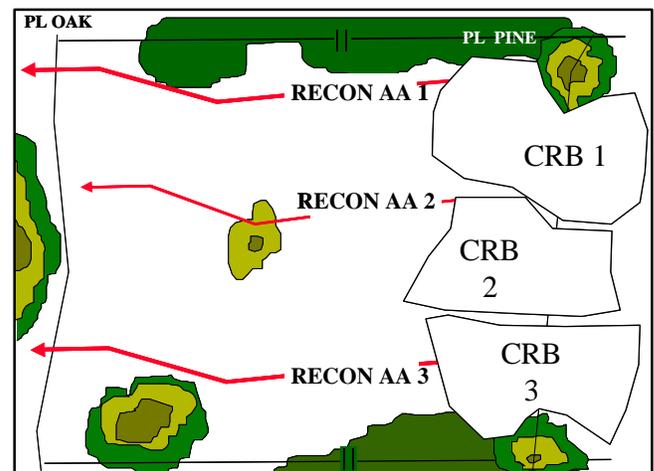


Figure 2

decide to task organize your team into the standard Cobra guard configuration (see Table 1).

Each platoon will form a “hunter” screen line and a series of “killer” teams employed in depth. The platoons will organize internally in the following manner as per the Cobra TACSOP. The infantry dismounts will be placed in ambush positions along likely dismounted avenues of approach or will patrol in dead space not covered by the hunter or killer teams.

OVERLAY TECHNIQUE: Using one overlay with the enemy infiltration routes in red, you now add a platoon boundary and checkpoints to aid you with command and control and target hand-off. You remind yourself to enforce the “no-move rule” as soon as the team leaders report “set.” You visualize the operation by drawing an accurate and detailed sketch of the terrain, enemy, likely friendly locations, and graphic control measures to assist in command and control. (See Fig. 3)

STEP SIX: Place hasty point obstacles and plan indirect fires. Using the unit basic load of Class IV and Class V (mines), the team will place a series of hasty point obstacles known as “cheap tricks.” These standard obstacles consist

TEAM 1	TEAM 2	HQ TEAM	SUPPLY TEAM
1ST PLATOON TANK	2ND PLATOON TANK	COBRA 5 AND COBRA 6	1SG M113
A SECTION MECH	B SECTION MECH	MORTAR SECTION	M977
INFANTRY DISMOUNTS	SCOUT SECTIONS THREE AND FOUR	SCOUT HQ SECTION	M978
SCOUT SECTIONS ONE AND TWO			MEDIC M113 AND MAINTENANCE M113

FIRST PLATOON ORGANIZATION

HUNTER 1	HUNTER 2	HUNTER 3
#12, M1A1	#13, M1A1	#11, M1A1
#11, M2A2	# 12, M2A2	#14, M1A1
SCOUT SECTION 1	SCOUT SECTION 2	

SECOND PLATOON ORGANIZATION

HUNTER 1	HUNTER 2	HUNTER 3
#22, M1A1	#23, M1A1	#21, M1A1
#14, M2A2	#13, M2A2	#24, M1A1
SCOUT SECTION 3	SCOUT SECTION 4	

Table 1

of a single layer of four rolls of concertina, reinforced with u-shaped pickets and four to five AT and AP mines. Each obstacle can cover 40 to 50 meters. When employed in mass by all vehicles within the team, these obstacles will occasionally entangle a BRDM or BMP during limited visibility conditions. Indirect fires

should be planned using the mortar section as the prime executor of targets. Mortar targets during the guard mission are best planned on likely OP locations, choke points, key terrain, and at “cheap trick” locations. Most importantly, “cheap tricks” and mortar targets should be placed in depth throughout the sector.

You ensure that you add the indirect fire targets to the one overlay. Once the “cheap trick” locations are confirmed with GPS, they will also be added.

STEP SEVEN: Rehearse critical events of the operation. Once set in position to observe the counterrecon boxes and as much of their respective areas of operation as possible, you plan to rehearse several critical events of the operation. This includes target handoff, the observation plan, the communications plan, the security plan, logistics issues, and any branch plans.

