

- [Education](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Salary Center](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [Gifts](#)
- [Conferences](#)

[Home](#) :: [Military](#) :: [Library](#) :: [Policy](#) :: [Army](#) :: [Fm](#) :: [17-98](#) ::

- [Military](#)
- [Introduction](#)
- [Systems](#)
- [Facilities](#)
- [Agencies](#)
- [Industry](#)
- [Operations](#)
- [Countries](#)
- [Hot Documents](#)
- [News](#)
- [Reports](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Budget](#)
- [Congress](#)
- [Links](#)
- [WMD](#)
- [Intelligence](#)
- [Homeland Security](#)
- [Space](#)
- [Public Eye](#)



## Military

### CHAPTER 3

## Reconnaissance

Scout platoons conduct reconnaissance to provide their commander with information that has tactical value concerning the terrain, the enemy, and the effects of weather within an area of operations. Scouts reconnoiter terrain to determine movement and maneuver conditions. When they find the enemy, they determine his disposition, strengths, and weaknesses in detail. The scout platoon provides the information necessary to allow combined arms forces to maneuver against the enemy, strike him where he is most vulnerable, and apply overwhelming power to defeat him.

Reconnaissance is conducted as part of all scout missions and is performed both mounted and dismounted. Scouts conduct dismounted reconnaissance to gather detailed information, to enhance security, and to move with stealth or in rugged terrain. Scouts conduct mounted reconnaissance when time is critical and they need to cover a large area quickly. Mounted reconnaissance allows them to maintain the fast tempo of combat operations and to make maximum use of the optics, firepower, communications, and protection provided by their scout vehicle.

Scouts must thoroughly understand how the enemy deploys his reconnaissance and security forces, as well as the sequence and timing of their entry into battle. The scouts' accurate and timely reporting of enemy locations and strength can make the difference between winning or losing the main battle. At the same time, it is critical that scouts never lose sight of their reconnaissance priorities and become involved in battles that invariably wear down reconnaissance forces.

<b>CONTENTS</b>	
<b><u>Section 1</u></b>	<b><u>Purpose and Fundamentals</u></b>
<b><u>Section 2</u></b>	<b><u>Reconnaissance Methods</u></b>
<b><u>Section 3</u></b>	<b><u>Route Reconnaissance</u></b>
<b><u>Section 4</u></b>	<b><u>Zone Reconnaissance</u></b>
<b><u>Section 5</u></b>	<b><u>Area Reconnaissance</u></b>
<b><u>Section 6</u></b>	<b><u>Obstacle/Restriction Reconnaissance</u></b>
<b><u>Section 7</u></b>	<b><u>Infiltration and Exfiltration</u></b>

## SECTION 1 PURPOSE AND FUNDAMENTALS

### PURPOSE

Based on their commander's intent and guidance, scouts conduct reconnaissance forward of other friendly forces to provide current, accurate information about the enemy, terrain, weather, and physical resources within a specified area of operations. This provides the follow-on forces with an opportunity to maneuver freely and rapidly to their objective. Scouts keep the follow-on forces from being surprised or interrupted, and they prevent these forces from losing men and equipment along the way to the objective. Scout platoons perform three types of reconnaissance: route, zone, and area.

### FUNDAMENTALS

Six fundamentals are common to all successful reconnaissance operations. Scout leaders must ensure that their plans adhere to these fundamentals, which are covered in the following discussion, during the execution of reconnaissance missions.

#### Maintain tempo and focus

As the scout platoon leader plans and executes the platoon's reconnaissance missions, he must ensure that the platoon keeps its focus on the reconnaissance objective(s) and maintains the operational tempo of the mission. A platoon that loses either focus or tempo will quickly lose its combat effectiveness.

#### Orient on the reconnaissance objective

The scout platoon's scheme of maneuver is focused toward a specific objective or set of objectives. The objective may be a terrain feature, a specific area, or an enemy force; it may be designated by an NAI, checkpoint, or objective symbol. The

platoon must maintain its orientation toward the objective, regardless of what it encounters, until the mission is complete. For the battalion scout, the objective is normally discussed in the commander's CCIR (which include his PIR), the R&S plan, or the execution portion (paragraph 3) of the OPORD. The cavalry scout's objective is covered in paragraph 3 of the troop commander's OPORD. It is critical that the scout leader completely understand the mission focus before he begins the planning process.

### **Report all information rapidly and accurately**

Commanders base their decisions and plans on the battlefield information that scouts find and report during reconnaissance. Information loses value over time. Scouts must report all information exactly as they see it and as fast as possible. They must never assume, distort, or exaggerate; inaccurate information is dangerous. Information that the enemy is not in a certain location is just as important as where the enemy is.

### **Retain freedom to maneuver**

Scouts must be able to maneuver on the battlefield. If the enemy fixes them, the scouts must free themselves; otherwise, they can no longer accomplish their mission. Scouts must continually maintain an awareness of tactical developments. They must employ effective techniques of tactical movement and react appropriately to unexpected situations. When contact is made, the platoon leader must seek to develop the situation at the lowest possible level, retaining the initiative, the ability to continue the mission, and the ability to maneuver his other elements.

### **Gain and maintain enemy contact**

Scouts seek visual contact with the enemy on favorable terms. They employ sound tactical movement, effective target acquisition methods, and appropriate actions on contact to see the enemy first and thereby retain the initiative and control of the situation. Once scouts find the enemy, they maintain contact using all available means (sensors, radar, sound, and visual) until their commander orders them to do otherwise or as required by their specific instructions.

### **Develop the situation rapidly**

Whether scouts run into an enemy force or an obstacle, they must quickly determine what they are up against. If it is the enemy, the scouts determine his size, composition, and activity. They find the flanks of the enemy force. They find any barriers or obstacles surrounding the enemy position and determine whether any other enemy forces can support the position. If the scouts encounter an obstacle, they find and mark a bypass or, if appropriate, execute or assist in a breach. This all must be done quickly, with a minimum of guidance from higher. Time is the scout's most precious resource; he cannot waste it if he is to achieve mission success.

## **SECTION 2 RECONNAISSANCE METHODS**

To reduce their vulnerability on the battlefield, scouts employ reconnaissance methods that achieve a balance between the acceptable level of risk and the security necessary to ensure mission accomplishment. Often this is expressed as a tradeoff between speed and security. The faster the reconnaissance, the more risk the scout takes and the less detailed the reconnaissance he conducts.

In conducting their missions, scouts must use all available resources, including reconnaissance methods that have been trained and rehearsed in detail. They must take every opportunity, both during peacetime and on the battlefield, to hone their reconnaissance skills. By the nature of their missions, scouts can never achieve perfect security; however, thorough knowledge of the various reconnaissance methods and their employment, combined with an understanding of a mission's particular METT-TC requirements, allows the scout leader to choose, and mix, reconnaissance methods that both

maximize security and ensure mission accomplishment.

This section discusses several reconnaissance methods that scouts can employ. These methods have proven effective in a variety of situations and form a foundation for how to conduct reconnaissance. Scouts must use their experience, professional judgment, and common sense to analyze a given situation and employ the appropriate method. Usually, a mission will require that these methods be applied using a variety of techniques, combinations, and variations.

## **AGGRESSIVE VERSUS STEALTHY RECONNAISSANCE**

In executing a reconnaissance mission, the scout platoon employs methods that reflect METT-TC considerations and that are geared to the particular task or unique capabilities of the reconnaissance element. The types of methods and actions that the platoon may employ during the course of a mission can be generally characterized as stealthy or aggressive. The majority of scout platoon missions will actually fall along a continuum between the two extremes of aggressive and stealthy actions.

Aggressive reconnaissance emphasizes rapid identification of the enemy's combat power by fighting for information. It is characterized by the employment of armored vehicles and the use of supporting fires. Scout platoon leaders must always remain aware that aggressive information-gathering can provide the enemy with an indication of friendly capabilities and future intentions.

Stealthy reconnaissance is a time-consuming process that emphasizes avoiding detection by the enemy. To be effective, a stealthy approach must rely on dismounted reconnaissance assets and maximum use of covered and concealed terrain.

Because of the nature of their organizations, HMMWV scouts will tend to conduct stealthy reconnaissance. CFV scouts, on the other hand, are more likely to conduct aggressive reconnaissance. Scout must realize that the two approaches to reconnaissance are not mutually exclusive. A combination of both methods can be useful based on templated and actual threat dispositions, changing tactical situations, varying weather and light conditions, and available resources.

## **RECONNAISSANCE PATROLS**

Reconnaissance patrols provide timely and accurate information about the enemy and terrain. The patrol leader must have specific intelligence collection requirements for each mission.

An area reconnaissance patrol is conducted to obtain information about a specific location (such as a road junction, hill, bridge, or enemy position) and the area immediately around it. The location of the objective is designated either by grid coordinates or by a map overlay with a boundary line encircling the area.

A zone reconnaissance patrol is conducted to obtain information on all enemy forces, terrain, and routes within a specific zone. The zone is defined by boundaries.

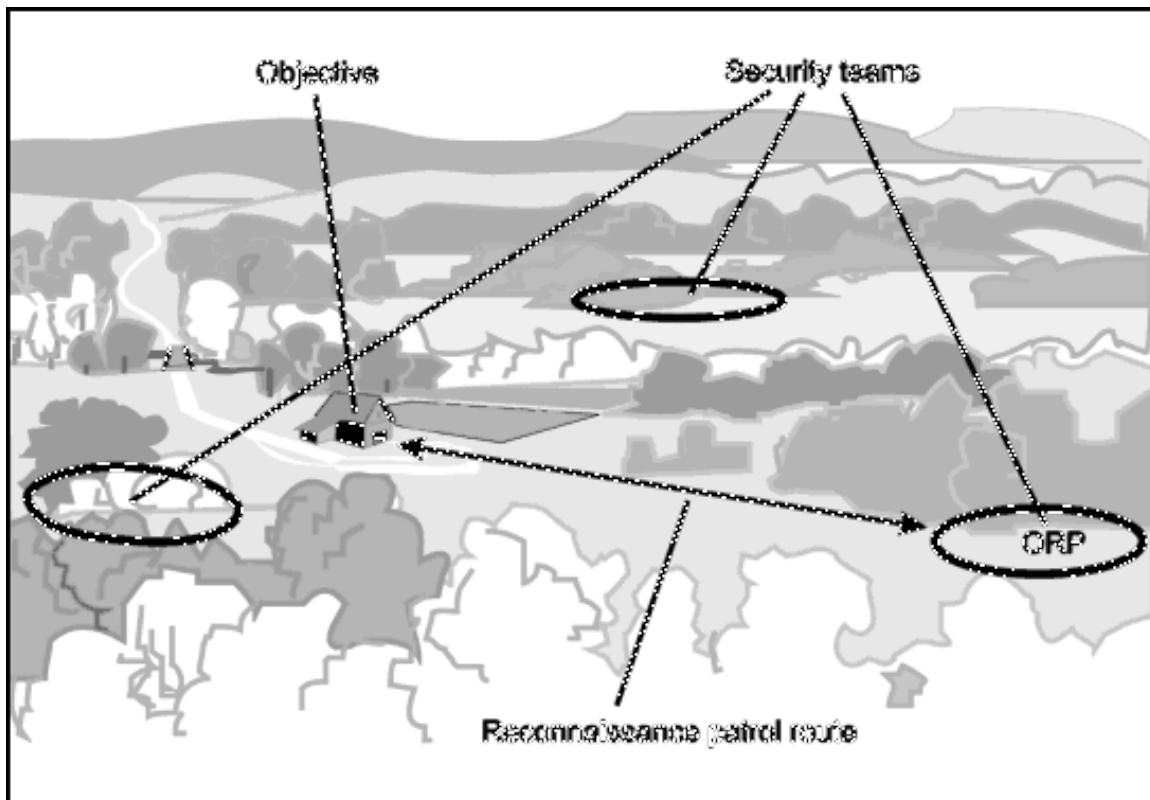
A route reconnaissance patrol is conducted to obtain information about one route and adjacent terrain or to locate sites for emplacing obstacles. The reconnaissance is oriented on a road; on a narrow axis, such as an infiltration lane; or on a general direction of attack.

Reconnaissance patrols are also a critical part of platoon security missions. Area and zone reconnaissance patrols are executed to ensure the security of individual OP sites and to cover dead space and dismounted avenues of approach throughout the platoon's area of operations. When executed as part of a screen or other security mission, reconnaissance patrols are sometimes referred to as security patrols.

### **Area reconnaissance**

In conducting an area reconnaissance, the patrol uses a series of surveillance and vantage points around the objective to observe it and the surrounding area. A scout platoon normally sends a squad on an area patrol. In rare cases, a section or the entire platoon may be required to conduct reconnaissance of a large area.

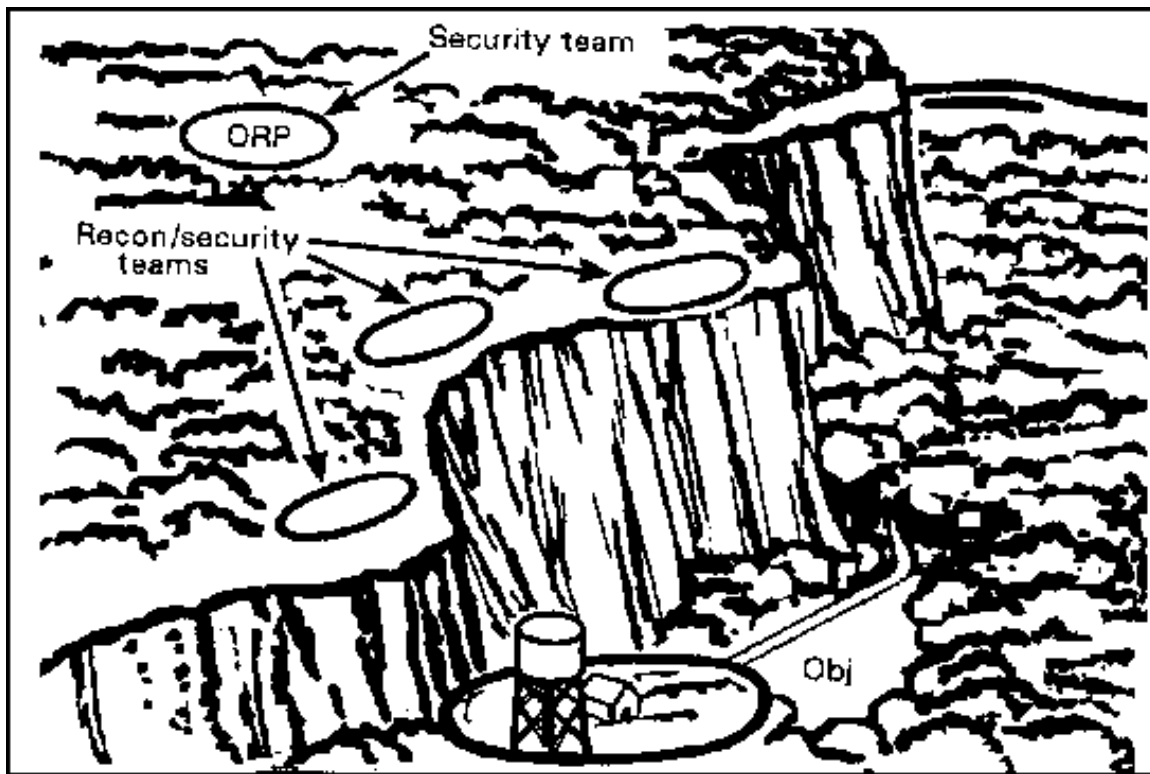
**Area reconnaissance procedures.** Before occupying an ORP, the patrol conducts a leader's reconnaissance to ensure that no enemy forces are in the area. Once this reconnaissance is completed, the patrol is signaled to move forward; it halts at the ORP and establishes security. The patrol leader and element leaders conduct a leader's reconnaissance of the objective to confirm the plan and then return to the ORP. The security element departs the ORP before the reconnaissance element. The security element leader positions security teams at the ORP and on likely enemy avenues of approach leading into the objective area. See [Figure 3-1](#).



**Figure 3-1. Area reconnaissance using separate reconnaissance and security elements.**

Once the security teams are in position, the reconnaissance element departs the ORP, moving to several surveillance/vantage points around the objective. The reconnaissance element leader may decide to have a small reconnaissance team move to each surveillance/vantage point instead of having the entire element move as a unit from point to point. Once the objective has been reconnoitered, the elements return to the ORP and report the information. The patrol then returns to friendly lines.

The terrain may not allow the patrol to secure the objective area. In this case, the patrol leader leaves a security team in the ORP and combines the reconnaissance and security elements into several teams to reconnoiter the objective. These teams move to different surveillance/vantage points, from which they reconnoiter the objective. Once the objective has been reconnoitered, the teams return to the ORP and report the information. The patrol then returns to friendly lines. See [Figure 3-2](#).



**Figure 3-2. Using combined teams to reconnoiter the objective.**

**Distance factors.** The area patrol can execute either long-range or short-range observation or surveillance of the objective. The following paragraphs examine factors that influence the distance at which the reconnaissance is conducted.

**Long-range observation/surveillance.** Whenever METT-TC permits the required information to be gathered from a distance, the patrol executes long-range observation or surveillance of the objective from an OP. The OP must be far enough from the objective to be outside enemy small arms range and local security measures.

Since the patrol does not move in close enough to be detected, long-range observation is the more desirable method for executing area reconnaissance. In addition, if the patrol is discovered by the enemy forces, friendly direct and indirect fires can be employed on the objective without endangering the patrol.

When information cannot be gathered from only one OP, successive OPs may be used. This is accomplished by squad-size reconnaissance patrols. The OPs must use available cover and concealment and have an unrestricted view of the objective.

**Short-range observation/surveillance.** If required information cannot be obtained by observing from a distance, the patrol moves closer to the objective. Short-range observation or surveillance is the technique of watching an objective from a position that is within the range of enemy local security measures and small arms fire.

This method can be executed by the platoon as a whole or by an individual section or squad. When the entire platoon is taking part in a short-range observation operation, the routes and area to be reconnoitered must be clearly defined.

