

## Section 12

# INTRODUCTION TO PATROLLING

## Key Points

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- 1 Patrols and Patrolling
- 2 The Purpose of Patrolling
- 3 Organization of Patrols
- 4 Initial Planning and Coordination for Patrols
- 5 Completion of the Patrol Plan

Patrolling fulfills the Infantry's primary function of finding the enemy to either engage him or report his disposition, location, and actions. Patrols act as both the eyes and ears of the larger unit and as a fist to deliver a sharp devastating jab and then withdraw before the enemy can recover.

*Field Manual 3-21.8, The Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*

## Introduction

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Patrolling is a basic activity of your infantry platoon and squads. The purpose of a typical **patrol** is to gather information or to conduct combat operations. In the Contemporary Operating Environment (COE), however, patrols are becoming more common in many military occupational specialties (MOSs) other than the infantry. The information gathered during patrols can be crucial to the success of the larger mission, as one patrol in Iraq demonstrated in the summer of 2005.

### patrol

*a mission to gather information or to conduct combat operations*

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### Iraqi, Coalition Forces Thwart Attacks, Discover Weapons Cache

BAGHDAD, Iraq—Coalition forces captured terrorists and thwarted attacks, [and] discovered a weapons cache . . . in and around Baghdad July 10[, 2005]. Task Force Baghdad Soldiers conducted a precision raid against a terrorist safe-house just west of Abu Ghraib Sunday. Two out of the 10 house occupants were identified as specifically targeted terrorists and were taken into custody for questioning.

During a routine patrol in the Ameriyah District that same day, Iraqi and Coalition Forces noticed a black BMW parked in the driveway of a house that was typically unoccupied. Soldiers searched the house and found a bag of raw C-4 plastic explosives and four other containers believed to be filled with explosives.

Also hidden in the house were 20 hand grenades, one machine gun, a sniper rifle, an AK-47 assault rifle, a loaded 9 millimeter pistol with a silencer, and 500 to 700 rounds of ammunition. A team of explosives experts safely removed the munitions.

“It was a joint Iraqi and US patrol. The Iraqi Soldiers took the lead,” said Capt. Mike Benoit of 1-69th Infantry. “They were aggressive and used their insight, which led us to the cache. . . .”

*Army News Service*

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## Patrols and Patrolling

A patrol is a detachment sent out by a larger unit to conduct a specific combat, reconnaissance, or security mission. Patrols operate semi-independently and return to the main body upon completion of their mission.

A patrol's organization is usually temporary and specifically matched to the immediate task. Because a patrol is an organization, not a mission—a noun, not a verb—it's not correct to speak of giving your unit the mission to "patrol." The Army uses the terms "patrolling" or "conducting a patrol" to refer to the semi-independent operation conducted to accomplish the patrol's mission. Patrols require a specific task and purpose.

A commander typically sends a patrol out from the main body to conduct a specific tactical task with an associated purpose. When the patrol completes that task, the patrol leader returns to the main body, reports to the commander, and describes the events that took place, the status of the patrol's members and equipment, and any observations.

If a patrol is made up of an organic unit, such as a rifle squad, a squad leader is the responsible patrol leader. If a patrol is made up of mixed elements from several units, an officer or NCO is designated as the patrol leader. This temporary title defines his or her role and responsibilities for that mission. The patrol leader may designate an assistant, normally the next senior Soldier in the patrol, and any subordinate element leaders the mission requires.

A patrol can consist of a unit as small as a fire team, but squad- and platoon-sized patrols are normal. Sometimes for combat tasks such as a raid, the patrol can consist of most of the combat elements of a rifle company. Unlike operations in which the infantry platoon or squad is integrated into a larger organization, the patrol is semi-independent and relies on itself for security.

