# Leveraging Technology: The Stryker Brigade Combat Team

**by Major Michael C. Kasales and CW2 Matthew E. Gray**

*"Thus we may know that there are five essentials for victory: he will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight; he will win who knows how to handle both superior and inferior forces; he will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all its ranks; he will win who, prepared himself, waits to take the enemy unprepared; he will win who has military capacity and is not interfered with by the sovereign."*

— Sun Tzu

*As the Joint Task Force (JTF) conducts military operations against RED military forces in the western portion of the JTF's area of responsibility, sub-JTF Striker conducts ground combat operations to the east to isolate and destroy RED's weapons of mass effects (WME) capabilities. Marine Forces conduct a demonstration and limited beachhead operations along the coast to fix and deceive RED forces. Airborne infantry units from the Army Forces (ARFOR) conduct parachute assaults to seize key terrain and isolate WME to prevent RED counterattacks. Task Force Ranger conducts a parachute assault to destroy RED forces and seize an airfield to facilitate early entry operations by the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT). The SBCT's mission is to conduct simultaneous offensive operations to destroy threat command and control, force projection, and WME capabilities that threaten the region to facilitate JTF military operations against country RED and prevent the use of WME in the JTF's area of responsibility (AOR).*

*The SBCT begins early entry operations within hours of the successful airfield seizure executed by elements of the 75th Ranger Regiment. Having conducted collaborative contingency planning for this operation with the ARFOR prior to departure from CONUS, the SBCT quickly marshals within the airhead and prepares to execute simultaneous offensive operations. Appropriate force packages were deployed to allow the brigade to rapidly augment the security of the airhead, as well as begin execution of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations to facilitate future offensive actions. Command posts are quickly established and all elements within the SBCT begin refining plans and battle tracking using the upper and lower tactical internet provided by the Army Battle Command System (ABCS) and Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2).*

*As the brigade continues to build combat power at the airhead, the reconnaissance squadron executes ISR operations to answer the commander's priority intelligence requirements (PIR), support the refinement of the plan for offensive operations, facilitate the SBCT's situational understanding, and shape (enable) SBCT operations. The squadron conducts continuous, collaborative, planning and battle command as robust ISR capabilities of the squadron are employed. The squadron commander and staff keep constant communications with the SBCT command group and tactical operations center (TOC) using a wide variety of communications assets such as traditional FM radios, the tactical internet, satellite communications, high-frequency radios, and Trojan Spirit. Additionally, as squadron assets begin devel-*

*oping situational awareness, the squadron tactical command post (TAC) and TOC verify communications with other SBCT and adjacent units to facilitate rapid link-up operations and battle/target handover at the objective areas.*

*As combat information is forwarded to the SBCT TOC, the brigade S2 and squadron staff develop processed intelligence using organic resources and reach capability. Upon receiving sufficient information to support the commander's decision points, the SBCT begins combat operations with three Stryker infantry battalions conducting simultaneous offensive operations against three separate objectives. During the conduct of these offensive operations, the reconnaissance squadron continues to report combat information to the brigade and battalion commanders and staffs, "pulling" them along the "path of least resistance," thus enabling the successful execution of SBCT combat operations.*

As the Army's first SBCT executes the final phases of transformation and prepares for its interim operational capable training rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center, several lessons have been learned about ISR operations, digital battle command, and how ABCS and FBCB2 facilitate ISR operations planning and execution.

### ISR Planning Timeline

The key to successful ISR operations is the early development of the ISR plan. By developing this plan early, reconnaissance forces can be employed with sufficient time to gather information, increase situational understanding, provide input to the SBCT's planning process, and develop the situation prior to the application of combat power — all of which enable the SBCT to successfully accomplish its mission.

There are several key points in developing the ISR plan: the SBCT and squadron staffs must begin developing the ISR plan upon receipt of warning order (WARNO) 1 from the ARFOR; both the SBCT and squadron staffs must receive ARFOR planning products early in the planning process, or access information from theater- or national-level sources; and the squadron staff must remain aware of changes to commander's guidance or changing mission requirements to refine the current ISR operation in progress.

To facilitate the early development of the SBCT's ISR plan, it is essential to be linked to the brigade's higher headquarters. Ideally, this linkage will be through a digital network, allowing the brigade and squadron staffs the ability to access ARFOR websites. A successful tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) practiced during a recent command post exercise had the ARFOR homepage continuously displayed in the squadron combat information center (CIC) on a large screen display (LSD). When TOCs are established during tactical operations, information can be accessed through the upper TI. During contingency planning at home station (or when upper TI connectivity is limited) this information can be accessed through the secret internet protocol router network (SIPRNET) using the Trojan Spirit [Special Purpose Integrated Remote Intelligence Terminal].

ISR planning must begin as soon as the ARFOR publishes WARNO 1. This order provides the squadron and brigade staffs with the basic mission elements. Preliminary planning, specifically the conduct of detailed intelligence preparation of the battlefield, must be accomplished prior to receiving ARFOR WARNO 1. After receiving WARNO 1 and commander's guidance for ISR execution, the squadron staff can begin the military decisionmaking process (MDMP). ARFOR WARNO 2 (and reach capability to theater or national agencies) provides the detailed information on threat forces required to complete ISR planning. The squadron staff takes the lead on ISR planning and, through close coordination with the brigade staff, adds the requisite level of detail for execution.