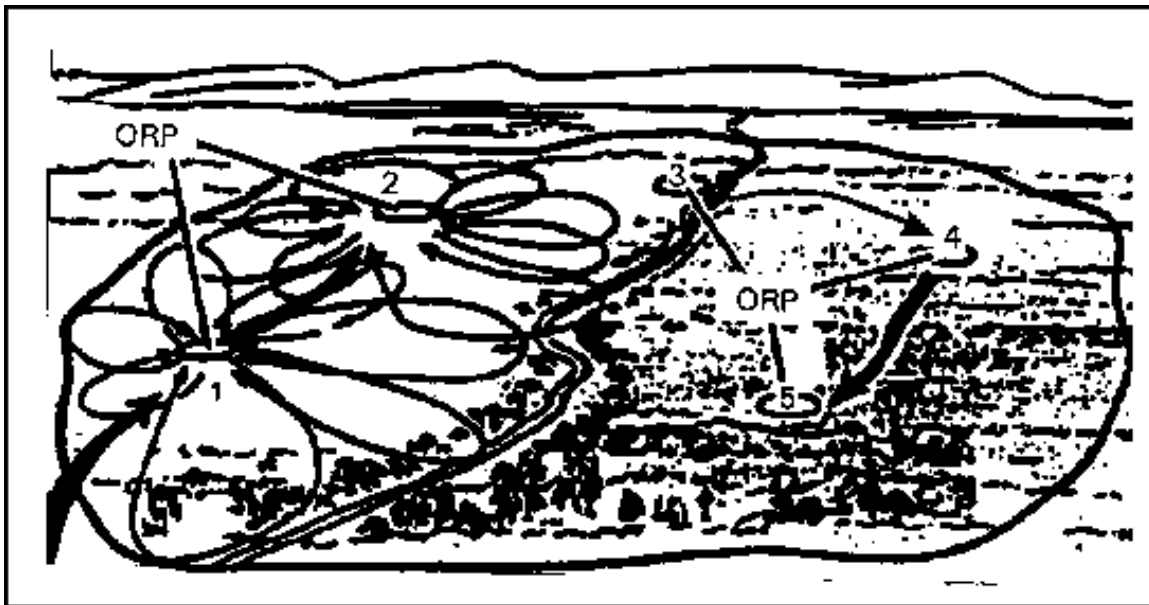
### **Zone reconnaissance**

There are three basic methods of conducting a zone reconnaissance: the fan method, the converging routes method, and the successive sector method. A dismounted scout squad can conduct a zone reconnaissance patrol of a narrow zone (less

than 1 kilometer wide). A dismounted scout section or platoon can reconnoiter a zone up to 3 kilometers wide.

**Fan method.** The patrol leader first selects a series of ORPs throughout the zone from which to operate. When the patrol arrives at the first ORP, it halts and establishes security. The patrol leader then selects reconnaissance routes out from and back to the ORP, forming a fan-shaped pattern around the ORP. The routes must overlap to ensure that the entire area is reconnoitered.

The patrol leader then sends out reconnaissance elements along the routes. He does not send out all of his elements at once, keeping a small reserve in the ORP. (For example, if the patrol has three reconnaissance elements, only two are sent out. The other is kept as a reserve.) The patrol leader sends the elements out on adjacent routes. This keeps the patrol from making contact in two different directions. See [Figure 3-3](#).



**Figure 3-3. Fan method.**

After the entire area (fan) has been reconnoitered, the patrol leader reports the information. The patrol then moves to the next ORP, and the fan process is repeated.

**Converging routes method.** The patrol leader first selects an ORP, then reconnaissance routes through the zone. He also selects a rendezvous point at which patrol members link up after their reconnaissance. Once the patrol arrives at the ORP, it halts and establishes security. The patrol leader designates the following:

- The element that will handle each reconnaissance route.
- A linkup time at the rendezvous point.

Each reconnaissance element then reconnoiters its designated route, normally using the fan method. The patrol leader usually moves with the center element. The entire patrol links up at the rendezvous point at the designated time. The rendezvous point is secured in the same way as the ORP. The patrol reports its information at the rendezvous point, then returns to friendly lines. See [Figure 3-4](#).



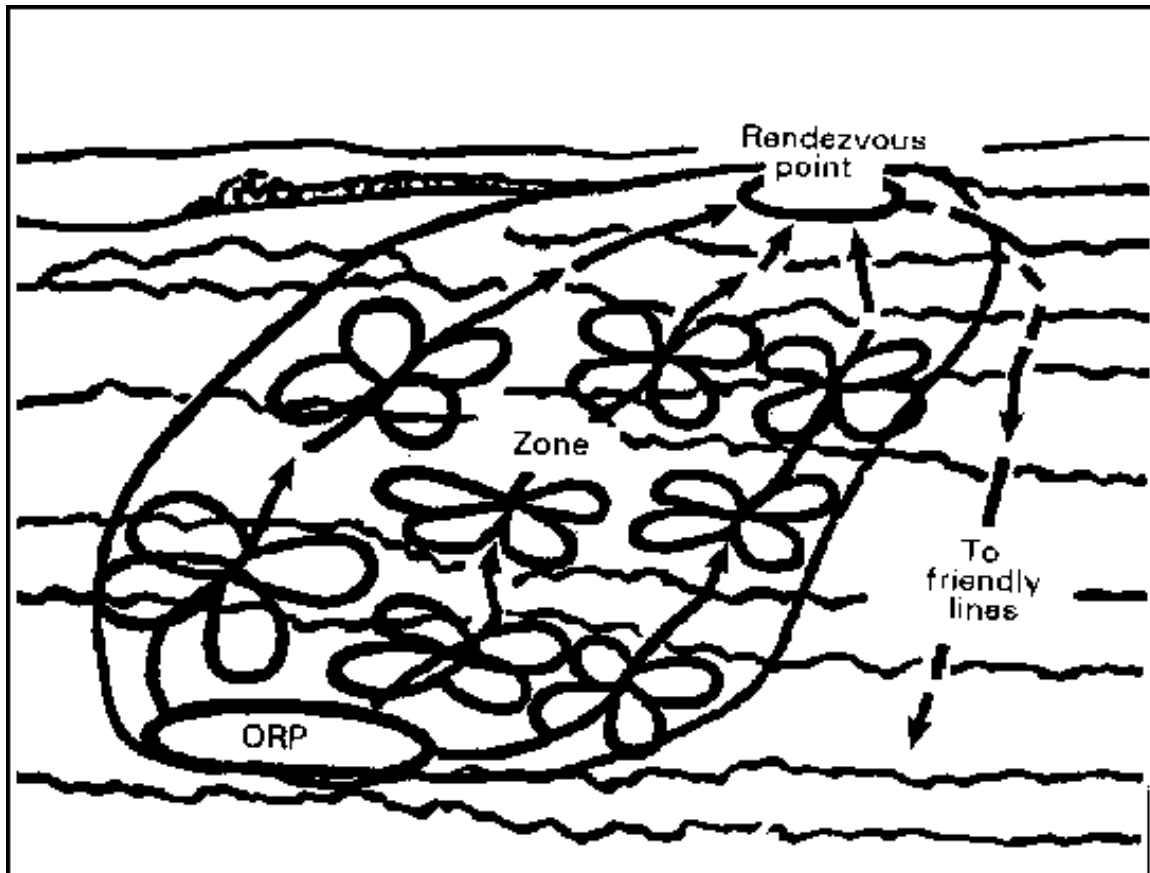


Figure 3-4. Converging routes method.

**Successive sector method.** This method is basically a continuation of the converging routes method. The patrol leader selects an initial ORP and a series of reconnaissance routes and rendezvous points. The actions of the patrol from each ORP to each rendezvous point are the same as in the converging routes method. Each rendezvous point becomes the ORP for the next phase. When the patrol links up at a rendezvous point, the patrol leader confirms the designated reconnaissance routes and the next rendezvous point and designates a linkup time. This sequence continues until the entire zone has been reconnoitered. Once the reconnaissance is completed, the patrol returns to friendly lines. See [Figure 3-5](#).

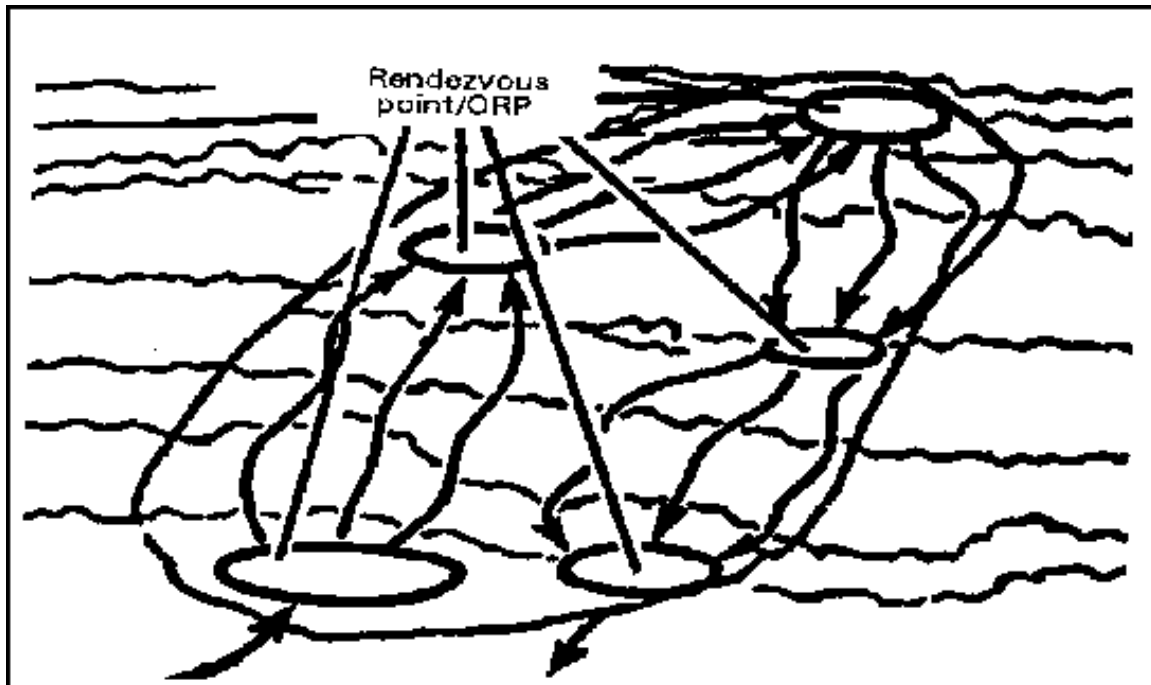


Figure 3-5. Successive sector method.

### Route reconnaissance

The purpose of the route reconnaissance patrol is to provide detailed information on trafficability, enemy activity, NBC contamination, and the adjacent terrain from the viewpoint of both enemy and friendly forces. The preferred method for conducting a route reconnaissance is the fan method, described in the earlier discussion of area reconnaissance. The patrol leader must ensure that the fans are extensive enough to cover intersecting routes beyond direct fire range of the main route.

If all or part of the proposed route is a road, the patrol leader must treat the road as a danger area. If possible, the platoon should move parallel to the road using a covered and concealed route. As necessary, reconnaissance and security teams move close to the road to reconnoiter key areas and provide local security for reconnaissance teams and the patrol main body.

## MOUNTED RECONNAISSANCE

Scouts frequently stay in their vehicles while conducting assigned reconnaissance tasks. Remaining mounted allows the scout platoon to conduct fairly detailed reconnaissance while maintaining the speed and momentum required for the operation. Mounted reconnaissance also allows the scouts to take advantage of the protection afforded by their vehicles.

### Employment considerations

Mounted reconnaissance is normally used under these conditions:

- Time is limited.
- Detailed reconnaissance is not required.
- An air cavalry troop is performing coordinated reconnaissance tasks in support of ground forces.
- IPB provides accurate information on the enemy.
- Terrain is open.

### **Advantages and disadvantages**

Speed and momentum are rarely necessary in a reconnaissance operation, but they are often critical to the successful execution of offensive operations that the reconnaissance mission supports. In addition to speed, mounted reconnaissance offers scouts the advantages of their reconnaissance vehicle. These advantages depend on the specific vehicle employed, but they can include firepower, armor protection, enhanced navigation and communications capability, and thermal optics.

The disadvantages of mounted reconnaissance include the loss of stealth due to the visual, noise, and thermal signatures of the vehicle and the loss of some detail because of restricted vision and impairment of the senses of smell and hearing. These disadvantages increase the risk to scouts as they conduct reconnaissance.

## **DISMOUNTED RECONNAISSANCE**

The primary purpose of dismounted reconnaissance is to obtain detailed information about terrain features, obstacles, or enemy forces. In addition, scouts dismount and reconnoiter forward of their vehicle to provide security before moving through danger areas such as open spaces, hilltops, curves, or other blind spots on the battlefield. They also dismount to set up short- or long-duration OPs.

### **Employment considerations**

In general, scouts conduct dismounted reconnaissance when the following conditions apply:

- Detailed reconnaissance is required.
- Stealth is required.
- Enemy contact is expected or visual contact has been achieved.
- Restricted terrain is encountered.
- Time is available.
- Danger areas are encountered.
- Security is the primary concern.
- IPB indicates close proximity to enemy positions.

Dismounted scouts provide security for each other as they move. Ideally, two scouts work together when operating dismounted. When only a single scout dismounts, he should never move out of supporting distance of the vehicle.

### **Advantages and disadvantages**

Dismounted reconnaissance is the preferred method when stealthy movement is desired. Scouts on foot benefit from the concealment offered by folds in the terrain; in addition, they do not emit a significant visual or audio signature. Dismounted reconnaissance techniques allow the scout platoon to observe enemy vehicles and soldiers at close range without being detected. Scouts conducting dismounted reconnaissance can also quickly transition to a stationary OP for a short period of time without suffering any loss of effectiveness.

Disadvantages of dismounted reconnaissance include a relatively slow rate of movement for personnel on foot, extensive requirements for detailed preliminary planning and coordination, and considerable risk to scouts who are conducting dismounted operations. Unless they establish a radio relay, scouts cannot conduct dismounted reconnaissance in depth because of the relatively short range of FM manportable communications systems. When dismounted reconnaissance takes place during hours of darkness, target acquisition depends largely on hand-held night vision devices, whose capabilities can be degraded.

### **Tools for dismounted reconnaissance**

Dismounted scouts employ a variety of equipment and other tactical tools to enhance their capability to report information accurately and to call for and adjust indirect fires. At a minimum, they carry the following items:

- SOPs.
- Personal weapons.
- Communications equipment.
- SOI extracts.
- Maps.
- A compass.
- Binoculars (and night vision devices, if necessary).

## **RECONNAISSANCE BY FIRE**

In reconnaissance by fire, scouts place direct and/or indirect fire on positions where there is a reasonable suspicion of enemy occupation; the goal is to cause the enemy to disclose his presence by moving or by returning fire. Scouts use this reconnaissance method when enemy contact is expected and time is limited or when the scouts cannot maneuver to develop the situation.

### **Employment considerations**

Examples of enemy locations and/or contact situations in which reconnaissance by fire may be employed include the following:

- Contact with a natural or man-made obstacle.
- Detection of an obvious kill zone.
- A suspected enemy position that fits the situational template.
- Signs of recent activity (such as track marks or trash).
- Bunker complexes that may or may not be occupied.

When such evidence exists, the scouts should maneuver to observe from different directions. When the decision is finally made to use reconnaissance by fire, weapons should be used in the following priority:

- Indirect fire.
- Loose machine gun.
- 25-mm chain gun, MK-19, or mounted machine gun.
- TOW.

Reconnaissance by fire eliminates any element of surprise the scouts may have had, and it is likely to give the enemy detailed knowledge of their location. It may, however, reduce the chance of scouts being ambushed within established kill zones.

Reconnaissance by fire does not work in all cases. For example, disciplined troops in prepared positions will not react to the scouts' fires. As a result, reconnaissance by fire must not entail the indiscriminate use of direct and indirect fires at all wood lines and hilltops in the hopes of causing the enemy to react. The enemy will recognize this for what it is; he will not react to it. This also wastes valuable ammunition.

### **Types of reconnaissance by fire**

Scouts can conduct reconnaissance by fire either by calling for and adjusting indirect fire or by employing their own direct fire systems.

**Indirect fire.** Reconnaissance by indirect fire provides security for the scouts because it does not disclose their exact position; in addition, all scouts are available to observe the effects of the fire.

Reconnaissance by indirect fire has disadvantages as well. Indirect fire requires more coordination and communication than direct fire; it is less responsive and may be less accurate than direct fire. Indirect fire is subject to factors beyond the control of the scout platoon, such as the supporting unit's Class V supply status, counterbattery threats, and command approval. Additionally, the effects of indirect fire may obscure the scout's vision.

**Direct fire.** Scouts can use their organic weapons to place accurate direct fires on suspected enemy positions. This technique is likely to provoke a rapid enemy response, but it discloses the scout's position. Direct fire is limited by the maximum effective range of the weapon used and by the scout's limited supply of ammunition.

Scouts must work together when employing direct fire. The scout who fires is not in the best position to observe because of obscurity and the necessity to move to a covered position after firing. Another scout, in another position, must observe for an enemy reaction. The observing scout remains undetected and can accurately report enemy information. When using direct fire, the scout platoon leader should also plan to place indirect fires on suspected positions for use as suppression if the enemy responds in strength.

## AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE

When available, aerial reconnaissance can be employed to complement ground reconnaissance. Aerial assets are an integral part of reconnaissance operations in division and regimental cavalry organizations; ground scouts must synchronize their reconnaissance effort with that of the air cavalry assets in the squadron or regiment. Ground scouts in the armor or mechanized battalion task force may also conduct reconnaissance with aviation assets. In this case, helicopters from the attack helicopter battalion or the divisional cavalry squadron may conduct the aerial reconnaissance.

In each type of organization, the ground scout must understand the capabilities and limitations of aerial reconnaissance. Air-ground coordination is vital to mission success and fratricide reduction. If possible, the scout platoon leader should arrange to conduct face-to-face coordination with the air troop commander or platoon leader. If this is not practical, radio coordination becomes essential.

When operating together, aerial and ground reconnaissance assets can compensate for each other's limitations and significantly increase the effectiveness of their combined reconnaissance effort. Aerial reconnaissance, as conducted by air cavalry elements, is the fastest form of reconnaissance. It is also terrain-independent; air assets can reconnoiter areas that may be difficult or impossible for ground scouts to reach.

On the other hand, aerial reconnaissance is limited by weather conditions, the night-vision capability of the particular aircraft's sensors, fuel requirements, ADA threats, and the detail with which terrain can be observed. Generally, aerial reconnaissance will not identify stationary enemy elements smaller than platoon size or moving elements of squad size or smaller, although this can vary widely depending on the terrain and available equipment.

