

Reconnaissance in the Multi-National Environment

Successful integration of Allies and Partners into the reconnaissance fight

In reconnaissance operations, timely and effective communication is paramount to mission success. Commanders require accurate reports to make decisions and adjust their plan to best fit the problem sets that the battlefield presents. At the Joint Multi-National Readiness Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany, many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies and partners come to train alongside American units. Often, multi-national elements will find themselves under a common headquarters. With limited means of communication due to differing platforms, the transfer of data and valuable priority intelligence requirements (PIR) becomes a unique challenge which must be solved in order to achieve key tasks and succeed in multi-national operations. Over the past seven rotations, effective methods of multi-national integration at the company and battalion levels into reconnaissance operations have emerged.

Plan

The first step in integrating a unit consisting of multi-national allies and partners is to understand the capabilities of their formations. The most effective way to do this is



Figure 1 – Commanders discuss scheme of maneuver

to demonstrate and explain the capabilities of forces (especially special purpose forces) using briefings and static displays. This enables leaders and Soldiers to see what an ally or partner can bring to the fight and how they get it there. This is especially useful in reconnaissance operations, where

the ability to observe named areas of interest (NAIs) is directly correlated to answering intelligence gaps and information requirements for higher command. In order to be effectively implemented throughout the planning process, units should focus on the following areas when explaining their capabilities: intelligence collection procedures, resource constraints, and additional support requirements. This will “encourage active collaboration among all organizations affected by the pending operations to build shared understanding”¹ and inevitably lead to a more synchronized operation.

Special considerations are made to command support relationships between multi-national allies and partners and their US counterparts. With differing definitions

Authority	Full command	NATO operational command	NATO operational control	NATO tactical command	NATO tactical control
Direct authority to deal with nations, diplomatic missions, and agencies	X				
Granted to a command	X	X			
Delegated to a command			X	X	X
Set chain of command to forces	X				
Assign mission/designate objective	X	X			
Assign tasks	X	X		X	
Direct/employ forces	X	X	X		
Establish maneuver control measures	X	X	X	X	X
Reassign forces	X				
Retain operational control	X	X			
Delegate operational control	X	X	X		
Assign tactical command	X				
Delegate tactical command	X	X	X		
Retain tactical control	X	X	X		
Deploy force (information/within theater)	X	X	X		
Local direction/control designated forces	X				X
Assign separate employment of unit components	X	X			
Directive authority for logistics	X				
Direct joint training	X				
Assign/reassign subordinate commanders/officers	X				
Conduct internal discipline/training	X				
The national authority always retains FULL COMMAND by Allied doctrine.					
<div> <div></div> Has this authority </div> <div> <div></div> Denied authority or not specifically granted </div>					

Figure 2 – Comparison of U.S. and NATO command relationships (FM 3-16)

amongst US doctrine and NATO terminology, the actual mission command authority can become convoluted. Commanders ensure that appropriate headquarters are assigned to multi-national units in order to enable effective decision making and incorporation into all levels of planning. “The unit leaders should come to a consensus on

which command relationships the brigade will use (US or NATO)”² to ensure that all subordinate elements are effectively employed. Command support relationships become extremely important when considering sustainment planning. This is because

¹ ADP 5-0, The Operations Process. Pg. 8, Paragraph 33.

² CALL Handbook 16-18, Multinational Interoperability, Pg. 14.

of the unique problem set that differing vehicle variants create amongst formations. For example, a light infantry battalion may not be equipped to handle the logistical requirements that a tank company presents. For this reason, leaders at echelon consider what effects a task organization may have on the parent unit. This may require the commitment of additional support assets at not only the company level, but at echelon. These considerations are identified during planning and practiced at sustainment rehearsals.