The squadron should attempt to complete its planning for ISR operations prior to the SBCT's mission analysis (MA) brief. A key point to remember is that the SBCT staff has been actively involved in the squadron's planning process from the beginning. At the brigade's MA brief, the squadron commander or operations officer briefs the concept of ISR operations to the SBCT commander and staff. Following the MA brief, the SBCT commander issues his commander's guidance for the brigade's operations. It is essential that the commander give the brigade staff and squadron commander guidance specific to the ISR operation. At this point, the squadron has already conducted at least one course of action (COA) brief with the SBCT command group and key staff.

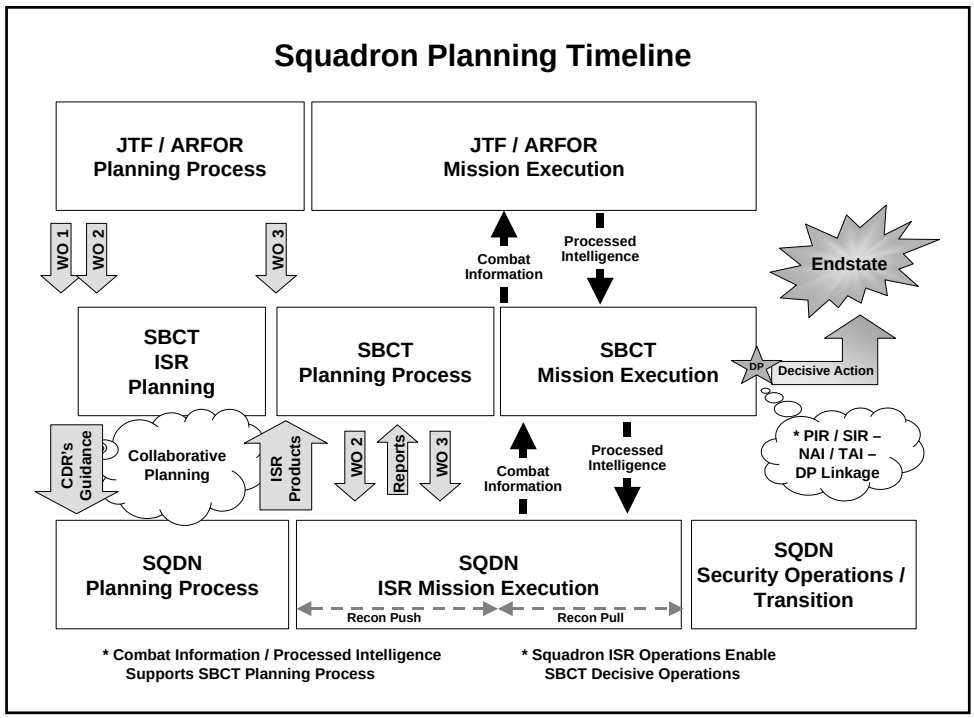


**Figure 1. ISR Planning Timeline**

On final approval of the ISR plan by the SBCT commander, the squadron begins operations focused on answering the commander's initial PIR. This phase of the ISR operation is known as reconnaissance push — collecting information to support the higher organization's planning process. Information is continuously fed to the brigade staff as they conduct

planning for the SBCT's mission. The combat information and processed intelligence that results from the initial ISR operation allows the brigade staff to plan for the employment of the SBCT based on "hard" intelligence and reduces the number of planning assumptions. If the brigade staff needs additional information during the planning process, a fragmentary order is sent to the squadron detailing the specific information requirements. The squadron staff then refines the ISR plan and directs the appropriate asset to collect the requested information.

Once the brigade staff completes the planning process, the employment methodology of the squadron changes to reconnaissance pull — providing information (and possibly conducting shaping operations) on threat forces to allow SBCT elements to maneuver out of contact and gain positional advantage over the enemy to strike at the time and place determined by the SBCT commander. Once SBCT elements commit to decisive action, the squadron transitions to support follow-on missions having already completed planning based on ARFOR WARNOs or brigade-determined requirements for future operations.

## ISR Planning Process

Legacy doctrine and TTP used to describe the development of brigade collection and battalion reconnaissance and surveillance plans is not sufficient, nor efficient enough to facilitate ISR planning in an SBCT. It can be argued that previous techniques have never facilitated reconnaissance operations. This has been demonstrated by the number one reoccurring trend identified by the combat training centers — failures in reconnaissance and surveillance operations.

The SBCT is the first organization that has an entire battalion-sized subordinate unit (with a full staff organization) responsible for ISR operations, therefore, SBCT staff does not have to be burdened with the responsibility to develop the ISR plan — the squadron staff accomplishes this task in close coordination with the SBCT staff. This allows the brigade staff to focus on overall SBCT operations, and reduces the amount of redundant work in developing the ISR plan. However, it is imperative that the two staffs have a clear understanding of responsibilities for providing resources, support requirements, development of technical details to support the operation, and synchronization of the operation.