### Patrol Leaders

The leader of every patrol, regardless of the type or the tactical task assigned, has an inherent responsibility to prepare and plan for possible enemy contact while on the mission. Patrols are never administrative, but are always assigned a tactical mission. When the patrol returns to the main body, the patrol leader must always report to the commander, briefing the commander on the patrol's actions, observations, and condition.

## The Purpose of Patrolling

Patrolling can accomplish several specific objectives:

- gathering information on the enemy, on the terrain, or on the populace
- reestablishing contact with the enemy or with adjacent friendly forces
- engaging an enemy in combat to destroy or inflict losses
- reassuring or gaining the trust of a local population
- preventing public disorder
- deterring and disrupting insurgent or criminal activity
- providing unit security
- protecting key infrastructure or bases.

## Types of Patrols

Patrol missions can range from security patrols in the close vicinity of the main body to raids deep into enemy territory. Successful patrolling requires that you conduct detailed contingency planning and well-rehearsed small-unit tactics. The planned action determines the type of patrol.

The two main categories of patrols are *combat* and *reconnaissance*. Regardless of the type of patrol sent out, a commander must provide the patrol leader a clear task and purpose. Any time a patrol leaves the main body of the unit, it may become engaged in close combat.

### Combat

Patrols that depart the main body with the clear intent to make direct contact with the enemy are called *combat* patrols. The three types of combat patrols are *raid patrols*, *ambush patrols* (both of which are sent out to conduct special-purpose attacks), and *security patrols*.

A combat patrol provides security and harasses, destroys, or captures enemy troops, equipment, or installations. When commanders give units the mission to send out a combat patrol, they intend that the patrols make contact with the enemy and engage in close combat. A combat patrol always attempts to remain undetected while moving, but of course it ultimately discloses its location to the enemy in a sudden, violent surprise attack. For this reason, your patrol will normally carry a significant amount of appropriate weapons and ammunition. It may also carry specialized munitions. A combat patrol collects and reports any information gathered during the mission, whether related to the combat task or not.

### Raid

As you learned in Section 9, a *raid* is a surprise attack against a position or installation for a specific purpose other than seizing and holding the terrain. You conduct a raid to destroy a position or installation, to destroy or capture enemy soldiers or equipment, or to free prisoners. A raid patrol retains terrain just long enough to accomplish the raid's intent. A raid always ends with a planned withdrawal from the objective and an orderly return to the main body.

### Ambush

You also learned about ambushes in Section 9. An *ambush* is a surprise attack from a concealed position on a moving or temporarily halted target. An ambush patrol does not need to seize or hold any terrain. Ambushes can include an assault to close with and destroy the target, or an attack by fire only.

### Security

A commander sends out a *security* patrol from a unit's location when the unit is stationary. The commander may also employ security patrols during a halt to search the local area, detect any enemy forces near the main body, and to engage and destroy the enemy. Units operating in close terrain with limited fields of observation and fire normally send out this type of combat patrol. Although it seeks to make direct contact with the enemy and destroy enemy forces as it can, the patrol should try to avoid decisive engagement. A security patrol detects and disrupts enemy forces who are conducting reconnaissance of



*Soldiers on patrol*

### reconnaissance

*observation and gathering information for use in tactical operations, such as information on terrain, known or suspected enemy positions, likely enemy ambush sites, friendly positions, obstacle locations, fields of fire, and location(s) of potential dismount points, initial rally points, departure points, and reentry points*

*In patrolling jargon, the terms element and team refer to squad, fire teams, or buddy teams.*

the main body or who are massing to conduct an attack. Security patrols are normally away from the main body of the unit for limited periods, returning frequently to coordinate and rest. They do not operate beyond the range of the main body's communications and supporting fires—especially mortar fires.