**NOTE:** Refer to [Chapter 6](#) of this manual for further details on air/ground reconnaissance integration.

## SECTION 3 ROUTE RECONNAISSANCE

The scout platoon conducts a route reconnaissance to gain detailed information about a specific route or axis and the terrain on both sides of the route that the enemy could use to influence movement on the route. It is usually tasked with this type of reconnaissance when the commander wants to use a certain route, but first wants to make sure the route is free

of obstacles and enemy forces and will support the movement of his vehicles.

## CRITICAL TASKS

During a route reconnaissance, the scout platoon must be prepared to accomplish a wide range of reconnaissance tasks. Based on the time available and the commander's intent, however, the platoon may be directed to conduct the reconnaissance to acquire specific information only. To be ready for either type of situation, the scout platoon leader must clearly understand these critical tasks that may have to be accomplished in route reconnaissance:

- Determine the trafficability of the route.
- Reconnoiter, to the limit of direct fire range, terrain that dominates the route.
- Reconnoiter all built-up areas along the route.
- Reconnoiter, to the limit of direct fire range, all lateral routes.
- Inspect and classify all bridges on the route.
- Locate fords or crossing sites near all bridges on the route.
- Inspect and classify all overpasses, underpasses, and culverts.
- Reconnoiter all defiles along the route.
- Locate minefields, and other obstacles, along the route.
- Locate a bypass around built-up areas, obstacles, restrictions, and contaminated areas.
- Report route information.
- Find and report all enemy forces that can influence movement along the route.

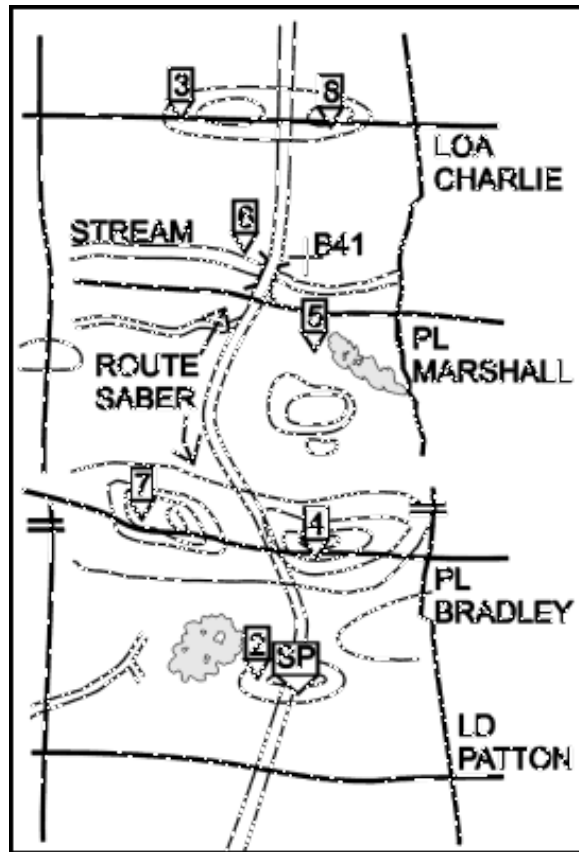
## TECHNIQUES

Because of the number of critical tasks that must be accomplished, a cavalry scout platoon can conduct a detailed reconnaissance of only one route. A battalion scout platoon may be able to handle two routes if the reconnaissance is limited to trafficability only. A scout platoon can reconnoiter a route by itself or may operate as part of a larger force such as a cavalry troop. The following discussion outlines one technique of getting all the tasks accomplished as rapidly and securely as possible.

The order the platoon leader receives specifies the route the platoon must reconnoiter and defines the route from SP to RP. Additionally, the order may specify platoon boundaries, phase lines, an LD, and a limit of advance (LOA) or reconnaissance objective. These control measures specify how much terrain on both sides of the route the platoon must reconnoiter and where the operation must begin and end.

The boundaries are drawn on both sides. They include the terrain that dominates the route, usually extending out about 2.5 to 3 kilometers. This ensures that the scouts reconnoiter all terrain the enemy could use to influence movement along the route. The LD is drawn from one boundary to the other behind the SP. This allows the platoon to cross the LD and be fully deployed before reaching the route. The LOA or objective is placed beyond the RP on the last terrain feature that dominates the route or at a location out to about 3 kilometers.

**NOTE:** Refer to [Figure 3-6](#) for an illustration of control measures for the route reconnaissance operation.



**Figure 3-6. Control measures.**

The platoon leader may add additional phase lines, contact points, and checkpoints to the graphics he receives from his commander. Phase lines are used to help control the maneuver of the platoon. The contact points ensure that the sections or squads maintain contact at particular critical points. Checkpoints are used along the route or on specific terrain to control movement or to designate areas that must be reconnoitered.

In coordination with the FSO, the platoon leader plans artillery targets on known or suspected enemy positions and on dominant terrain throughout the area of operations. The platoon leader evaluates the factors of METT-TC to select a platoon organization. He must ensure that at least one section has responsibility for reconnoitering the route.

The three-section organization is usually the type best suited for reconnaissance of one route. One section reconnoiters the terrain left of the route, another covers the terrain on the right side of the route, and the third section reconnoiters the route and controls the movement of the other two. In this organization, the platoon leader's section has specific responsibility to reconnoiter the route. (See [Figure 3-7.](#))

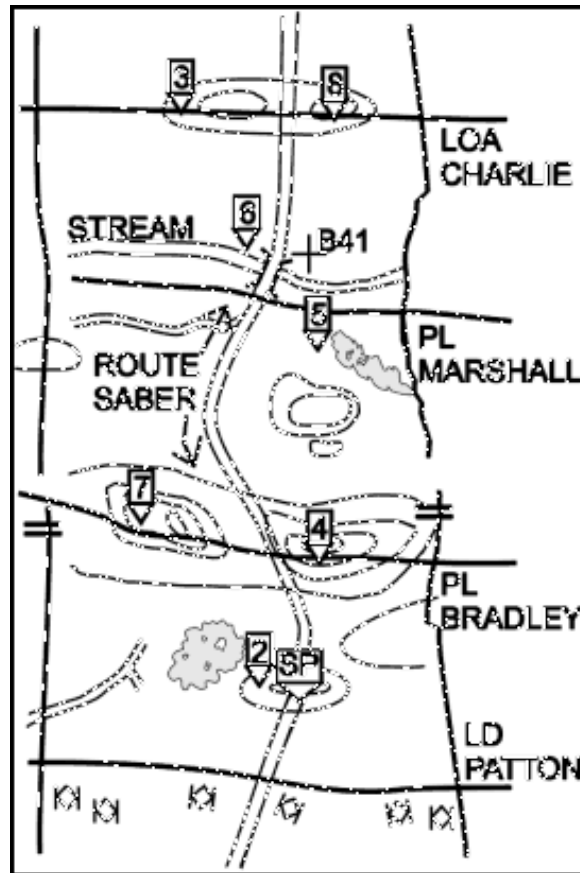


Figure 3-7. Three-section reconnaissance organization.

### EXAMPLE OF A ROUTE RECONNAISSANCE

The following example of route reconnaissance is for a cavalry scout platoon. [Figure 3-8](#) illustrates this situation.



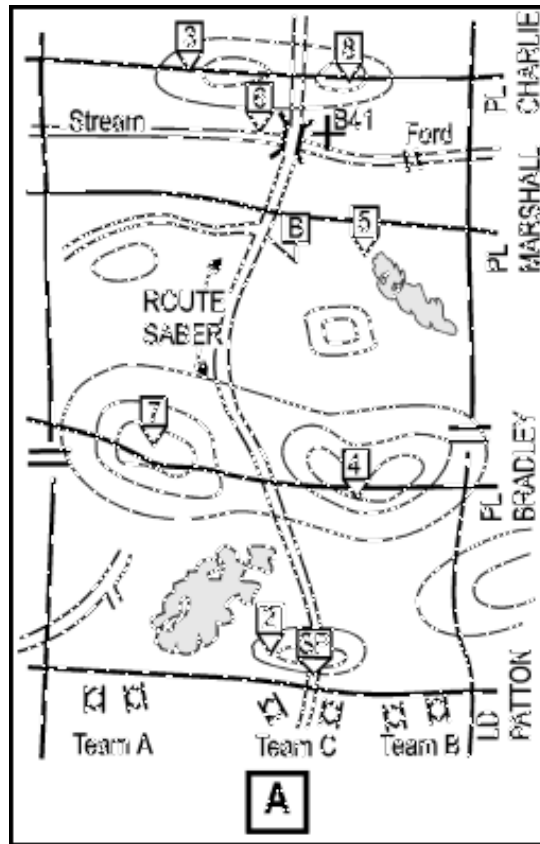


Figure 3-8A. Route reconnaissance.

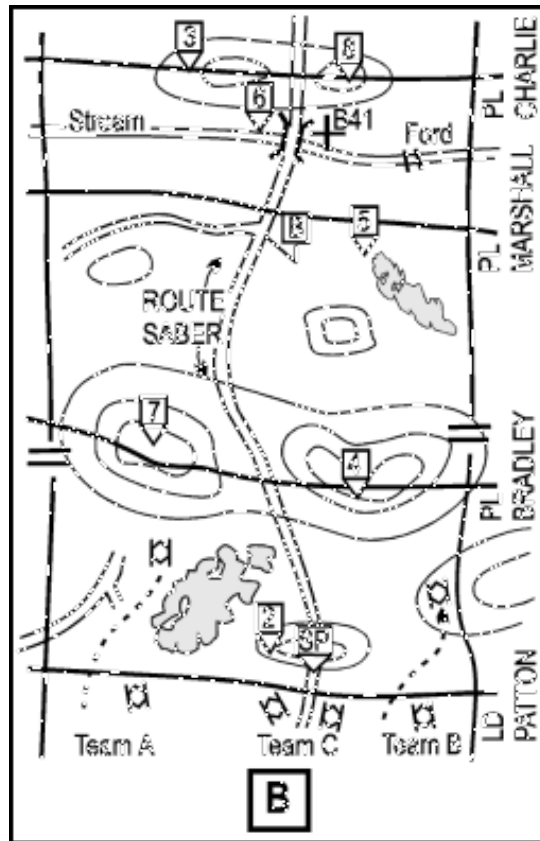


Figure 3-8B. Route reconnaissance (continued).

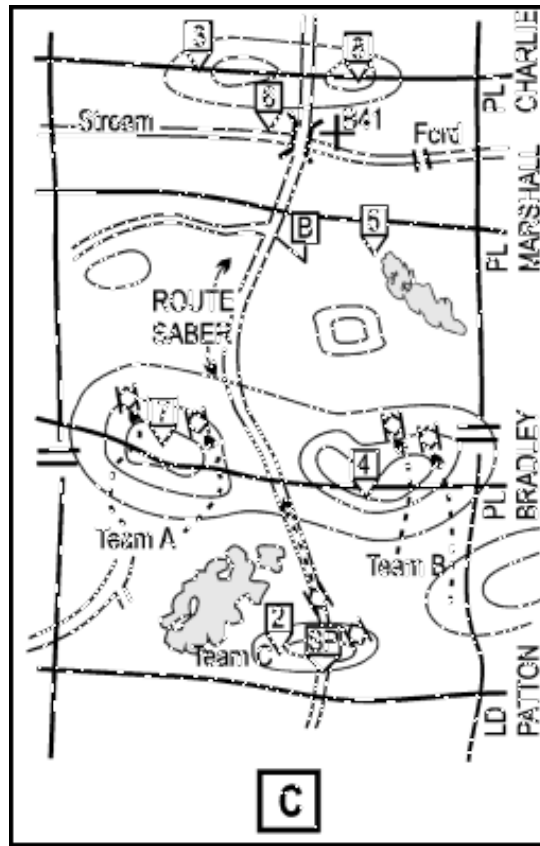


Figure 3-8C. Route reconnaissance (continued).

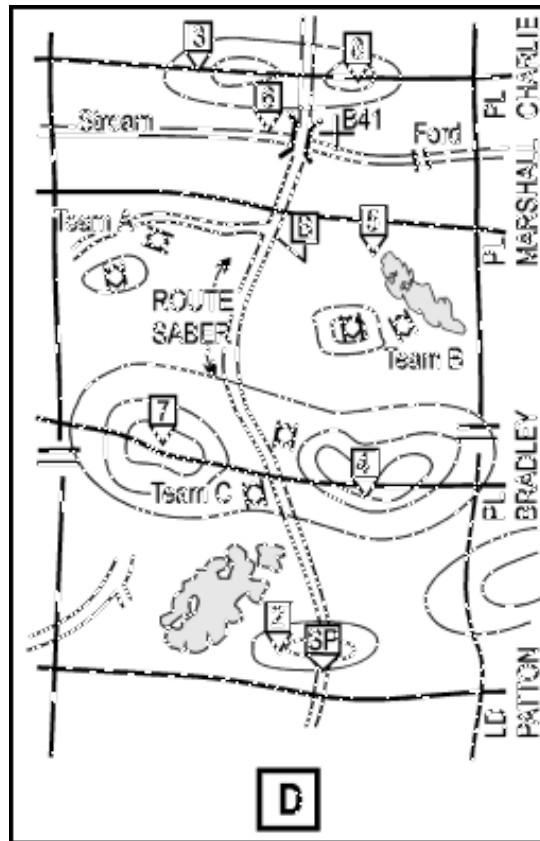


Figure 3-8D. Route reconnaissance (continued).

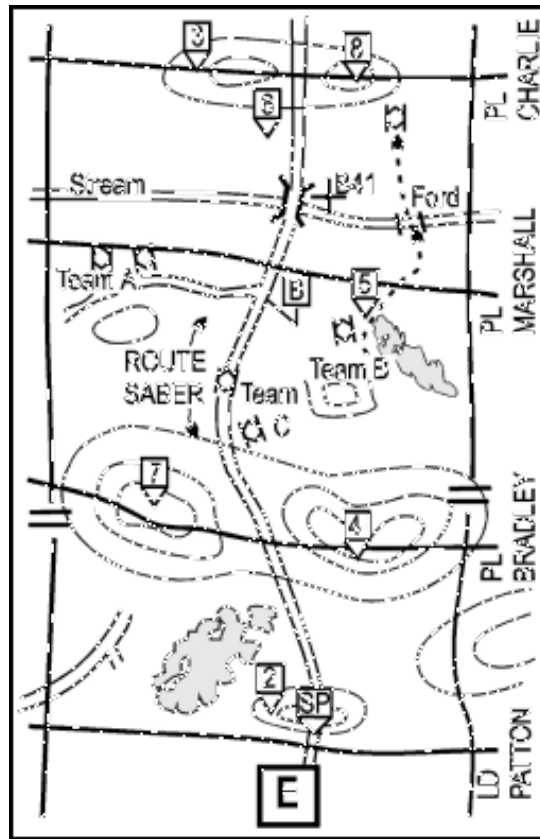


Figure 3-8E. Route reconnaissance (continued).

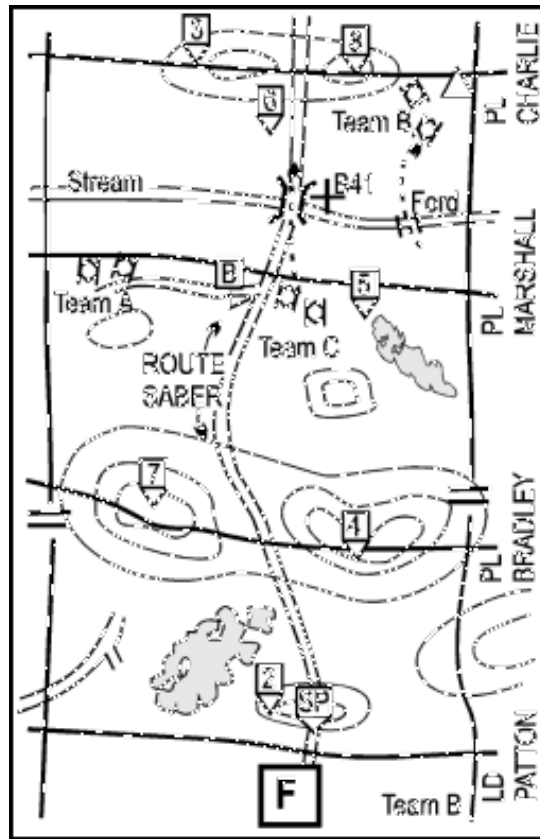


Figure 3-8F. Route reconnaissance (continued).

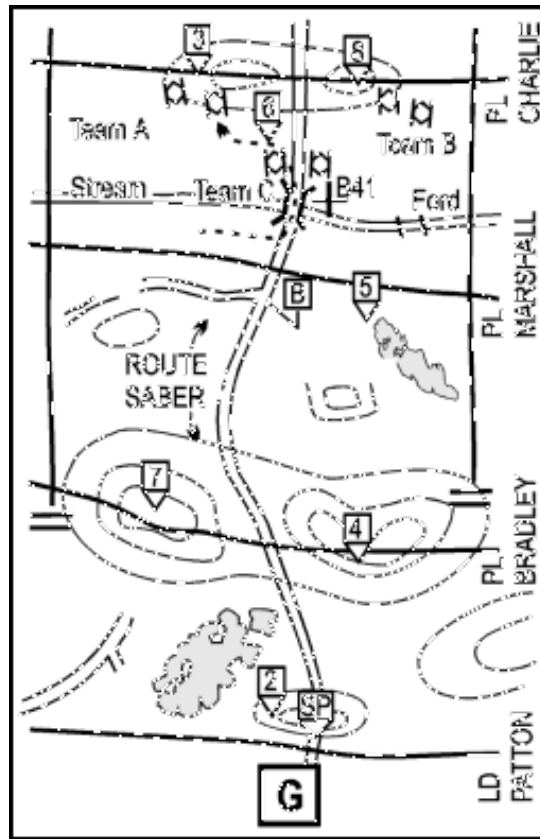
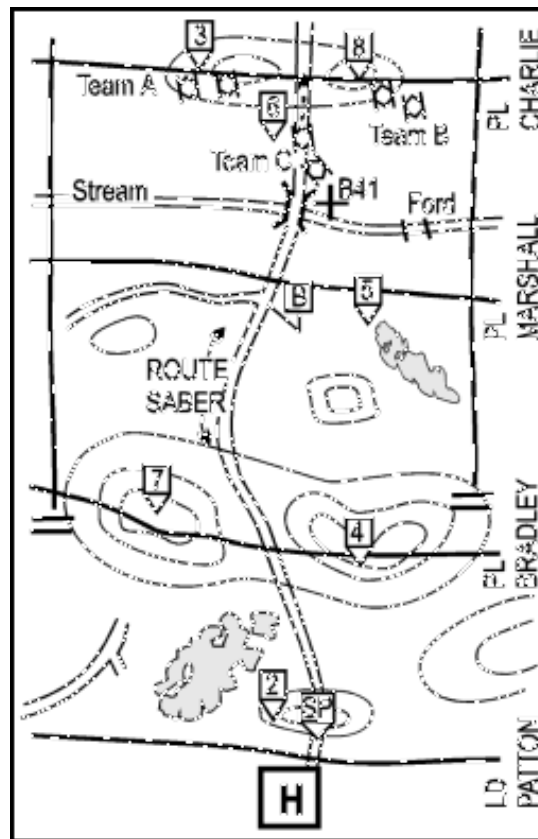


Figure 3-8G. Route reconnaissance (continued).