As mission requirements are identified, the two staffs must coordinate and synchronize combat multipliers and support requirements. ABCS allows for rapid dissemination of planning products, and the various communications assets allow for direct communications between staff officers. Each staff section must identify and have a mutual understanding of what planning products must be produced, who has responsibility for each product (or portion of), when these products will be available, and where (in the ABCS architecture) they will be posted. The charts at right list the types of information that must be coordinated between the brigade and squadron staff during specific steps

| Mission Analysis | Produced by SBCT | Produced by Squadron |
|---|---|---|
| **INT** | Initial Enemy Situation Template<br>Event Template / Matrix<br>Enemy Order of Battle<br>General Terrain Products<br>EAB Reconnaissance Schedule<br>EAB HUMINT Assets in AOR<br>EAB NAI Coverage Requirements<br>Information Requirements<br>Brigade MDMP Timeline | Squadron ISR Asset Status<br>Squadron ISR Plan (Concept)<br>RFIs on Threat Forces<br>Terrain Product Requests |
| **MAN** | Air-Land Flow<br>Initial Commander's ISR Guidance<br>Commander's CCIR<br>Assets Available to Support ISR | Initial ISR Concept<br>ISR Operation Support Requirements<br>A2C2 Overlay / TUAV Schedule<br>Tactical Risk Assessment |
| **EFFECTS** | Cdr's Intent for Fire and Effects<br>Available Fire and Effects Assets | Proposed Squadron EFETs<br>Critical RFIs |
| **CSS** | Initial Location of BSA<br>Initial Concept of Support<br>Location of IN BNs for Area Support | Initial CTCP Location<br>Initial Support Requirements<br>Initial Concept of Support Sketch |
| **C2** | Location of NCS-E<br>Location of 334th TREX<br>Location of IN BN TREX<br>Voice NET Plan and Checks | Initial TOC and TAC locations<br>Initial TREX locations<br>Initial TREX NETs to be RETRANS<br>C2 Overlay |

**Chart 1. Mission Analysis Requirements for ISR Planning**

| COA Development | Produced by SBCT | Produced by Squadron |
|---|---|---|
| **INT** | Brigade Commander's ISR Guidance<br>Brigade Collection Plan (Draft)<br>(Non-RSTA Coverage Requirements)<br>(Proposed RSTA Requirements) | Sensor locations and focus<br>-- LP/OP Locations, Patrol Routes<br>-- UAV ROZ<br>-- Prophet Baseline<br>-- REMBASS/GSR Locations<br>Squadron NAI Overlay<br>Coverage of Plan for NAIs |
| **MAN** | Refined Commander's ISR Guidance<br>Time for Available Combat Multipliers<br>Graphic Control Measures | Refined ISR Concept<br>Scheme of Maneuver / Overlay<br>Combat Multiplier Integration |
| **EFFECTS** | Refinement of Target List<br>Brigade EFETs | Draft Target List<br>Approved Squadron EFETs<br>Suggested FSCMs<br>Draft Concept of Fires |
| **CSS** | Changes to Area Support Plan<br>Changes Concept of Support | Refined CTCP location<br>Refined CSS Overlay<br>Refined CSS Concept of Support |
| **C2** | Changes to C2 Node Locations<br>Changes to Voice NET PLAN | Verified TOC/TAC locations<br>Verified TREX Locations Overlay<br>Verified TREX NETs<br>Changes to C2 Overlay |

**Chart 2. COA Development Requirements for ISR Planning**

| Wargaming | Produced by SBCT | Produced by Squadron |
|---|---|---|
| **INT** | Updates to EAB Collection Plan<br>Responses to RFIs<br>Terrain Product Requests<br>Updates to Brigade SITTEMP<br>Updates to COA Overlays | Squadron ISR Plan<br>Final Squadron NAI Overlay<br>Sensor Coverage Overlay<br>ID Gaps in Higher Collection Plan |
| **MAN** | Approval of ISR COA<br>Confirm Support Requests | Squadron Synchronization Matrix |
| **EFFECTS** | Changes to Brigade EFETs<br>Changes to Brigade Target List<br>Changes to Available Assets<br>FSCMs / AGM / TSS / HPTL | Final Target List<br>Fire and Effects Execution Matrix<br>Complete Squadron Annex D |
| **CSS** | Final Concept of Support<br>CSS Overlay | Paragraph 4 and Annex I<br>Final CSS Overlay |
| **C2** | Changes to Brigade C2 Node locations<br>Changes to Voice NET Plan | Changes to C2 Locations<br>Changes to TREX Locations<br>Changes to NET RETRANS Plan<br>Changes to C2 Overlay |

