

The Future of the Reconnaissance Professional

by Staff Sergeant Brendan F. Kearns

Military occupational skills (MOS) 11H, heavy antiarmor weapons infantryman, and 11M, fighting vehicle infantryman, have been successfully combined with the 11B, infantryman, MOS. The Stryker brigade combat team's infantry battalion recon platoon (SBCT's IBRP) has been introduced, and the Infantry Center has proven its ability to train scouts and snipers for long-range surveillance (LRS) and infantry battalion scout platoons. These changes require the armor branch to relinquish the 19D cavalry scout MOS and the myth that it provides the force with reconnaissance and security.

Not long ago, 19D cavalry scouts were trained to perform reconnaissance and security tasks for the force. The mission essential task list (METL) was as vast and varied as the units to which a cavalry scout could be assigned. Light units, such as the 10th Mountain Division, 82d Airborne Division, 25th Infantry Division, and the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) are outfitted with the M1025/M1026 high mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV), requiring the cavalry scout

to master light gunnery skills employing the tube launched, optically tracked, wired-guided (TOW) missile, MK19 grenade machine gun, M2HB Browning machine gun, and the M60/M240 machine guns.

Scouts must be comfortable and familiar with both LRS-detachment (LRS-D) and LRS-company (LRS-C) operations to support corps and division deep reconnaissance, as well as the IBRP's recon and sniper sections to ensure a smooth reconnaissance handover and passage of lines. These scouts can reconnoiter routes, conduct screening missions, and escort convoys because they do not need extra equipment, additional troops, or special training. This leaves the austere resources of the division or corps commander to be used at more critical points on the battlefield.

A 19D assigned to the 2d ACR could be assigned to a cavalry troop antiarmor platoon or a squadron antiarmor company, requiring him to be competent in antitank fire and well versed in antiarmor tactics. On the other hand, a cavalry scout as-

signed to a heavy force has a good chance of being in a brigade recon troop, armor, or mechanized infantry battalion scout platoon with HMMWVs or on an M3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle (BFV) in the divisional cavalry squadron. All cavalry scouts assigned to the 3d ACR are mounted on the M3. Being in a unit with the M3 BFV demands that the cavalry scout be knowledgeable in mounted and dismounted reconnaissance, and be a subject-matter expert on Bradley maintenance as well as Bradley gunnery.

The 19D cavalry scout soldier's manual encompasses not just recon and security tasks normally associated with scouts, but also almost all tasks covered in the former 11H, 11M, and 11B soldier's manuals. Today, the 19D and new 11B soldier's manuals are nearly identical. Career management fields (CMF) are used to group together jobs with similar or closely related skills; however, today's 19D performs tasks similar to or exactly the same as the 11B, not like those of the 19K, M1 armor crewmember, their CMF counterparts.



While the United States Army Armor Center is responsible for 19D initial entry training, the basic noncommissioned officers course, the advanced noncommissioned officers course, and developing training packets for the Regional Training Institute of the National Guard under the Total Army School System program, very little else relevant to scouting and reconnaissance is released or taught by the Armor Center.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Armor Center trained MOS 11D, armored reconnaissance specialists, the forerunner of the 19D cavalry scout. During the Cold War, the armor branch produced doctrine, helped design vehicles, and modified unit equipment and personnel tables to counter the threat and keep reconnaissance and security the main focus of the 11D, and later, the 19D. These soldiers were equipped with and trained on the M551 Sheridan, M113 armored personnel carrier, M901 improved TOW vehicle, and jeeps equipped with machine guns and TOWs. They were an integral part of infantry, armor and cavalry units conducting reconnaissance in Vietnam and keeping watch on the East German border. Later, with the introduction of new equipment, such as the M3 and HMMWV, Fort Knox seamlessly incorporated these new platforms into training and doctrine.

Fort Knox supplemental manuals passed on new information and helped reorganize units, such as the light infantry division reconnaissance squadron, which fought everything from low-intensity conflicts to repelling Warsaw Pact units on the battlefields of Germany. Each field manual (FM) used by these soldiers had specific sections dedicated to the soviet system of battle, including how they fought, what equipment was used, its appearance, and how the units were organized.

The Armor Center produced some valuable FMs, training circulars, leader notebooks, and standard operating procedures, but focused mainly on mounted armored reconnaissance. The emphasis on mounted and armored reconnaissance, started during World War II, and hit its zenith during the 1980s with the anticipation of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) versus Warsaw Pact showdown on the plains of Western Europe. With the demise of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the Armor

Center remained fixated on mounted reconnaissance, relying on sensors and optics, armor, and firepower.