Effective coordination in reconnaissance between multi-national forces requires integrated planning. This begins during mission receipt and during the military decision-making process (MDMP). All multi-national forces should be included throughout the MDMP or comparable planning process. Though a Liaison Officer (LNO) can serve adequately as a representative for the unit throughout the planning process, the commander of the attached force should regularly attend key discussions/briefings of the MDMP. There is no replacement for commander-to-commander dialogue at all levels of operations. This includes things such as war-gaming and the course of action (COA) approval briefing. This will enable the commander to “assist in developing shared understanding and purpose”³ and to ensure his or her unit is effectively being employed to aid in mission accomplishment and properly resourced to do so. Without being properly included in the initial development of a COA, multi-national partners and allies cannot be fully implemented into the operation’s unity of purpose.

Units conducting reconnaissance operations with multi-national allies and partners pay special attention to developing and maintaining the common operating

³ ADP 5-0, The Operations Process. Pg. 6, Paragraph 22.

picture (COP) of the task force. This is imperative due to the increased risk of friendly fire incidents due to improper positive identification of enemy targets. To maintain an effective COP, units ensure the appropriate maintenance and dissemination of analog graphics. “For clarity and risk reduction, units must use overlays with control measures from a scaled topographical map and distribute overlays to subordinate units”⁴. Graphic



Figure 3 – French Leclerc conducts FPOL with SBCT

control measures such as restrictive fire lines, boundaries, no-fire areas (NFAs), and reconnaissance hand-over / battle hand-over

(RHO/BHO) lines are crucial to successful integration of multi-national allies and partners. This is because of the risk reduction that they provide to the using force. Additionally, operations such as forward passage of lines and rearward passage of lines (FPOL / RPOL) are constructed utilizing delineated lanes and coordination points to promote adjacent unit coordination and synchronized shifting of area of operations (AO) responsibility.

Prepare

Joint rehearsals are extremely important to ensuring that the planning process has accomplished mission synchronization and shared understanding. All unit commanders should attend brigade and battalion level combined arms rehearsals (CARs). During these rehearsals, staff and commanders determine how the scheme of

⁴ CALL Handbook 16-18, Multinational Interoperability, Pg. 17.

maneuver fits into time, space, and terrain. Additionally, commanders discuss how information will be transferred between units because of the importance that PIR play in an operation. “Commanders require timely and accurate information during the execution of operations to maneuver and direct future combat operations against the enemy.”⁵ Information flow is an especially delicate part of the operation due to the number of varying communications platforms that may be present throughout different formations. Many multi-national forces do not have the capabilities to communicate with U.S. forces unless utilizing a single-channel, plain-text frequency which is much more vulnerable to interference and outside intelligence gathering efforts.

This inevitably calls for the co-location of command posts (CPs) or the use of LNOs on at both U.S. and multi-national command nodes. In reconnaissance operations, timely reporting can directly lead to mission success or failure due to the ramifications of ill-advised decision-making by commanders. By co-locating CPs, commanders at multiple levels can maximize the use of available communication platforms to rapidly share information gathered by adjacent units. This is vitally important in missions such as the screen, where PIR dedicated to the identification of the main body, may have a latest time information is of value (LTIOV) that expires quickly due the necessary repositioning of defensive forces to meet the advancing threat.

In a recent rotation, a Netherlands’ reconnaissance troop was overwhelmingly successful in providing information rapidly to their adjacent units because of the areas in

⁵ FM 3-98, Reconnaissance and Security Operations. Chapter 1, Page 1-4.

which they emplaced their key leaders. The commander of the troop split from his CP to move to the TOC of his “reconnaissance customer”. As information flowed from his surveillance sites, he was able to rapidly pass this information. This information went directly to the commander and staff of the unit prepared in a defense position behind the troop’s screen. This directly enabled timely decision making and the commander of the defending force to make decisions to reallocate forces to subsequent, alternate, or supplementary battle positions based off of the enemy’s scheme of maneuver. This also gave the reconnaissance troop commander the ability to compare common operating pictures, coordinate emergency sustainment resupply (if needed), and the ability to maximize options for casualty care in the event of chance contact.

