Cavalry Planning: How to Plan in a Time Constrained Environment

By MAJ (P) Brian Hummel

Cavalry organizations tasked to conduct reconnaissance and security early and continuously throughout a brigade combat team's (BCT) operations often find themselves short on available time for planning. The nature of the missions they conduct, combined with the requirements driven by the enemy they anticipate, require proficiency in the military decisionmaking process (MDMP) and knowing how to abbreviate it when mission timelines dictate.

Most Cavalry organizations conduct reconnaissance pull operations early in the BCT's planning cycle in order to answer the commander's critical information requirements (CCIR) and build situational understanding for the BCT commander and staff. While conducting parallel planning with the BCT, Cavalry organizations find themselves in mission execution before the BCT publishes warning order (WARNORD) 3. The information the Cavalry squadron provides helps "pull" the BCT towards a course of action, while helping develop an increased level of certainty about the enemy or operational environment in the BCT's area of operations. Field Manual (FM) 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations* states:

> "Quality staffs produce simple, flexible, and tactically sound plans in time-constrained environments. Any METT-TC [mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, and civil considerations] factor, but especially limited time, may make it difficult to complete every step of the MDMP in detail. Applying an inflexible process to all situations does not work."[1]

The Air Cavalry Leaders Course (ACLC) at Fort Rucker, Alabama, working in conjunction with the Cavalry Leaders Course (CLC) at Fort Benning, Georgia, developed a technique for heavy attack reconnaissance squadron (H-ARS) and attack reconnaissance battalion (ARB) staffs and commanders to plan in time constrained environments. The Reconnaissance and Security Planning Process (RSPP) is taught and exercised in both courses. Despite minute variances accounting for differing capabilities between air and ground cavalry organizations (most notably aviation station time limitations), the principles taught in each course are nested with each other to achieve similar outcomes. The RSPP combines planning techniques outlined in FM 3-55, *Information Collection*; FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations*; and FM 6-0, *Mission Command*. The table below outlines the steps of the RSPP for H-ARS and ARB staffs.

Air Cavalry Leaders Course
Reconnaissance & Security Planning Process

Key Input	Abbreviated MDMP (FM 3-55)	R&S Steps (ACLC TTP)	R&S Key Output
❑ BCT WARNORD 1 ❑ Initial CDRs Planning Guidance	Step 1: Receipt of Mission	Step 1: Receipt of Mission	❑ WARNORD 1 ❑ Initial CDRs Planning Guidance
❑ 2 levels up HQ plan and products ❑ SQDN CDR's planning guidance ❑ SQDN CDR's risk guidance ❑ SQDN CDR's Focus ❑ Initial CCIR ❑ SQDN Task Organization ❑ External unit support relationships ❑ BCT CCIR and NAIs with LTIOV BCT WARNORD 2 and/or Annex L	Step 2: Conduct Mission Analysis (Concurrently with BCT staff)	Step 2: Conduct Mission Analysis (Concurrently with BCT staff)	❑ Terrain and weather considerations (MCOO) ❑ Enemy (ORBAT), HVTs, courses of action (SITEMP), capabilities and limitations ❑ IC asset availability ❑ Initial CDRs Recon & Security Guidance PIR Matrix with indicators
		Step 3: Develop Reconnaissance Objectives	❑ NAI overlay (Event Temp, Event Matrix) ❑ Initial IC Matrix ❑ WARNORD 2
❑ BCT Specified Tasks to SQDN ❑ BCT mission ❑ SQDN mission ❑ SQDN CDR's Tempo	Step 3: Course of Action Development	Step 4: Task Information Collection Assets	❑ Specific Information Requirements (SIR) ❑ Final Information Collection Matrix ❑ Refined CDRs Recon & Security Guidance ❑ Scheme of Maneuver ❑ Operational timeline
❑ Refined BCT PIR ❑ CDRs Reconnaissance/Security Guidance	Step 4: Course of Action Analysis	Step 5: Synchronize Warfighting Functions	❑ Fire support plan ❑ Sustainment plan ❑ Mission Command plan ❑ Sequels and branch plans ❑ High Payoff Target (HPT) List ❑ Decision Support Matrix ❑ Synchronization Matrix ❑ WARNORD 3 WARGAMING
	Step 5: Orders Production	Step 6: Orders Production	Compile Matrices & Graphical Overlays Squadron OPORD w/Annexes

Color Key
BCT ORDERS SQDN ORDERS R&S Matrices

Similar to the MDMP and the planning process outlined in FM 3-55, RSPP starts with Step 1, Receipt of Mission. This step's critical output is the initial commander's planning guidance in WARNORD 1. This guidance focuses the staff, gives initial information to subordinate units, and serves as the initial commander's intent and early development of the commander's reconnaissance or security guidance. At a minimum this guidance should address the following items:

- The initial planning timeline/ information collection timeline
- Initial CCIRs
- Focus of reconnaissance or security operations

Immediately after WARNORD 1 is published, the staff transitions to Step 2: Mission Analysis. FM 3-55 states:

> "Properly synchronized information collection planning begins when the IPB [intelligence preparation of the battlefield] (threat characteristics, enemy templates, enemy courses of action [COA] statements, and, most importantly, an enemy event template or matrix) is developed and updated."[2]