“Death before Dismount” is the unofficial motto of the Armor Center. Because of this creed, vital field craft and dismounted skills needed by scouts to survive and succeed on the battlefield started to suffer. Some good information is still published and taught by the Armor Center. FM 17-12-8, *Light Cavalry Gunnery*, is a superb training tool to go hand in hand with the 19D soldier’s manual and associated weapons manuals to train scouts in the use of weapons systems and engagement techniques, but does little for scouting skills.¹ FM 17-98, *Scout Platoon*, was once an outstanding source of information for scouts, but several rewrites in the past decade have omitted valuable scout know-how, such as tracking enemy foot patrols, counter-tracking techniques, and using chain link fencing to protect vehicles from rocket-propelled grenade attacks while in a laager position, as well as a complete change in the way the fundamentals of reconnaissance are currently presented and taught.²

The Scout Leaders Course (SLC) is a valued course for scout leaders, but is not easy to obtain, is oriented on mounted reconnaissance procedures, and is not offered on a temporary-duty-en-route basis. Specialists and privates first class, lead by newly promoted sergeants, perform most dismounted patrols and observation posts. These soldiers are not the intended audience for SLC and are not eligible to attend. There is a serious lack of skills-based doctrine or formal training for dismounted reconnaissance. Other than check-the-block and career-progression courses, cavalry scouts seeking information and training in reconnaissance, field craft, and scout skills must look to another training center — Fort Benning.

Fort Benning, Georgia, the home of infantry and the Infantry School, has many formal courses and manuals that enable scouts to be better prepared, more knowledgeable, and more task proficient. The Infantry School is responsible for all small arms, mortars, and antiarmor weapons manuals, including TOW and TOW gunnery. It is also responsible for information included in FM 23-1, *Bradley Gunnery*, and managing the Bradley master gunner course by training MOSs 11B, 14R,

13F, 12B, as well as 19Ds, from the 3d ACR and Bradley-equipped cavalry squadrons, to become master gunner qualified.³

The infantry leader has realized that scout and sniper roles and training are so closely related that not only are they organized together in the same platoon in the light infantry force, but many mechanized infantry battalions are attaching their 11B snipers to 19D-manned scout platoons. 11Bs in LRS and light infantry scout platoons attend Pathfinder School, Ranger School, and Sniper and Long-Range Surveillance Leaders Course, or a combination of these courses, to be trained for their current duty positions. While 19Ds are authorized to attend these courses, command emphasis is not placed on their attendance.

11Bs are offered these courses at E-2 and E-3 pay grades so these soldiers can start their reconnaissance careers early and successfully. These are excellent courses that provide superior field craft training, skills and knowledge on small-unit tactics, as well as individual soldier capabilities. When that scout, sniper, or LRS soldier returns to his unit, he takes with him tactics, techniques, and procedures essential to battlefield success. The infantry community has long used these courses to increase the effectiveness of its scouts, snipers, and LRS operators. For the rest of the infantry force, the Infantry School offers courses for leaders going to Bradley or antiarmor units for the first time. The Bradley Leaders Course and the Antiarmor Leaders Course allow leaders to become familiar with each system and provide instruction on how to use these systems. This training prevents the learning curve from becoming too steep for new leaders. These courses would be ideal for 19D cavalry scouts leaving Bradley units en route to the 2d ACR, or leaving light units en route to Bradley-equipped units, their only experience on a Bradley coming from IET years ago.

Since the Infantry School and Fort Benning are responsible for the main variant of the Stryker and the SBCT, it has formed the IBRP to perform reconnaissance and security tasks for the SBCT infantry battalion commander and manned it with 11Bs. Like the scouts in the light infantry, snipers are organic to this recon platoon. The IBRP and the reconnaissance, surveillance, targeting, acquisition

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(RSTA) squadron reconce platoon use the reconnaissance vehicle variant of the Stryker and the long-range advanced scout surveillance system.

The RSTA uses a four-vehicle reconce platoon and each Stryker is manned by six 19Ds (two crewmembers and four dismounted scouts) with a 97B human intelligence (HUMINT) source specialist attached to the squad. The IBRP uses a four-vehicle setup with the platoon divided into two sections of two vehicles each. One section is heavy with two recon teams (one per Stryker), and the other section is light with one recon team and the headquarters element. The infantry scouts are aligned in three five-man recon teams; a command element that includes the platoon leader, platoon sergeant, and medic; and a sniper squad currently experimenting with all-terrain vehicles for increased mobility and stealth. The sniper squad is assigned a squad leader and two three-man sniper teams.

