

A Dangerous Bargain: The Sacrifice of Division Cavalry

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

A Dangerous Bargain: The Sacrifice of Division Cavalry by MAJ Frank A. Dolberry II, US Army, 38 pages.

The US Army division lost the capability to effectively shape the deep fight with the removal of division cavalry squadrons. The change made sense to provide cavalry squadrons to the modular brigade combat teams for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This move was a dangerous bargain: the sacrifice of a high-quality unit for the increase of similar units but of lesser quality. The lack in traditional capability was filled with a greater dependence on unmanned aerial surveillance systems. This added to the justification that cavalry squadrons no longer needed to fight for information. With the growing likelihood of large-scale combat operations against a peer adversary in a contested environment, the division needs the adequate capability to enable brigades to succeed in the close fight. Although the Army is developing solutions, this study proposes a unique alternative. By referencing US cavalry history and case studies of cavalry operations during the World Wars, this study proposes a change to the division which provides the commander with the operational capabilities that enable success in multi-domain battle within the full range of military operations. The result is that Division commanders have organic assets that are tactically and technically capable to accurately paint and effectively shape the deep fight.

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Acronyms

ABCT	Armored Brigade Combat Team
A2AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
BfSB	Battlefield Surveillance Brigade
DCG-O	Deputy Commanding General- Operations
CEMA	Cyber Electromagnetic Activities
CSSB	Combat Sustainment Support Battalion
CTC	Combat Training Center
DCR	Division Cavalry Regiment
DIVCAV	Division Cavalry Squadron
DIVARTY	Division Artillery
FA BDE	Field Artillery Brigade
FM	Field Manual
HBCT	Heavy Brigade Combat Team
HQ	Headquarters
IBCT	Infantry Brigade Combat Team
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
JFLCC	Joint Force Land Component Commander
LRS	Long Range Surveillance
LSCO	Large-Scale Combat Operation
MRX	Mission Readiness Exercise
MDB	Multi-Domain Battle
NCA	National Command Authority
R&S	Reconnaissance & Security

RES	Regimental Engineer Squadron
RPS	Regimental Pioneer Squadron
RSTA	Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition
ROAD	Reorganization Objective Army Division
SBCT	Stryker Brigade Combat Team
SQDN	Squadron
STB	Special Troops Battalion
TACON	Tactical Control
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
ULO	Unified Land Operation
US	United States
WfX	Warfighter Exercise

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Introduction

The United States historically follows successful military ventures by destroying the very strength that provided victory – only to find it necessary to rebuild on short order with the arrival of new and previously unforeseen threats. The first battles of the next war thus find us paying the tragic price for our unpreparedness in the commodity we can least afford to expend – the lives of soldiers, marines, airmen, and sailors.

— Donn Starry, General, US Army, Retired, *Armored Cav: A Guided Tour*

22 June 2021: The sun rises over a nameless battlefield in Eastern Europe, the terrain shows traces of ground seized and lost. The smoking hulls of friendly and enemy tanks are intermingled. Larger numbers of burned-out infantry fighting vehicles are still as well. Blasted open from direct hits from heavy caliber artillery rounds and rockets, the vehicles no longer have the means to continue the fight. Bodies of friendly infantry lay among half dug fighting positions and destroyed military equipment. Not too far from the carnage, the remains of an attack helicopter rest in the nearby wood line. The main rotor blades slowly turn from a light easterly wind. The crew, unable to escape, shared the same fate as their once capable attack platform. To the west, an outline of an assaulted perimeter hides through the smoke. Along the battered tree line are the remaining warriors of the 52nd Infantry Division (Mechanized). Just past them, the remaining soldiers and officers of the division headquarters (DIV HQ) attempt to make sense of the deadly encounter that took place.

After arriving in their sector a few months before yesterday, the division engaged enemy forces for the first time amounting to three and a half divisions of tanks and mechanized infantry. The division commander, unable to gain a clear picture of the operational environment, had no choice but to conduct a movement to contact. Both the corps and the land component commander assured the division commander that the 52nd would receive priority in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and other Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets. That assurance failed when the enemy employed robust cyber-electromagnetic activities (CEMA). Unable to gain the freedom to operate due to the enemy's extensive anti-access area denial (A2/AD) system,

American UAVs and airpower were useless. The subordinate armored brigade combat teams (ABCTs) never stood a chance. Within minutes, the brigades sustained casualties up to seventy-five percent. The division commander would not be present to see what remained of his formation. An enemy reconnaissance unit conducted a raid against the DIV MAIN and killed several officers and soldiers, to include the division commander and command sergeant major.

The deputy commanding general-operations (DCG-O), the remaining senior leader in charge of the division, peered over the topographic map of the corps' area of operations. He replayed the first engagements over and over in his head, trying to figure out where the division went wrong. As one of the Radio-Telephone Operators (RTOs) handed the DCG-O some coffee in a dented mess can. The DCG-O accepted the coffee and finally exclaimed in a hushed manner: "What do we do now?"

As early as 2013, senior leaders of the US Army identified a problem. Multiple deployments of brigade combat teams (BCTs) to Iraq and Afghanistan created a force that was proficient in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. However, that force was no longer proficient in large-scale combat operations, like operations during World War II, Korea, and the early phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. The sacrifice of powerful division cavalry squadrons to create more but weaker cavalry squadrons for brigade combat teams was the dangerous bargain. Given the growing threat of conflict with a near-peer or peer adversary, the Army shifted the training focus towards large-scale combat operations while still executing COIN and stability operations abroad. In the pursuit to regain skills for conventional warfare, several capability gaps present challenges within the Army's current structure and operational ability.

With the October 2017 update to doctrine, Field Manual (FM) 3-0 *Operations*, the Army placed renewed emphasis in the fighting ability of echelons above brigade, to include division headquarters, concerning large-scale combat operations. Unlike COIN operations, where a division headquarters operates from a very static position and assumes the role of administration

and resource manager to the BCTs, divisions were now expected to maintain a high sense of mobility and aggressiveness not observed since 2003. FM 3-0 emphasizes the importance of having an army that can operate across the range of military operations and the conflict continuum (see Figure 1). In a world of various actors competing for their interests, armed conflict remains a highly complex affair. The ability for a division to efficiently function between different operations is key for an army to maintain its position of relative advantage against their adversaries.



Figure 1. The conflict continuum and the range of military operations.
Source: FM 3-0, *Operations*, 2017, 1-1.

The Army division, by doctrine, is a tactical headquarters that command brigades for decisive action.¹ Throughout the Army's history, the division has gone through several changes based on the character of warfare. Across the six warfighting functions, the division maintained organic assets to operate without major outside support effectively.² One critical capability gap at the division-level is the absence of a dedicated reconnaissance and security asset. Even before World War One, cavalry units have fulfilled the primary role of reconnaissance and security

¹ US Department of the Army, FM 3-94, *Theater Army, Corps, and Division Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 6-1.

² US Department of the Army, FM 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 2-22. Warfighting functions: mission command, movement & maneuver, intelligence, fires, sustainment, and protection; these are a group of tasks and systems united by a common purpose that commanders use to accomplish missions and training objectives.

provider for the division. Division cavalry conducted a variety of missions that allowed the division to maintain the necessary endurance and momentum during crucial moments of combat operations. Since 2003, Army divisions have lacked an organic cavalry capability that provides effective reconnaissance and security for large-scale combat operations.

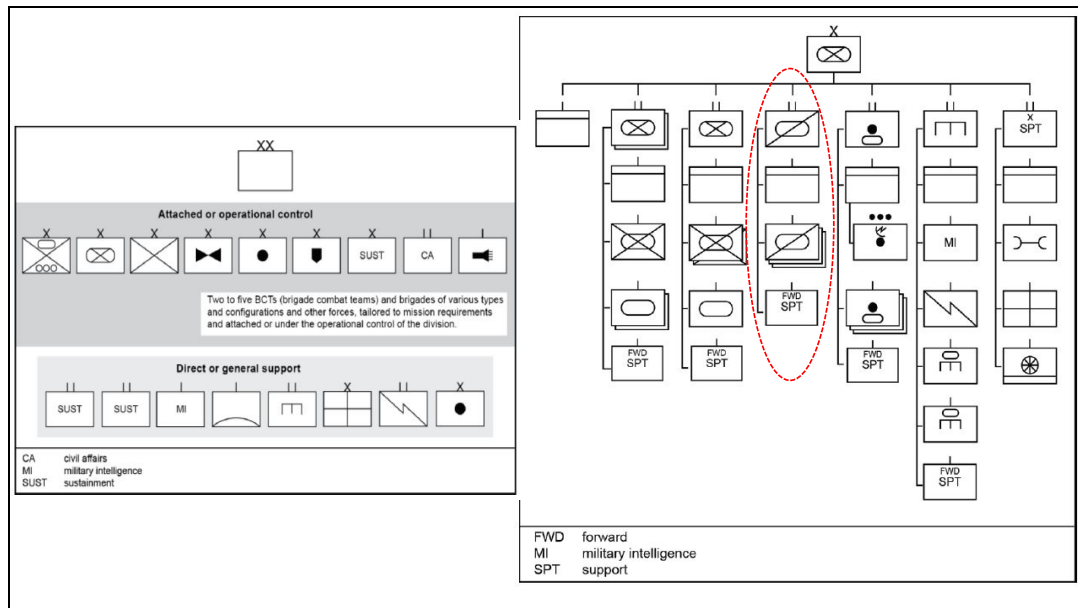


Figure 2. Army Division and Armored Brigade Combat Team task organization comparison.
Source: FM 3-0, *Operations*, 2017, 2-14 & 2-15.