### Reconnaissance

Patrols that depart the main body with the intention of avoiding direct combat with the enemy while seeing out information or confirming the accuracy of previously-gathered information are called **reconnaissance** patrols. The most common types of reconnaissance patrols are *area*, *route*, *zone*, and *point* patrols. Leaders also dispatch reconnaissance patrols to track the enemy and to establish contact with other friendly forces. Contact patrols make physical contact with adjacent units and report their location, status, and intentions. Tracking patrols follow the trail and movements of a specific enemy unit. *Presence patrols* conduct a special form of reconnaissance, normally during stability or civil support operations.

### *Area, Route, and Zone Patrols*

The *area reconnaissance patrol* focuses only on obtaining detailed information about the terrain or enemy activity within a prescribed area. The *route reconnaissance patrol* obtains detailed information about a specified route and any terrain where the enemy could influence movement along that route. *Zone reconnaissance patrols* involve a directed effort to obtain detailed information on all routes, obstacles, terrain, and enemy forces within a defined zone.

### **Point Reconnaissance Patrol**

The *point reconnaissance patrol* goes straight to a specific location and determines the situation there. As soon as it does so, it either reports the information by radio or returns to the larger unit to report. This patrol can obtain, verify, confirm, or deny extremely specific information for the commander. These patrols are often used in stability or civil support operations. Normally, the patrol leader is the individual responsible for making the assigned assessment. This may involve interacting with the local populace, so interpreters or local civil leaders might accompany the patrol. The patrol leader may need to participate in lengthy discussions or inspections with individuals at the site. During that time he or she is vulnerable to attack. So the assistant patrol leader should not become involved in these talks, but should remain focused on external security to prevent attack from outside, and on the patrol leader's personal security. One or two specially-designated patrol members may be needed to protect the patrol leader while his or her attention is focused on discussions.

Leaders also dispatch reconnaissance patrols to track the enemy and to establish contact with other friendly forces. Contact patrols make physical contact with adjacent units and report their location, status, and intentions. Tracking patrols follow the trail and movements of a specific enemy unit. Presence patrols conduct a special form of reconnaissance, normally during stability or civil support operations.

## **Organization of Patrols**

A patrol is organized to perform specific tasks. The patrol unit must be prepared to secure itself, navigate accurately, identify and cross danger areas, and reconnoiter the patrol objective. If a combat patrol, it must be prepared to breach obstacles, assault the objective, and support those assaults by fire. Additionally, a patrol must be able to conduct detailed searches as well as deal with casualties and prisoners or detainees.

As the leader, you identify those tasks the patrol must perform and decide which elements will implement them. Where possible, you should maintain squad and fire team integrity.

Squads and fire teams may perform more than one task during the time a patrol is away from the main body or they may be responsible for only one task. You must plan carefully to ensure that you've identified and assigned all required tasks in the most efficient way.

Elements and teams for platoons conducting patrols include the common and specific elements for each type of patrol. The following elements are common to all patrols.

*Headquarters Element.* The headquarters element normally consists of the patrol leader and the radio operator. The platoon sergeant may be designated as the assistant patrol leader. Combat patrols may include a forward observer and perhaps a radio operator. Any attachments you or the platoon sergeant must control directly are also part of the headquarters element.

*Aid and Litter Team(s).* Aid and litter teams are responsible for locating, treating, and evacuating casualties.

*Enemy Prisoner of War/Detainee Team(s).* Enemy prisoner of war (EPW) teams are responsible for controlling enemy prisoners in accordance with the five S's and the leader's guidance. These teams may also be responsible for accounting for and controlling detainees or recovered personnel.

*Surveillance Team(s).* You assign surveillance teams to establish and maintain covert observation of an objective for the duration of the patrol's mission.

*En Route Recorder.* You may designate an en route recorder to record all information collected during the mission.

*Compass and Pace Man.* If your patrol does not have access to global positioning systems, or if you are operating in a location with no satellite reception, you might have to navigate by dead reckoning. You do this with a compass man and a pace man.

*Assault Team(s).* Combat patrols designate assault teams to close with the enemy on the objective or to clear the ambush kill zone.