TARGET HANDOFF: The distance between the scout “hunter” and the Bradley/Abrams “killer” is critical to proper target handoff. You know from past experience that a 1 to 2½ kilometer separation between the “hunter” and the “killer” is about the

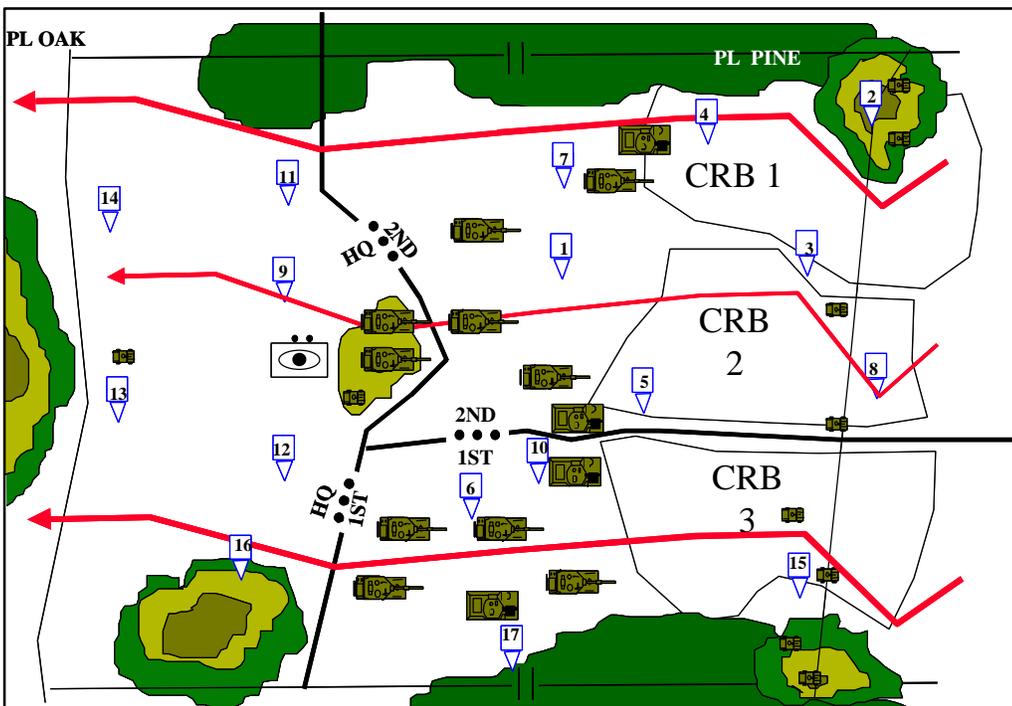


Figure 3

right distance for desert-type terrain. In restrictive terrain you have had to close that gap to less than 500 meters. After your terrain analysis, you will order the distance to be less than one and a half kilometers. Once the enemy vehicle is spotted by the scout "hunter," it is critical to relay the information through the platoon net immediately. You will remind the platoon leaders to send up the contact and spot reports using the checkpoints from the operation overlay. This way, precious time is not used looking up grids in the dark of the turret. The team has trained for this mission several times at home station and they know the usual routine. Single BMPs or BRDMs attempt to infiltrate into sector around EENT. The initial report is from the forward "hunter" and is relayed to the "killer" to which the scout section is responsible. Once the target is handed off to the "killer" team, the scout continues to scan for targets forward in his assigned observation sector. The "killer" team then has two choices: He can either wait for the target to present a clear shot or he can aggressively maneuver to the target, corner and kill him. You know from past experience that the latter works best, especially in restrictive terrain. If the team does move, the team commander will announce the

