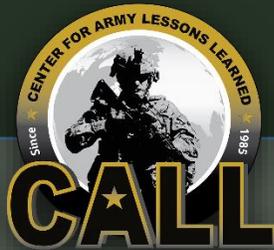


NEWS FROM THE FRONT



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The Mounted Combined Arms Rehearsal

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During our recent rotation to the National Training Center (NTC), 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, “Sykes’ Regulars”, refined our use of the mounted combined arms rehearsal (CAR). The mounted CAR, when designed and executed properly, adds value to the traditional terrain-model CAR, and provides the additional benefit of exercising our mission command systems.

Rehearsals are arguably the most important step of the planning process. General George S. Patton is credited with the statement, “A good plan, violently executed now, is better than a perfect plan next week.” Over my career I have heard a poignant variation on this famous quote: “A great plan with a bad rehearsal will result in a bad mission. A weak plan, well-rehearsed, will result in a successful mission.” Rehearsals identify friction points and allow the commander to ensure everyone understands his intent prior to the operation.

“Rehearsals are the commander’s tool to ensure staffs and subordinates understand the commander’s intent and the concept of operations. They allow commanders and staffs to identify shortcomings in the plan not previously recognized. Rehearsals also contribute to external and internal coordination, as the staff identifies additional coordinating requirements.” – FM 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*

While the combined arms rehearsal is the preferred *type* of rehearsal, there are many *methods* of rehearsal that a commander can choose to execute the CAR. The figure below, from FM 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*, should be familiar to many. This figure depicts the inherent trade-offs between different methods of rehearsal, when compared against the following criteria:

- Time Used
- Resources Required
- OPSEC Risk
- Leader Participation
- Understanding Gained

Most units attempt to conduct their rehearsals in the upper-right area of this chart, if time and resources permit. Our battalion is no different. A full dress rehearsal, while providing the maximum amount of understanding, also requires extensive resources to execute. A blank fire run prior to a platoon live fire exercise is a prime

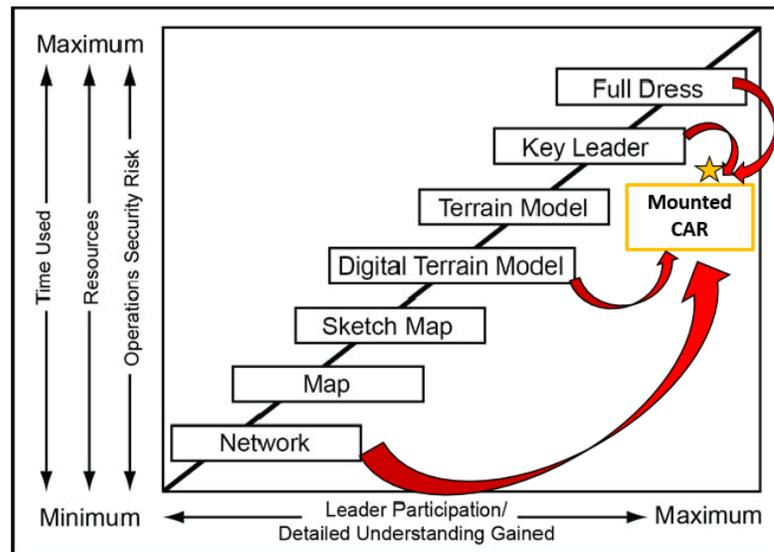


Figure 1. The Mounted CAR Combines elements of the Network, Digital Terrain Model, Key Leader, and Full Dress methods of rehearsal.

example of a full dress rehearsal. The terrain-model rehearsal is the most popular rehearsal method (FM 6-0). When most leaders envision a brigade or battalion-level CAR, it usually includes a large terrain-model with operational graphics and unit icons. Construction of the terrain-model is often time-consuming and resource intensive.

The Regulars' Mounted CAR is effectively a key leader rehearsal, with elements of the full dress rehearsal and the network rehearsal methods included. Our transition point between current operations (CUOPS) and plans happens immediately following the OPORD briefing. This transition point places the rehearsal firmly within CUOPS' area of responsibility, thereby forcing CUOPS to master the plan prior to the rehearsal.

Rehearsal Preparation

CUOPS begins constructing JCR "mini-graphics" as soon as possible. The operational graphics, information collection, and fire support overlays created by the planners are concurrently developed in analog and digital formats. As a mounted formation, our JCR systems provide our common operating picture. As a Stryker formation, we often outpace our FM range during offensive operations, and the JCR is a critical mission command system for maintaining shared understanding and situational awareness. By building JCR "mini-graphics" for the mounted CAR, we are able to replicate how we fight and concurrently test our mission command systems.