*Support Team(s).* Combat patrols also designate teams to provide direct fire to support the breach and assault teams.

*Breach Team(s) and Search Team(s).* Combat patrols have breach teams to assist the assault team in getting to the objective. You designate search teams to conduct a cursory or detailed search of the objective area.

## Critical Thinking

What information do you think other units could provide you about the enemy or terrain for the area of operations in which you will conduct your combat patrols?

## Initial Planning and Coordination for Patrols

As a leader, you will plan and prepare for patrols using the troop leading procedures you studied in Section 6 and an estimate of the situation. You must identify required actions on the objective, employ **backward planning** to the departure from friendly lines, then plan forward to the reentry of friendly lines.

The following elements are common to all patrols:

- headquarters element
- aid and litter team
- enemy prisoner of war (EPW) team
- surveillance team
- en route recorder
- compass and pace man
- assault team
- support team
- breach team
- search team.

### backward planning

planning the operation's timeline, including all key events in reverse order

### Troop Leading Procedures (TLP)

1. Receive the mission
2. Issue a warning order
3. Make a tentative plan
4. Start necessary movement
5. Reconnoiter
6. Complete the plan
7. Issue the complete order
8. Supervise and refine.

Your plan must include a leader's reconnaissance of the objective. The preferred method for conducting a leader's recon is for you to personally conduct the recon on the ground. If time does not permit a personal recon, you can send out a recon party to conduct the recon for you. As a last resort, you will conduct a map or aerial-photo recon of the objective.

In most cases, you will conduct your leader's recon from the objective rally point (ORP). In some cases, you may have time to depart your forward operating base (FOB) or tactical assembly area (TAA), conduct your leader's recon, and return. You may take different elements with you on the recon, but remember the fewer Soldiers you take along, the less chance the enemy will detect you.

During the leader's reconnaissance, you will pinpoint the objective, establish a surveillance team, and identify where you will position other patrol elements, such as your security, support, and assault elements. Time permitting, you will also identify routes, release points, and primary and alternate ORPs—all of which you will learn more about later. You will adjust your patrol plan based on what you learned on your leader's recon. Remember to allow time to return to the ORP, FOB, or TAA, complete the plan, disseminate information, issue orders and instructions, and allow your squads to make any additional preparations.

You will normally receive the operation order (OPORD) in the battalion or company command post where communications is good and key personnel are available for coordination. Because patrols act semi-independently, move beyond the direct-fire support of the parent unit, and often operate forward of friendly units, coordination must be thorough and detailed.

Patrol leaders may routinely coordinate with elements of the battalion staff directly. You should develop tactical standing operating procedures (SOPs) with detailed checklists to avoid omitting items vital to accomplishing your mission.

Items you and the battalion staff or company commander must coordinate include:

- changes or updates in the enemy situation
- best use of terrain for routes, rally points, and patrol bases
- light and weather data
- changes in the friendly situation
- the attachment of Soldiers with special skills or equipment (engineers, sniper teams, scout dog teams, forward observers, or interpreters)
- use and location of landing or pickup zones
- departure and reentry of friendly lines
- fire support on the objective and along the planned routes, including alternate routes
- rehearsal areas and times—the terrain for the rehearsal should be similar to that at the objective, to include buildings and fortifications if necessary; coordination for rehearsals includes security of the area, use of blanks, pyrotechnics, and live ammunition
- special equipment and ammunition requirements
- transportation support, including transportation to and from the rehearsal site
- signal plan—call signs frequencies, code words, pyrotechnics, and challenge and password.

It's also essential that you coordinate with the unit whose lines you will pass through (passage of lines) going out and coming back. You also need to coordinate your patrol's activities with the leaders of other units that will be patrolling in adjacent areas at the same time.

## Completion of the Patrol Plan

As you complete your patrol plan, be sure to consider the following elements.

### Essential and Supporting Tasks

Ensure that you have assigned all essential tasks to be performed on the objective, at rally points, at danger areas, at security or surveillance locations, along the route(s), and at passage lanes.