Although brigade combat teams possess a cavalry squadron (see Figure 2), this capability was founded on a faulty paradigm: the idea that accurate and useful intelligence can be easily collected through highly specialized assets without risk to human life. This idea was coupled with the overconfident belief that US airpower will always possess air superiority throughout large-scale combat operations (LSCO). This promotes a false perception that cavalry units no longer have to possess the ability to fight for information. If future large-scale combat operations are anything like the World Wars or Korean war, this capability gap needs correction sooner rather than later. If not, the cost of the dangerous bargain may be unacceptable to citizens of tomorrow's America.

“The Dangerous Bargain” examines the problem that faces the Army division: the lack of organic capability to shape the deep fight. The sacrifice of powerful division cavalry squadrons to

create more but weaker cavalry squadrons for brigade combat teams was the dangerous bargain. By examining the history of division cavalry in the US Army during similar periods of large-scale combat operations from the First World War to today, this study highlights the lost advantages of speed, tempo, and unique skill that division cavalry presented to the force. The history of division cavalry supports the critical necessity of maintaining maneuver elements directly under division control. The cavalry's development in the Second World War answers how the Army should proceed with reorganization. This study examines case studies from the initial stages of the Second World War when an Army division correctly or incorrectly used division cavalry to enable a division during large-scale combat operations.

Following the history of division cavalry, this study captures the crucial shift of cavalry operations based on a new contact paradigm.³ Through technological advances in sensors and radars, newly-formed Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RSTA) squadrons possess the capability to provide continuous information and collect intelligence with less risk associated to personnel and mission. Starting from the Stryker brigade combat team (SBCT) structure, the RSTA formation found a place within both the Heavy/Armored brigade combat team (HBCT/ABCT) and Infantry brigade combat team (IBCT). The creation of other assets, such as the Battlefield Surveillance Brigade (BfSB), justified the elimination of division cavalry. The bitter truth is that removal of division cavalry was a grave miscalculation.

An examination of current trends from brigade training rotations and division command post exercises highlight the glaring capability gap at echelons above brigade. The current trends show that a solution is needed to ready the Army divisions for future large-scale combat

³ Robert S. Cameron, *To Fight or Not to Fight?* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press), 438-447.

operations. This study demonstrates the absence of short-term solutions offered by the Army to fix this capability gap.

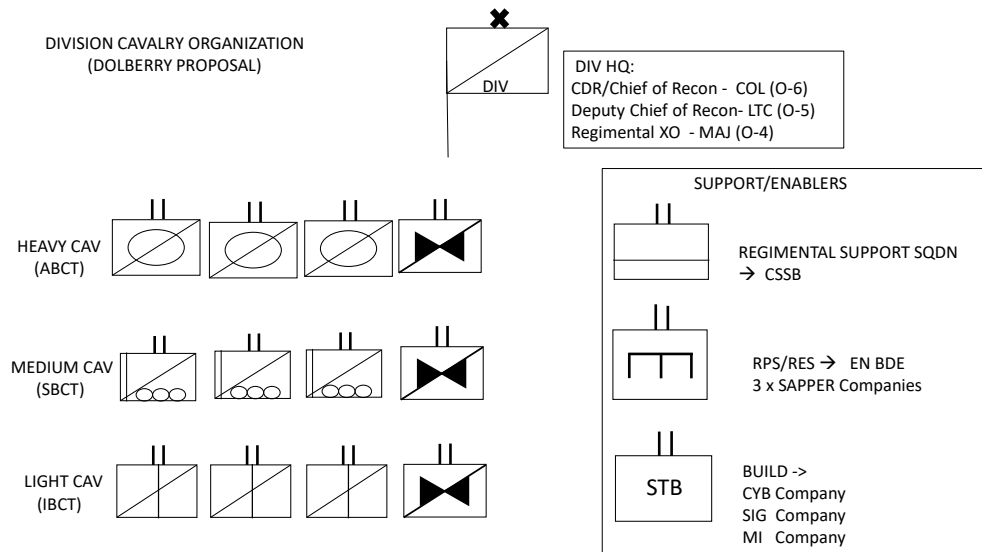


Figure 3. Proposal for Division Cavalry Regiment (DCR) Organization.

Source: Author.

Do divisions require organic assets to shape the deep fight in current and future large-scale combat operations? A solution may be similar to the reestablishment of division artillery (DIVARTY) at the Division level (see Figure 3). A Division Cavalry Regiment (DCR) provides the following: 1) a standardized structure for cavalry operations 2) Division commanders with the ability to gain the necessary time and space for critical decision making and 3) a tailorable force package to enable the operations for a corps to a brigade. With a DCR headquarters (HQ) element responsible for training and resourcing the division's cavalry units, the division will have the ability to provide properly trained cavalry units down to brigades and even to corps. Additionally, the division will have an organic capability that can conduct cavalry operations. Not only can the division use highly trained cavalry squadrons for reconnaissance and security missions, the division will also have the ability to extend its operational reach using cavalry squadrons that can effectively discover gaps in the opposition's plan and capitalize upon fleeting moments of opportunity in battle. These tactical actions, sequenced across time and space, can enable a

shorter period of military hostilities and achieve the strategic aims set forth by the national command authority (NCA). To understand the capability that is lacking today, a brief examination in the history of the cavalry's role during large-scale combat operations is necessary.

History of Division Cavalry

The focus starts with the American involvement during the World Wars. In this section, this study highlights the cavalry's transformations to remain relevant throughout each era of conflict. Because of the American late entry into the First World War, few cavalry units deployed to Europe with the American Expeditionary Force (AEF).⁴

Most US cavalry units stayed along the Mexican/American border because of the difficult terrain, which posed a mobility challenge in conventional operations. The First World War was the first major conflict where American forces fought in large formations abroad. Major General (Retired) Ernest Harmon, an American cavalry officer who saw action in both World Wars, captured the essence of American cavalry during large-scale combat operations in the First World War. Due to shipping congestion, the cavalry sent forward had no horses. Once equipped with French horses, Captain Harmon (at the time) received various missions assigned from higher headquarters. Bounced from different infantry divisions, Harmon traveled across the worse terrain with equally harsh weather. Despite the inability to assail the enemy's flanks, Harmon performed other missions specific to cavalry: conducted intelligence sorties into enemy positions and maintained communication between friendly forces. Before the end of the war, Harmon would be one of the few cavalry officers to engage in combat in France. Harmon, along with

⁴ Matthew Morton, *Men on Iron Ponies: The Death and Rebirth of the Modern U.S. Cavalry* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press), 14.

other American cavalryman, gained lessons and ideas from their European allies, who had been fighting for much longer.⁵

After the First World War, there was a serious debate on the usefulness of horse cavalry on the battlefield. In 1919, General John J. Pershing held a Superior Board to review the findings of subordinate boards; each board reviewed the American experience during the war by branch. While horse cavalry was a traditional combat force, the board findings held the seeds of the future changes in the composition of US cavalry. With the rapidly expanded use of the airplane, there was a belief that a majority of strategic and operational reconnaissance would no longer require ground assets. However, cavalry still held relevance for tactical reconnaissance –specifically at the division level. The board closing of the Cavalry portion reported: “With heightened mobility, increased firepower, and under command of alert, vigorous and enthusiastic officers, it can look forward to the opportunities of the future with confidence.”⁶ Like today, the US Army debated over what exactly division cavalry would look like and what the formation would do. The debate led to the eventual demise of the US Cavalry as a branch arguably more dedicated to the horse than the mission.

After the First World War, infantry divisions initially did not contain a ground unit for reconnaissance and security. Before the Second World War, the superiority of the combat vehicles over the horse for reconnaissance was preferred. Throughout the interwar period, the US Army considered various ideas from reconnaissance squadrons to troop-sized elements. As armored divisions were activated during the Second World War, division reconnaissance battalions were established. The US Army assumed that a reconnaissance unit needed to be

⁵ Ernest Harmon, *Combat Commander; Autobiography of a Soldier* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), 17-45 While only four (2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 15th) cavalry regiments deployed overseas to Europe, Captain Harmon served in a provisional squadron from 2nd Cavalry Regiment.