**Figure 3-8H. Route reconnaissance (continued).**

When the scout platoon conducts a route reconnaissance, it often deploys in a vee formation because of the very focused nature of this mission. Section A is positioned to the left of the route, Section B to the right, and Section C in the center of the zone along Route SABER. The platoon should deploy into formation before reaching LD PATTON so that it crosses the LD at the specified time. The platoon leader reports crossing the LD when the first element crosses it (see [Figure 3-8A](#)).

The platoon leader is responsible for the scout platoon's movement through the sector. He uses checkpoints to control the movement and to focus on key terrain or features that may influence movement along the route.

Section C should be positioned along the route so it can observe the route, and one element of the section must physically drive the entire route. Unless the sector is very small or very open, the platoon will move as individual sections. As the sections move to the checkpoints, they maneuver in a zigzag pattern to reconnoiter the sector and accomplish all critical tasks of a route reconnaissance. The lead sections, on the flanks, must observe the route and report any restrictions or obstacles that may restrict movement along the route. Visually clearing the route before Section C travels it provides for better security and allows Section C to concentrate on the critical reconnaissance tasks. As the sections maneuver toward the checkpoints, they maintain visual contact with the route (see [Figure 3-8B](#)).

After both lead sections report "SET" and are in overwatch positions, Section C begins the route reconnaissance (see [Figure 3-8C](#)). As the section leader moves along Route SABER, his wingman maneuvers to provide overwatch for the section leader. During the reconnaissance, the platoon leader normally must send a route classification of the trafficability at intervals designated by the commander. A route report may be required only if there is a significant or unexpected change in the route's makeup.



As Section C reconnoiters the route, the other sections move ahead, reconnoitering critical and dominant terrain. The platoon leader controls and coordinates the movement of all three sections. He must ensure that the flank sections remain far enough forward of Section C to provide security. The flank sections have also been assigned responsibility for covering lateral routes. Section A is executing a lateral route and will use contact point B to tie in with Section C on Route SABER (see [Figure 3-8D](#)).

The platoon order must address actions on the approach to the stream. In this case, the two flank sections have been given the task of locating bypasses in the form of fords or unmapped bridges. Section B is successful in locating a ford; Section A is not. Section B conducts a ford reconnaissance, following the steps used for obstacle and restriction reconnaissance, and then continues its mission (see [Figure 3-8E](#)).

Section C continues its route reconnaissance along the route until it approaches the bridge site. It then executes a bridge reconnaissance to establish trafficability of the bridge. Section A occupies an overwatch position while Section C reconnoiters the bridge. Section B continues its reconnaissance one terrain feature beyond the stream and then occupies a short-duration OP (see [Figure 3-8F](#)).

Section C completes its bridge reconnaissance and establishes local security on the approaches to the far side of the bridge. Once this is complete, Section A passes across the bridge and through Section C, continuing its reconnaissance of the dominant terrain on the left flank of the route (see [Figure 3-8G](#)). Once Section A is set in sector, the platoon resumes its route reconnaissance to the LOA (see [Figure 3-8H](#)).

## SECTION 4 ZONE RECONNAISSANCE

Commanders normally assign a zone reconnaissance or infiltration mission to the scout platoon when they need detailed information before maneuvering their forces through the zone. The reconnaissance provides the commander with a detailed picture of how the enemy plans to defend the zone, enabling him to choose the appropriate COA. There are two types of zone reconnaissance: terrain-oriented and force-oriented.

The scout platoon conducts terrain-oriented zone reconnaissance to gain detailed information about routes, terrain, and resources within the assigned zone. This is the most thorough and complete reconnaissance mission and therefore is very time-intensive. It is common for scouts executing a zone reconnaissance in terrain with heavy vegetation to advance at only about 1.5 kilometers per hour.

The scout platoon conducts force-oriented zone reconnaissance to gain detailed information about enemy forces within the zone. As the platoon conducts this type of zone reconnaissance, its emphasis is on determining the enemy's locations, strengths, and weaknesses.

Terrain- and force-oriented missions are not mutually exclusive. METT-TC factors will dictate if these types of reconnaissance are conducted separately or in conjunction with each other.

### CRITICAL TASKS

Scouts must accomplish numerous critical tasks during the zone reconnaissance. Their primary critical tasks include the following:

- Find and report all enemy forces within the zone.
- Reconnoiter specific terrain within the zone.
- Report reconnaissance information.

In addition to their primary tasks, the scouts must be prepared to conduct other tasks as directed by the higher commander. These additional tasks may include the following:

- Reconnoiter all terrain within the zone.
- Inspect and classify all bridges within the zone.
- Locate fords or crossing sites near all bridges in the zone.
- Inspect and classify all overpasses, underpasses, and culverts.
- Within capability, locate all minefields and other obstacles in the zone, reduce or breach them, and clear and mark lanes.
- Locate bypasses around built-up areas, obstacles, and contaminated areas.

## TECHNIQUES

Zone reconnaissance is very time-consuming. Unless the orders specify otherwise, all critical tasks listed in the previous discussion are implied in the zone reconnaissance mission statement. When speed is the primary concern, commanders must modify the mission statement or prioritize the critical tasks for the platoon leader. The width of the zone is determined by the road network, terrain features, anticipated enemy activity, and time available to accomplish the mission. A scout platoon can effectively reconnoiter a zone that is 3 to 5 kilometers wide. If the platoon is stretched any farther than this, it quickly loses the capability to accomplish critical tasks and move securely.

When a scout platoon leader receives a zone reconnaissance mission, the order will define the zone by lateral boundaries, an LD, and an LOA or objective. The parent unit may include additional phase lines or other graphic control measures within the zone to help control the maneuver of the units.

The platoon leader analyzes the mission to determine what must be accomplished. He evaluates any information he has received about the enemy in the IPB to determine what enemy activity he should expect to encounter. He then analyzes the terrain by conducting a map reconnaissance and by examining any aerial photographs or information from other units to determine what types of terrain the platoon must operate over. This reconnaissance is important in identifying areas the enemy could occupy based on observation capability, fields of fire, and natural obstacles.

The platoon leader completes troop-leading procedures and comes up with a COA to accomplish his assigned mission. He may add phase lines on easily identifiable terrain through the zone to help control the maneuver. He places checkpoints in specific areas that must be reconnoitered or where they will aid in controlling the operation. If the terrain is mixed, with both extensive dead space and easily identifiable features, he may use boundaries to designate areas of responsibility for each section. He will place contact points at critical areas where he wants to ensure that sections maintain contact.

The platoon leader works with the FSO to plan indirect fire targets to support the platoon's scheme of maneuver. As a minimum, they should plan targets on known or suspected enemy positions.

Depending on the type of scout platoon and applicable METT-TC considerations, the platoon can conduct the zone reconnaissance using a two- or three-section organization. It must deploy to cover the entire zone. It usually operates in a zone it knows very little about, so the COA must allow for flexibility, responsiveness, and security as it moves.

The platoon leader deploys the scout sections on line across the LD and assigns each section a zone within the platoon zone for which it is responsible. He uses phase lines, checkpoints, contact points, or TIRS to ensure that the platoon reconnoiters the entire zone. He ensures that the scout sections remain generally on line; this prevents development of significant gaps that a moving enemy could exploit. Scouts dismount as necessary to gather detailed information, reconnoiter danger areas, or move through areas that are not accessible to the vehicles. The platoon continues to reconnoiter the zone until it reaches the LOA or the final reconnaissance objective.

### EXAMPLE OF A ZONE RECONNAISSANCE

The following example of zone reconnaissance is for a battalion scout platoon. Figure 3-9 illustrates this situation.

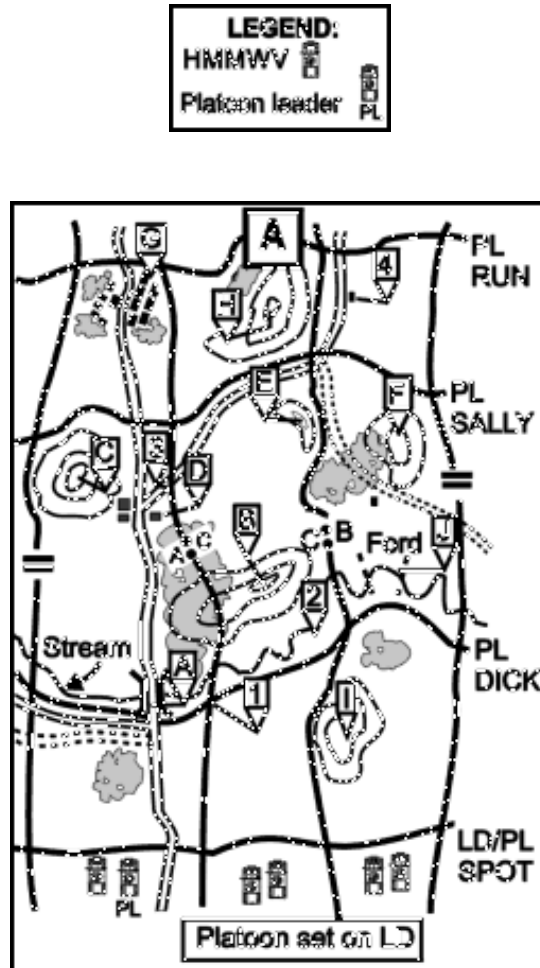


Figure 3-9A. Zone reconnaissance.

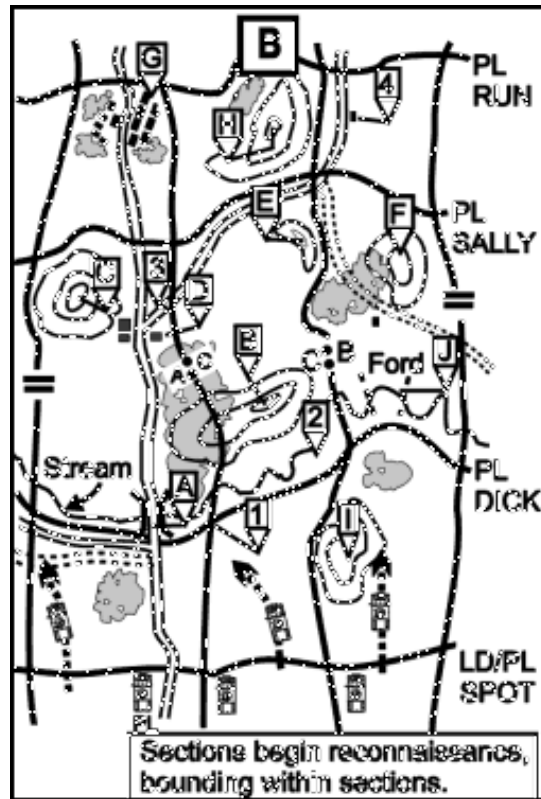


Figure 3-9B. Zone reconnaissance (continued).

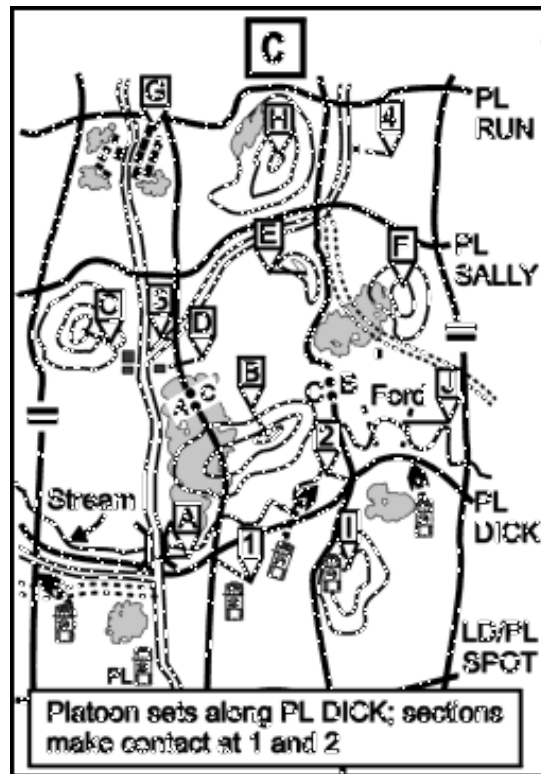


Figure 3-9C. Zone reconnaissance (continued).

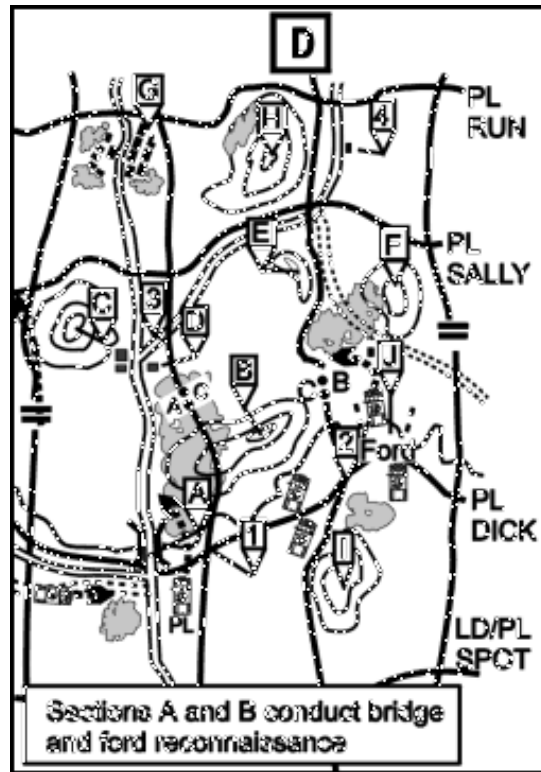


Figure 3-9D. Zone reconnaissance (continued).

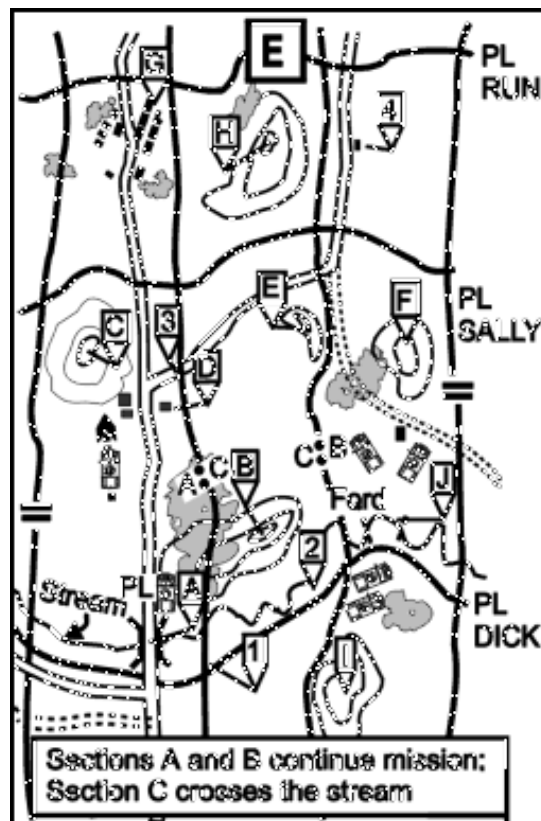


Figure 3-9E. Zone reconnaissance (continued).

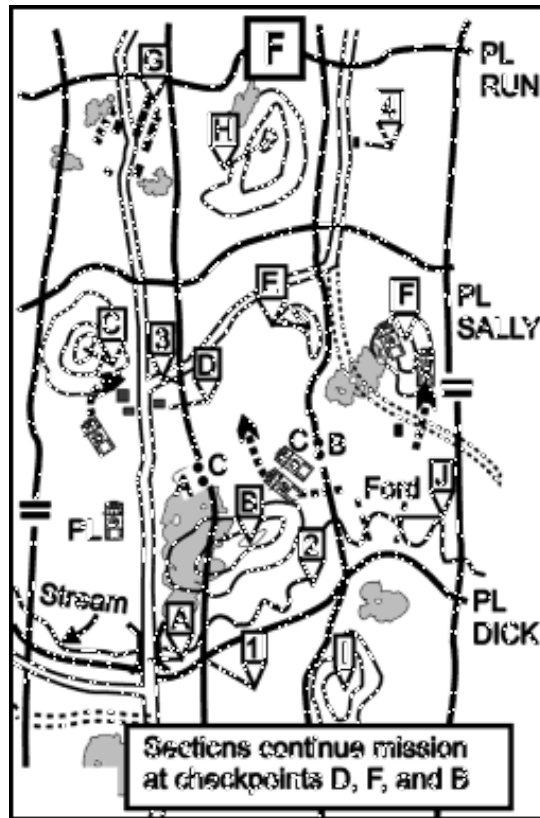
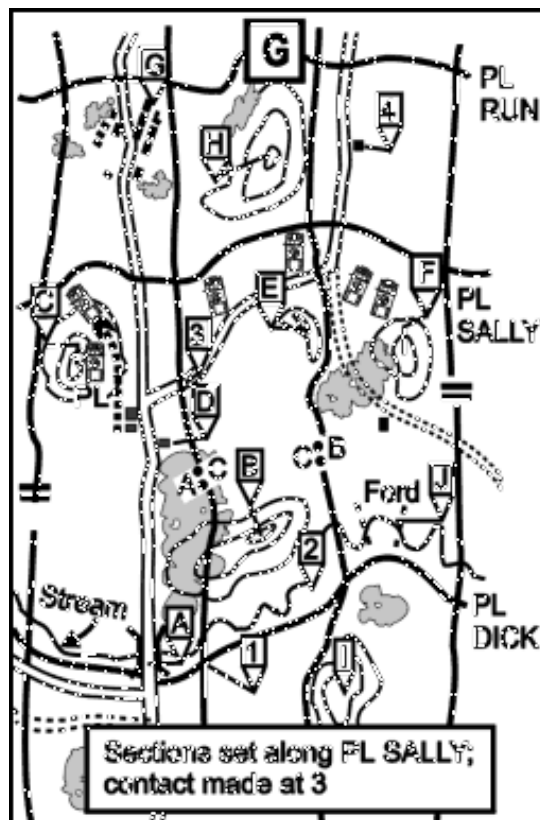
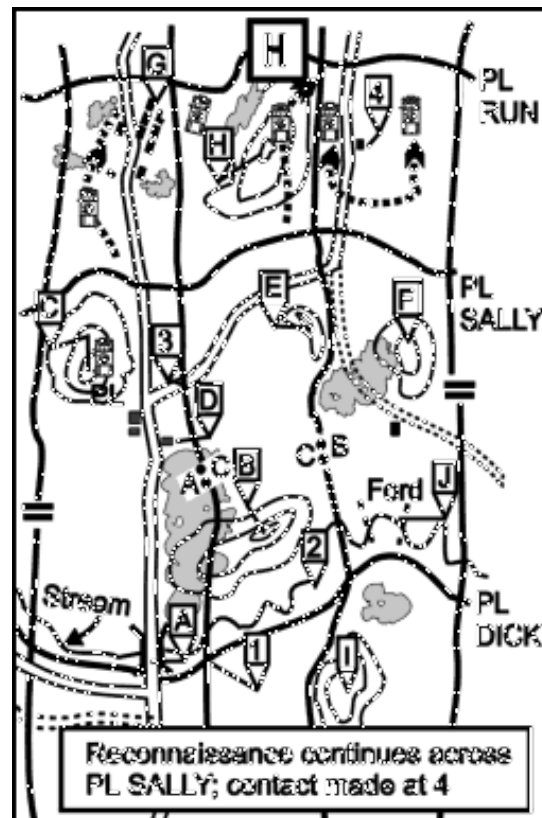


Figure 3-9F. Zone reconnaissance (continued).