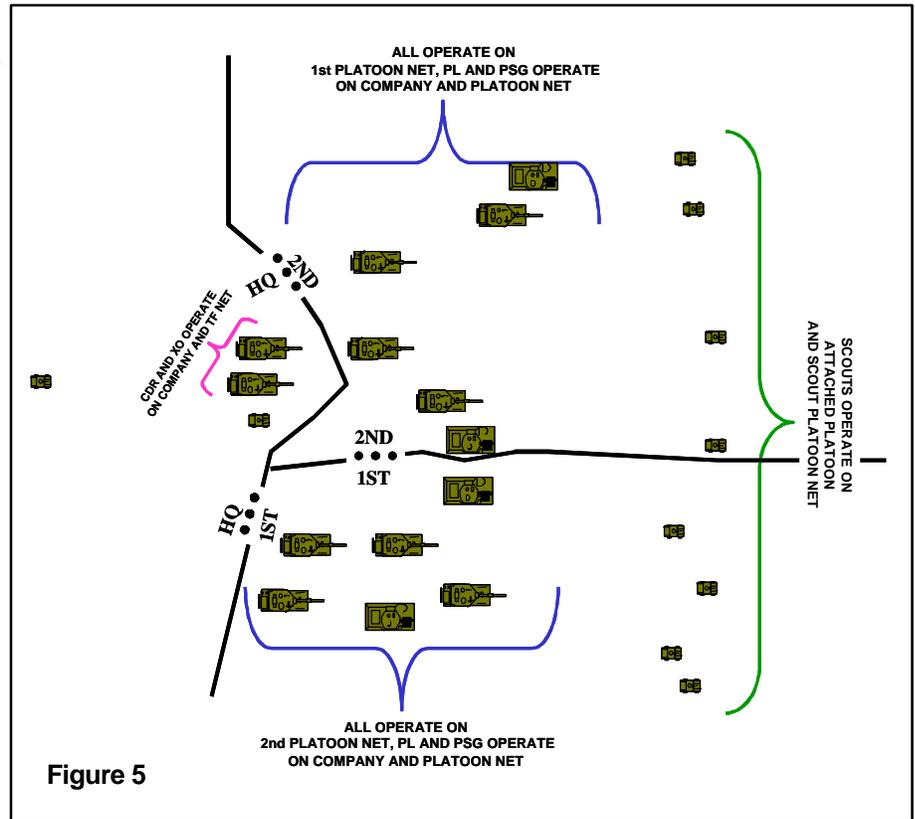


Figure 5

movement over the company net and receive a reply from all parties to ensure that friendly fire will not be an issue.

OBSERVATION PLAN: You want to make it perfectly clear to each platoon leader that the reason guard missions fail is due to two common problems, poor scanning discipline and a faulty observation plan. Each platoon is responsible for its entire area of operation, but with a focused effort on those avenues of approach which appear most likely for enemy infiltration. A focused observation plan does not only scan between TRPs to the direct front, but each vehicle scans a 180-degree frontal arc, and leader tanks should scan the rear of their forward killers to ensure infiltration has not occurred. The HQ tanks will scan to the flanks and rear. The mortar section and supply team will also scan a designated avenue. *Everyone should be involved in the fight!* When one turret stops scanning, this allows an open gap in a properly prepared observation plan. You will remind the platoon leaders about the Cobra standard observation plan and will personally refer them to the page in the Cobra TACSOP that outlines the individual vehicle observation plan. (Fig. 4)

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN: Communication during the late night hours, especially between the hours of 0200 to 0400 is always difficult. You require a SITREP from each platoon leader every 30 minutes to ensure situational awareness and radio operational status. You pull out your communications plan chart from the back of your bustle rack that