Cavalry staffs working within strict time constraints must quickly analyze the terrain and develop the modified combined obstacles overlay (MCOO) while simultaneously evaluating the threat's characteristics. The staff develops the enemy order of battle (ORBAT) and determines high value targets (HVT). Enemy COA are developed, resulting in detailed enemy situation templates (SITEMP) for each anticipated enemy action. Consolidated SITEMPs are utilized during Step 3: Developing the Reconnaissance Objective, to develop the event template, one of the most critical IPB products. The priority intelligence requirements (PIR) matrix with developed indicators is vital input for Step 3. The PIR are developed to answer critical gaps in information on enemy, terrain, time, weather, or civil considerations. As the commander gains a better understanding of the mission, he also updates his commander's planning guidance to include the following:

- Revised CCIR
- Tempo for reconnaissance and security operations
- Engagement/disengagement criteria
- Displacement criteria
- Acceptable risk
- Initial commander's intent- focus on key tasks

Steps 3-5 of the RSPP account for the most notable changes in techniques for planning in a time constrained environment. Field Manual 6-0 states:

> "the commander decides how to adjust the MDMP, giving specific guidance to the staff to focus on the process and save time. Commanders shorten the MDMP when they lack time to perform each step in detail."[3]

The staff begins Step 3 by considering the mission, commander's intent/guidance, and the gaps in information for the mission to develop the reconnaissance objective. The staff assigns geographical locations (named area of interest/target area of interest [NAI/TAI]) to direct assets for information collection (IC). The S-2 adds the anticipated enemy actions, specifically, the time/distance analysis or timed phase lines, which results in the event template. The staff then correlates each location with the PIR, its indicators, any anticipated HVTs, and a specific enemy COA to complete the event matrix. A thoroughly developed event matrix will help ensure the success of any reconnaissance operation. This product is the foundation for the most critical product for reconnaissance and security operations: the IC plan. At this point, WARNO 2 is ready to be published.

Cavalry commanders challenged by time constraints assume risk by forgoing Steps 5 and 6 of the traditional MDMP. Time constraints often prevent staffs from developing, analyzing, and comparing multiple friendly COA. In lieu of multiple COA, Cavalry commanders will use the information developed in Steps 1-3 of the RSPP to give a directed friendly COA and use the time saved on wargaming during Step 5.

Having already identified IC assets available, the S-3 considers the mission analysis from the S-2 via the event matrix and initial IC matrix and begins Step 4: Task Information Collection Assets. This

step lays the groundwork for developing the overall scheme of maneuver. During this phase, the commander refines the commander's reconnaissance or security guidance, commander's intent, and the operational timeline. Intelligence and operations planners convert PIR to specific information requirements (SIR) and task them in accordance with asset capabilities (such as the radar or aircraft survivability equipment capabilities of the AH-64D/E) for IC. Commanders and S-3s must keep the fundamentals of reconnaissance in mind during this phase.

The rest of the warfighting functions update their running estimates and refine their plan in support of the overall scheme of maneuver to initiate the transition to Step 5: Synchronize the Warfighting Functions. Field Manual 6-0 also states:

> "Staffs can use the time saved on any step of the MDMP to refine the plan more thoroughly, conduct a more deliberate and detailed war game, consider potential branches and sequels, and focus more on rehearsing and preparing the plan."[4]

Wargaming the directed course of action is essential to addressing initial planning shortfalls and to ensure coordination and synchronization throughout the operation. Wargaming addresses enemy reactions to friendly maneuver and allows the commander and staff to develop and refine decision points and branch and sequel plans. Wargaming is the most crucial step of the process to mitigate risk accepted by the commander's directed COA. Planners refine locations of control measure such as observation posts, passage points, and engagement areas in anticipation of enemy movement. The staff also ensures the locations and operational timing of critical enablers like fires, retransmission sites, and forward arming and refueling point locations meet the demands of the scheme of maneuver. Lastly, wargaming assists in identifying the high-payoff target (HPT) list to further refine the fires plan. The outputs of an exhaustive wargame are a thoroughly synchronized plan and completed synchronization and decision support matrices.

The final step in the RSPP is Step 6: Orders Production. This step is nested with the traditional Step 7 of MDMP and completes the overall process. Units should ensure dissemination of all critical annexes and products with a heavy focus on the IC matrix, synchronization, and decision support matrices.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the RSPP was not developed to replace the traditional MDMP. However, this process is a technique by which commanders and staffs can use to plan in time constrained environments. As previously mentioned, the process is nested with current doctrine and outlines important steps to focus on while conducting both reconnaissance and security operations. Units can start with the RSPP and continue to refine the process with their own standing operating procedures, further enhancing their abilities to conduct reconnaissance early and continuously throughout the BCT's operations, often in time constrained environments.

[1] U.S. Department of the Army, Commander and Staff Organization and Operations, FM 6-0 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, May 2014), 9-44.
[2] U.S. Department of the Army, Information Collections, FM 3-55 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, May 2013), 3-1.
[3] U.S. Department of the Army, Commander and Staff Organization and Operations, FM 6-0 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, May 2014, 9-44.
[4] Ibid.

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Acronym Reference

ACLC- Air Cavalry Leaders Course	**IPB** - intelligence preparation of the battle field
ARB - attack reconnaissance battalion	**LTIOV** - latest time information of value
BCT - brigade combat team	**MCOO** - modified combined obstacles overlay
CCIR - commander's critical information requirements	**MDMP** - military decisionmaking process
CLC - Cavalry Leaders Course	**NAI/TAI** - named area of interest/target area of interest
COA - course of action	**ORBAT** - order of battle
FM - field manual	**PIR** - priority intelligence requirements
H-ARS - heavy attack reconnaissance squadron	**RSPP** - Reconnaissance and Security Planning Process
HTP - high-payoff target	**SIR** - specific information requirements
HVT - high value target	**SITEMP** - situation templates
IC - information collection	**WARNORD** - warning order