**Chart 3. Wargaming Requirements for ISR Planning**

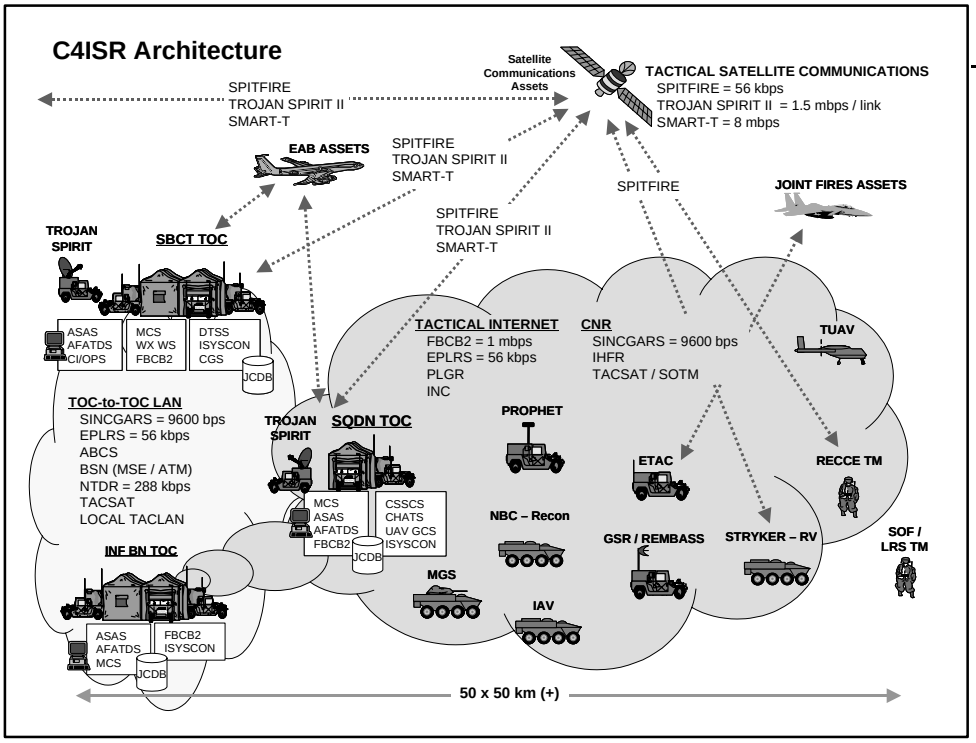


**Figure 2. C4ISR Architecture**

of the MDMP. This information is coordinated through a combination of voice and digital communications. It is essential that all staff members know the exact location of this information and when it will posted on the respective staff's website. Additionally, each staff member must have a detailed listing of ABCS internet protocol (IP) addresses to ensure timely and accurate messaging between staff sections.

After the SBCT's higher headquarters issues WARNO 1, the squadron has a general understanding of upcoming mission requirements. The information available in this WARNO allows the squadron to begin its MDMP. However, this requires ISR planning guidance from the SBCT commander to continue planning. A useful tool to gain this guidance is an ISR concept worksheet. A sample ISR concept worksheet is available at *www.knox.army.mil/armormag/* under the "Downloads" link.

Based on the general understanding of the brigade's mission, the squadron staff completes the ISR concept worksheet. The worksheet provides a basic concept and courses of action for the employment of squadron assets to enable the SBCT for its upcoming mission. Because this worksheet is developed prior to the brigade or squadron beginning the formal MDMP, it only provides a framework for the SBCT commander to give guidance. This process does not take the place of COA development, which occurs later in the squadron's planning process. The worksheet does outline all possible employment considerations given the SBCT's current location, the objective area, and an initial analysis of terrain and threat forces. From this, the brigade commander can provide specific guidance for the conduct of the ISR operation.

As mentioned earlier, it is imperative that the squadron receives detailed information on terrain and the threat situation. This information should be gained once the ARFOR publishes WARNO 2, or it can be gained through reach operations using Trojan Spirit. By having Trojan Spirit collocated with the squadron TOC, the staff has the ability to access large amounts of information about the upcoming operation. By providing Trojan Spirit operators with specific requests for intelligence, they can conduct reach operations to access information from both theater- and national-level agencies. In addition, the intelligence analysts that are part of the Trojan Spirit crew can process the gathered information into a usable format to support the squadron's planning process, highlighting specific information of interest or concern.

As the squadron continues to develop the ISR plan, information is shared and coordinated between the squadron and SBCT staffs. The squadron staff relies on the SBCT staff to provide resources, support, and synchronization needed to execute ISR operations. If resources are unavailable, or being withheld to support the overall SBCT mission, the squadron staff must refine the ISR plan to mitigate any associated tactical risk. The bottom line is that each staff section within the brigade must be aware of the ISR planning process and staff officers must be prepared to conduct collaborative planning as the squadron staff completes ISR planning. It is also understood that the ISR plan cannot restrict or detract from the SBCT's main planning effort. By working in close coordination, the two staffs ensure that the ISR plan is developed to provide the greatest amount of flexibility to the SBCT commander during the conduct of brigade combat operations.