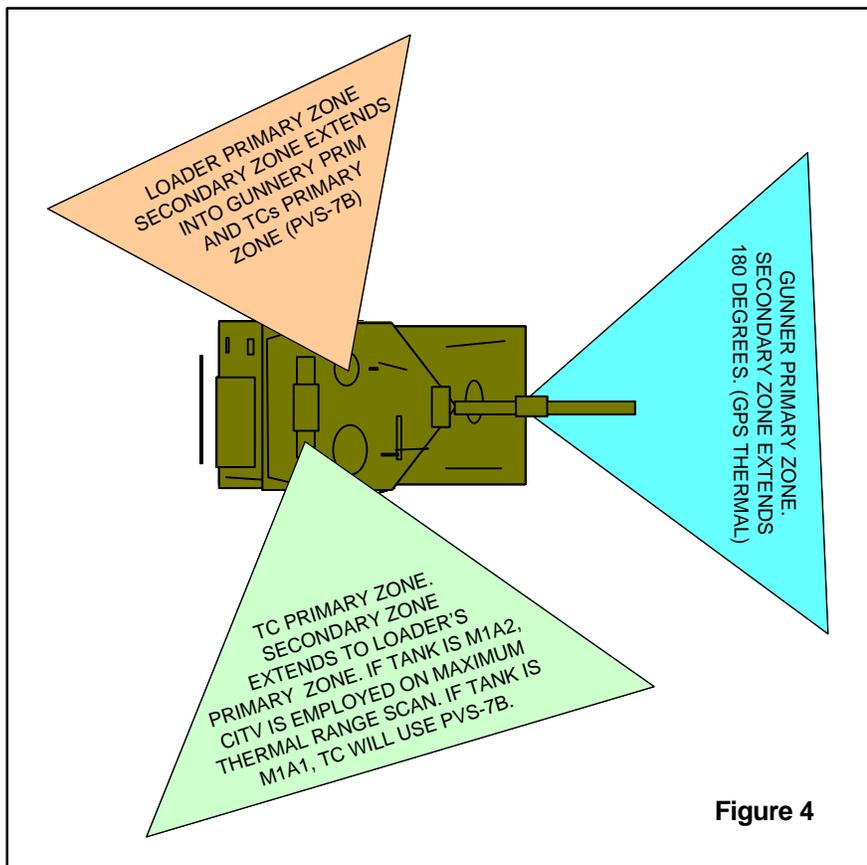


Figure 4

outlines the radio linkage between vehicles. (Fig. 5)

SECURITY AND SLEEP PLANS: The men know this is an extremely difficult mission. Because of the importance of the mission, you have to make a difficult call on sleep plans. Therefore, as in the past, you make the call for a RED-CON 1, minus engines running status. No turret will stop scanning. The crew will take turns on the Gunner's Primary Sight. The driver, who is not actively scanning will ensure the Auxiliary Power Unit is running smoothly, that the batteries are not running low and will monitor other crew level functions. The driver will take his turn on the GPS as well. After the battle, the task force will shield the company if possible to allow us some rest.

LOGISTICAL OPERATIONS: The task force has task organized your team with an additional fuel and cargo HEMTT and the usual maintenance and medic attachments. Team Supply, also will be scanning an assigned sector and able to move forward to evacuate casualties or execute any emergency resupply needs. The team will rehearse movement to and from the platoon positions during

limited visibility. Each platoon will plan for one maintenance collection point and one casualty collection point. The XO will accompany the resupply effort for security if needed. Companies will execute a quick resupply stop when beginning the rearward passage of lines, using the extra M977 and M978 assets.

BRANCH PLANNING: You know the enemy rarely does exactly what we think or want him to do, so you plan accordingly. You know that if a guard operation is very successful, the enemy commander will commit an independent recon detachment or IRD. This detachment will fight for intelligence and can be as large as a reinforced company. If the enemy commander makes the tactical decision to commit such a force, your unit will execute the Cobra standard counter-IRD branch plan. This plan goes into effect if an IRD is committed or if any force penetrates the forward platoon and becomes a threat to the MBA. Upon identification of the potential penetration or enemy IRD, the platoon in contact will give an accurate spot report and recommend execution of the branch plan. The commander and the XO will then commit to an attack

by fire position in order to prevent penetration of the team's rear boundary. You draw a quick sketch to help the platoon leaders visualize the plan. (Fig 6)

The time is 1400 hours local. Your platoon leaders look anxious as they approach your tank. You issue the young leaders your FRAGO and the Cobras begin movement along Route Red on time, enroute to another successful counter-terrecon operation.

CPT Chad Young was commissioned in Armor in 1989 from the University of Kansas. After the AOB Course, he served with 3d Squadron, 3d ACR at Ft. Bliss, Texas, as a tank platoon leader, scout platoon leader, troop XO and assistant S3. Upon graduation from AOAC in 1994, he served as battalion S4 and C company commander with the 2-8th Cav, 1st BCT, 1st Cav Division. Recently, he served as a small group instructor for AC3. His current assignment is FORSCOM, DCSOPS, Ft. McPherson, Ga.

