

PATRIOT ISR: The Need For 'Snake-Eaters'

"Complacency is the biggest killer on the battlefield."

GEN PETER J. SCHOOMAKER

35TH U.S. ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, 2003-2007

CPT C.R. GARNETT
United States Army

Major E.E. Cobham, CG 6
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Conventionally speaking, the mission of the U.S. Army Air Defense Artillery (ADA) is to protect the force and selected geopolitical assets from aerial attack, missile attack, and from surveillance. Theater objectives of ADA are to preserve combat power, gain the initiative, and support offensive operations. However with the current counterinsurgency (COIN) operations that U.S. forces are engaged in, the likelihood of a future enemy employing both conventional and unconventional methods of warfare are becoming more and more likely. The United States Army Air and Missile Defense community needs to develop and integrate ground intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) into their general operations, giving the U.S. Army Air Defense units more operational flexibility. This will increase survivability, situational awareness, and situational understanding to the commanders during air defense operations. This future, over the horizon threat will be a hybrid enemy.

Introduction

Traditionally, air defense units, specifically PATRIOT, in theater have ground maneuver units attached to them in order to provide operational ground security. However, attached ground defense erodes the overall situational awareness of air defense commanders. Simultaneously, this practice has limited these assigned maneuver units their ability to focus on offensive and

follow-on operations. Although originally well intended, this method allows the air defense commander to focus solely on air defense operations and nothing outside of their units immediate location (footprint). Due to the requirements for combating COIN and the byproduct of bypassing enemy ground forces in traditional maneuver warfare, these conventional methods will more than likely not be available to air defense units in the future and pose a potential threat.

Future air defense operations against a more 'hybrid' threat will require PATRIOT batteries to emplace in locations that are both distant from and close to urban areas as well as in rural, sparsely populated sites. This complex terrain will require commanders to be able to thoroughly evaluate and understand the threats posed against personnel, equipment, and location. When emplacing in and around urban areas, maneuver forces by their organic capability and what they are able to bring to the fight tactically, would be constrained by performing defensive operations, this is not practical or useful role.



PATRIOT air defense commanders must have intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities that are organic in order to obtain and maintain continuous situational awareness and situational understanding. Typically, air defense planners emplace PATRIOT units in distant remote locations. Unfortunately, it is common yet unintended that once these units are in position, they are quite vulnerable to asymmetric threats. Although Quick Reaction Force (QRF) teams are effective tool in reacting to a specific enemy action(s), organic ISR teams would enable the commander to take a proactive action to counter enemy threats before they evolve. This 'eyes and ears' approach will increase the survivability, situational awareness, and situational understanding to the commanders during air defense operations.

With maneuver warfare being the basis of our conventional operations, the common practice of bypassing small or non-relevant enemy elements in order to maintain momentum poses the biggest ground threat to PATRIOT units. The physical sensitivity of air defense equipment, specifically radar systems, sensors, and missile launchers, this bypassed threat could neutralize an entire air defense battalion with several randomly placed 7.62mm rounds. No other combat arms element of this size in the U.S. Army is as vulnerable to small arms fire.



Thus, commanders need to have continuous information on the physical status of their remotely located, including potential threats to it.

A realistic scenario that could develop is one that would have a PATRIOT battery emplaced in a location that is far from

any determined ground threats. However, once emplaced and after close examination of the terrain and operational footprint, the commander discovers that a small village is located just fifteen kilometers away from his unit's location. Bypassed enemy elements would take full advantage of this village as a potential staging location for follow-on attacks. PATRIOT ISR teams would deploy to a concealed position, undetected, to best observe all activities in and around this village. Because of the lack of any scouts and/or sniper assets in ADA units, the two or three-man PATRIOT ISR teams would report on all personnel and equipment entering into and leaving the village. Information given to commanders of static ADA units from these ISR teams is extremely valuable because they are not capable of immediately initiating offensive operations or relocating.

With the information that ISR teams could pass along, commanders would be able to anticipate an attack and institute measures to defend themselves. Area reconnaissance such as this obtains detailed information concerning the terrain or potential enemy activity within that prescribed area, such as a village. However, area reconnaissance is not the only means of gathering intelligence by air defense commanders.



ISR Missions

The information ISR teams can provide to commanders in the field can be used to protect their battery positions, launchers that are in a remote configuration, as well as for future battery convoy initial route operations. Additionally, ISR can provide information from vantage points that overlook their battle position in urban terrain, counter-surveillance. These positions must be identified in order to reduce the likelihood of potential enemy surveillance and/or civilian interference as well as reduce the possibly asymmetric attacks. PATRIOT ISR counter-surveillance missions in and around urban sprawls would include:

- identifying high-rise locations that are in direct line of sight or over watch of battery/battalion position
- identifying possible choke points by civilian vehicular movement in lines of communication and main supply routes that would degrade direct access
- identifying organic teams of personnel, if needed, to occupy surrounding civilian infrastructure that pose security risk to battery/battalion position during times of war
- designing and producing an 'occupation in urban terrain' planning book that outlines actions to be taken in this setting

ISR Skill Tasks

Currently, air defense and field artillery units utilize reconnaissance, selection, occupation of position (RSOP) teams that are organic to their units. The RSOP teams select sites for sites the batteries. ISR teams will be an extension of RSOP, with the purpose of passing of information requested by the immediate commander (battery or battalion).