⁶ US Army, “Superior Board”, 1919. 63-78.

lightly armored to maintain the constant tempo and focus to gain information. It would take actual combat experience that would dispel the artificial differentiation between cavalry units performing reconnaissance and combat missions. After combat operations in North Africa, the realization is that a lightly armored unit would not achieve the reconnaissance mission due to lack of survivability against enemy contact. By the Normandy Invasion, Army divisions received improved reconnaissance units.⁷

American Divisions of the Second World War

With two types of maneuver divisions (armored and infantry), each division had distinct forms of reconnaissance requirements. For the armored division, a battalion-sized reconnaissance element served the division (see Figure 4). For infantry divisions, two echelons of reconnaissance were present: a troop-sized element for the division and a reconnaissance platoon for the subordinate regiments. Equipped with a mix of light tanks, armored cars, assault guns, and jeeps, the mechanized cavalry squadron gave armored division commanders the ability to provide a reconnaissance troop to each subordinate combat command (equivalent to a brigade) while still

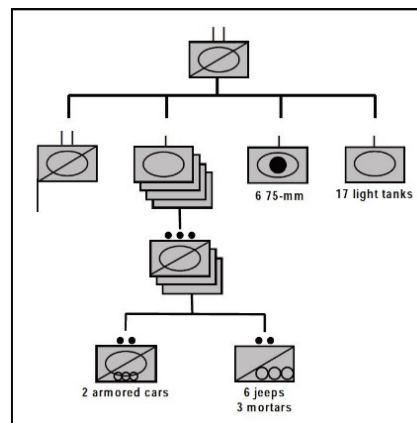


Figure 4. US Army armored division mechanized cavalry reconnaissance squadron, 1944.

Source: McGrath, *Scouts Out!*, 105.

⁷ Cameron, *To Fight or Not to Fight?*, 51-52.

maintaining a reconnaissance troop for direct control. In the early 1940s, there was no standard form of employment.

An example of the varied use of division cavalry is the comparison of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and the 81st Armored Reconnaissance Battalion during the North Africa campaign in 1942. These two units were the first to conduct cavalry operations against Axis forces in the North Africa campaign. Supporting the 1st Armored Division, the 81st Armored Reconnaissance Battalion conducted a variety of missions including securing key objectives, intelligence collection on terrain and enemy forces, and raids. Most of their missions required a high degree of mobility. The 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, though not assigned to one specific division, conducted similar missions. However, on many occasions, the 91st had to operate in a dismounted capacity to enable offensive operations. Despite tactical setbacks against an experienced and well-trained adversary, both units adapted in action.⁸

The presence of higher level reconnaissance units gave field commanders flexibility from the corps to army group. Although reconnaissance was the primary mission for all cavalry units, every unit conducted additional missions in support of decisive operations. As the war continued, the Army improved the doctrine from up to the regimental-level to ensure effectiveness and proficiency. The Army did not remove the capability from the division level.

Beside the development of reconnaissance units for armored divisions, infantry divisions received reconnaissance units also. Due to the limited mobility of the conventional infantry soldier, the infantry division did not need as robust of a reconnaissance unit like the armored division (see Figure 5). In 1941, infantry divisions received reconnaissance troops, composed of

⁸ Cameron, *To Fight or Not to Fight?*, 52-53; US Army Cavalry School, "Cavalry Reconnaissance #1: Operations of the 81st Armored Reconnaissance Battalion in Tunisia" (Fort Riley: US Army Cavalry School, c.1946); US Army Cavalry School, "Cavalry Reconnaissance #3: Operations of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, From El Abiod to Mateur (Northern Tunisia)" (Fort Riley: US Army Cavalry School, c. 1946); US Army Cavalry School, "Cavalry Reconnaissance #4: Operations of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, From Mateur to Bizerte (Northern Tunisia)" (Fort Riley: US Army Cavalry School, c. 1946).

three platoons, with scout cars and motorcycles. By 1942, the reconnaissance troop evolved to three troops with platoons equipped with armored cars and jeeps⁹

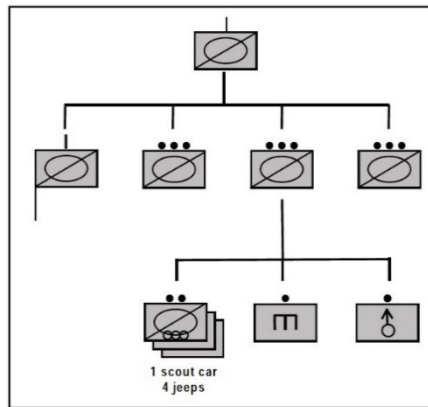


Figure 5. US Army infantry mechanized cavalry reconnaissance troop, 1942.

Source: McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 107.

Due to the character of large-scale combat operations during the Second World War, division cavalry units conducted less pure reconnaissance operations. During most campaigns, cavalry units executed defensive actions, special operations, security/counter-reconnaissance, and offensive actions over the primary task of reconnaissance. Whenever cavalry units were given non-reconnaissance missions, the units were often reinforced with additional capabilities (such as tank support, infantry, artillery, and engineers).¹⁰ The US Army concluded their analysis of reconnaissance operations in the European theater with the observation that mechanized cavalry units were less capable of performing the cavalry mission when compared to the missions that horse cavalry had performed previously.¹¹ Like today, the evidence available in 1946 supported the belief that cavalry units needed to focus less on conducting just reconnaissance and more of conducting the range of missions formerly assigned to horse cavalry. The missions accomplished

⁹ John J. McGrath. *Scouts Out!- The Development of Reconnaissance Units in Modern Armies*. (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007) 107.

¹⁰ Gordon L. Rottman. *World War II US Cavalry Groups- European Theater* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2012) 20.

¹¹ McGrath, *Scouts Out!*, 109.

by reconnaissance units in the Second World War were offensive and defensive operations, mobile reserve, rear area security, security and counter-reconnaissance, and reconnaissance.¹² As stated before, cavalry units were reinforced when given non-reconnaissance missions. The reinforcement of additional combat power was necessary because the basic cavalry unit could not survive contact against a tough and determined enemy like the German army. However, the presence of reconnaissance units at every echelon gave commanders the ability to gain situational understanding during combat.

Summary

During the world wars, cavalry's role adjusted to the changing conditions of large-scale combat operations. The observations from the First World War concluded that cavalry was still relevant capability with adjustments. The horse was no longer the pragmatic means of conducting cavalry missions. The Second World War introduced mechanized cavalry for infantry and armored divisions. Due to interwar doctrine, cavalry formations were equipped for only reconnaissance missions. Hard fought lessons, during campaigns against the Axis forces, proved that the new cavalry needed to resemble its predecessor concerning speed and lethality. By the end of the Second World War, cavalry units remained employed throughout the Army. For the Army division, the cavalry squadron remained organic.

¹² McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 109-110.

The Dangerous Bargain

Following the culmination of the Second World War, the Army entered a period of relative complexity. With a Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union spanning across the globe, division cavalry evolved significantly. Although the cavalry remained the same for the Korean War in the 1950s, sweeping transformation ensued for the cavalry formations deployed to Cold War Germany and Vietnam.¹³ For those contested regions, division cavalry evolved with increased combined arms capability of infantry, artillery, and air. Echoing an observation from the Superior Board of 1919, the integration of air and ground assets allowed increased observation and utility for the cavalry mission.¹⁴ After the strategic failure of the Vietnam War, the Army reorganized towards the known and potential threats to the nation. During this period, the US cavalry transitioned again. The actions of division cavalry in Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom displayed where cavalry organizations were either just another maneuver element during large scale combat operations or a lesser version of its former self that depends solely on advanced technology to execute missions. The Army accepted the dangerous bargain to remove powerful division cavalry squadrons from the Army's organizational table for the creation of cavalry squadrons for modular brigades.¹⁵ The faulty logic began during Operation Desert Storm in the small desert country of Kuwait.

¹³ Cameron. *To Fight or Not to Fight?*, 165-183. The Reorganization Objective Army Division (ROAD) concept was a redesign effort to improve the mobility, survivability, and combat power of infantry, armored, and mechanized divisions. Intended for fielding in the early 1960s, this concept was the solution to the failed Pentomic Division Concept, which structured divisions (specifically light divisions) to five small battle groups. Redesigning armored divisions for possible nuclear warfare in the late 1950s was underneath the Reorganization of the Current Armored Division (ROCAD) initiative.

¹⁴ McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 151-152.

¹⁵ Keith Walters. "Who will fulfill the Cavalry's Functions?" *Military Review* 91, no. 1 (January-February 2011): 80-85.