### Digital Connectivity and Messaging

Figure 2 depicts the upper and lower tactical internet architecture, as well as other key command, control, communications, and computer ISR (C4ISR) elements. The squadron communicates and maintains connectivity with subordinate elements through FBCB2 and combat net radios. These two systems allow for effective battle command, not only within the squadron, but also throughout the SBCT. The squadron maintains connectivity with adjacent and higher units primarily through FM and tactical satellite communications, and ABCS.

The primary method for reporting initial combat information to the squadron TOC is via FBCB2 SPOT (standard Army report of tactically important combat information) reports. These reports are sent from the individual section (or sensor) via FBCB2 to the squadron CIC remote workstation (RWS). An entity of the transmitted record is then posted on the unit's FBCB2 digital maps. The secondary means (or to confirm receipt) for transmitting SPOT reports is via FM voice communications, using the squadron operations and intelligence net.

The imbedded counterintelligence/human intelligence (HUMINT) agents located in each recce team provide additional source information. As reporting occurs through HUMINT channels, information of immediate tactical value is reported

via FBCB2 or FM to the squadron TOC. HUMINT information that supports higher-level source operations is transmitted in a source lead development report or screening report format via individual tactical reporting tool/counterintelligence human intelligence automated tool (ITRT/CHAT) sets. These HUMINT-specific reports are sent from the recce team, through the troop and squadron TOC, to the brigade S2 (X) cell.

Once a SPOT report arrives at the TOC, the information is entered into the CIC RWS, if not received automatically through FBCB2. This information is reviewed by the RWS database manager against current information in the database, and is either correlated (if an entity already exists), or a new unit icon is created — the RWS database transmits via embedded battle command (EBC) back down to FBCB2. If this icon meets pre-established alert criteria based on commander's critical intelligence requirements (CCIR), an enemy order of battle spot report (EOBSREP) message is immediately transmitted to the SBCT TOC. For tactical unmanned aerial vehicle (TUAV) reporting, the ground control station (GCS) controlling the TUAV submits RECCEXREP (specific report format used to send imagery intelligence reports through digital intelligence systems) reports directly from the GCS collocated with the TOC to the RWS. The database manager prints the report and gives it to the battle captain for issuance within the TOC. The messages are then disseminated to the maneuver control system-light (MCS-L) operator who controls the command and observation post assessment overlay. Concurrently, the battle captain disseminates this information to other staff sections for action.

After processing reports within the TOC, the information is scrutinized against CCIR and the appropriate tracking charts on the LSD are updated. In addition to these immediate reports, external database coordination (EDC) messages are received in the RWS (at pre-subscribed times) from the SBCT's military intelligence company. These messages reflect the consolidated brigade database of reports within the entire brigade, along with messages received from higher and adjacent units. Any information within these messages that was not generated within the squadron is consolidated into the database, and thus disseminated via EBC to FBCB2.

Messaging between the squadron and the brigade consists of the EOBSREPs transmitted via RWS and the EDCs received from brigade. As the primary intelligence collector for the SBCT, the squadron relies on the brigade to forward echelon above brigade reports that are sent from higher echelon sensors that do not report directly to the squadron. In addition to the EDCs, information of immediate concern obtained by the brigade is transmitted via voice or EOBSREP to the squadron. As previously mentioned, this information is consolidated in the RWS database for dissemination to the FBCB2s and updated on the MCS-L assessment overlay for display in the CIC. In addition to sending and receiving messages and EDCs, at a minimum of every 12 hours, video teleconferences are conducted over the Trojan Spirit network to synchronize squadron and brigade assessments and expected activity for the next time period.

## Squadron Command Post Configuration

In the contemporary operating environment, future operations will take place within a nonlinear and noncontiguous battlefield framework. This fact and given the capability of the brigade to conduct rapid maneuver over a large battle space, tactical operations centers must be small, mobile, and possess the full range of ABCS capabilities. To effectively provide battle command during ISR operations, the reconnaissance squadron TOC is designed to quickly move/establish operations on the battlefield, provide maximum C4ISR connectivity and communications, and present a small, survivable footprint from which to operate.

The two main components of the TOC are the squadron CIC and the squadron plans cell. Current ISR operations are executed through the CIC, while the plans cell prepares for future operations. Additionally, the plans cell serves as a jump TOC — used to "echelon" command posts (CPs) and facilitate rapid repositioning of the squadron's command and control facilities. Both facilities are identical in ABCS and communications architecture, and provide the squadron commander the flexibility to execute and plan for simultaneous reconnaissance operations over large distances. Additionally, both components of the TOC present the smallest possible footprint, while maintaining maximum command and control capability, which increases the survivability of the squadron's command post and its ability to occupy and conduct operations in dense, restricted terrain.