**Figure 3-9G. Zone reconnaissance (continued).****Figure 3-9H. Zone reconnaissance (continued).**

Although scout platoons generally will not use strict formations forward of the FEBA, the platoon leader in this example starts out with his platoon on line. The platoon leader will attempt to generally maintain this relationship even though the sections will not be mutually supporting much of the time. The platoon should deploy into formation prior to crossing the LD, with Section A on the left, Section B on the right, and Section C in the center of the zone (see [Figure 3-9A](#)).

The platoon crosses the LD at the time prescribed in the commander's OPOD, using the bounding overwatch technique of movement within sections. In this mission, the platoon leader has chosen to position himself with Section A because of the importance of the route and bridge in Section A's area of operations. The sections maneuver through the zone in a zigzag pattern to ensure the zone is properly reconnoitered and to accomplish all critical tasks of a zone reconnaissance. Security is maintained within sections because the width and terrain of the zone prevent the sections from providing mutual support (see [Figure 3-9B](#)).

Depending on the factors of METT-TC, the platoon leader chooses the movement technique best suited for command and control. He may choose to have the sections secure the area and set at all checkpoints. As an alternative, he may have the sections bound through the checkpoints, report when they have been secured, and then set at the phase lines. If the platoon leader has not assigned sections a particular checkpoint on which to orient, the section leaders must plan their own measures to control the movement. They move section elements to contact points to ensure that the move is tied in with that of the other sections. The platoon leader does not allow any element to cross PL DICK until all elements have reported set (see [Figure 3-9C](#)).

When the platoon is set on PL DICK, the leader gives the sections permission to execute DICK and move to PL SALLY. The sections immediately begin reconnaissance of natural and man-made obstacles, including the stream to their front.

Section A must execute a bridge reconnaissance and reconnoiter the stream for possible unmarked fords as well. Section C reconnoiters the stream for possible unmarked fords. Section B reconnoiters the stream for possible unmarked fords and conducts a ford reconnaissance at the known ford in the zone.

Once Section C completes its reconnaissance of the stream and reports negative results, it moves to the vicinity of contact point 2 and awaits permission to cross the stream at Section B's ford. Section C is also prepared to cross at Section A's bridge, if necessary (see [Figure 3-9D](#)).

As Sections A and B complete their reconnaissance tasks at the bridge and ford, they revert to the bounding overwatch movement technique and continue reconnaissance. Section C moves across the section boundary and prepares to cross the stream at the ford (see [Figure 3-9E](#)).

The zone reconnaissance continues with Sections A and B securing checkpoints D and F. The platoon leader holds the sections at those control measures to allow time for Section C to secure checkpoint B and get on line with the other sections at checkpoint E. This prevents dangerous gaps from developing between the sections (see [Figure 3-9F](#)).

Once Section C sets at checkpoint E, the platoon leader has all elements on line and set along PL SALLY. Sections A and C ensure that they make contact at contact point 3. The platoon leader gives permission for all elements to execute PL SALLY, then move to and set at PL RUN (see [Figure 3-9G](#)).

As the sections move across PL SALLY, Sections C and B make contact at contact point 4. The platoon uses bounding overwatch within each section as the movement technique. The sections continue the zone reconnaissance in this manner, accomplishing all critical tasks and reporting all control measures and other reconnaissance information, until they reach the LOA or reconnaissance objective (see [Figure 3-9H](#)).

## SECTION 5 AREA RECONNAISSANCE

Before moving forces into or near a specified area, commanders call on their scouts to conduct an area reconnaissance to avoid being surprised by unsuitable terrain conditions or unexpected enemy forces. The area could be a town, ridgeline, woods, or another feature that friendly forces intend to occupy, pass through, or avoid.

Area reconnaissance is frequently employed to gain information on objective areas as well as to confirm the IPB templates and provide detailed information regarding enemy dispositions. Within a zone of operations, area reconnaissance can be used to focus the scouts on the specific area that is critical to the commander. This technique of focusing the reconnaissance also permits the mission to be accomplished more quickly. Area reconnaissance can thus be a stand-alone mission or a task to a section or platoon within the larger context of a platoon or troop reconnaissance mission.

Like zone reconnaissance, area reconnaissance can be either terrain- or force-oriented. The commander analyzes the mission using METT-TC to determine whether these types of reconnaissance will be conducted separately or in conjunction with each other.

### CRITICAL TASKS

Scouts must accomplish numerous critical tasks during the area reconnaissance. Their primary critical tasks include the following:

- Find and report all enemy forces within the area.
- Reconnoiter specific terrain within the area.



- Report reconnaissance information.

In addition to their primary tasks, the scouts must be prepared to conduct other tasks as directed by the higher commander. Additional tasks for the area reconnaissance include the following:

- Reconnoiter all terrain within the area.
- Inspect and classify all bridges within the area.
- Locate fords or crossing sites near all bridges in the area.
- Inspect and classify all overpasses, underpasses, and culverts.
- Within capability, locate all minefields and other obstacles in the area, reduce or breach them, and clear and mark lanes.
- Locate bypasses around built-up areas, obstacles, and contaminated areas.

## TECHNIQUES

The order to conduct an area reconnaissance mission identifies the area to be reconnoitered within a continuous boundary. The platoon leader analyzes the mission, enemy, and terrain and completes his troop-leading procedures. He also plans the movement to and, if necessary, from the area, following the basic rule of using different routes to and from the area. The routes are specified for the platoon when it works as part of a larger unit, such as a cavalry troop.

The platoon's primary concern during movement to the area is security rather than reconnaissance. If the platoon leader feels there may be enemy forces along the route to the area to be reconnoitered, the platoon should employ the principles of tactical movement based on METT-TC factors. During movement to the area, it may be appropriate (depending on the commander's intent) for the platoon to avoid contact. The platoon leader may also choose to orient and focus sections or squads on checkpoints as the platoon moves to the area.

The platoon leader encloses the given area within a platoon zone; he uses boundaries, a LD, and an LOA. He can divide the area into section zones by placing boundaries on identifiable terrain; this ensures that each section has responsibility for specific pieces of terrain.

The platoon leader places contact points at the intersections of phase lines and boundaries and any other places he wants physical contact and coordination between his scout sections. He uses TIRS as necessary. He works with the FSO to plan indirect fires to support the platoon's scheme of maneuver.

The platoon can conduct area reconnaissance using any of the platoon organizations. The platoon leader deploys his sections abreast across the LD to accomplish their reconnaissance tasks. Formations are often not appropriate to the area reconnaissance mission because the area may be irregular in shape and because of the wide variety of METT-TC considerations the platoon may encounter.

## EXAMPLE OF AN AREA RECONNAISSANCE

The following example of area reconnaissance is for a battalion scout platoon. [Figure 3-10](#) illustrates this situation.

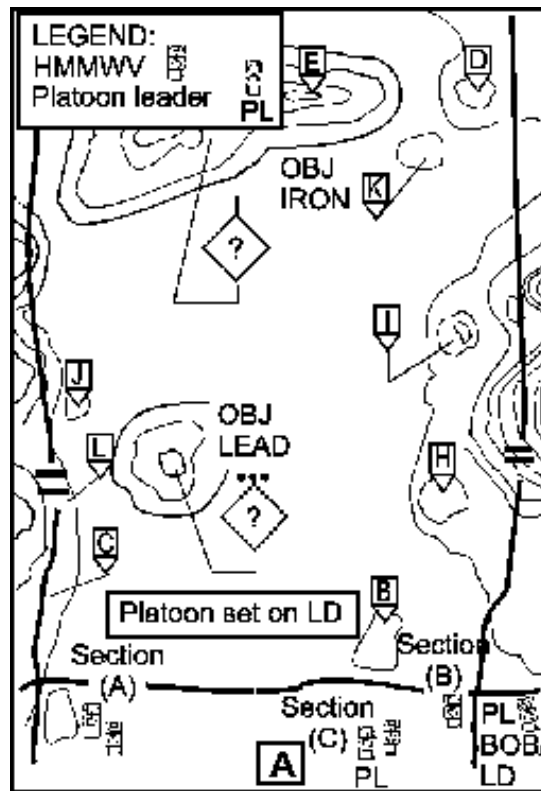


Figure 3-10A. Area reconnaissance.

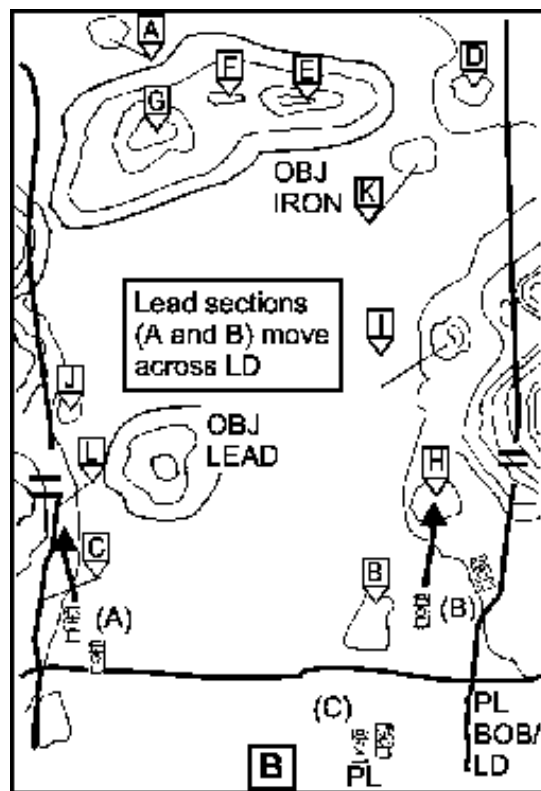


Figure 3-10B. Area reconnaissance (continued).

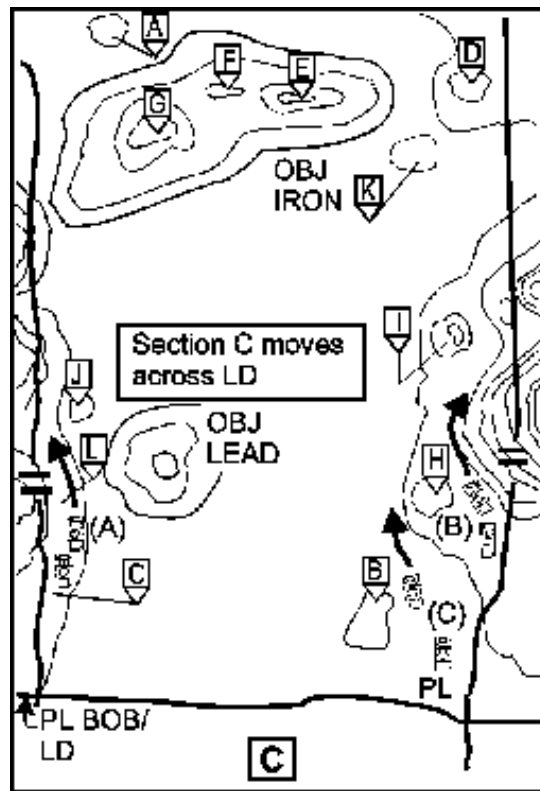


Figure 3-10C. Area reconnaissance (continued).

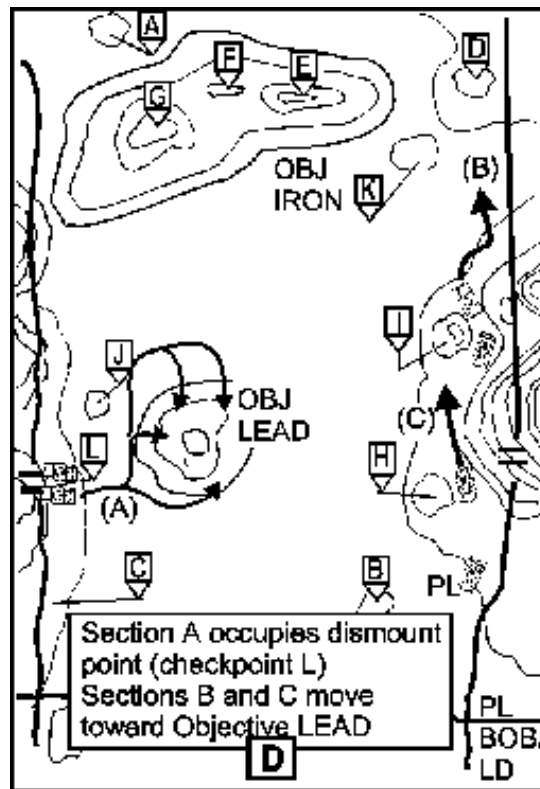


Figure 3-10D. Area reconnaissance (continued).

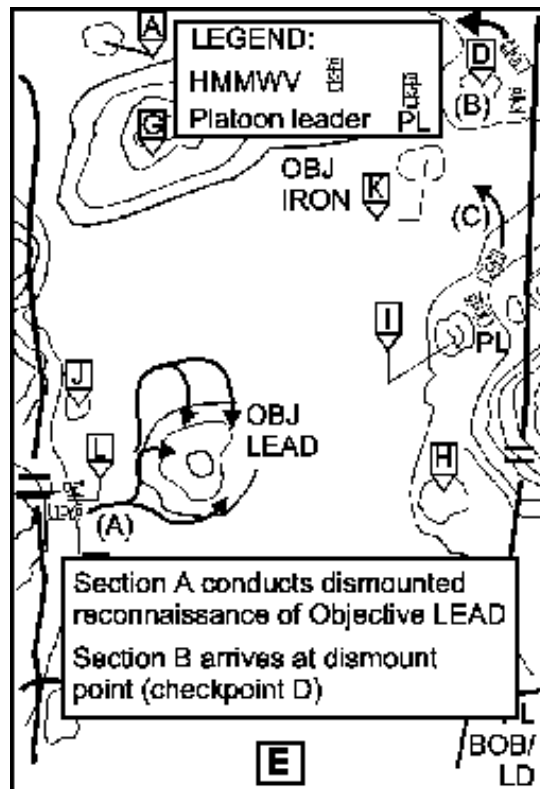


Figure 3-10E. Area reconnaissance (continued).

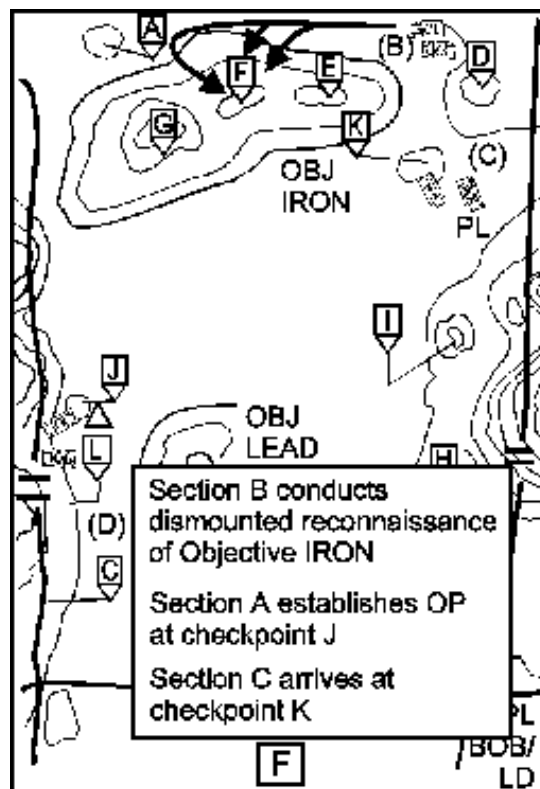


Figure 3-10F. Area reconnaissance (continued).

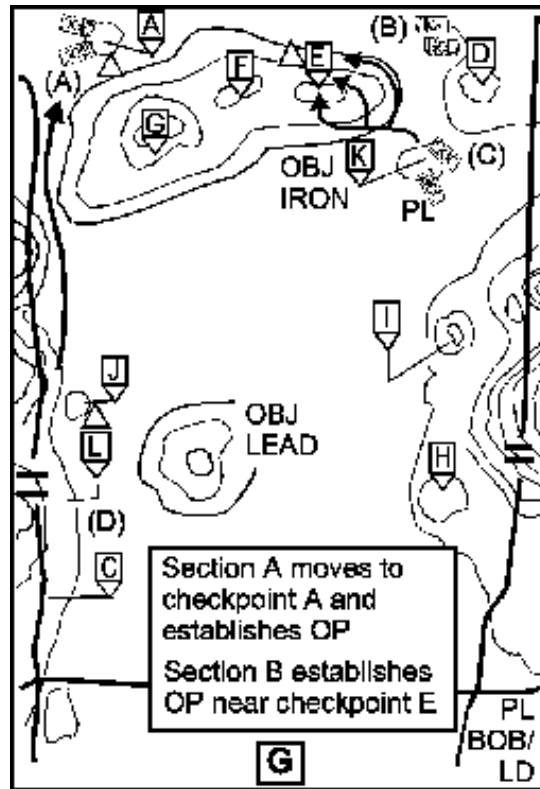


Figure 3-10G. Area reconnaissance (continued).