1991 - Operation Desert Storm

The Army would get a chance to test out its new Army of Excellence (AOE) concept during Operation Desert Storm. While the Armored Cavalry Regiments (ACRs) operated as either an advance force or additional combat power, division cavalry squadrons were used in a variety of missions.¹⁶ The key takeaway for division cavalry operations in Desert Storm is that the division commander had adequate forces available to conduct necessary missions. With the habitual relationship already established, the squadron commander had a clear understanding of his division commander's intent. However, external factors drove the Army to new approaches in the evolution of division cavalry.

Following the completion of Operation Desert Storm, the Army experienced significant drawdown and economic constraint. The need to streamline capabilities throughout the Army introduced the formation of a Brigade Reconnaissance Troop (BRT) to each heavy brigade.¹⁷ This formation, comprised of wheeled vehicles, was organized like the scout platoons within the maneuver battalions. The Army sought to create self-contained formations at the Brigade level. The prior habitual relationships formed between attached battalions and companies gave rise to the Brigade Combat Team (BCT) structure. The BRT remained from 1998 to 2004. 12 years

¹⁶ McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 174-175. Due to the organizational differences between divisions, operational capabilities varied Division cavalry squadrons were split into air and ground elements which operated separately. Ground elements primarily covered the flanks of the movement and kept divisions tied in with the units to their left and right. Division commanders, as necessary, also used their squadrons as attacking forces.

¹⁷ McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 169. The lack of an organic reconnaissance element at the brigade level went back to the original concept of the armored division combat command in World War II. The division commander provided reconnaissance assets just like he provided tank and armored infantry assets to the command on a mission basis. The organization of the division reconnaissance squadron reflected this, providing four reconnaissance troops. However, due to the updated Reorganization Objective Army Division (ROAD) concept, a division commander would deprive one or more of the brigades if he kept any ground troops under his control.

would elapse before division cavalry squadrons performed in large scale combat operations for the very last time.

2003 - Operation Iraqi Freedom

In 2003, Division cavalry squadrons once again led the invasion. This time, the attack was in to Iraq. Unlike Operation Desert Storm, there would not be as many forces available for the invasion.¹⁸ The 3rd Infantry division commander would use the ground troops of 3rd Squadron of the 7th Cavalry Regiment as an added maneuver element during the outset of the campaign. Only later would the division cavalry squadron operate in a doctrinal role by screening for the maneuver battalions advancing to Baghdad.¹⁹ As the Baghdad campaign closed, the flame of division cavalry squadrons was extinguished.

With the US Army focused on streamlining the force for greater flexibility, the Modular Army concept was added to the previous Force XXI concept of digitalization of a division. This concept started with the creation of the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT). With a capability gap between the Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) and the Heavy Brigade Combat Team (HBCT), the US Army needed a formation that was capable of having the benefits of both traditional formations: adequate number of dismounts and all-weather mobility. Unlike the traditional brigade formations, the Stryker brigade was designed to be stand-alone brigade²⁰

¹⁸ McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 175. For the 2003 Baghdad campaign, the Army deployed a single corps, which used a single mechanized division for its main effort. NO ACRs deployed with V Corps, and two squadrons and a separate troop were available and designed to conduct the reconnaissance and security missions. This contrasts with the DESERT STORM offensive comprised of two ACRs and seven Division Cavalry (DIVCAV) Squadrons.

¹⁹ McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 177. Based on the operational approach of the Iraq invasion, the divisional cavalry squadrons were more valuable as mobile reserves/strike forces or an additional maneuver force instead of a traditional reconnaissance or security element.

²⁰ Cameron. *To Fight or Not to Fight?*, 417-438. Army Chief of Staff, General Eric K. Shinseki, introduced a new direction for military development known as Army Transformation in 1999. The intent was to prepare for the broad array of threats in the 21st century. While the Army was required to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, General Shinseki noticed a gap between heavy and light forces.

While the Infantry brigades and Heavy brigades kept reconnaissance troops, the Stryker brigades contained cavalry squadrons known as Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RSTA) squadrons (see Figure 6). The mission of the RSTA squadron was to provide combat information to build the knowledge base necessary to achieve a common operational picture.²¹

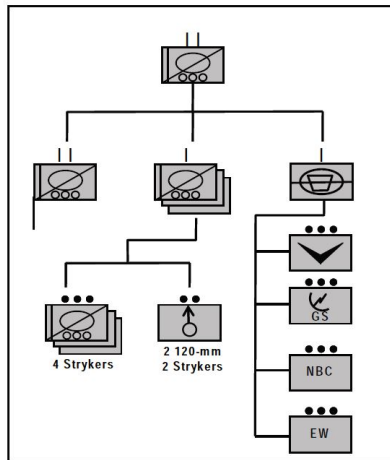


Figure 6. RSTA squadron of an SBCT, 2003
 Source: McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 179.

There is a contradiction between the roles of the new RSTA squadron versus the roles of historical cavalry. COL Michael Mehaffey, Director of the Battle Lab Integration and Technology Directorate for the US Army, declared that the squadron “must excel in the traditional reconnaissance and surveillance roles and in the broader mission of providing situational understanding of the operational environment.”²² Unlike previous cavalry units, the new RSTA

General Shinseki sought to reduce the logistical tail of combat organization and improve deployment ability. The desired force structure would be the Stryker Brigade Combat Team. As a stand-alone brigade, the SBCT was able to operate without a division. Digitization, which had been the major feature of Force XXI, was incorporated extensively into the SBCT structure.

²¹ McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 178. Unlike previous cavalry squadrons, RSTA squadrons received a vast array of digital and surveillance systems to increase its information gathering ability.

²² Michael Mehaffey, “Vanguard of the Objective Force” in Newsletter No. 01-18 Interim Brigade Combat Team, Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) (Fort Leavenworth: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2001) 6.

squadron sole purpose was reconnaissance and surveillance missions. This deviation of mission would be applied to similar cavalry units in the Army.

This divorce of cavalry missions is the essence of the new contact paradigm for the 21st century. These “new” cavalry organizations, equipped with high tech radars, sensors, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), no longer must risk personnel by gaining enemy contact within direct fire range. The sensors give the commander the information to maneuver his forces and execute combat operations at the time and place of his choosing.²³ With this ability of continuous information and providing early warning, the scouts of the RSTA squadron no longer need the utility of firepower once found in actual cavalry squadrons. With the “success” promised in this concept, the Army implemented the RSTA concept throughout the rest of the brigade combat teams.

To produce the required number of RSTA squadrons for the modular brigade combat teams, a dangerous bargain was made. The division headquarters saw the loss of their organic capability. Division cavalry squadrons were deactivated while RSTA squadrons were stood up within all brigade combat teams. The concept, modularity, was intended to produce more active maneuver brigade combat teams for the current combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As self-contained formations can operate independently, brigade combat teams were essentially “miniature divisions.” The cavalry squadron within the heavy brigades combined wheeled and tracked platforms to increase maneuverability (see Figure 7). Despite the rationale, not much consideration was made to historical evidence with placing cavalry units at the brigade level.²⁴ With the RSTA squadron assigned to a BCT, the division no longer had organic assets and must

²³ Cameron. *To Fight or Not to Fight?*, 440.

²⁴ McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 180. The rationale for including a cavalry squadron in each brigade was from the perception of the Army Chief of Staff that the brigade echelon had previously been too weak at detecting enemy activities and capabilities. This is understandable due to the Army operating as a division-centric organization instead of brigade-centric.

work through another layer of command to direct forces accordingly. To fill the role of division cavalry, the US Army established battlefield surveillance brigades (BfSB). However, battlefield surveillance brigades were intended to conduct reconnaissance missions solely. This decision left the division having to assign traditional cavalry missions of security, liaison/coordination duties and economy of force missions to the subordinate brigade combat teams.²⁵

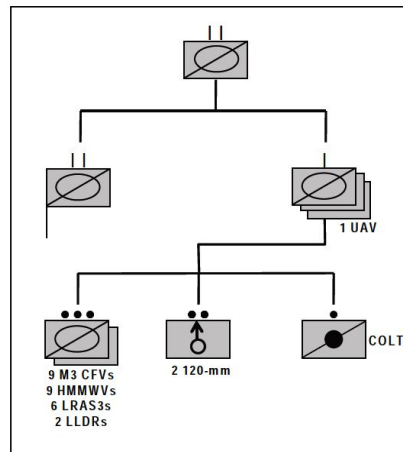


Figure 7. RSTA Squadron for Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 2003.
Source: McGrath, *Scouts Out!*, 181.