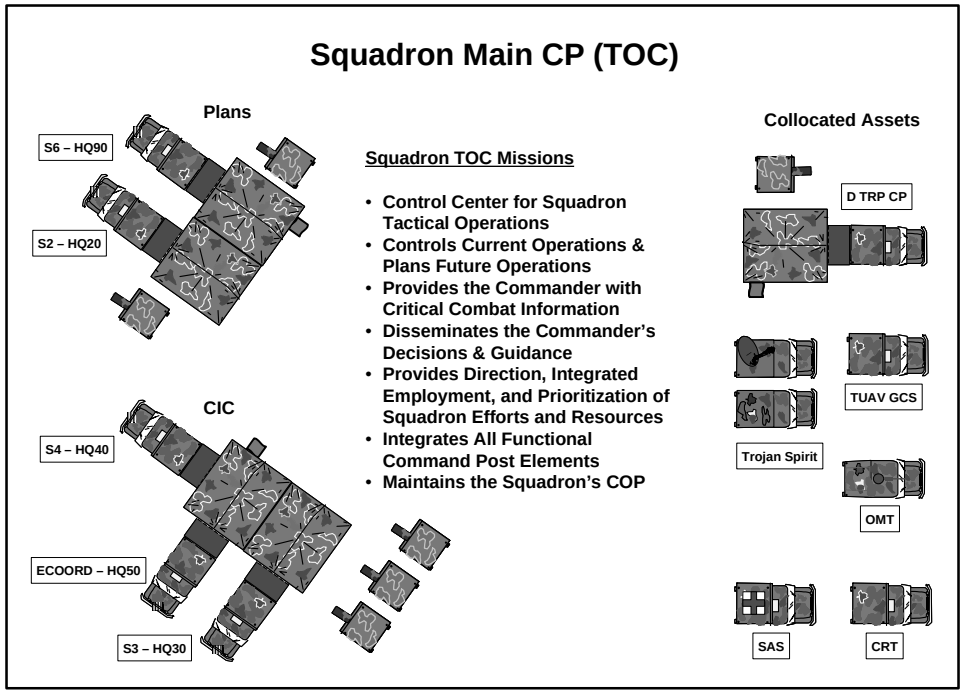


**Figure 3. Reconnaissance Squadron Command Post**

Other elements that are essential to squadron operations also collocate with the squadron TOC. Specifically, the surveillance troop command post and TUAV ground control shelter, and an operational management team (OMT) from the management of information control officer tactical HUMINT platoon are integrated into the TOC perimeter and provide subject matter expertise during the squadron's planning process. The surveillance troop CP personnel ensure that specific troop sensors for signal intelligence, measurement and signature intelligence, imagery intelligence, and nuclear, biological, and chemical reconnaissance are properly employed within capabilities. The TUAV technician provides oversight of TUAV operations and completes Army airspace command and control planning requirements with the brigade's digital air defense system used to facilitate air defense planning and execution (ADAM) cell. The OMT provides subject matter expertise regarding source operations and the development of HUMINT related requirements during the squadron's planning process. Additionally, during execution of ISR operations, the OMT provides direction to tactical HUMINT teams operating within the squadron's area of operation and they provide additional quality control for the submission of ITRT/CHATS-generated reports from recce troop intelligence agents.

To better support operations, the squadron trains collocate with the squadron TOC. The trains' elements that operate within close proximity to the squadron TOC include the combat trains command post, the squadron's combat recovery team, and the squadron aid station.

The last component of the squadron command and control architecture is the squadron TAC. This command post consists of the squadron commander, operations officer, and air liaison officer. The TAC will generally be positioned at the point on the battlefield to best facilitate command and control of squadron elements that are focused on the SBCT commander's primary decision points. However, due to its small footprint and high mobility, the TAC can be positioned at the place and time required to allow the squadron commander to best command the squadron. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the ABCS and communications architecture in both the squadron CIC and plans cell. These illustrations are self-explanatory in describing the locations of key ABCS and communications components.

