

CHAPTER 3. ENEMY ACTIVITY

A commander often acts on information furnished by scouts. Therefore, scouts must aim at absolute accuracy in reporting enemy activity. This chapter discusses estimating enemy strengths, interpreting signs and tracks, and knowing the enemy.

3001. ESTIMATING ENEMY STRENGTHS

If troops cannot be counted, their strength may be estimated by: noting the length of time it takes various types of moving columns to pass given point, the area required of a unit in camp or bivouac, or the front on which they are deployed. When the ground is dry, infantry on the march raise a low, thick cloud of dust, and motor vehicles or mechanized units raise a thick, rapidly moving cloud. Additionally, through practice, a scout may gain information as to the strength and composition of enemy forces by listening to noises and observing lights, fires, and smoke. A scout gains valuable experience in estimating enemy strengths by observing friendly forces in camp, on the march, and deployed. The knowledge scouts gain during field exercises of the appearance and tactical dispositions of squads, platoons, companies, and larger units will be of great assistance in estimating the strength and composition of enemy units observed under various conditions.

3002. INTERPRETING SIGNS AND TRACKS

In addition to estimates made through direct observation, a scout may often be able to estimate size, composition, direction, rate of movement, condition, discipline, state of training, and morale of enemy forces through signs and tracks left behind.

Signs

The examination of vacated enemy positions provides valuable information. The size of a bivouac or defense area ordinarily indicates the number of enemy occupants. Clothing, ration containers, dumps, etc., further indicate the quantity of the departed enemy force. The condition of the bivouac area and amount of material abandoned give an indication of the enemy morale, training, and discipline. A well-policed area

indicates good discipline. Rubbish, ration and smoking residue, and nonessential personal items of equipment adrift indicate a lower state of morale, training, and discipline. Stores and material left behind in good condition may indicate a hasty movement or withdrawal. Burned or destroyed materials indicate a deliberate, orderly withdrawal or movement. Letters, insignia, and other articles may reveal the identity of the enemy unit.

In the case of a moving enemy, the distance between periodic halts indicates the rate of march if enemy habits relative to marches and halts are known. Condition of the halt areas indicates the state of morale, training, and discipline.

The physical condition of enemy dead and wounded and their personal equipment and weapons are reported. The general condition and state of maintenance of destroyed or abandoned vehicles should also be reported.

Tracks

A track is a mark left on the ground by the passage of a person or object. Examination of tracks reveals information about the enemy.

Troops

A few tracks overlapping each other on both sides of a road or trail may indicate a patrol in staggered formation. A large number of tracks indicates troops in column formation. A large column will wear a dry road smooth and flat. In damp terrain, a freshly made track will have sharp edges; ordinarily, signs of moisture will disappear in about 15 minutes. A runner's toes are dug into the ground; a walker's footprint is fairly even.

Vehicles

The type of track indicates whether the vehicle is wheeled or tracked. A scout acquires the necessary experience to make the proper determination by observing vehicle tracks during training.

The direction of travel can be determined by the way tracks pass across ruts, by impressions on the edges of holes in the ground, how water is splashed from puddles, or by the way grass, twigs, and branches are bent; for example—

- ┆ A vehicle (wheeled or tracked) entering a rut pushes dirt into the rut and leaves an indentation on the exit side of the rut.
- ┆ A wheel going over holes in the ground leaves a deeper impression on the edge toward the direction of travel.
- ┆ The side of a puddle with the greater splash indicates the direction of travel of the vehicle.
- ┆ When traveling cross-country, the direction in which grass is bent and/or twigs, branches, and bushes are broken indicates direction of travel.

A general rate of speed can be estimated by the amount of water or mud splattered. A fast-moving vehicle will throw larger amounts of water or mud a greater distance to the front and sides than a slow-

moving vehicle, and it leaves a deeper impression on the exit edges of holes. The faster the travel, the deeper the impression.

3003. KNOWING THE ENEMY

A scout should learn as much as possible about enemy psychology, habits, organization, and tactics. The more knowledge gained about the enemy, particularly the enemy's normal security measures, the better the scout's chances are to observe and obtain accurate information with minimum risk to the mission's success. Scouts gain much of this knowledge through experience, but they also gain a great deal of their preliminary information, particularly that pertaining to enemy organization and tactics, during training and may be updated by unit commanders and intelligence officers.