In 2005, modular brigade combat teams began deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan. Immediately, flaws became apparent to the design of reconnaissance squadron in the BCT. With the new BCT only having two maneuver battalions instead of the traditional three, the reconnaissance squadrons are tasked to fill that void.²⁶ With a responsibility to a specified area of operations, the RSTA squadron concept was not challenged with the traditional cavalry missions of reconnaissance and security. The frequent expectation of cavalry squadrons, deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, is to operate like their peer infantry battalions. Due to less personnel, cavalry

²⁵ McGrath. *Scouts Out!*, 182. BfSB composition did not allow for proper conduct of combat operations or security missions. Intent was to provide additional surveillance and reconnaissance units on a mission-dependent basis.

²⁶ Ryan Howell. "A Critique of the US Army Force Redesign of Cavalry Formations" (Quantico: US Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2009) 15.

squadrons are forced to conduct “economy of force” missions by operating as under-strength infantry battalions.

The result is that brigade cavalry squadrons are only equipped to perform part of the traditional cavalry mission: reconnaissance and surveillance. For cavalry squadrons to perform any additional missions, such as security missions, squadrons needed additional enablers.²⁷ Despite what doctrine prescribes for the role of cavalry squadrons, observations from major training events has forced Armor branch to relook at filling the void left open by the absence of division cavalry.

Current Trends, Short-Term Solutions, and Criticisms

Human scouts can also pick up details and dimensions that sensors can’t. They can identify dummies and decoys, tell you about enemy morale and fervor capture material and talk to locals and prisoners and look at the ground in detail. The sensor that can evaluate the going isn’t here yet, nor is the one that finds minefields, looks under bridges and culverts or brings you a captured map or enemy colonel.

-Roman Jarymowycz, *Cavalry from Hoof to Track*

One of the key principles of Army training is to train as you fight. For the division headquarters and subordinate brigades, there is a discontinuity between the two when it comes to training. For a BCT, its training calendar builds to a home station field training exercise (FTX) to a mission rehearsal exercise (MRX). The MRX for a brigade combat team is a rotation to a combat training center (CTC). This is the brigade’s final validation to achieve deployable status for the fiscal year. A division headquarters conducts a command post exercise (CPX) known as a warfighter exercise (WfX) to achieve a similar status. The Mission Command Training Program (MCTP) has the responsibility to capture the trends and key observations of the various rotations

²⁷ US Department of the Army. Army Tactics and Procedures (ATP) 3-20.96, *Cavalry Squadron*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016) 6-1.

to MRXs and WfXs. The trends from combat training centers and warfighter exercises pinpoint issues associated with division headquarters lack of organic capabilities to shape the fight.

As mentioned before, the brigade combat teams are now “miniature divisions.” However, current CTC trends show brigades are unable to effectively conduct reconnaissance and/or security operations. Even with an organic cavalry squadron and three infantry battalions, the brigade staff is unable to employ a cavalry squadron efficiently and effectively for combat operations.²⁸ While the brigade staffs struggled to incorporate the cavalry squadron for reconnaissance and security operations, the squadron struggled to display expert skill in conducting cavalry operations. This concern of inadequate training dates back as early as the Second World War. An assessment of Army Ground Forces during the Second World War diagnosed the failure to have adequate personnel on the staff prevented the ability of competent supervision to ensure all subordinate units were trained to standard.²⁹ Like today’s world, a cavalry squadron had to manage non-cavalry tasks with cavalry tasks. Sometimes this difficult balance was to the detriment of squadron’s mission. One example is a cavalry squadron must perform dismounted machine gun crew ranges and conduct several dismounted live fires while neglecting the doctrinal tasks of mounted maneuver and reconnaissance skills. When both a brigade commander and squadron commander are unfamiliar with the role of a cavalry squadron during large-scale combat operations, improper employment is likely to take occur. While the brigades try to manage too much, the divisions show their absence of capability during their respective warfighter exercise.

²⁸ US Army Combined Arms Center. *JRTC Trends FY17* (Fort Leavenworth: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2017) 22.

²⁹ Bell I. Wiley. “The Training of Non-Divisional Units” in *The Army Ground Forces: The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington DC:US Government Printing Office, 2003) 508-519.

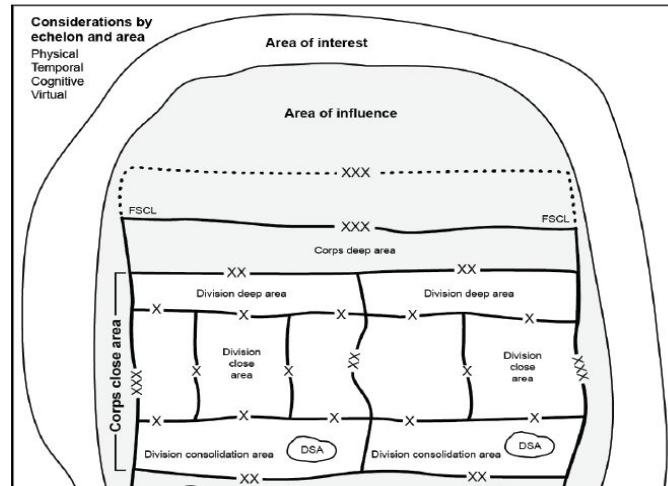


Figure 8. Example of Corps/Division Area of Operations.
Source: FM 3-0, *Operations*, October 2017, 1-32.

Within the operational framework for large-scale combat operations, the division maintains a deep, close, and consolidation/support area (see Figure 8). The division focuses on the deep area. The purpose is to place effects on uncommitted enemy forces not engaged in the close area. This sets the conditions for brigade combat teams to achieve decisive operations in the close area. To gain experience and skill with such complex operations, divisions execute warfighter exercises.

Despite the constant requirement for deployments in support of counterinsurgency and stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, divisions conduct large-scale combat operations during warfighter exercises. During these exercises, division staffs must generate creative solutions to address the deep area fight. Since divisions no longer have organic capabilities like division cavalry, several trends develop among each headquarters. With the reactivation of division artillery formations, divisions relearn the necessary skills to place effects on enemy forces. During the warfighter exercises, division commanders and staffs generated creative solutions to address the lack of deep area capability. The result was that no division came up with the same solution.³⁰ The fact is that without a standard starting point for the divisions, the

³⁰ US Army Combined Arms Center. *Deep Operations* (Fort Leavenworth: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2018); Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) *FY2010 Annual Trends* (Fort

solution developed is based on the levels of experience and skill of the commander and staff. There is no guarantee that both commander and staff will have the necessary experience for large-scale combat operations. To address this possibility, the Army derived a short-term solution in the form of a concept: using entire brigade combat teams to conduct reconnaissance and security missions.³¹

In June of 2017, the Reconnaissance and Security excursion took place at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California. The unit, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team of the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized), executed a series of reconnaissance and security missions in support of a corps or division. This experiment was necessary due to the drastic change of the BfSB no longer able to support corps and division with reconnaissance operations.³² Without dedicated capabilities to support echelons above brigade for reconnaissance and security operations, the capability gap increases the operational risk. The Reconnaissance and Security (R&S) excursion's purpose was to fill the capability gap until a better solution was developed. While observations are key to future development of a permanent solution, necessary training time, force structure, and excessive UAV dependence require the most attention to achieving an optimal and pragmatic solution. If the base design is not well-established, any subsequent improvements will fail to reinforce the concept.

Leavenworth; Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2010); *Mission Command Training in Unified Land Operations* (Fort Leavenworth: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2017); *Combat Training Center (CTC) Trends: Battle Command Training Program* (Fort Leavenworth: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2008).

³¹ TRADOC Capability Manager- Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 1st SBCT/4th Infantry Division *Reconnaissance and Security (R&S) Post-NTC Lessons Learned Report* (Fort Eustis: US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2017) 3. During discussions on 11 March 2016 at the F2025B Executive Committee meeting, the committee was briefed that division and corps commanders lack reconnaissance and security capability to set conditions for successful unified land operations across all phases of Joint operations. In response to this critical shortfall, Forces Command (FORSCOM) designated an SBCT as the 'pilot' unit for the R&S BCT.

³² Kevin Sandell. "504th leads a storied history on military intelligence triumphs," *Fort Hood Sentinel*, 2017, accessed February 8, 2018, http://www.forthoodsentinel.com/living/th-leads-a-storied-history-on-military-intelligence-triumphs/article_a96ac0fc-e25e-11e6-bc32-e7de2809c80f.html.

The first issue is with respect to the essential time for any BCT to be proficient in conducting R&S operations. While 1st SBCT received 18 months to train, 18 months was considered the minimum benchmark for a brigade to achieve a minimal level of proficiency.³³ However, once a brigade is proficient for the R&S mission, that brigade is no longer proficient for any standard combat mission. Just like training a BCT for a counter-insurgency or security force assistance mission, the proficiency level of that BCT to execute any other mission is degraded. This decision results in a significant loss of combat power for large-scale combat. Given the complex nature of military operations, there is no guarantee that the Army will get the necessary lead time to enable the decision. Without an organic capability like division cavalry, divisions risk going into combat with marginally trained forces.