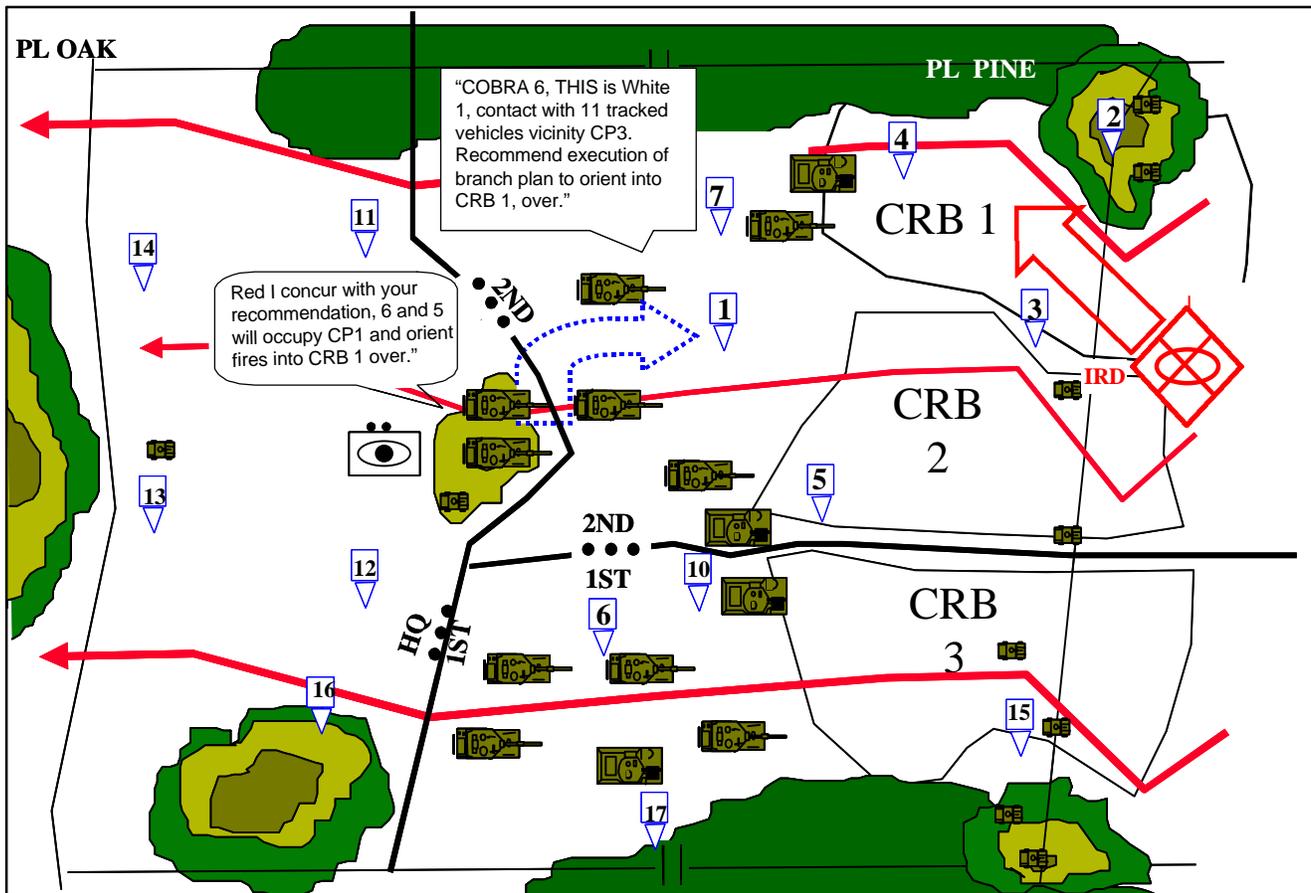


Figure 6