The mini-graphics are created on the map over the intended rehearsal site. While an area as small as 2Km by 2Km can be used, we have used areas as large as 4Km by 4Km for our mounted CAR. We consider the following selection criteria when looking for a rehearsal site:

- Proximity to our subordinate elements TAAs - as centrally located as possible
- Enemy threat - specifically the threat of observation and indirect fire
- Terrain – maneuverable by Strykers with good observation across the rehearsal site

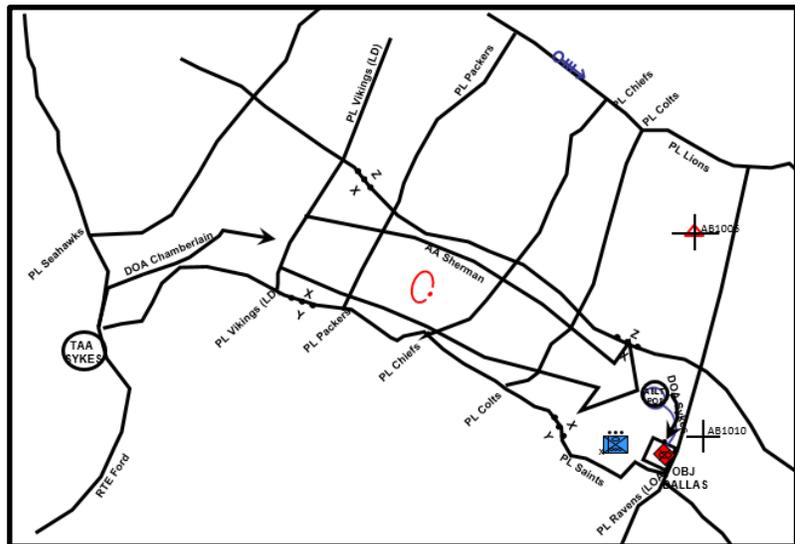


Figure 2. JCR "Mini-Graphics" are relatively quick to construct, since they do not have to be tied to terrain or specific grids. An approximate replication of the spatial relationships between the real Operational Graphics is the only requirement.

Once the site is selected, the mini-graphics are built on JCR. We begin building our rehearsal graphics from the LOA backwards. This technique ensures two things. First, the spatial relationships between our graphics at the decisive point will be accurate because we will not run in to a piece of restrictive terrain that is outside the rehearsal site. Secondly, by building the

graphics backwards, we prioritize immediate placement of the most critical graphics, allowing us to execute the rehearsal quickly if our mission timeline changes.

In practice, creating the mini-graphics is not overly time-consuming. It will take one sharp Lieutenant or NCO about an hour to replicate all operational graphics and fire support graphics for the mounted CAR. The mini-graphics, however, are not the only required part of the model. While the JCR mini-graphics provide a common operating picture for the rehearsal, that shared understanding is immediately lost when our leaders dismount toward their objectives. To remedy this problem, we establish an additional terrain model on the ground, depicting key graphics that will affect our dismounted fight. By doing this, we ensure there is something on the ground at the rehearsal site that mirrors the graphics in the JCR. We try to keep these models simple. A few pickets and some engineer tape represent our phase lines, while some strategically placed MRE boxes represent urban objectives.

Rehearsal Execution

The Regulars' Mounted CAR is controlled from the Battalion Command Post (CP) by the Battle Captain, just like the subsequent operation. The Main CP is fully manned by all Warfighting Functions, and the Tactical Command Post (TAC), if used, is also manned. Figure 3 shows a rough template of CAR attendees and their respective locations. In practice, required participants for the CAR are determined by the Battalion Commander based on the following criteria:

- Ongoing operations
- Enemy threat
- Ongoing preparations
- Task Organization
- Time available
- Complexity of the operation

Our general rule of thumb is that any leader maneuvering a separate element on the battlefield must attend the CAR. The PL of an attached Sapper Platoon, therefore, would attend the CAR.

The CAR begins with maneuver elements arrayed on the JCR Mini-Graphics at one of three locations, based on the commander's guidance and time available:

- The Tactical Assembly Area (TAA)
- At their templated positions during the start of a new phase
- One phase line back from the probable line of deployment

Once arrayed, the rehearsal begins with a radio check in sequence for all participants, further validating our mission command systems prior to execution. Typical terrain model CARs often involve an

<u>Regulars Mounted CAR</u>
<i>Key Participants by Location</i>
<i>Battalion Leadership</i>
BN CDR – RHXL Site
BN CSM – METT-TC
BN S3 – RHXL Site
BN XO – Main CP
<i>Company Leadership</i>
CO CDR – RHXL Site
CO XO – METT-TC
CO 1SG – METT-TC
CO FSO – RHXL Site
PLT LDRs – RHXL Site
<i>Key Staff</i>
S1 – METT-TC
S2 – Main CP
AS3 CUOPS – Main CP
AS3 PLANS – Main CP
S4 – METT-TC
BN FSO – METT-TC
MEDO – RHXL Site
<i>Specialty Platoons</i>
Scout PL/PSG – RHXL Site
Mortar PL – RHXL Site
MGS PL – RHXL Site
Distro PL – METT-TC
FAS/MAS – RHXL Site
<i>Attachments & Enablers</i>
Engineers – RHXL Site
Retrans Teams – RHXL Site
Enablers – METT-TC

Figure 3. CAR Attendees.

orientation to the terrain model and a recitation of Task Organization, the Mission Statement, and the Commander's Intent. This technique can often cause a CAR to look and feel more like a briefing than a rehearsal. We attempt to eschew this approach as much as possible. Our phase-by-phase agenda, seen in Figure 4, has minimal scripted portions. The Battle Captain, or AS3-CUOPS, briefly sets the stage for each phase and then turns it over to the S2 and Scout Platoon Leader to describe the enemy situation. From this point, the CAR runs off the execution matrix, just as we would fight the mission.

