

Light Cavalry Table XII

by Captain Larry Reeves

When the 2d ACR reorganized into its current configuration in 1993 (HMMWV scout and anti-tank platoons), the main emphasis was focused on equipping the regiment to fight alongside fellow XVIII Airborne Corps units. *How* the regiment would fight has been, and still is, an ongoing debate. Gone are the days when the regiment would close with and destroy an advancing enemy on the rolling German plains. We are now faced with determining when and how to engage the enemy with M2 .50 caliber machine guns, Mk-19 automatic grenade launchers, and HMMWV-mounted TOW launchers.

In order to alleviate some of the inherent problems the light cavalry faces, such as no good shoot-on-the-move capability and rather poor observation platforms, the regiment has adopted the SCAT (Scout/Anti-tank) platoon concept. Instead of having two 10-HMMWV scout platoons and two 4-HMMWV anti-tank (TOW) platoons per cavalry troop, the SCAT configuration combines the scout and anti-tank platoons into four 7-vehicle platoons, each consisting of 5 scout vehicles and 2 TOW vehicles. A squadron's training density at Ft. Chaffee, Ark., in February '96 presented an invaluable opportunity to validate the SCAT concept upon return from a five and a half month deployment in support of the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). Table XII was one of several events that could help confirm or deny the concept of organization.

The Table XII was designed and re-sourced like a heavy cavalry Table XII, without the night fire. The 12 SCAT platoons would conduct a 6-hour maneuver and live-fire, bounding in between four different ranges spread across 12 kilometers, and engaging targets as presented. This was not a roll-on, roll-off range exercise. Each section within the maneuvering platoon would bound from OP (observation post) to OP under a tactical scenario, establishing OPs wherever they felt they could observe assigned NAIs. This concept added a degree of realism, but also added an increased risk factor, because no set locations were identified.

The exercise was designed to train platoon-level battle tasks that are inherent to a troop conducting a moving flank guard. These tasks are 1) conduct TAA procedures, 2) conduct a tactical road march, 3) conduct a forward passage of lines, 4) conduct a moving flank screen, 5) conduct an anti-armor ambush, 6) conduct direct-fire planning, and 7) troop-leading procedures. The squadron produced a troop-level matrix order that was briefed (and amended) by each troop commander to his platoon leaders. After receiving his order (24 hours prior to LD time), the platoon leader began his troop-leading procedures and mission planning. A platoon-level rehearsal was conducted with the commander and one observer/controller (O/C) present to ensure the platoon leader had a firm understanding of the mission. Once the rehearsal was complete, the O/C conducted a range/safety brief with the entire platoon.

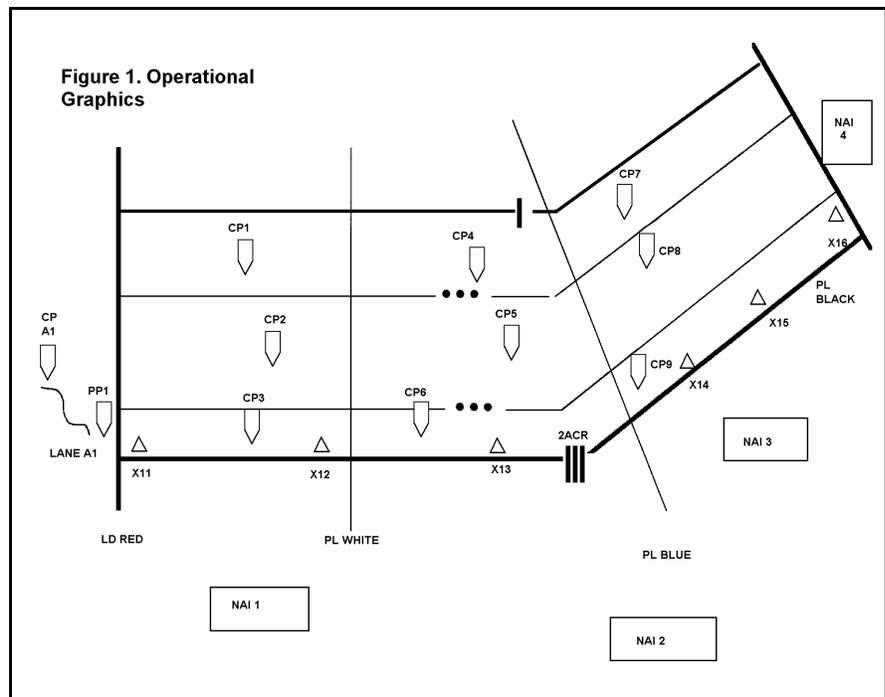
During the troop-leading procedure, the platoon received a LOGPAC in the TAA. Included in the LOGPAC was the platoon's Class V allocation for the exercise, which the platoon sergeant then had to distribute to each vehicle according to the assigned mission. Since the platoons did not receive their

basic load, the ammunition breakout became a significant planning factor that bore either good or bad results during the exercise.

The exercise began with a squad from the platoon conducting a link-up and coordination for the forward passage of lines with the O/C. The platoon (-) then began its tactical road march, culminating with the passage of lines. During the passage of lines, the platoon was given a fragmentary order (FRAGO) from its troop Tactical Operations Center (TOC) stating that enemy movement had been detected near the first OP. The platoon then moved to and occupied the OP and began working to deny an enemy avenue of approach leading into the OP.