### Key Travel and Execution Times

Estimate time requirements for movement to the objective, your reconnaissance of the objective, establishing of security and surveillance, completion of all assigned tasks on the objective, movement to an objective rally point to debrief the platoon, and secure return through friendly lines.

### Primary and Alternate Routes

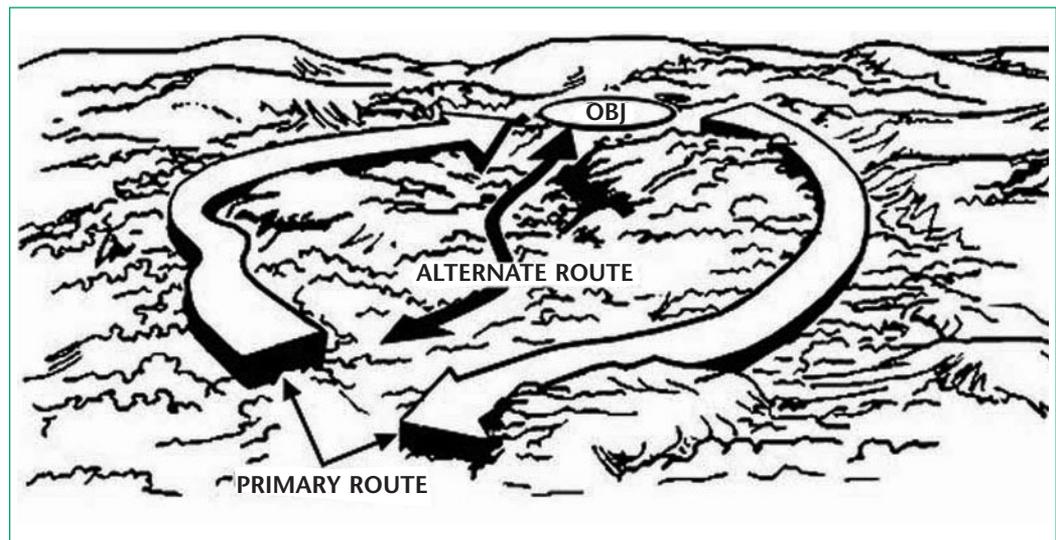
You select primary and alternate routes to and from the objective (Figure 12.1). The return routes should be different from the routes to the objective. You can delegate route selection to a subordinate leader, but you are still responsible for the routes selected.

### Signals

Consider the use of special signals. These include arm-and-hand signals, flares, voice, whistles, radios, and visible and nonvisible lasers. Rehearse all signals to ensure that all of your Soldiers know what they mean.

### Challenge and Password Outside Friendly Lines

Don't use the challenge and password when the patrol is outside friendly lines. The unit's tactical SOP should state the procedure for establishing a patrol challenge and password as well as other combat identification features and patrol markings.



**Figure 12.1** Primary and Alternate Routes

### Location of Leaders

Consider where you, your platoon sergeant, and other key leaders will be during each phase of the patrol mission. The platoon sergeant is normally with the following elements for each type of patrol:

- On a raid or ambush, the platoon sergeant normally controls the support element
- On an area reconnaissance, the platoon sergeant normally supervises security in the ORP
- On a zone reconnaissance, the platoon sergeant normally moves with the reconnaissance element that sets up the linkup point.

### Actions on Enemy Contact

Your patrol plan must address actions on chance contact at each phase of the patrol mission.

- The plan must address the handling of seriously wounded and KIAs
- The plan must address the handling of prisoners captured as a result of chance contact who are not part of the planned mission.

### Departure from Friendly Lines or Fixed Base

You must thoroughly plan and coordinate the patrol's departure from friendly lines, or from a fixed base.