Commanders and Platoon Leaders do not simply brief over the radio, but call up their reports over the Battalion Command Net as they would during the operation. Maneuver elements are encouraged to cut into the net and call up their reports as they identify their triggers for movement. Likewise, the movement of sustainment assets, retransmission teams, and fire missions are called in-stride as each phase unfolds. Fire missions are called over the fires net and announced over the command net so that every element has visibility on the fire support plan during the rehearsal. While prompting is sometimes required from the CP, it is more common to have to halt a maneuver element briefly during the CAR in order for all other elements and enablers to set the conditions prior to the next critical event. Measured intervention from the CP is absolutely critical to a successful rehearsal. Typically, Commanders and Platoon leaders have a thorough understanding of their unit's mission, but in a time-constrained environment, they may not fully grasp the synchronization of actions at the Battalion level. The Battle Captain and Battalion XO must have the freedom of maneuver to pause or prompt certain elements in order to keep the rehearsal on track and in sync with the execution matrix.

The loosely framed CAR agenda lends itself to the addition of injects and contingencies. Our commonly used injects often take the form of:

- Casualties (BN CSM)
- Unexpected enemy action (S2)
- Unexpected friendly action (CUOPS)
- CBRNE attack (CHEMO)
- Branch Plans and Sequels (CUOPS)

A properly planned and executed mounted CAR will take approximately one hour for the first iteration, with an additional thirty to forty-five minutes for a re-set or second iteration with new contingencies.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Mounted CAR

As with any chosen method of rehearsal, the Regulars Mounted CAR has advantages and disadvantages. 5-20th has been using this method of rehearsal for approximately 18 months, and we have developed a thorough understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, our

Mounted CAR Agenda by Phase

1. Phase Begins - CUOPS
2. Phase Ends - CUOPS
3. Critical Events - CUOPS
4. Friendly Situation Updates - CUOPS
5. Intel Update - S2
6. Information Collection - S2/ RECON PL
- 7. Trigger-Action-Move**
- 8. Fires**
- 9. Trigger-Action-Move (repeat until Phase is complete)**
10. Enablers
11. Sustainment - S4/ Distro / MEDO
12. Phase Ends - CUOPS

Repeat for all phases of the operation

Figure 4. Phase-by-Phase Agenda

leaders have become comfortable with the technique, which is critical to the rehearsal execution. The strengths and weaknesses of our mounted CAR are listed below in Figure 5.

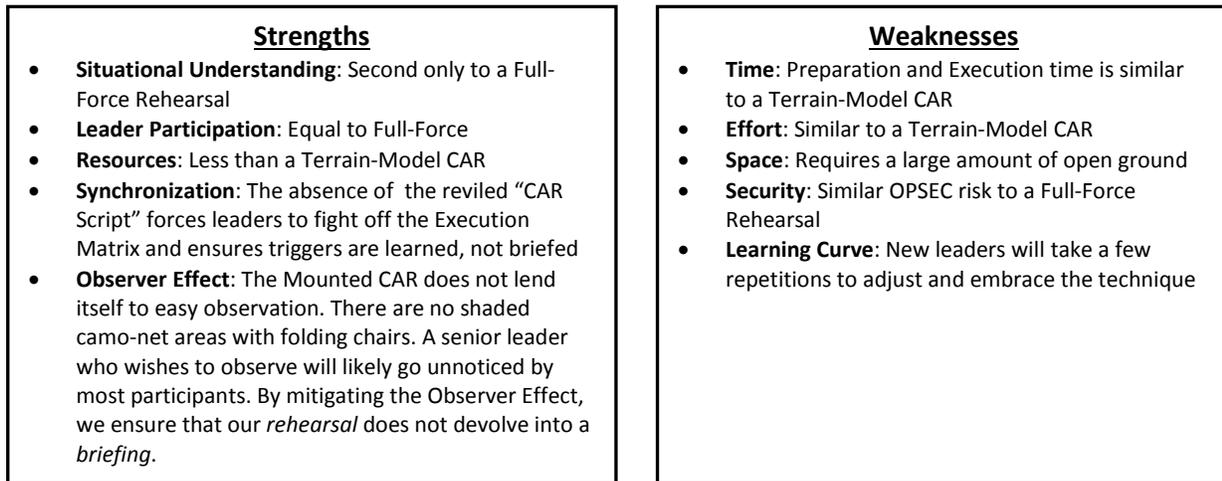


Figure 5. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Mounted CAR

The mounted CAR is not a panacea. During our recent NTC Rotation, we only employed the mounted CAR twice, often using other methods based on the trade-offs listed above. However, given adequate time, we still rely on the mounted CAR as a reliable technique to achieve shared understanding above and beyond a typical terrain model rehearsal.