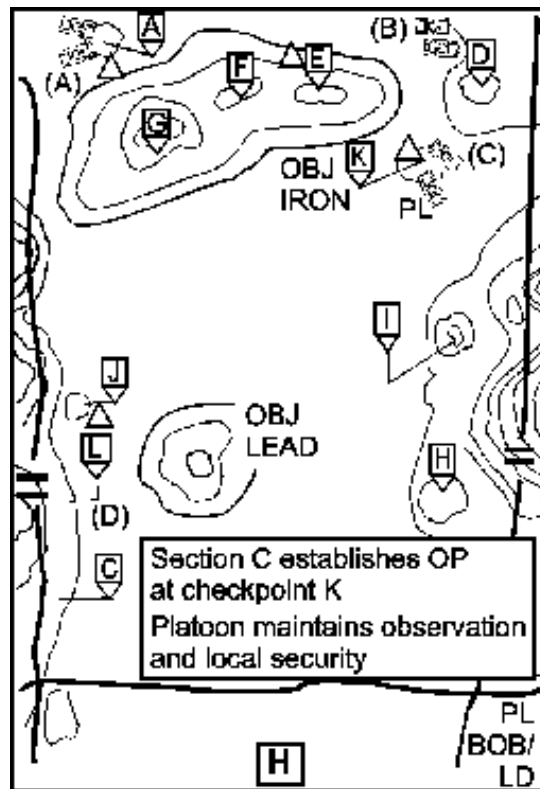


Figure 3-10H. Area reconnaissance (continued).

In this example, the battalion scout platoon has been given the mission of performing an area reconnaissance of Objective LEAD and Objective IRON. The platoon has not been assigned a specific route, and enemy dispositions are vague. The platoon leader decides, after analyzing the factors of METT-TC, to deploy his platoon to maximize security.

The platoon leader analyzes the terrain and his mission requirements and decides to use the three-section organization. He assigns Sections B and C respective checkpoints on Objective IRON. Because of Objective LEAD's smaller size, he assigns only Section A to reconnoiter it.

The platoon leader decides that he will move with Section C and thus provide close control of the reconnaissance of Objective IRON. The PSG will move with Section A to control the reconnaissance of Objective LEAD. The platoon leader decides to move the platoon using checkpoints that make maximum use of cover and concealment between the LD and the objectives (see [Figure 3-10A](#)).

Using the three-section organization, the platoon crosses PL BOB at the time specified in the commander's OPORD. The platoon crosses in sequence, with the two lead sections (A and B) executing and Section C waiting until initial checkpoints are secured before proceeding. No platoon formation is used. The lead sections, which have the longest distance to move to their reconnaissance objectives, use bounding overwatch to ensure maximum security (see [Figure 3-10B](#)).

As the lead sections execute Checkpoints C and H, Section C crosses the LD. The movement technique is bounding overwatch within sections (see [Figure 3-10C](#)).

The scout sections continue their move to the designated dismount points. Section A occupies its dismount point, Checkpoint L. The section sets its vehicles in hide positions, organizes a patrol, and deploys local security (see [Figure 3-10D](#)).

Section A's patrol moves on covered and concealed dismounted routes to Objective LEAD and conducts a dismounted reconnaissance. The patrol uses the fan dismounted reconnaissance technique to thoroughly reconnoiter the objective. Section B occupies its dismount point (Checkpoint D), while Section C continues to move (see [Figure 3-10E](#)).

Section A's patrol completes its reconnaissance of Objective LEAD. The section submits its report and establishes an OP in the vicinity of checkpoint J from which it can observe the objective area. Section B dispatches a patrol to conduct dismounted reconnaissance on Objective IRON. The platoon leader has designated checkpoints on the objective to focus the patrol, which concentrates on the terrain around checkpoint F. Section C occupies its dismount point in the vicinity of checkpoint K (see [Figure 3-10F](#)).

Section B completes the reconnaissance of Objective IRON; it then establishes an OP near checkpoint E from which it can observe the objective area and monitor any changes in the enemy situation. The section also submits its reports on enemy dispositions through the platoon leader to the commander. Section C conducts a dismounted patrol to reconnoiter the area around checkpoint E, its portion of Objective IRON. Section A moves to checkpoint A, where it establishes an OP to observe its portion of Objective IRON (see [Figure 3-10G](#)).

Section C completes its reconnaissance of Objective IRON, submits detailed reports to the platoon leader and commander as necessary, and establishes an OP at checkpoint K. All sections reconnoiter the objective area from their OPs and send updated spot reports as necessary. The platoon continues to observe the objective until relieved or assigned subsequent tasks by its higher headquarters (see [Figure 3-10H](#)).

## SECTION 6 OBSTACLE/RESTRICTION RECONNAISSANCE

One of the common tasks associated with reconnaissance missions is location and reconnaissance of obstacles and restrictions that may affect the trafficability of a particular route or axis. Obstacles and restrictions can be either natural or man-made. Current threat doctrine emphasizes the use of man-made obstacles to reinforce natural obstacles and of restrictions to slow, impede, and canalize friendly forces. These obstacles and restrictions include the following:

- Minefields.
- Bridges.
- Log obstacles such as abatises, log cribs, stumps, and posts.
- AT ditches.
- Wire entanglements.
- Defiles.
- Persistent agent contamination.

The scout platoon's ability to deal with an obstacle or restriction is extensive in certain areas and, at the same time, somewhat limited in others. The scout's most important function is reconnaissance of deliberate obstacles, including supporting enemy positions and possible breach sites. Another important reconnaissance task for the scout is to locate bypasses around obstacles and restrictions. Engineer reconnaissance teams may be task organized to the scout platoon to assist in obstacle reconnaissance.

The scout platoon has the capability to reduce or breach small obstacles; however, this is generally limited to point obstacles that are not integrated into the enemy defense and are not covered by enemy fire and observation. When the scout encounters obstacles that support an enemy defense, they have the capability to assist in breaching.

**NOTE:** An engineer squad is often attached to the scout platoon to assist in obstacle/restriction reconnaissance. This squad provides expertise in collecting OBSTINTEL; it also provides extremely limited breaching capability.

## **THE STEPS OF OBSTACLE/RESTRICTION RECONNAISSANCE**

How the scout approaches obstacle and restriction reconnaissance is highly dependent on METT-TC factors. In general, however, the process of conducting this type of reconnaissance can be covered in five steps that under most METT-TC conditions will ensure an organized and efficient operation:

- Detection.
- Area security and reconnaissance.
- Obstacle reconnaissance.
- Selection of a COA.
- Recommendation/execution of a COA.

### **Detection**

During reconnaissance operations, scouts must locate and evaluate man-made and natural obstacles and restrictions to support the movement of their parent unit. Detection of obstacles and restrictions begins in the planning phase of an operation when the S2 conducts IPB. The scout combines the S2's work with the reconnaissance conducted during the troop-leading process (normally a map reconnaissance only) to identify all possible obstacles and restrictions within their area of operations. The scout then plans their reconnaissance based on the orders they receive, the S2's IPB, and their own map reconnaissance.

The scout uses visual and physical means to detect mines and obstacles while conducting their mission. They visually inspect terrain for signs of mine emplacement and other reinforcing obstacles. They also must be alert to dangerous battlefield debris such as bomblets from cluster bomb units (CBU) or dual-purpose improved conventional munitions (DPICM).

Mines and other types of obstacles can be difficult for mounted elements to detect; therefore, scouts must also conduct obstacle detection while dismounted. They may need to dismount their vehicles several hundred meters short of a suspected obstacle and approach the obstacle on foot to conduct reconnaissance. They look for disturbed earth, unusual or out-of-place features, surface-laid mines, tilt rods, and tripwires. They can incorporate vehicle-mounted thermal sights into the search to help detect surface-laid mines.

Physical detection methods include detonating, probing, and using a mine detector. Detection occurs when a vehicle, soldier, or countermine system physically encounters a mine. This method does not indicate the boundaries of the obstacle. The scouts must probe or conduct additional visual inspection to define the extent of the minefield.

### **Area security and reconnaissance**

Enemy forces often cover their obstacles with observation and fire. Whenever scouts encounter an obstacle, they must proceed with their reconnaissance assuming the enemy can observe and engage them. The scout element that detects the obstacle establishes overwatch before it proceeds with the reconnaissance. The scouts in overwatch look for signs of enemy forces in and around the obstacle or in positions that allow observation of the obstacle. They visually search the dominant terrain on the far side of the obstacle for evidence of enemy positions or ambushes.

Once they confirm the enemy situation from the near side, the scouts not in overwatch move mounted and/or dismounted to find bypasses around the obstacle. If they find a bypass, they move around the obstacle and establish OPs on the far side to provide 360-degree security of the obstacle. If the scouts are unable to find a bypass, they must conduct their reconnaissance from the near side under the security of the overwatch elements.

### **Obstacle reconnaissance**

Once security is established, scouts then move dismounted to the obstacle. The scouts must be cautious when reconnoitering the obstacle. Tripwires or other signs may indicate the enemy is using booby traps or command-detonated mines to prevent friendly forces from determining pertinent information about the obstacle, known as OBSTINTEL. The scout platoon must collect all information that may be critical to the commander in such areas as planning a breach and verifying the enemy template. Examples of OBSTINTEL include:

- Obstacle location.
- Obstacle orientation.
- Soil conditions.
- Presence of wire, gaps, and bypasses.
- Composition of complex obstacles.
- Minefield composition, including types of mines.
- Breaching requirements.
- Gaps between successive obstacle belts.
- Location of enemy direct fire weapons.

The scout element reconnoitering the obstacle prepares an obstacle report with this information and forwards the report through the platoon leader or PSG to the commander.

### **Choosing a course of action**

The scout platoon leader analyzes the situation and the factors of METT-TC to determine what COA to select. He has a choice of four COAs:

- Bypass the obstacle/restriction.
- Conduct obstacle reduction.



- Support a breaching operation.
- Continue the mission.

***Bypass.*** A bypass is the preferred method when it offers a quick, easy, and tactically sound means of avoiding the obstacle. A good bypass must allow the entire force to avoid the primary obstacle without risking further exposure to enemy ambush and without diverting the force from its objective. Bypassing conserves reduction assets and maintains the momentum of the moving unit. If the platoon leader decides to bypass and his commander approves, the scouts must mark the bypass and report it to the commander. They may be required to provide guides for the main body if the bypass is difficult to locate or visibility conditions are poor.

**NOTE:** In some cases, bypassing is not possible, with breaching the best, or only, tactical solution. Such situations may include the following:

- The obstacle is integrated into a prepared defensive position and the only available bypass canalizes friendly forces into a fire sack or ambush.
- The scout platoon mission specifically tasks the platoon to reconnoiter and reduce any obstacle or to eliminate any enemy forces located on the original route, allowing follow-on forces to maintain freedom of movement.
- The best available bypass route will not allow follow-on forces to maintain their desired rate of movement.
- Improving the bypass may require more time and assets than breaching the primary obstacle(s).

***Conduct obstacle reduction.*** Obstacle reduction significantly degrades the platoon's ability to maintain momentum either, for its own reconnaissance effort or for follow-on forces. Obstacles within the scouts' breaching capability include small minefields, simple wire obstacles, small roadblocks, craters, and similar point-type obstacles. For other types of obstacles, the scouts can support the breaching effort.

***Support a breaching operation.*** When the scout platoon locates a large obstacle that cannot be easily bypassed, its primary option is to support a breaching operation. The scouts perform additional reconnaissance and security tasks as necessary; these may include determining the amount of time and resources required to reduce the obstacle and locating the best available reduction site. (**NOTE:** If he expects to encounter large obstacles during an operation, the commander may direct engineer reconnaissance teams to move with the scouts to determine much of this information.) The scout reconnaissance effort focuses on the following features:

- Fighting positions for support force weapons on the near side of the obstacle.
- Trafficable routes to the reduction site and routes from the far side leading to the objective.
- Dispersed covered and concealed areas near the reduction site.
- Work areas on the near side for reduction assets of the breach force.
- Fighting positions on the far side once a foothold is established.
- Positions on both sides of the obstacle that could facilitate enemy observation of the reduction site.
- Trafficability and soil conditions near the reduction site. This is especially important for minefield reduction because mine-clearing blades will not work properly in all soil conditions.
- Width, depth, and bottom condition of wet and dry gaps.
- Bank height and slope, soil stability of wet and dry gaps.
- Water velocity of wet gaps.
- Wind direction for obscuration of the obstacle.

Gathering the OBSTINTEL necessary for a breaching operation can be made much easier if engineers work closely with the scouts. If he expects to encounter large obstacles during a mission, the scout platoon leader should request an attached engineer reconnaissance team or, as a minimum, an engineer NCO to serve as a technical advisor.

After the scouts report the necessary information to the commander, they maintain security of the obstacle and serve as

guides, if necessary, for the breach force. The information they provide is used by the commander and his engineers to prepare the suppression, obscuration, security, and reduction (SOSR) plans for the breach. The scouts maintain security during the breaching operation and call for and adjust indirect fires, as necessary, in support of the breaching operation. The scouts must be in position to move rapidly through the obstacle once a lane is created so they can continue their mission.

***Continue the mission.*** When the scouts encounter a restriction, such as a bridge or defile, they may find that the restriction is not an obstacle to movement and is not covered by enemy fire or observation. Scouts may also discover dummy minefields or obstacles that are incomplete and easily passed through. Under these conditions, the scouts COA may be to report, then continue their reconnaissance mission.

### **Recommending/executing a course of action**

Once the scout has determined the COA best suited to the situation, he either executes it or recommends it to his higher headquarters for approval. Generally, the scout will execute a particular COA without specific approval if it was addressed in the OPORD he received from higher or is covered in his unit SOP. In such a case, the scout will execute the COA and then inform the commander of his actions. If the situation the scout discovered is not covered by previous guidance, he determines the best COA and recommends it to his commander. He then executes the COA specified by the commander.

## **EXAMPLES OF OBSTACLE/RESTRICTION RECONNAISSANCE**

These examples illustrate reconnaissance of obstacles and restrictions in two tactical situations. They are organized using the five-step process.

### **Reconnaissance of a restriction (not covered by fire or observation)**

Figure 3-11 illustrates this situation.

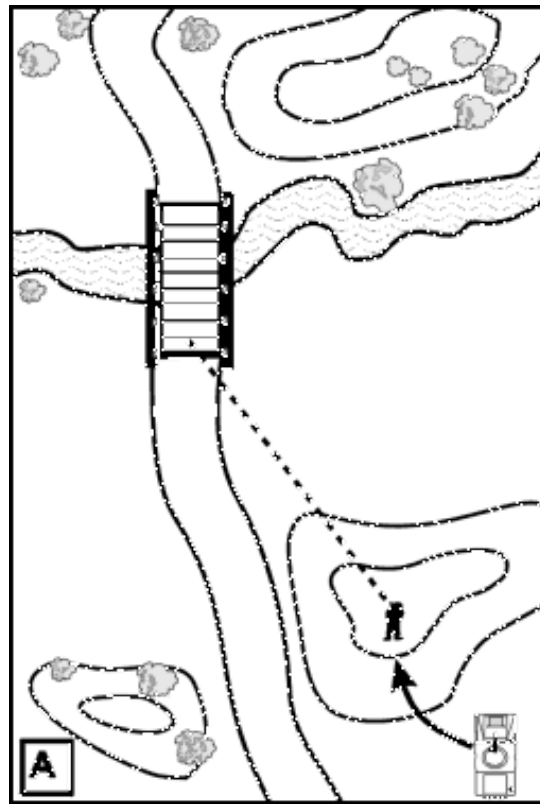
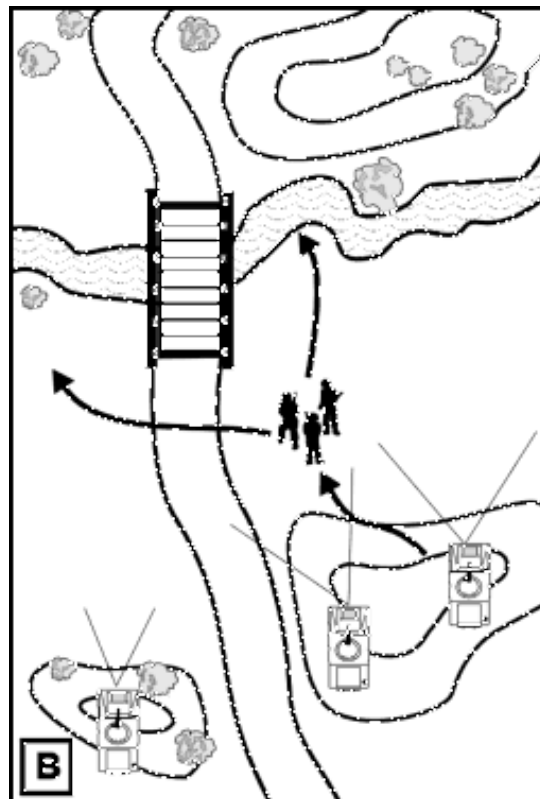
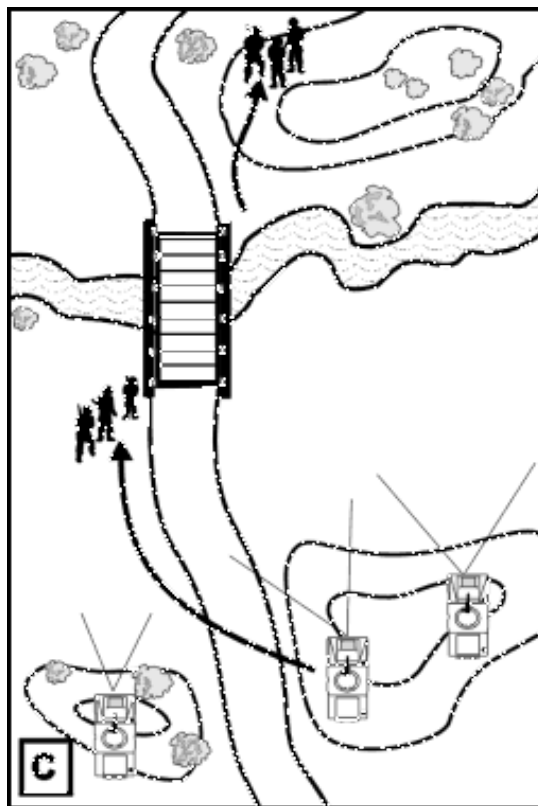


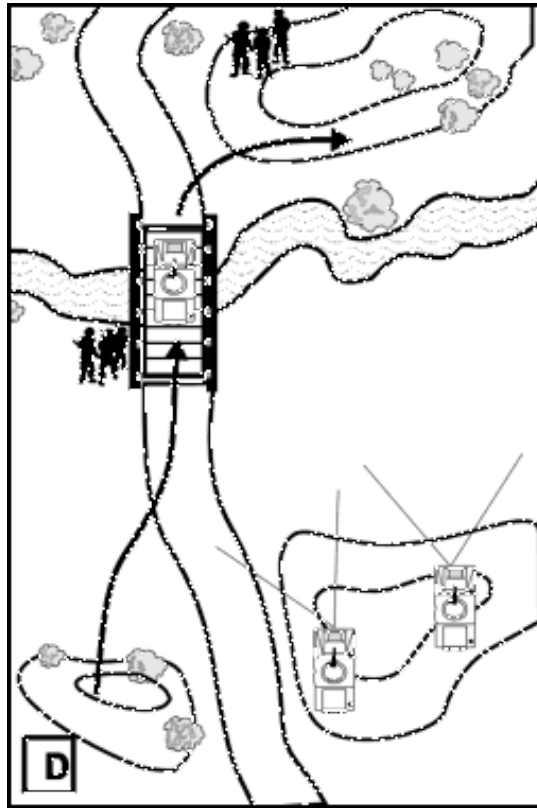
Figure 3-11A. Reconnaissance of a restriction.