The second issue with the R&S Brigade concept is the sheer size of the BCT. Even with the entire brigade combat team, there must be outside enablers to improve the capability of the assigned brigade.³⁴ The intent of this concept was to provide division and corps with a force capable to conduct cavalry missions. An important characteristic of cavalry units is high mobility. Cavalry needed to quickly transition across the battlefield assuming fighting space of units much larger. An SBCT is not an ACR, the sheer size and strength of the brigade combat team prevent itself from quickly moving across the battlefield and fighting decisively. The Army requires a formation that can move quickly and fight decisively for information.³⁵

The third issue is the overreliance of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for reconnaissance and surveillance operations. Since the inception of the RSTA squadron construct,

³³ TRADOC. *Lessons Learned Report*, 4. The allotted time of 18 months allows for institutional and home station individual and leader training, collective level training in virtual, live and constructive environments prior to a CTC rotation.

³⁴ TRADOC. *Lessons Learned Report*, 11. Training a Stryker brigade to “fight for information” required a significant cultural and mindset shift and would not have been successful without the dedicated focus provided by the excursion and the significant investment made by TRADOC.

³⁵ US Army Combined Arms Center. *Reconnaissance and Security Brigade Combat Team Excursion Draft* (Fort Leavenworth: Center for Army Lessons Learned) 9.

the use of UAVs for reconnaissance and surveillance operations increased. This is a residual effect of a permissive operational environment against a low-tech adversary. The lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan do not support the idea that cavalry squadrons no longer must fight for information. Just like every unit has responsibility for reconnaissance, every unit must have the means to project relative combat power. The apprehension behind not equipping the cavalry squadron with the means to fight for information assumes that robust cavalry units are employed into battle immediately versus based on mission necessity.³⁶ This had some truth for the brigade combat team with only two maneuver battalions and one cavalry squadron. This may even hold true for the new brigade combat team structure with three maneuver battalions and one cavalry squadron. Given the similarities with platforms, a brigade commander is inclined to see a cavalry squadron as just another maneuver battalion. A cavalry squadron that can effectively conduct reconnaissance and security missions while using the advantages in technology strikes the balance that division cavalry used to provide to the division. However, the potential for today's squadrons diminishes as they remain under brigade control.

Lastly, the relevance of division cavalry faces criticism. With any emerging theories of action, benefactors of the status quo will indicate that the joint force currently has the means to address the capability gap. The main two counterpoints are: 1) The US Air Force can place satisfactory effects on enemy forces during large-scale combat. and 2) Current maneuver units can do the cavalry mission. While both points have merit, they must be challenged.

Deep Operations involve a system of military forces from the land and air domain. Aside from Army attack aviation and ground fires, the US Air Force bears the greater burden in placing effects on enemy forces during large scale combat operations. Based on the successes of the First Gulf War and Iraq War, the logic that the Air Force would place similar effects on the enemy in

³⁶ Matthew A. Dooley. "Ignoring History: The Flawed Effort to divorce reconnaissance from security in modern cavalry transformation" (Fort Leavenworth: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2006) 91.

future campaigns is sound. That idea needs reconsideration. Two major powers, Russia and China, have steadily increased their military capabilities for the current environment. While potential conflict with either remains probable but unlikely, both states have closely observed American combat operations in the recent decades. During that time, both states have adjusted not only their doctrine but their force structure.³⁷ Both states are aware of what the US military is capable of. That is why Russian and Chinese doctrine focuses on contesting and disrupting American dominance of the air during combat operations. During large-scale combat operations, the air force will confront an adversary's air force. Coupled with requirements for a deep attack, the air force will not have the ability to support the needs of every ground unit. That is why there is a need to produce a capability within the Army to address deep operations.

The second counterpoint to the formation of cavalry units is that the present maneuver units (infantry and combined-arms battalions) can do the cavalry mission instead. As discussed earlier in this section, the Army posed a compelling case for assigning a brigade combat team to conduct reconnaissance and security missions for echelons above brigade. As early as 2006, several graduates of the US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) and School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) have posted strong opposition to this idea.³⁸ Given the relative complexity of today's environment, maneuver units have their fair share of tasks to train

³⁷ Ben Lowsen, "How China Fights: The PLA's Strategic Doctrine" *The Diplomat* (April 2016) Accessed February 06, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/04/how-china-fights-the-plas-strategic-doctrine>; Jeffery Engstrom, "System Confrontation and System Destruction Warfare: How the Chinese People's Liberation Army Seeks to Wage Modern Warfare" (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2018); Lester W. Grau and Charles K. Bartles, *The Russian War of War: Force Structure, Tactics, and Modernization of the Russian Ground Forces* (Fort Leavenworth: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2016).

³⁸ Matthew Dooley, "Ignoring History: The Flawed Effort to Divorce Reconnaissance from Security in Modern Cavalry Transformation" (master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2006); Ryan Howell, "A Critique of the U.S. Army Force Redesign of Cavalry Formations" (master's thesis, US Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2009), 15; Michael Larsen, "Organizational Structure of Deep Ground Reconnaissance for Future Divisions and Corps" (master's Thesis: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2006); Daniel Ludwig, "Fighting Blind: Why US Army Divisions Need a Dedicated Reconnaissance and Security Force." SAMS Monograph: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2017.

and maintain proficiency. The Army has historically depended on the cavalry to enable the maneuver battalions to achieve success through reconnaissance, security, and economy of force missions. Maneuver units simply cannot be everywhere and do everything. In war, an army is a team composed of various branches. Each branch plays a specific role. Enabling echelons above brigade allow the Army to maintain its relative edge against the nation's adversaries.

The Army has an inability to conduct deep operations effectively during large-scale combat operations. Brigade combat teams are not effective with their cavalry squadrons during rotations to combat training centers. Divisions, without organic capabilities, must figure out creative solutions to address deep operations during their warfighter exercises. The short-term solution of an R&S mission to a brigade combat team is a way but not ideal way going forward. An unhealthy dependence on the strength of American airpower coupled with the flippant logic of giving the cavalry mission to current maneuver units does not improve the Army for future.

The next fight the Army encounters has the potential to be on a massive scale. With adversaries capable of placing large doses of effective lethal and nonlethal fires against our formations, dispersion of forces is critical. Without organic ground-based capabilities at echelons above brigade, the Army must commit brigade combat teams to fill the void. Structured to mass their combat power during operations, brigade combat teams will sacrifice mass to cover large expanses of terrain at the risk of losing the speed and tempo necessary to provide the time and space for higher commanders to make timely decisions.

If the Army believes that the next fight will be as easy as Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Army will fail to learn from past experiences. One prediction is certain: the next large-scale combat operation will not be as easy as earlier operations. Rejoicing the Pacific victory of the Second World War, General MacArthur made the dangerous assumption that American arrogance alone would stop the invading forces of North Korea from its advance south. That was false and the phrase "No more Task Force Smiths!" became a historical warning

to future generations.³⁹ The Army must give serious thought to the organization of combat forces. The dangerous bargain must be renegotiated, or else unnecessary human capital will be the cost.

Conclusion

America's military has no preordained right to victory on the battlefield

-2018 National Defense Strategy

Historical evidence, current trends, and short-term solutions have shown that the Army must put greater thought into placing organic capability under the direct control of the division for large-scale combat operations. The division cavalry units during both world wars executed their doctrinal and additional missions.⁴⁰ Their actions allowed division commanders the time and space to make critical decisions during combat operations. After the world wars, cavalry units adopted technological advances and remained relevant in the full range of military operations. Cavalry units were designed to maintain the necessary tempo and speed necessary to gain and maintain contact with the enemy. Cavalry units even conducted economy of force missions by replacing larger formations needed elsewhere on the battlefield. That ability diminished once cavalry squadrons were under direct control of brigade combat teams. Instead of being the eyes and ears of divisions, cavalry squadrons were unable to maneuver deep into enemy territory and tasked to operate as another maneuver battalion.

The latest trends with brigade combat teams during CTC rotations proves that the brigade staffs do not have the requisite experience needed for planning cavalry operations. With three maneuver battalions, the cavalry squadrons are marginalized. Under brigade control, the cavalry squadrons are not highly effective for large-scale combat operations. Division warfighter

³⁹ Eliot Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 165-170.

⁴⁰ Rottman. *World War II US Cavalry Groups*, 16-19.

exercises support the argument that an organic capability is needed at echelons above brigade. The reestablishment of DIVARTY gives credence that divisions require capabilities without task organizing from their subordinate units.

The dangerous bargain of producing additional but weaker cavalry squadrons to support the brigade combat teams made sense. But the shift was made without serious consideration. Historically, American divisions have always maintained an organic ground capability for large-scale combat operations. Without that capability, operational flexibility disappears, and division commanders must constantly request from higher or task organize from their subordinates. Neither of these choices is sustainable over extended periods of large-scale combat operations.