The difference in manning reflects the opposing views and experience brought

to the SBCT by the two separate branches. The light infantry force (airborne, air assault, and light infantry) supplements its scouts with snipers to enhance the platoon's effectiveness, simplify training, and increase its ability to shape the battlefield. The IBRP continues this habitual association of scouts and snipers, as is reflected in new doctrine. The IBRP manual is well thought out, doctrinally sound, and written in clear, simple, concise language without any vague doctrinal buzzwords. The manual currently used by the reconce platoon and all other 19D scout platoons, FM 3-20.98, *Reconnaissance Platoon*, is loaded with buzzwords and is simply too jam-packed with tactics for three different types of scout platoons using various vehicles in one all-encompassing book.⁴ The Fort Benning manuals, dealing with the three different units responsible for performing reconnaissance, LRS, IBRP, and light infantry scout platoon, are tailored to each element. While these manuals, FM 7-92, *Infantry Reconnaissance Platoon and Squad*, FM 7-93, *LRS Unit Operations*, and FM 3-21.94, *SBCT IBRP*, do have overlapping

material, nothing is omitted by trying to make one be-all and end-all manual.⁵

19Ds and 11Bs perform the same tasks in a variety of units. While the majority of 11Bs perform traditional infantryman tasks, more and more are working as the commander's eyes and ears. The opposite can be said of 19Ds, as evidenced by the 3d Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment during its drive north out of Kuwait and on to Baghdad, and the 2d ACR's battle of 73 Easting during Desert Storm. While these units fulfilled a traditional cavalry role, the individual cavalry scout engaged and destroyed targets from Bradleys just as did their 11B, and at that time, 11M counterparts. Those troopers became decisively engaged closing with and destroying the enemy, completing a traditional infantry task.

"Cavalry is a state of mind!" I've heard that on more than one occasion. I have always believed that cavalry filled the maneuver forces need for reconnaissance and security on the battlefield, which took a specific soldier trained, ready, and able to accomplish that task. If cavalry oper-



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ations are just a doctrinal approach to the employment of force on the battlefield, rather than a function of specially trained and led soldiers performing unique tasks on the battlefield, then tankers and infantrymen can do these jobs as an ad hoc combined arms team at the company or battalion level to replace cavalry soldiers, or at the very least, assign tankers and infantrymen to troop and squadron positions.

Tankers are already in cavalry units as well as armor units. Since 19Ks crew the M1 Abrams in both organizations, why is the BFV crewed by two separate MOSs to do one job? Isn't it a waste of manpower and resources to have two different soldiers, trained at two different locations by two separate branches, fill two different MOSs and perform the same tasks? Is being cavalry really a leadership function of employment of troops and equipment rather than a trooper's display of skills that define how reconnaissance and security are performed?

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tactics, techniques, and procedures to successfully give scouts the edge they need on future battlefields. The Armor community still has a narrow view of how to conduct reconnaissance. Armor leaders have placed their faith in electronic means to conduct reconnaissance. Sensors and optics enhance the scout on the ground capabilities; it does not supersede them. By perpetuating this view of mounted, armored reconnaissance, the scout is limited and hampered, handicapped by short sightedness and exposed on tomorrow's battlefield.

The Army, and the armor branch specifically, need to reassess the necessity to keep an MOS like 19D in the armor community. Is it beneficial for the soldier and the Army to keep it as is or combine it with 11B? If it is not, consolidating the MOS needs to be fully supported by the Armor Center with better training, manning, doctrine, specifically defined tasks, and dedicated platforms with a mission statement that demands all reconnaissance from corps to battalion, across the full spectrum of the force, light, medium, and heavy, current and future, be dedicated to the 19D.

With scouts, both cavalry and infantry, using the Stryker reconnaissance vehicle, shooting the same TOW and Bradley tables, and approaching the same coordi-

nation point, while leading a dismounted patrol conducting reconnaissance and security for the force, I see something at the beginning of the 21st century that happened early in the 20th century, proud members of the cavalry put out to pasture — this time instead of four-legged mounts, it is the 19D cavalry scout.



Notes

¹U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 17-12-8, *Light Cavalry Gunnery*, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), Washington, D.C., 16 February 1999.

²FM 17-98, *Scout Platoon*, U.S. GPO, Washington, D.C., 10 April 1999, superseded by FM 3-20.98, *Reconnaissance Platoon*, 2 December 2002.

³FM 23-1, *Bradley Gunnery*, U.S. GPO, Washington, D.C., 18 March 1996, superseded by FM 3-22.1, *Bradley Gunnery*, 28 November 2003.

⁴FM 3-20.98, *Reconnaissance Platoon* U.S. GPO, Washington, D.C., 2 December 2002.

⁵FM 7-92, *Infantry Reconnaissance Platoon and Squad*, U.S. GPO, Washington, D.C., 23 December 1992, Change 1, 13 December 2001; FM 7-93, *Long-Range Surveillance Unit Operations*, U.S. GPO, Washington, D.C., 3 October 1995; and FM 3-21.94, *Stryker Brigade Combat Team's Infantry Battalion Recon Platoon*, U.S. GPO, Washington, D.C., 18 April 2003.

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