Common tasks that would be required by ISR teams include but are not limited to:

- obtaining the location of possible hostile forces

- description, composition, activities, and identification of possible hostile forces
- attempt to identify hostile forces strengths and weaknesses
- attempt to discover gaps or vulnerabilities in hostile forces dispositions
- determine hostile forces ability to reinforce
- confirm or refute apparent hostile COAs
- conduct reconnaissance and surveillance of designated named areas of interest (NAIs)
- report information in accordance with current intelligence reporting criteria and the intelligence dissemination plan



ISR Fundamental ISR Skills

In order to increase the survivability, situational awareness, and situational understanding to the commanders during air defense operations, and due to the general nature of air defense missions, two means of insertion of ISR teams will be either walking foot patrol or vehicular. Based on the theater of operations, unit mission, and assets available, the commander must be able to identify needed ISR tasks. Though specialized skills need to be resident with ISR teams, they are not high-level skills that require formal schooling. The majority of these skills are fundamental to the Soldier and will be mastered at the unit level. Thorough planning and understanding of the commander's intent is essential for ISR success.

Core competency skills that would need to be acquired and accompany these ISR tasks include, but are not limited to:

- radio operations
- identifying and selecting location/position for effective surveillance operations
- effective camouflage and concealment of personnel, equipment, position, and vehicle(s)
- field sketching and basic ground photographic skills



- be able to identify avenue of advance to desired location/position with little to zero visual or acoustic signature displacement
- map reading and land navigation skills
- use of compass
- be able to execute surveillance operations over prolonged periods of time
- operate in low-light conditions
- operate GPS-aided equipment (i.e., DAGER)
- operate in adverse weather conditions
- operate assigned night vision equipment

- be able to self-extract from surveillance position with little to zero visual or acoustic signature displacement
- be able to collect and forward a SALUTE report
- be able to monitor and record information in a logbook or designated ISR journal

Bridging of Skills, Tasks, and Mission

Though introducing these tasks and improving on the skills is vital, the overall effectiveness of the ISR teams will be based on the realism of the training. Commanders must rely on judgment to balance the requirements of mission success with the associated risks. In order to maintain the realism, training needs to be conducted under conditions that are expected in combat. This realism in training of ISR teams is acquired by introducing these conditions that ISR teams can expect to encounter in combat:

- secrecy in planning and execution
- tactical insertion and extraction methods
- use of tactical communication procedures
- incorporation of OPFOR and/or COB (civilians on the battlefield) elements for ISR teams to observe and report on

Personnel Selection for ISR

The recommended manning of PATRIOT ISR teams at the battery level would include the RSOP OIC (2LT), junior non-commissioned officer as NCOIC, and junior enlisted- service member preferably with a 25F(COMMO) MOS. The OIC would be responsible for developing a training plan and working in conjunction with the battery commander's intent. Ideal training time would be during traditional RED CYCLE driven events, to maximize time spent for ISR skills development and strengthening and allow for time to be used during non-RED CYCLE training to focus on PATRIOT-specific skills.



Additionally, it is also recommended to have a battalion-level ISR evaluation team/master training team. This team would be responsible for coordinating training within the battalion and for progress reporting on all ISR teams. This team would be manned by a staff officer (CPT/1LT) as OIC, and a non-commissioned officer as NCOIC. This battalion-level ISR team would be the main point of contact for training resources and references. Evaluations for ISR teams would be graded on 'GO/NO-GO' criteria and would not be included in or conducted during PATRIOT Gunnery Table VIII evaluations. Training focus needs to be kept to conventional operations, yet keeping mind that the future conflict will involve a hybrid enemy.

The development of ISR training from a Soldiers perspective will broaden their skills and strengthen their warrior ethos as well as the warrior tasks and battle drills (2008, U.S. Army Posture Statement). Incorporating ISR into PATRIOT training will strengthen Soldier development by enabling ISR team members to research, develop training, and offer leadership opportunities that would not normally be offered. The integration of ISR into their general operations, giving the U.S. Army Air Defense units more operational flexibility, is one that develops Soldiers and increases overall unit capabilities.

Counter-Argument

The counter-argument to PATRIOT ISR is a common and traditional response. First, with security being provided from maneuver units is more of a gamble than a plan-it gives the air defense commander a false sense of situational understanding. Maneuver warfare often requires the practice of bypassing small, non-significant enemy elements in order to maintain operational speed and tempo. This traditional security attachment from past operations is an assumption that requires a reliable, secondary organic ISR plan. Second, the demands of personnel shortages and training time needed. The mission essential task list (METL) tasks for PATRIOT operations must be the training focus for all commanders. ISR training requires at most three personnel per battery. Time allocated to this training can not only be independent from METL tasks and PATRIOT-specific training, but can also be designed to take place during RED CYCLE training events when large amounts of personnel demands from taskings are assigned. ISR skills alone do not require formal and in-depth training, nor do these skills call for extensive time allocated to training which would equate to time away from conventional PATRIOT training.

Conclusion

In conclusion, PATRIOT ISR operations will bring an enormous capability to air defense units. The information passed along by ISR teams will be common air defense specific information that is organic to the unit and will allow for an effective decision by the commander in a short amount of time. With current COIN operations and both conventional and hybrid threats gathering, this aspect of intelligence gathering for air defense operations is invaluable. This 'eyes and ears' tool for commanders to gather information through surveillance operations will drastically increase their situational awareness and understanding, resulting in positive control and information passing to air defense commanders at all levels.

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