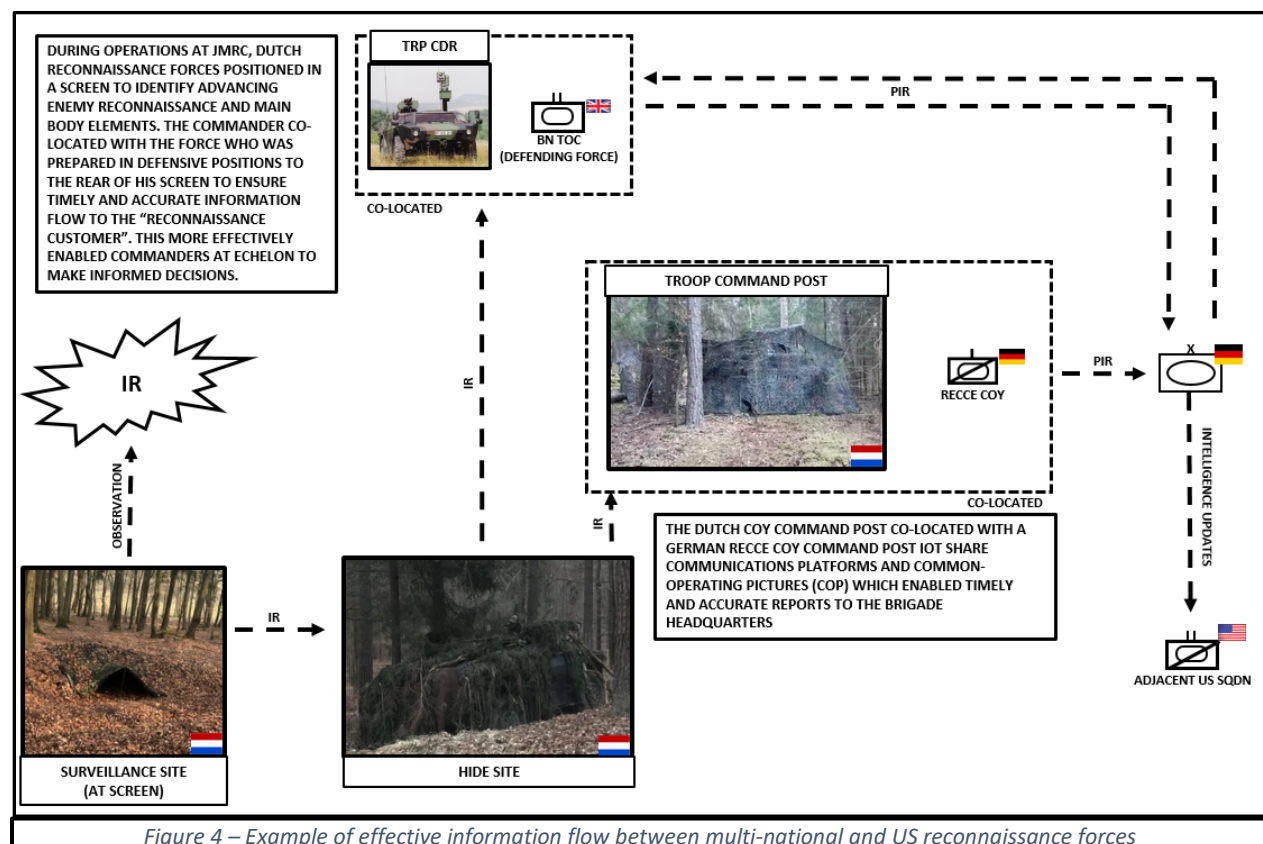


Figure 4 – Example of effective information flow between multi-national and US reconnaissance forces

Units develop methods of marking to further understanding of multi-national vehicle identification at echelon. These methods of marking are created and refined during the unit's planning process and then employed to ensure that Soldiers at all levels and across formations can accurately identify friendly vehicles on the battlefield. Markings include both day and night identification means. In the European theater of operations where many allies and partners share the same vehicle variants as some potential adversaries, this is a critical endeavor. Friendly fire incidents are an inherent risk in multi-national operations and require deliberate mitigation.