The emergent concept of R&S missions for a brigade is a bold concept. However, the concept needs significant lead time and resources to bring those designated brigades to a proficient level. But once those brigades are fully competent for the R&S mission, their ability to conduct other missions becomes degraded. This decision could potentially leave divisions without enough capable brigade combat teams for more crucial tasks, such as urban or stability operations.

A change needs to take place. The adversaries of the United States will be even more emboldened to contest American military might in the conventional arena. Divisions require an organic capability to shape the deep fight. The Army has a means to fill that capability gap: by using division cavalry. Aside from the traditional cavalry missions of reconnaissance and security, division cavalry performed other missions to increase the flexibility and optionality of maneuver commanders in large-scale combat operations of the world wars. The current framework of modularity remains a feasible framework for future operations, but with caveats. The division headquarters with organic capabilities provide the commander with the necessary time and space to achieve success during large-scale combat operations.

Recommendations

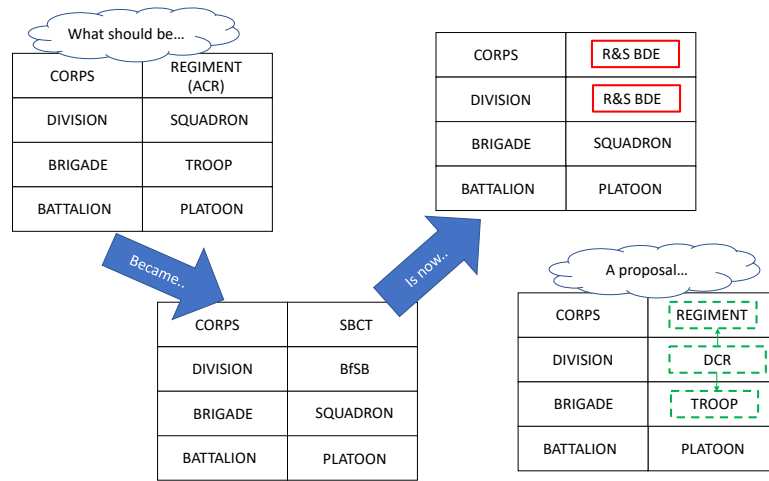


Figure 9. The logic flow of R&S formation coverage.

Source: Author.

There is an alternative perspective to rebuilding the lost organic capability at the division level for large-scale combat operations (see Figure 11). The approach examines the past and the present capabilities at each unit level. This study demonstrated the inherent flaws with the current solution of assigning an R&S mission to a brigade combat team. These recommendations not only support an R&S capability at the brigade level but division and corps levels as well. To present this recommendation in a logical manner, the DOTMLPF-P framework is used. While all portions of DOTMLPF-P are not addressed, the focus was placed on specific portions such as Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material and Leadership/ Education. This recommendation approaches the problem under the conditions of a “zero growth” Army within a fiscally-constrained environment. This recommendation is not meant to be the ultimate answer but a means of returning to the desired end state: divisions with the organic ability to shape the deep fight. The DCR could be that capability.

Doctrine

Since the start of brigade modularity, doctrine for cavalry formations was only for squadron, troop, and platoon. The last universal doctrine published for cavalry operations was in 1996. In FM 17-95, *Cavalry Operations*, everything about cavalry operations could be found within a single source. Instead, several smaller publications have been produced but do not connect and emphasize the strength of cavalry organizations: providing the commander with an element that has “the operational mobility, tactical agility, superb command and control, and a unique ability to effectively operate over vast distances”⁴¹ The inability of today’s doctrine to underscore the benefits of cavalry operations leads to a misunderstanding and improper employment of cavalry units for large-scale combat operations.

Although the Army updated doctrine for the Cavalry Squadron in May of 2016, the doctrine does not address the use of the cavalry squadron at echelons above brigade.⁴² The only doctrine that addresses cavalry operations, in general, is FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations* (July 2015). While the latest version of FM 3-98 refers to units that are no longer within the Army organization (BfSB) the publication focuses on the employment of the cavalry squadron within the brigade combat team operational framework (see Figure 10). The doctrine does not address the employment of multiple cavalry squadrons within echelons above brigade. Large-scale combat operations require numerous brigades to execute various tactical actions. It is essential to consider how to best manage battlefield geometry given the potential increase number of brigades. Instead of leaving the brigades to fend for themselves, divisions must play a prominent role not experienced since Operation Desert Storm.

⁴¹ Tom Clancy, *Armored Cav* (New York: Berkley Books: 1994), xvii.

⁴² US Department of the Army, Army Tactics and Procedures (ATP) 3-20.96, *Cavalry Squadron*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1996).

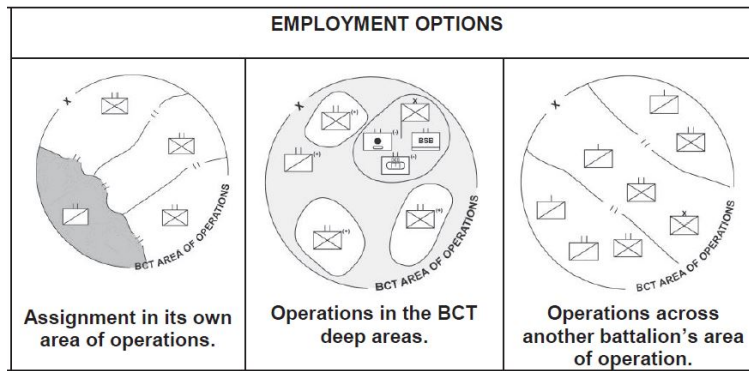


Figure 10. Employment options of the cavalry squadron in the operational framework of a Brigade Combat Team.

Source: FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations*, July 2015. 1-15.

With the introduction of the DCR concept, an improved doctrine is necessary to produce competent and trained cavalry troopers for the operational force. Compared to earlier years, the current cavalry squadrons of brigade combat teams were not very competent in their skills and tasks as cavalrymen.⁴³ This degradation in skill was a result of the myth that cavalry squadrons will not have to fight for information or fight at all because of the technological advantage that the United States has over its enemies. Current events today have shown that the US military cannot rely on advantages in the necessary domains.

⁴³ Trevor R Barrett and Rohn Perry White, “Building Proficiency in Reconnaissance and Security: Observations and Solutions” in *No. 17-19 Ten Fundamental Brigade Combat Team Skills Required to Win the First Fight* (Fort Leavenworth: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2017) 37-42.

Organization

Divisions require organic assets to enhance the needed capability for deep operations. To rely just on the skill and ability of the headquarters and staffs of subordinate units would only aggregate a larger collection of variables that increase uncertainty. Even though uncertainty is ever present, forcing the division staffs to formulate solutions is a just temporary way to solving complex problems. The purpose of the DCR concept is to enhance the capabilities of the division. The construction of the DCR provides the division with the means to shape the deep fight, provide cavalry assets to echelons above or below, and offer the flexible means to address moments of opportunity during large-scale combat operations.

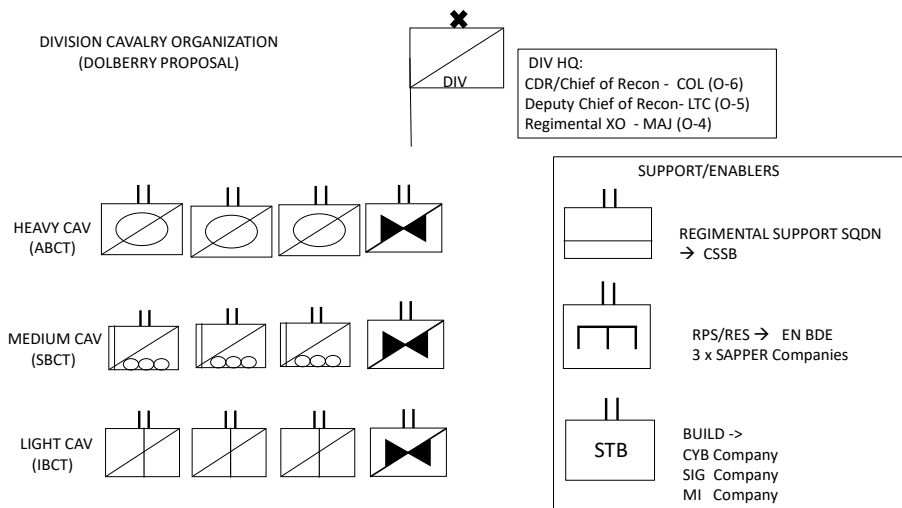


Figure 11. Proposal for Division Cavalry Regiment Organization.

Source: Author.