#### Coordination

You must coordinate with the commander of the forward unit and leaders of other units that will be patrolling in the same or adjacent areas. The coordination includes signal operating instruction (SOI) information, signal plan, fire plan, running passwords, procedures for departure and reentry of lines, planned dismount points, initial rally points, actions at departure and reentry points, and information about the enemy.

1. You provide the forward unit leader with your unit identification, size of the patrol, departure and return times, and area of operation
2. The forward unit leader provides you and your staff with the following:
  - Additional information on terrain just outside the friendly unit lines
  - Known or suspected enemy positions in the near vicinity
  - Likely enemy ambush sites
  - Latest enemy activity
  - Detailed information on friendly positions, obstacles, and observation posts (OPs)
  - Friendly unit fire plan
  - Support the unit can provide (fire support, litter teams, guides, communications, and reaction force).

#### Planning

In your plan for the departure of friendly lines, you should consider the following sequence of actions:

- Making contact with friendly guides at the contact point
- Moving to a coordinated initial rally point just inside friendly lines
- Completing final coordination
- Moving to and through the passage point
- Establishing a security-listening halt beyond the friendly unit's final protective fires.

**rally point**

a place where a patrol can reassemble and reorganize if dispersed during movement; temporarily halt to reorganize and prepare for actions at an objective; temporarily halt to prepare to depart from friendly lines; or temporarily halt to prepare to reenter friendly lines

**Rally points must:**

- be easy to find
- have cover and concealment
- be away from natural lines of drift
- be defensible for short periods.

You designate a rally point in one of three ways:

1. Physically occupy it for a short period—this is the preferred method
2. Pass by at a distance and designate the rally point using hand-and-arm signals
3. Walk through the rally point and designate it using hand-and-arm signals.

## Rally Points

You must consider the use and locations of rally points. A **rally point** is a place you designate where your platoon moves to reassemble and reorganize if your Soldiers become dispersed.

You physically reconnoiter routes to select rally points whenever possible. If you can only conduct a map reconnaissance, you select tentative points. You then confirm them through actual inspection as the platoon moves through them.

Rally points must:

- be easy to recognize on the ground
- have cover and concealment
- be away from natural lines of drift
- be defensible for short periods.

### Types of Rally Points

The most common types of rally points are *initial*, *en route*, *objective*, *reentry*, *near-* and *far-side* rally points. Soldiers must know which rally point to move to at each phase of the patrol mission. They should know what actions are required there and how long they are to wait at each rally point before moving to another.

#### 1. Initial Rally Point

An initial rally point is a place inside friendly lines where your unit may assemble and reorganize if it makes enemy contact during the departure of friendly lines or before reaching the first en route rally point. The commander of the friendly unit normally selects this point.