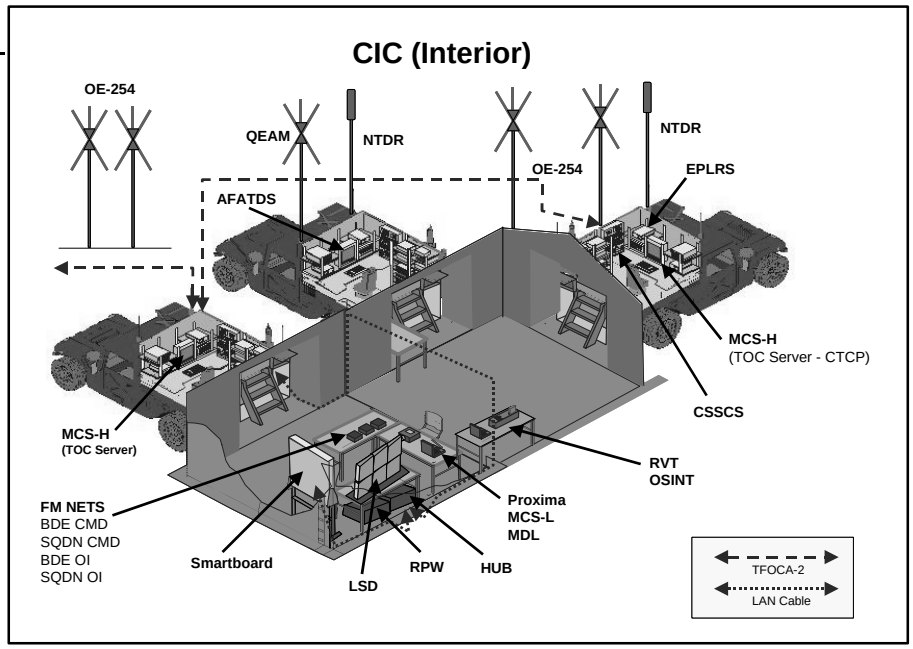


**Figure 4. Reconnaissance Squadron Command Information Center (Above)**

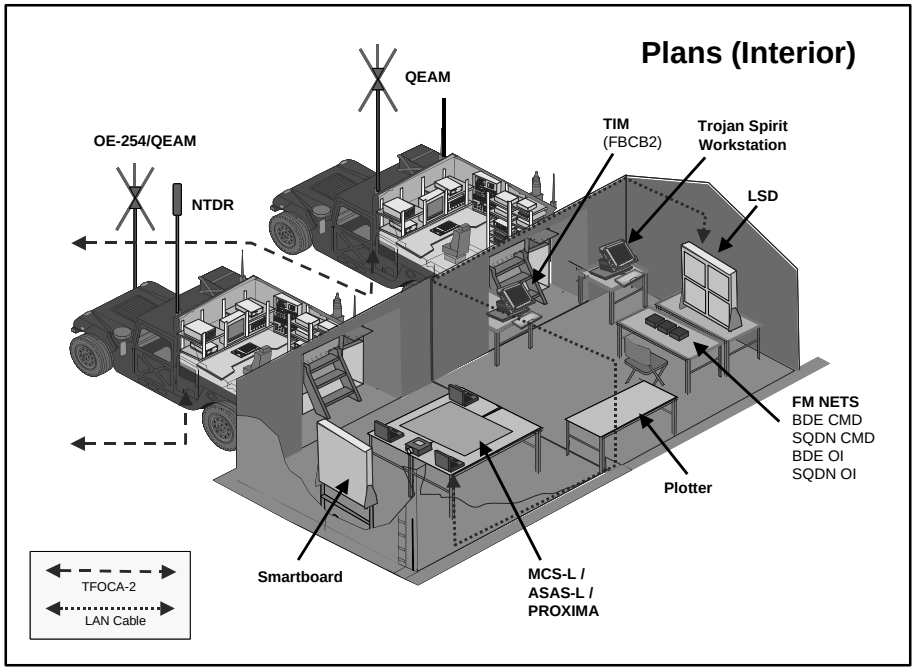


**Figure 5. Reconnaissance Squadron Planning Cell (Alternate CP)**

- LSD – Large Screen Display
- MDL – Mission Data Loader
- OSINT – Open Source Intel
- RPW – Remote Pentium Workstation
- RVT – TUAV Remote Video Terminal
- NTDR – Near Term Digital Radio

The advantage of having two ABCS components identically equipped to the squadron TOC is evident. The squadron commander and staff have a command and control facility that provides the greatest flexibility for planning and executing ISR operations. Based on mission requirements, these components can be positioned at decisive locations on the battlefield to ensure effective C4ISR connectivity between the squadron, SBCT command group and TOC, and adjacent and higher units. Lastly, this command post design provides the smallest possible footprint, without compromising capability, to remain as survivable as possible.

### Digital Skills Sustainment

To effectively and efficiently conduct ISR operations, the squadron staff must be proficient at conducting the MDMP.

And, arguably more important, the staff and ABCS operators must be highly proficient in establishing connectivity and manipulating digital systems. To ensure staffs and operators are highly trained in using ABCS, units must integrate these systems into daily unit operations.

There are two considerations to integrating ABCS into daily operations. First, the unit must physically establish ABCS in the garrison environment. Second, the staff and system operators must use ABCS as often as possible to facilitate unit operations and consider dedicating time to conduct weekly "digital" staff training.

To establish ABCS in the garrison environment, units must have the requisite amount of office space to ensure all systems can be set up. Figure 6 depicts an example of how ABCS can be integrated into the S3 plans shop in any digital unit. This design allows systems to be operated on an isolated network within the confines of the plans shop. If required, the TOC vehicles can be positioned at the back door of the plans shop and connectivity can be established within the normal upper TI network. To better support this architecture, work orders can be submitted for installing tactical fiber-optic cable assemblies (to facilitate quick establishment of the TOC local area network) and a power distribution box (to eliminate the constant use of vehicle generators to power the systems). Additionally, OE-254 antennas are mounted on the exterior of the building to allow long-range FM communications. Overall, this configuration allows for daily ABCS operations, as well as provides a contingency planning facility for the squadron staff.

Like any other technical skill, digital skills are extremely perishable. To prevent degradation in ABCS skills, operators must constantly use the systems for which they have been trained. One recommendation for keeping operators current and highly trained is to use ABCS daily to monitor unit activities. Instead of having a map board in the S3 shop with "sticky" icons that show unit locations during training, power-up the ABCS and use the digital maps and icons to represent unit locations. If a net control station-enhanced positioning locating and reporting system or fixed TI is available, the unit headquarters will have real-time situational awareness of where all subordinate units are training. Additionally, by developing garrison CCIR and monitoring critical events, ABCS operators can practice information management skills — with key information being displayed and tracked on the LSD.