Execute

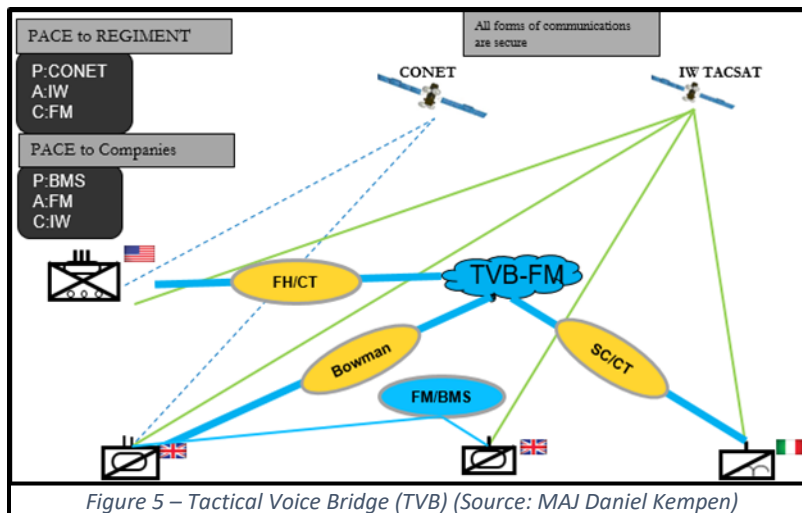
Following mission planning and preparation, operations including multi-national and US forces require constant communication and synchronization through the use of strategically placed liaison teams. These liaison teams must be involved in both current operations (CUOPS) and future operations (FUOPS) planning processes. This enables calculated decision making by commanders and staffs and ensures that multi-national formations are employed where and when they can be most beneficial to the fight. This liaison team includes the multi-national unit's communication platforms to enable timely and accurate reporting of applicable PIR and unit locations.

The upkeep and accurate depiction of the COP is important to ensuring that all subordinate elements have a shared understanding of adjacent unit locations. This may require additional analog emphasis due to the lack of compatible digital communication systems in multi-national formations. This requires additional effort on the part of the staff of the commanding unit to ensure that updates to multi-national locations and

movements are disseminated to all elements of the formation and vice versa.

“Development of the COP is ongoing throughout operations.”⁶

To solve the issue of timely and accurate transmission of intelligence, units have historically employed the tactical voice bridge (TVB) within their command nodes. While



this is a realistic solution, it does not replace the need for effective liaison operations at all levels due to the language barrier that can divide a U.S. and multi-national force. Co-locating digital

communication means such as Joint Battlefield Command-Platform (JBCP) and multi-national systems may require changes to existing TOC layouts but enables timely and effective transfer of information. Operators can ensure that as units move or changes are made to graphic control measures, they are perfected on both systems. Units preparing for operations with multi-national partners also “establish a command post SOP for each configuration”⁷. Lastly, units “prepare draft communication’s exercises (COMMEX) and digital exercises (DIGEX) plans with the intent of executing the systems validations” of the unit primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency communications (PACE) plan.

⁶ ADRP 6-0, Mission Command. Chapter 2, Page 2-14.

⁷ CALL Handbook 16-18, Multinational Interoperability, Pg. 44.

Conclusion

To be effective in a multi-national environment, reconnaissance formations first maximize their understanding of attached multi-national ally and partner capabilities. Effective operations between U.S. forces, allies, and partners require implementation of adjacent units in the planning process as early as possible. In addition to using LNOs between both formations, commander-to-commander dialogues and joint rehearsals can ensure shared understanding and operational synchronization. Lastly, by employing systems such as the TVB, U.S. forces and multi-national units can multiply the number of communication platforms they have at their disposal. Success in multi-national operations begins before units arrive in theater and hinges heavily on critically thinking through where LNOs, TVBs, and CPs should be placed to be most effective. By planning for and employing these considerations, reconnaissance formations enable more effective information flow and overall mission success.