At that point, the platoon was met by an engineer company LNO (from the regiment's 84th EN Company), who was to oversee the demolition work and to ensure proper safety precautions were followed. The platoon employed a ring and line main charge, simulating a cratering charge on a trail entering the OP area. After reducing the obstacle, the platoon began its moving flank screen. This action began after receipt of another FRAGO that sent one section to the next OP.

At this OP (Fig. 1), the section established an OP that would be able to observe the assigned NAI. The section leader had the freedom to emplace his OP wherever he felt he could observe



the NAI and interdict enemy movement with direct fire. The section O/C intervened only if the OP and vehicle hide and firing positions were unsafe. This allowed the section leader to use his best judgment in placing his OP without the help of the engineer tape and position signs we have all seen on gunnery ranges. Once the OP was established, the range OIC (separate from the O/C) began presenting targets, which consisted of one BRDM, one truck, and two dismount targets. The targets were arrayed to simulate enemy movement, trying to find the OP's flank.

In the meantime, the second section had begun movement to a position further along the flank to occupy an OP there. The scenario was scripted so that while one section was moving, the other was engaging targets. By the time the first section completed its engagement, the second section was arriving at its OP. The second section was presented the same target array as the first, simulating enemy reconnaissance probing the squadron's flank.

While the second section made contact, the first section received a FRAGO, sending it to establish a battle position (BP) in the vicinity of the second section. It was to set a battle position oriented into the NAI where the second section had made contact. Once the second section had completed its engagement, the first section began to arrive at its BP, about 500 meters from the second section. From there, the platoon would gain contact with a heavier reconnaissance element (three BRDMs, two trucks, and several dismounted targets) that, again, simulated the enemy attempting to find the OP's flank. At the conclusion of the engagement, the platoon received its final FRAGO, sending them to another position, where the platoon was to conduct an anti-armor ambush.

After the platoon arrived at the anti-armor ambush site, the leadership conducted a reconnaissance of the area. The position was a 600-meter long small knoll located on the edge of the Ft. Chaffee impact area. The platoon leader was shown his TOW target, which doubled as the artillery and mortar target group. The platoon then went about establishing the ambush site, setting the TOW firing positions, AT-4 firing positions, and Claymore positions. Upon establishing the site, the platoon leader initiated the ambush with a call for fire through his troop FIST, targeting the "hostile" targets which simu-

lated a Forward Security Element. Once the platoon leader adjusted fire, the TOW engaged the main armor target; i.e., the lead tank in the column. Upon destruction of the target, the AT-4's volley-fired against smaller armor targets. E-type silhouettes were placed in the impact area buffer zone to simulate a dismounted attack against the position. The platoon engaged the targets with M16A2 and M203 fire. To cover the withdrawal, the platoon detonated the Claymores against the dismounted threat. The exercise ended with a platoon-level AAR facilitated by the O/Cs.

The exercise brought several strengths to light. First, it validated the SCAT concept. The addition of the two TOW HMMWVs gave the platoon increased killing capability as well as a solid observation platform. Secondly, Table XII validated the squadron's gunnery standards and training. The squadron's master gunner, SFC Ron Swasey, spent countless hours refining the standards, scenarios, and training requirements well before and throughout the gunnery density. Table XII, along with Table VIII, validated this work. Finally, the exercise showed a high level of competence and leadership by the squadron's platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, and section leaders. Each platoon executed the mission with audacity and fury.

Table XII, however, also exposed some areas that need improvement. First, as light cavalymen, our engagement criteria and current weapon systems do not allow for decisive or protracted engagements. One way for the regiment to kill armored targets is the anti-armor ambush. Table XII showed the need to improve our ambush execution standards. Secondly, soldiers and leaders alike felt like more training time should be devoted to AT-4 and Claymore employment. These weapons are linchpins in the proper conduct of the ambush.

The Table XII was a rousing success for several reasons. First, it was cheap and efficient. The squadron used existing resources (targets from previous gunnery tables, SAABs, etc.) without incurring additional costs. Second, it forced the SCAT platoons to "train as we fight." Leaders were forced to think on their feet without the benefit of a canned scenario. Also, each platoon had to employ every soldier, vehicle, and weapon system without the benefit of identified firing points, routes, and other administrative gunnery issues normally associated with a Table XII. Third, the squadron was able to con-

duct multi-echeloned training, from the individual soldier, to the platoon chain of command, to the troop commander and his TOC. Finally, the squadron trained a METL task in conducting the moving flank screen. The event was not allowed to override the need to train individual and collective and platoon battle tasks. For example, if a section failed to accomplish a task to the published standard, the section was held up or restarted to allow for proper training and execution prior to moving to the next level of training.

The soldiers who participated in Table XII found the training enjoyable and challenging. The squadron learned valuable lessons in SCAT employment and training, and the leaders found new training focuses that will help them at their next CTC rotation and beyond. The success, however, does not lie with the planners of the exercise. It lies with the soldiers, NCOs, and officers who participated in Table XII and executed it to a higher standard than was envisioned. Hard, challenging, and well-planned training is always key to success, but it is driven at the level of the junior leader, who has to execute the plans put before him.

Captain Larry Reeves was commissioned as a Distinguished Military Graduate from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in 1989. After AOBC and SPLC, he served as a scout platoon leader during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in A Troop, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division at Ft. Hood, Texas. He later served as the A Troop executive officer and squadron assistant S3. After AOAC, CLC, and Airborne School, he was assigned as the squadron maintenance officer for 1st Squadron, 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Polk, La., and served in that position during the squadron's deployment to Haiti in support of the United Nations mission there. Upon return, he was assigned as the assistant S3 (Plans). He is currently the commander of Troop A, 1/2 ACR.