The DCR concept needs one dynamic change to the current division organization: the removal of cavalry squadrons from the brigade combat teams and assigning them under the direct control of division headquarters. Like fires battalions and the DIVARTY construct, cavalry squadrons would have a habitual relationship with respective brigades. The DCR concept (see Figure 11) consists of three cavalry squadrons, an attack reconnaissance battalion, a regimental support squadron, a regimental engineer squadron, and a special troops squadron. These elements would fall under the operational control of a smaller command element within the division

headquarters. While the mission for the maneuver squadrons would remain the same, the roles of the support units are as follows:

-The Regimental Support Squadron (RSS) is under the command of a Lieutenant Colonel Logistician on their second battalion command. Because the DCR will operate far from friendly lines, well-coordinated sustainment operations are key to the DCR's success to maintain speed and tempo. A seasoned commander with significant logistical experience is best. The RSS provides the division with the necessary sustainment to keep the DCR forward and in the fight. Experience commanding a brigade support battalion is key to understanding the critical requirements of division cavalry squadrons. This formation can come from an existing combat service support battalion (CSSB).

-The Regimental Engineer Squadron (RES) is under the command of a Lieutenant Colonel Engineer. The RES provides the division with the robust engineer capability to seize moments of opportunity during cavalry missions. Each cavalry squadron would have a company of engineers to support and increase sapper capabilities. This formation can come from the Engineer Brigade.

- The Regimental Special Troops Squadron (RSTS) is under the command of a Lieutenant Colonel Branch Immaterial who has successfully commanded a battalion. Because of the potential to have various types of company-size elements assigned, a commander with prior experience is desired. The RSTS provides the DCR with the critical skills to be effective in future conflicts. This formation is task-organized with mission-essential assets (Civil Affairs company, Psychological Operations company, or Military Police company) depending on the mission (i.e. Humanitarian Assistance, Stability Operations, Peace Keeping Operations, Disaster Relief, Security Assistance).

-Within the RSTS, a subordinate Cyber Company provides the DCR with limited Offensive and Defensive Cyber capability to allow time and space for the commander to build situational understanding. The cyber capability forward can allow space necessary to move friendly forces without disruptive effects from enemy cyber operations. A subordinate Signal Company provides the DCR with a robust communication capability to reach back to Division HQ and subordinate brigade combat teams through the area of operations. A subordinate military intelligence company provides the DCR with requisite analysts who understand enemy capabilities. This organization shortens the time to process information collected and develop actionable intelligence for the commander. The current expeditionary military intelligence brigade (EMIB) can provide this capability.

The DCR HQ element would consist of a regimental commander, a deputy commander (DCO), a regimental executive officer (XO), a regimental operations officer (S3), a regimental adjutant (S1), a regimental intelligence officer (S2), a regimental logistician (S4), and a regimental signal officer (S6). The staff officers would serve as coordinating staff to division and adjacent brigade staffs. The Regimental commander serves as the Chief of Recon at the division level. As an organic asset to the division, the DCR would rely on the staff work of the division staff. The regimental staff would supplement the division staff during planning. The Chief of Recon would serve as the connection between G2 (Intelligence) and G3 (Operations). When the DCR deploys, the Chief of Recon provides the division with a subordinate commander to focus solely on the division deep fight or missions of opportunity. This position needs an officer that has successfully served and commanded in various cavalry units.

With a combination of ground and air assets, the division now has a capability to conduct necessary missions for large-scale combat operations. Instead of divisions having to task organize brigades to form necessary forces for division operations, the division now can provide skilled cavalry support below to brigades or even up to the corps (see Figure 12). Current doctrine (FM

3-0) calls for reinforced brigade combat teams to division and corps security areas. As previously discussed, the use of entire brigade combat teams limits the flexibility of the commander. With the DCR, divisions maintain their brigade combat teams for more important missions.

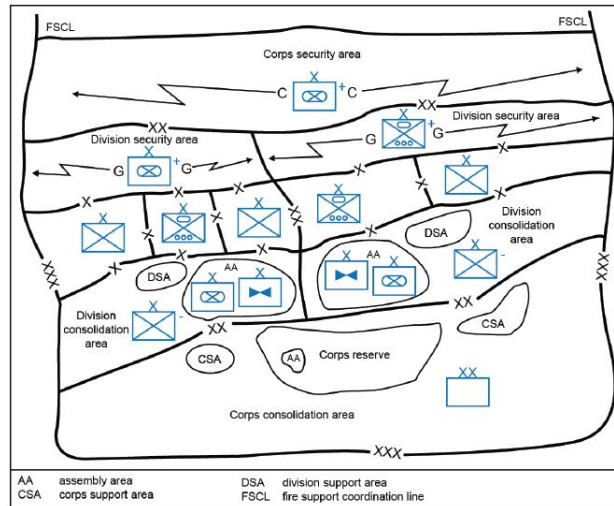


Figure 12. Example of Corps Contiguous Area Defense.
Source: FM 3-0, *Operations*, 2017. 6-29.

With the DCR proposal, division cavalry is organized for the deep fight. The divisions can provide cavalry forces down to the brigade or up to the corps without significantly disrupting the operational framework within the subordinate brigades. The renewed command relationship between the DCR and division headquarters fosters the necessary environment to produce highly trained and capable cavalymen.

Training

A unit not trained for its required mission is more of a liability than an asset. Cavalry squadrons within brigade combat teams struggled with being the experts in effective cavalry operations. With the DCR concept, cavalry squadrons will have the necessary environment to build the expertise. But more than just the environment is needed to ensure the cavalry skill set does not completely disappear. For cavalry squadrons operating far from friendly lines, it is important to ensure the necessary skills are present to remain effective throughout large-scale

combat operations. Two considerations towards training that would enhance the DCR concept are:

- 1) Renovate the advanced individual training curriculum to introduce proper cavalry tactics.

This requires that cavalry scouts learn what they need to be used forward of friendly lines. Skills, such as friendly and enemy vehicle identification, basic demolition, and communication skills are necessary to produce trained cavalry scouts that enhance the capabilities of the DCR. Reviewing the obsolete version of ST 3-20.983, *Reconnaissance Handbook*, as the bible for the cavalry scout is an action to consider.

- 2) Conduct coordinated large unit maneuvers after completion of home station combined training. To stress the mission command system of divisions, division headquarters should deploy a forward command element to command operations of multiple brigades. The DCR could deploy as separate squadrons to support brigades as an economy of force unit during CTC rotations.

Material

Since most platforms already exist for cavalry squadrons, recommended considerations are for the practical replacement for OH-58 Kiowa instead of the current AH-64 Apache. The Kiowa platform allowed a genuine air-ground relationship between cavalry units. This ability disappeared when the Kiowa no longer flew for the operational force. A new light reconnaissance helicopter can renew that crucial air-ground integration necessary for effective cavalry operations.

Another consideration for material is the proper creation of mobile protected firepower platform for the cavalry squadrons within the IBCT. One consideration is the improvement of the M551 Sheridan light tank platform (see Figure 13). The ability to rapidly deploy with increased lethality is key for an IBCT, especially during joint forced entry operations. An improved version of the M551 would provide the IBCTs with a fast, tracked lethal platform that is air-droppable.

The placement of a light tank troop within the light cavalry squadron would mirror the same structure as the new Armored Reconnaissance Squadron (ARS) of the ABCT.



Figure 13. M551 Sheridan Light Tank.
Source: McGrath, Scouts Out!, 156.

Leadership & Education

Regardless of the platform used, being cavalry is a mindset. This mindset needs to be emphasized through professional military education. A cavalryman must be an expert on reconnaissance and security operations. But cavalry operations are not just about reconnaissance and security. It is about having an audacious spirit and meeting the intent of the commander to enable victory in sequenced tactical actions. That is why officers and senior non-commissioned officers assigned to cavalry units must attend Cavalry Leader's Course (CLC) to learn the institutional knowledge for effective employment of cavalry units. All newly-commissioned infantry and armor officers must attend the Army Reconnaissance Course (ARC). Any army aviators assigned to air reconnaissance squadrons should receive a partial course to improve shared understanding for the air-ground integration. The ability to educate the present and future ranks of cavalymen allow the necessary culture for a cavalry mindset to take hold. Without the positive culture, the audacious spirit is hindered

In conclusion, the DCR recommendation offers several considerations for implementation. The subordinate brigade combat team still retains its combat power of three maneuver battalions for combat operations. The DCR maintains the ability to reinforce or enable

brigades with a cavalry troop to a squadron. The DCR maintains the ability to execute deep operations with ground, air and fires. The DCR is even prepared to support the corps for large-scale combat operations. The DCR proposal is a start to filling the capability gap that currently persists within the Army: a lack of reconnaissance and security organic to echelons above brigade. Thoughtful consideration is necessary for implementation. Anything less is a detriment to the soldiers going into the next conflict.

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