Finally, the challenge of all unit staffs is finding the time to conduct training on the staff planning process. Developing a plan is the result of a combined effort from all staff members. And, although each staff officer must be extremely knowledgeable and proficient in his respective battlefield operating system, the organization will succeed based on the collective proficiency of the staff. It is imperative that unit staffs dedicate time to practicing the planning process.

ABCS and FBCB2 do not change the fundamentals of the MDMP. However, there are TTP that must be practiced when using digital systems in executing the planning process. Once units determine which planning products will be used to facilitate collaborative planning, a clear and simple standard operating procedure (SOP) must be developed that articulates how digital systems support the unit's MDMP. ABCS can support a much more efficient planning process and this SOP must be understood staff wide to ensure that sections are spending more time planning the operation than figuring out how to use the digital systems.

During the past 14 months of conducting transformation activities within the reconnaissance squadron of the SBCT, several lessons have been learned on how to leverage digital systems to facilitate ISR operations planning and execution. This article has outlined these points and provided discussion on the collaborative ISR planning timeline and process, the digital architecture and how the reconnaissance squadron establishes connectivity between a wide array of digital C4ISR systems, the squadron command post design and how it facilitates SBCT and squadron ISR operations, and some home station training techniques that have proved useful in sustaining staff and digital skill proficiency. The comments in this article are based on physically practicing the TTP discussed though the execution of

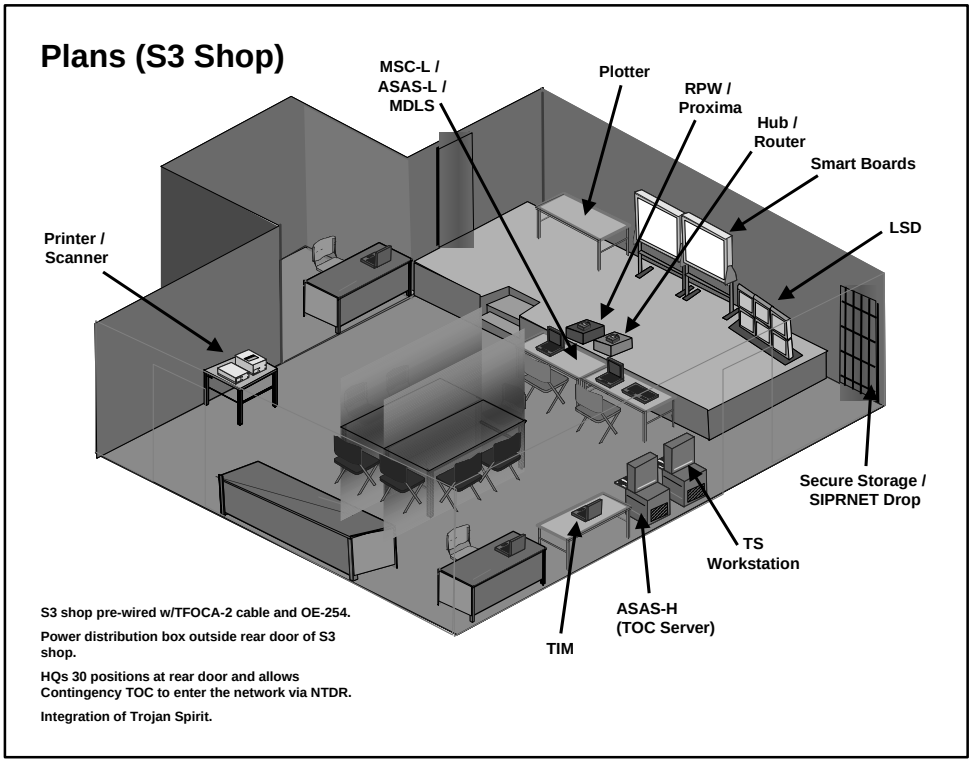


**Figure 6. Reconnaissance Squadron "Digital" S3 Shop**

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numerous squadron-level field training exercises, several digital command and control rehearsals, two Army Warfighter exercises, Millennium Challenge 2002 (NTC rotation), weekly digital staff training and monthly squadron command post exercises, and integration of ABCS into daily squadron operations. Although all of the mentioned TTP may not apply to all reconnaissance (or digitally equipped) units, they may provide some proven techniques for increasing staff and digital skills proficiency.

As the Army's first medium-weight reconnaissance squadron and its parent unit, the SBCT, begin executing the final phases of transformation, several valuable lessons have been learned in regards to leveraging digital systems to support the MDMP. Equally important has been the lessons learned on how these systems enhance ISR planning and execution. It is no longer a question of *why* the Army needs to transform, it is the fact that the Army is executing transformation now that should drive all leaders to become educated on the use of digital systems and ISR operations — as they both will play a significant role in enabling future combat operations.

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