**Figure 3-11B. Reconnaissance of a restriction (continued).**



**Figure 3-11C. Reconnaissance of a restriction (continued).**



**Figure 3-11D. Reconnaissance of a restriction (continued).**

**Detection.** A scout section detects a bridge when a dismounted element observes it from an overwatch position (see [Figure 3-11A](#)). The bridge was expected because it was also identified during the scout's map reconnaissance. The dismounted scouts confirm the bridge's location and report that it appears to be intact.

**Area security and reconnaissance.** The dismounted scouts bring the section's vehicles into covered and concealed overwatch positions; the section establishes near-side security of the bridge. A dismounted patrol is organized to conduct reconnaissance up to the bridge, overwatched by the vehicles (see [Figure 3-11B](#)). The dismounted element reconnoiters for both mounted and dismounted bypasses. The dismounts must determine quickly if it is possible to bypass the bridge through the use of a ford in the local area. The platoon leader monitors the situation and, if necessary, may direct other sections to assume the mission of locating other bridges or fords to serve as bypasses.

If the water obstacle can be forded, the dismounts use the ford to move to the far side. On the far side, they reconnoiter the terrain that dominates the bridge. They establish far-side security on terrain where they can observe enemy approach routes to the bridge. Once the far side is secure, the section is ready to reconnoiter the bridge itself.

If the water obstacle cannot be easily forded in the local area, the scouts may have to cross on the bridge itself. Before attempting to cross, the dismounted scouts visually examine the bridge for structural damage and rigged explosives. Because the bridge appears intact, the dismounted element then crosses the bridge one scout at a time. The scouts move quickly to the far side and take up covered and concealed positions that provide local security on the opposite approach to the bridge. Once the entire dismounted element is secure on the opposite side, it continues beyond the immediate bank area to secure the far side.

**Obstacle reconnaissance.** Once the area has been reconnoitered and secured, a dismounted element moves to the bridge under the supervision of the senior scout and conducts a detailed examination of the bridge (see [Figure 3-11C](#)). The scouts examine the bridge for the following purposes:

- Ensure that the bridge is free of demolitions. This requires examination of underwater pilings and the underside of the bridge for hidden explosives. In addition, the scouts should take a detailed look at the far side to find any electrical cables or wires connecting the bridge to the shore.
- Find any structural damage. The scouts look for obvious signs of enemy destruction efforts as well as for less obvious signs of structural damage, including cracks or fractures in stringers or supports and twisted or untrue alignments of stringers or supports.
- Conduct a hasty classification of the bridge. The scouts determine if it will support the largest vehicle in the unit.

The section leader consolidates all appropriate and relevant reports (for example, the bridge, ford, and bypass reports) and sends them higher.

***Choosing a course of action.*** Based on the results of the bridge reconnaissance, the section leader determines that the restriction is secure, that he can safely move the section across it, and that he can continue his mission.

***Recommending/executing a course of action.*** In accordance with the platoon SOP, the scout section leader now moves the remainder of his element across the bridge. The lead scout vehicle moves across the bridge, overwatched by the other vehicles (see [Figure 3-11D](#)). The vehicle crosses with only the driver on board. As he observes the crossing, the section leader watches for any signs of damage or stress on the bridge.

Once the lead vehicle is across, it moves to link up with the dismounted element and assists in providing far-side security. At this point, the overwatch vehicles can cross the bridge, and the section can continue its mission. The section leader also advises his platoon leader that he is continuing his mission.

#### **Reconnaissance of a deliberate obstacle (covered by fire)**

[Figure 3-12](#) illustrates this situation.

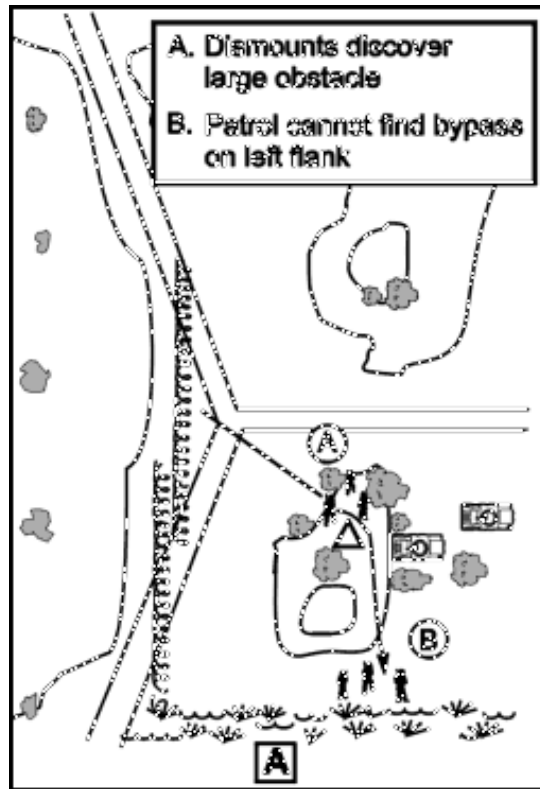


Figure 3-12A. Reconnaissance of an obstacle.

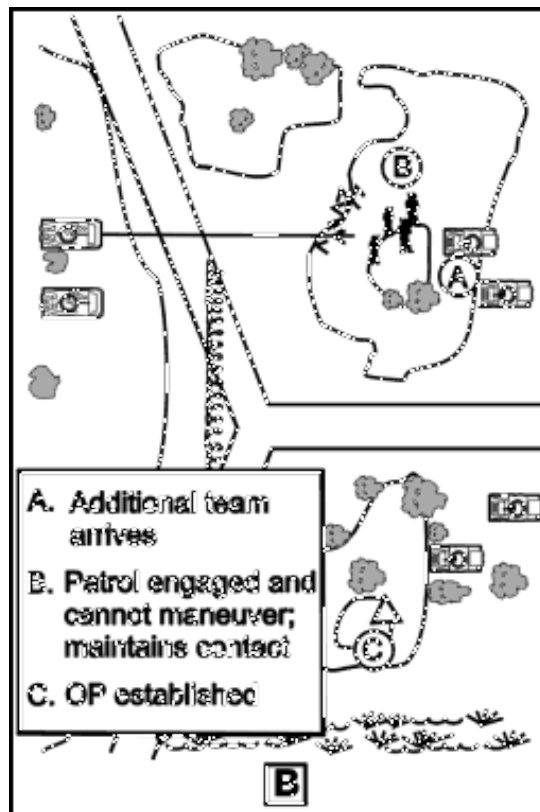


Figure 3-12B. Reconnaissance of an obstacle (continued).

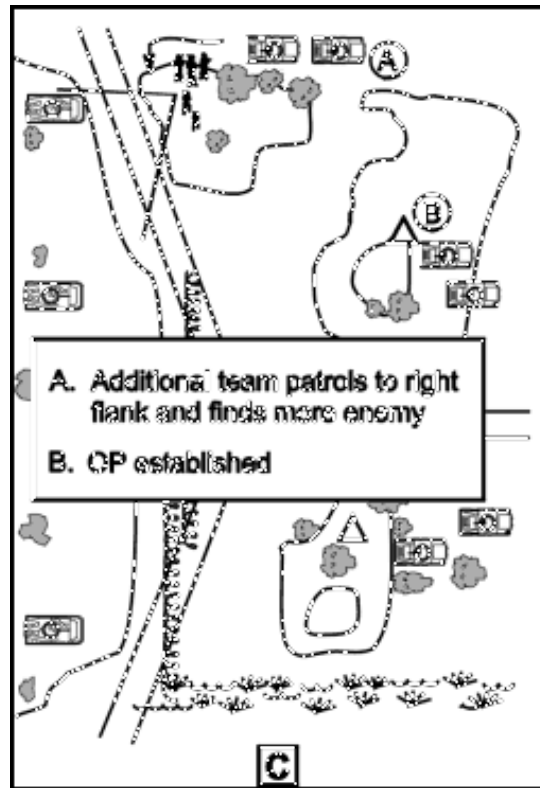


Figure 3-12C. Reconnaissance of an obstacle (continued).



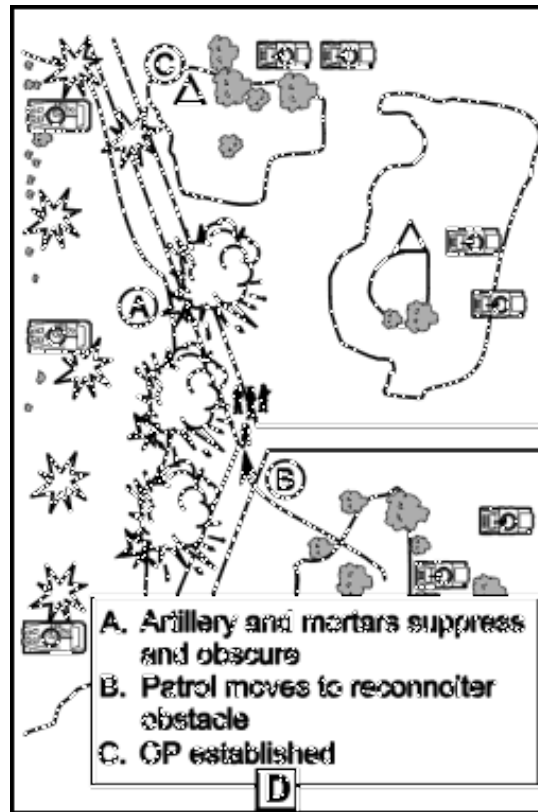


Figure 3-12D. Reconnaissance of an obstacle (continued).

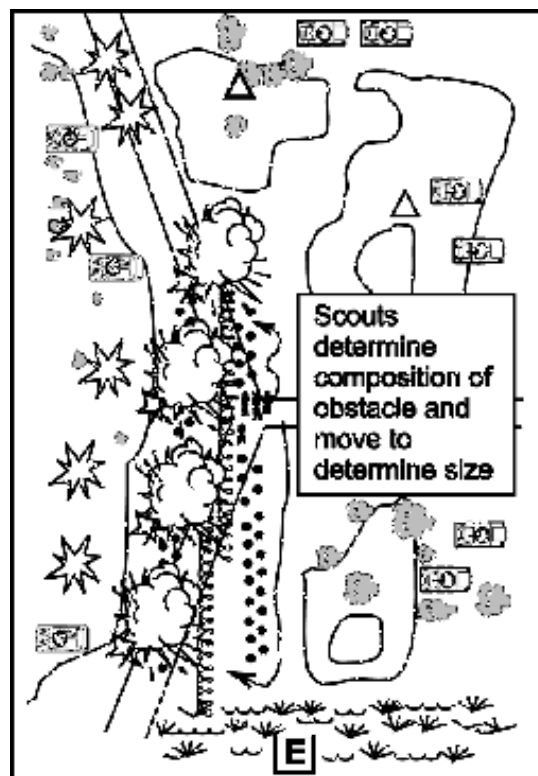
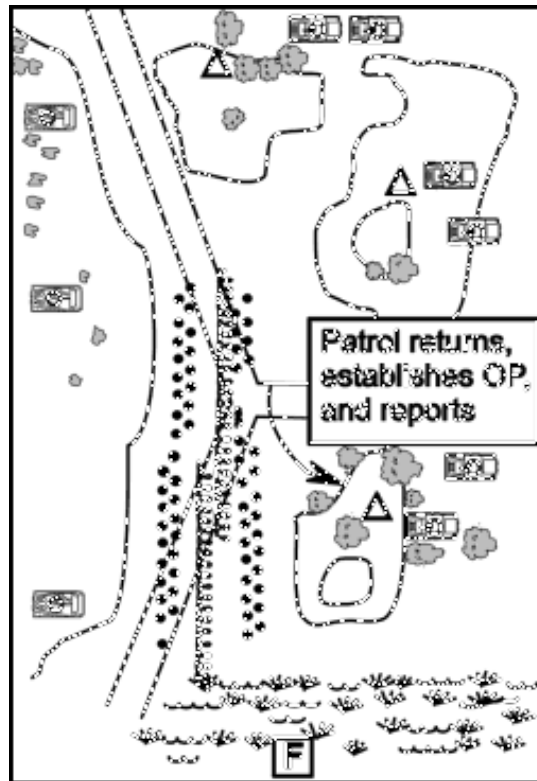


Figure 3-12E. Reconnaissance of an obstacle (continued).



**Figure 3-12F. Reconnaissance of an obstacle (continued).**

**Detection.** Dismounted scouts detect an extensive wire obstacle from a covered and concealed position. From its vantage point, the scout section cannot determine any additional details.

**Area security and reconnaissance.** The scout section brings vehicles up to covered and concealed positions to overwatch the obstacle. It organizes a dismounted element to attempt to locate a bypass and secure the far side. Because of the obstacle's size, the section also informs the platoon leader that it will take considerable time for the section to reconnoiter the obstacle by itself. In the process of executing the patrol, the section discovers that the left flank of the obstacle is tied into an impassable swamp (see [Figure 3-12A](#)).

Based on this initial evaluation, the platoon leader attempts to increase the speed of the reconnaissance by sending two additional sections to find a bypass around the right flank of the obstacle. One section moves to a dismount point and sends a patrol around the right flank. The patrol is engaged by enemy machine guns. The overwatch vehicles suppress the machine guns and then are engaged by enemy vehicles in defensive positions. The section reports that it can maintain contact with the enemy but can no longer maneuver (see [Figure 3-12B](#)). The other section, positioned where it can observe the enemy from the rear, reports a company-size unit in defensive positions overwatching the obstacle. It also reports that there are no trafficable routes around the enemy's right flank (see [Figure 3-12C](#)).

At this point, the platoon leader determines that he does not have the combat power to secure the far side of the objective. He also determines that the only trafficable bypass is covered by enemy direct fires. He now must conduct a detailed reconnaissance of the obstacle before he can recommend a COA to his commander.

**Obstacle reconnaissance.** The scout section that originally detected the obstacle is in the best position to reconnoiter it. It organizes a dismounted element to move to the obstacle. Because there is enough light for the enemy to visually cover the obstacle, the platoon leader coordinates indirect fire to support the patrol. As the patrol moves out, mortars lay suppressive fires on the known enemy positions, and artillery fires smoke into the area between the enemy positions and the obstacle (see [Figure 3-12D](#)).

The scouts move by covered and concealed dismounted routes to the obstacle; through probing and visual observation, they determine that the wire obstacle is reinforced with buried mines. They are able to determine that there is a mix of AT and AP mines with antihandling devices, emplaced in 30-meter belts on both the near side and the far side of the wire. Once they acquire this information, the scouts move laterally along the obstacle to determine its length and to find out if its composition is uniform. They look for the most favorable breaching location (see [Figure 3-12E](#)).

**Choosing a course of action.** The platoon leader evaluates the situation and determines that he cannot bypass the obstacle and does not have the capability to breach it. He decides to recommend a deliberate breach.

**Recommending/executing a course of action.** The platoon leader recommends to his commander that the platoon prepare to support a deliberate breach. With higher approval, he orders the platoon to continue the reconnaissance and security tasks necessary to support a deliberate breach operation. He also begins coordinating with, and passing information to, the element responsible for conducting the deliberate breach (see [Figure 3-12F](#)).

## SECTION 7 INFILTRATION AND EXFILTRATION

### INFILTRATION

Infiltration is a form of maneuver that the scout platoon can use to penetrate the enemy security zone or main battle area to accomplish a specific task. It is most commonly used by ground reconnaissance assets, although aerial platforms may also employ tactics based on infiltration techniques.

During infiltration, the platoon's elements use predesignated lanes to reach their objective without being detected or engaged by the enemy. The infiltrating elements employ cover, concealment, and stealth to move through identified or templated gaps in the enemy array. Purposes of infiltration include the following:

- Reconnoiter a specified area and establish OPs.
- Emplace remote sensors.
- Establish communications relay capability for a specific period in support of other reconnaissance operations.
- Determine enemy strengths and weaknesses.
- Locate unobserved routes through enemy positions.
- Determine the location of high-payoff enemy assets.

The scout platoon can infiltrate by squads, by sections, or as a complete platoon. [Figures 3-13A](#) through [3-13C](#) illustrate an infiltration operation.

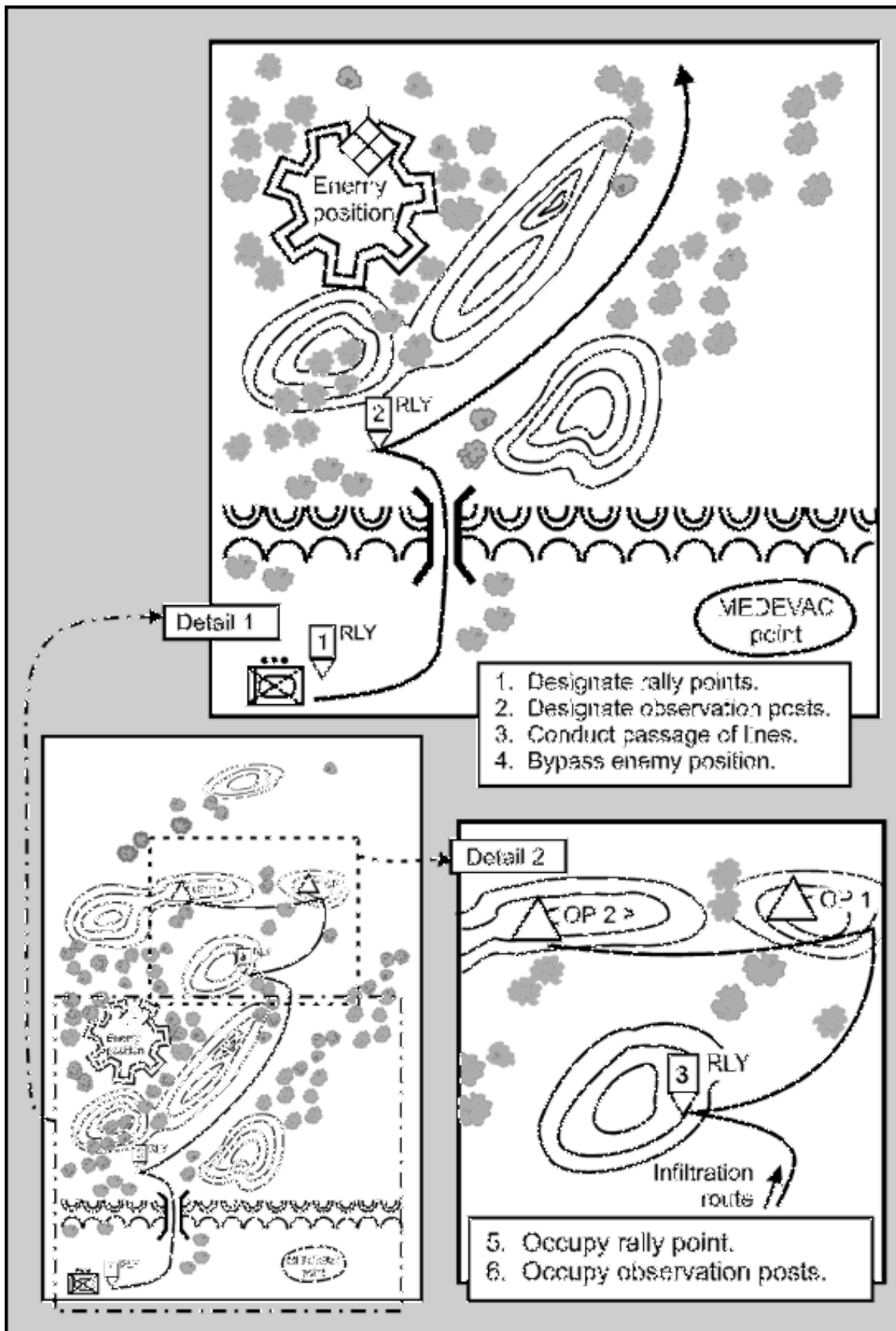


Figure 3-13A. Infiltration scheme of maneuver.

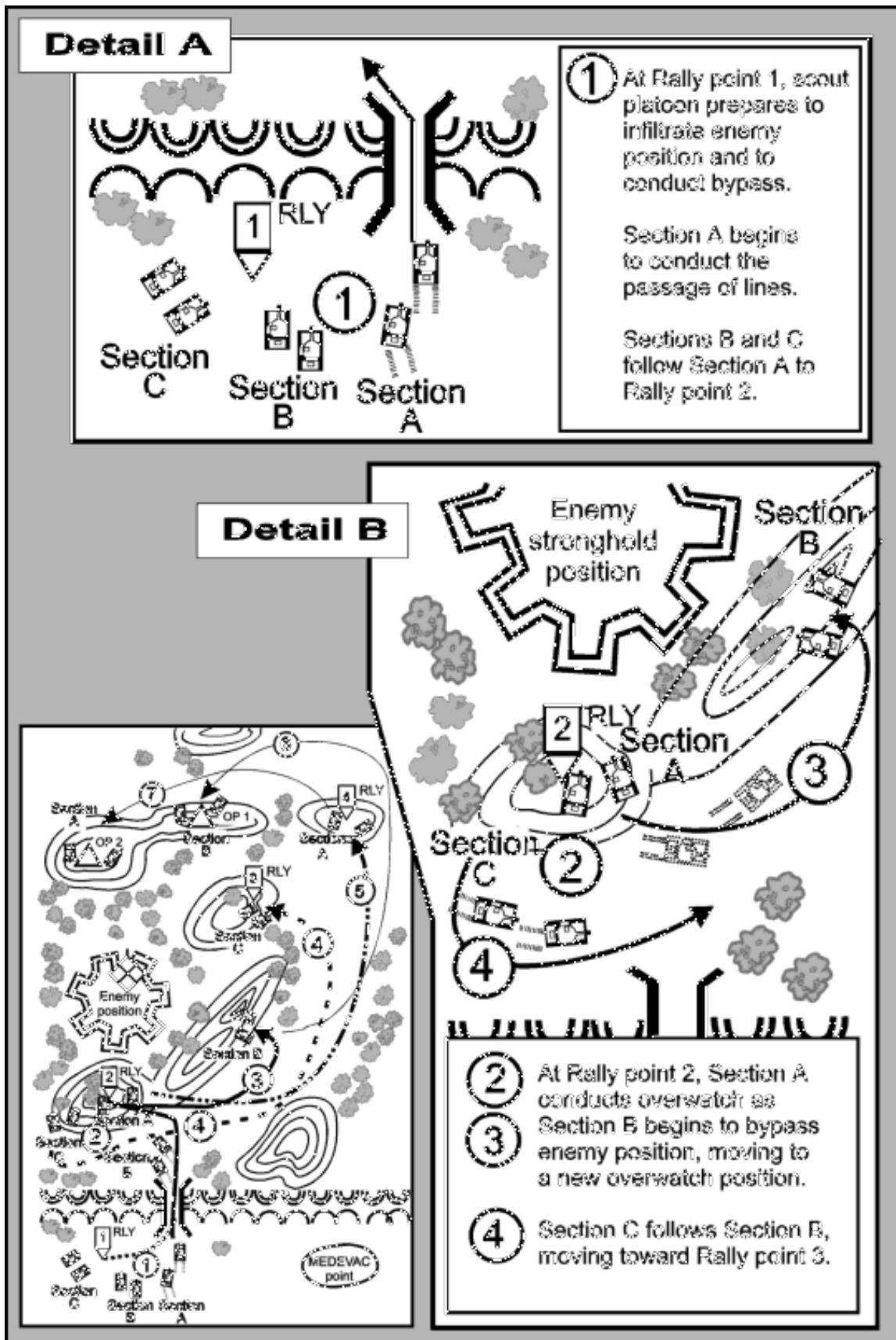


Figure 3-13B. Bypass of the enemy position.

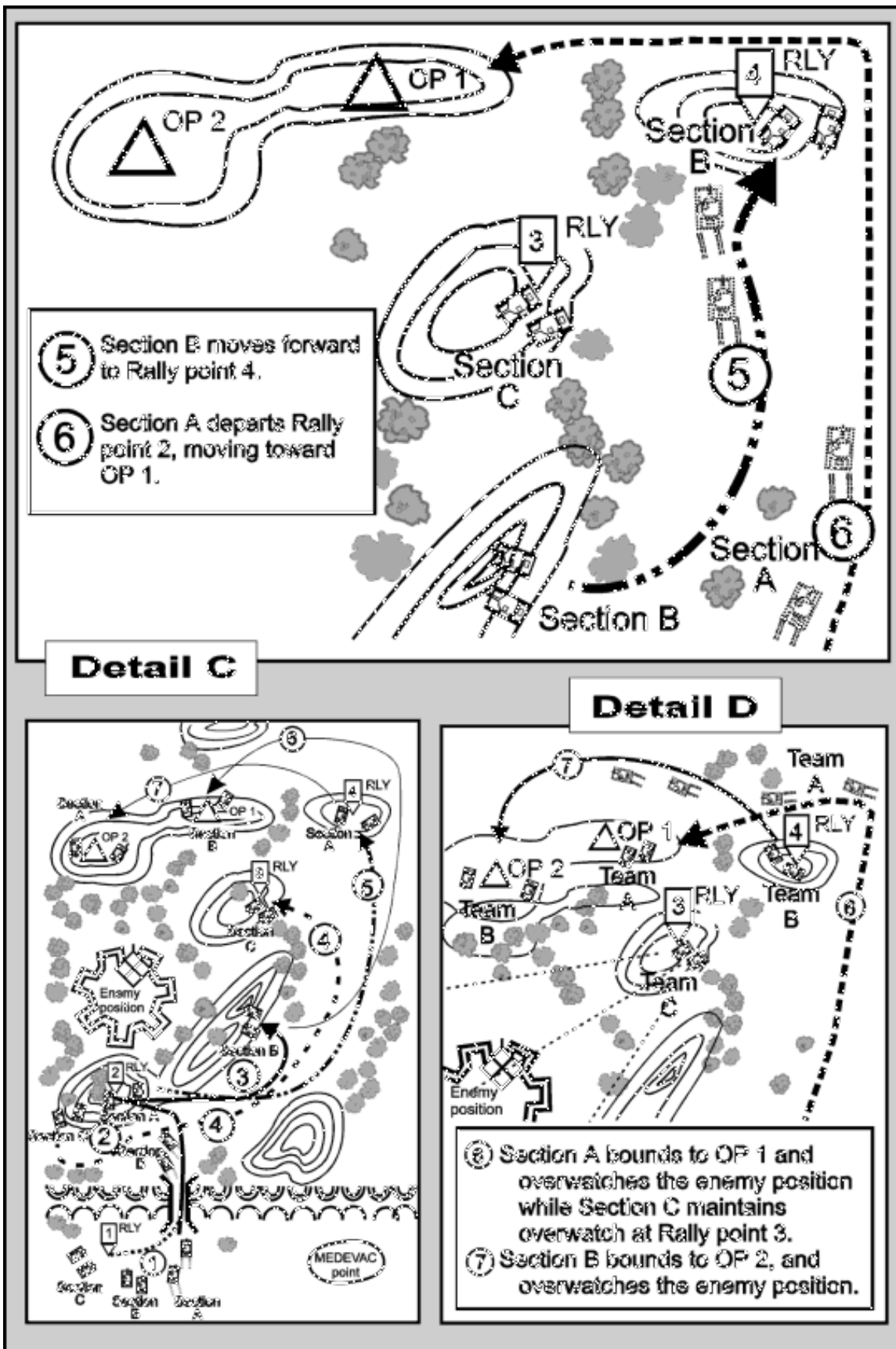


Figure 3-13C. Movement to OPs and reconnaissance of the enemy position.

## **Planning and coordination**

The amount of intelligence information available to the scout platoon leader during the planning process will determine the risk involved in conducting the infiltration. As he plans the operation, the platoon leader must select appropriate routes and movement techniques based on the mission, terrain and weather, likelihood of enemy contact, speed of movement, and the depth to which the platoon's elements must penetrate. Once these factors have been considered, the platoon leader must make the decision to infiltrate either mounted or dismounted. Even if he decides the platoon can conduct a mounted infiltration, his plan must take into account that the situation may require scouts to dismount and reconnoiter an area before the vehicles move forward. The platoon leader's infiltration plan must provide platoon elements with enough time for preparation and initial movement.

The platoon leader must conduct detailed coordination with any friendly elements through which the platoon will pass when executing infiltration tactics; this includes integration of communications, fires, and CSS activities. In addition, the platoon's higher headquarters must coordinate the activities of adjacent friendly units to ensure they do not compromise the scout platoon and its elements as they conduct the infiltration.

## **Size of infiltrating elements**

The size of the elements depends on several factors: the assigned mission, time available, cover and concealment, the target acquisition capabilities of both friendly and enemy forces, available communications assets, and navigation capabilities and limitations. If the platoon is tasked to gather information over a wide area, it may employ several small teams to cover the complete sector. In most situations, smaller elements are better able to take advantage of available cover and concealment.

## **Infiltration lanes or routes**

The scout platoon's higher headquarters will assign the platoon an infiltration lane or zone, requiring the platoon leader to gather the necessary information and intelligence to prepare for the mission. The platoon leader must decide whether to move the entire platoon along a single lane or assign separate lanes for each section or squad.

Each alternative presents both advantages and disadvantages. Moving the entire platoon on a single lane makes navigation and movement easier to control, but it can increase the chance of the platoon being detected by enemy forces. Moving on multiple lanes may require development of additional control measures, make command and control more difficult, and create navigation problems. On the other hand, it can reduce the chances of detection by the enemy.

In choosing infiltration lanes, the platoon leader must ensure that lanes afford sufficient width to allow each element to change its planned route to avoid unexpected enemy contact. He must also consider civilian activity along each lane and within the infiltration zone as a whole.

## **Communications**

In general, infiltrating elements should maintain radio listening silence except to send critical information that the commander has directed to be reported immediately or to report contact with enemy forces. When operating out of range of normal radio communications, an infiltrating element that must transmit required information should move to high ground or set up a long-range expedient antenna. (**NOTE:** Refer to [Chapter 9](#) of this manual for information on construction of field expedient antennas.)

## **Fire support**

Infiltration plans always cover employment of indirect fires, although they are used only in limited circumstances. The most common use is when the infiltrating unit makes enemy contact. The commander or platoon leader may employ

indirect fires in another sector to divert attention from the infiltration lane. Indirect fires can also be useful in degrading the enemy's acquisition and observation capabilities by forcing him to seek cover.

### **Actions on contact**

Each infiltrating element must develop and rehearse a plan that clearly defines its actions in case of contact with enemy security forces. If detected, an infiltrating element will return fire, break contact, and report. Fighting through the enemy force, however, is the least preferred COA. Direct fire engagements are normally limited to whatever actions are required to break contact.

During infiltration using multiple lanes, the detection of one platoon's elements may alert the enemy and compromise other units in the infiltration zone. The OPORD must clearly state whether the element will continue the mission or return to friendly lines if it is detected by the enemy. If the element makes visual contact but is not detected, it should continue the mission.

## **EXFILTRATION**

The scout platoon and its elements may have to conduct exfiltration in several types of tactical situations. For example, reconnaissance forces that infiltrate the enemy main battle area or rear area must exfiltrate once they gather the required information. In another instance, the platoon may be deliberately employed in a stay-behind mode during defensive operations, forcing it to use exfiltration to return to friendly lines.

### **Planning considerations**

In all situations, exfiltration must be planned as carefully as infiltration. An effective exfiltration plan is essential in terms of mission accomplishment and morale. In most cases, planning for an exfiltration operation begins at the same time as planning for the infiltration (or other tactical operation) that precedes it. For example, the scout platoon leader must anticipate contingency measures that may be required if his elements must conduct an unplanned exfiltration during a reconnaissance operation. His exfiltration plan should factor in additional time that the platoon may need to react to unforeseen circumstances, such as inadvertent contact with enemy forces or unexpected restrictive terrain. Whether the platoon plans to exfiltrate on foot or by another transport method (ground vehicles, aircraft, or watercraft), detailed planning is required to establish criteria for a passage of lines to minimize the chances of fratricide. The exfiltrating force must also be prepared to conduct additional planning once the operation is under way, particularly if enemy contact occurs.

The exfiltration plan should also cover other types of contingencies that will not require the platoon to exfiltrate. For example, when a section or squad repeatedly misses mandatory radio contact, it must be assumed that the element has a communications problem, is in trouble, or both. The exfiltration plan might address this situation by calling for a resupply drop of new batteries and another means of communication at a predetermined location. The plan would mandate that the resupply location be specially marked to ensure that the equipment does not fall into enemy hands.

### **Movement considerations**

The principles of route selection, movement formations, and movement security are critical to the success of the exfiltration operation. Plans for extraction by applicable means (ground, air, or water) must be developed before the operation, covering procedural contingencies such as the loss of vehicles, evacuation of sick and wounded personnel, and disruption of communications. These plans should address various contingencies for movement, such as the possibility that the platoon may be able to exfiltrate intact or the option of breaking into smaller groups to avoid detection.

### **Terrain factors and pickup points**



The scout platoon uses terrain features to its advantage during the exfiltration. It employs movement routes that put ridge lines, rivers, and other restrictive terrain between the platoon and enemy security forces. The platoon leader ensures that primary and alternate linkup points are not on a single azimuth leading away from the OP or exfiltration route.

Exfiltration pickup points for dismounted personnel should be far enough away from the OP to ensure the enemy does not hear vehicle or helicopter noises. The exfiltrating force should use mountains, dense foliage, and other terrain features to screen these noises. Under normal conditions in flat, open terrain on a clear night, rotary-wing aircraft lose most of their audio signature at a distance of approximately 5 kilometers.

### **Methods of exfiltration**

Exfiltration can be conducted by air, water, or land. Each alternative presents the scout platoon with specific operational considerations as well as tactical advantages and disadvantages. The exfiltration plan and the OPORD must address these factors as well as operational contingencies such as actions the reconnaissance unit will take if an unplanned exfiltration becomes necessary.

Extraction by air or water means is favored when the resources are available and their use will not compromise the mission. These methods are used when long distances must be covered, time of return is essential, the exfiltration zone lacks adequate cover and concealment, the enemy does not have air or naval superiority, or heavily populated hostile areas obstruct ground exfiltration.

Reconnaissance forces normally conduct exfiltration via land routes when friendly lines are close or no other extraction method is feasible. Ground exfiltration is preferred when areas along the route are largely uninhabited, when enemy forces are widely dispersed or under such pressure that they cannot conduct counterreconnaissance and security operations, or when terrain is sufficiently restrictive to degrade enemy efforts to use mobile forces against the exfiltrating reconnaissance unit.

### **Emergency exfiltration**

The scout platoon may have to conduct emergency exfiltration if it is detected or engaged by an enemy force. This type of operation requires activation of an escape and evasion plan or deployment of a reaction or support force to assist with the extraction of friendly elements. Employment of the reaction force and supporting fires must be carefully coordinated and rehearsed before the infiltration (or other tactical mission, if applicable) is initiated.

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