#### 2. En Route Rally Point

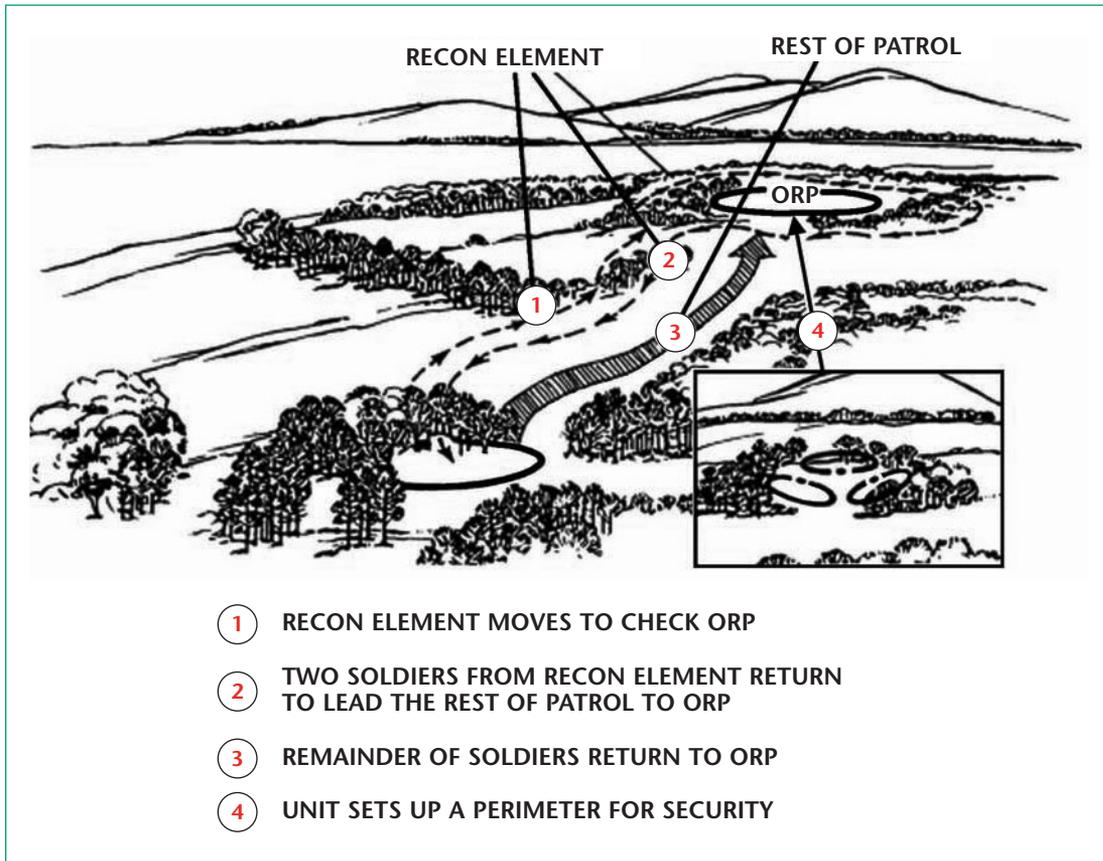
Typically a patrol leader designates en route rally points every 100 to 400 meters, based on terrain, vegetation, and visibility. When the leader designates a new en route rally point, the previously designated RP is the one at which the patrol will reorganize if it makes contact with the enemy. This precludes uncertainty over which RP Soldiers should approach if they make enemy contact immediately after the leader designates a new rally point.

#### 3. Objective Rally Point

The objective rally point (ORP) is a point out of sight, sound, and small-arms range of the objective area in the direction that the platoon plans to move after completing its actions on the objective. The ORP is tentative until the patrol leader pinpoints the mission objective.

Actions at or from the ORP typically include:

- your leader's recon of the objective
- issuing a fragmentary order (FRAGO)
- disseminating information from reconnaissance if enemy contact is not made
- making final preparations before continuing operations (for example, recamouflaging)
- accounting for Soldiers and equipment after actions at the objective are complete
- reestablishing the chain of command after actions at the objective are complete (Figure 12.2).



**Figure 12.2** Objective Rally Point

#### 4. Reentry Rally Point

The reentry rally point (RRP) is the last covered and concealed position out of sight, sound, and small-arms weapons range of the friendly unit through which your platoon will return. This also means that the RRP should be outside the final protective fires of the friendly unit. That way, if the friendly unit makes contact with the enemy, your patrol will not accidentally come under friendly fire. Your platoon occupies the RRP as a security perimeter.

#### 5. Near- and Far-Side Rally Point

These rally points are on the near and far side of danger areas. If your platoon makes contact while crossing the danger area and control is lost, your Soldiers on either side move to the rally point nearest them. They establish security, reestablish the chain of command, determine their personnel and equipment status, continue the patrol mission, and link up at the ORP.

**Hand-and-Arm Signals**  
*Hand-and-arm signals are critical for communication within a unit in the field. You should train your unit in their use and rehearse the signals used on the patrol. Hand-and-arm signals lift or shift supporting fire, start an assault, order withdrawal from the objective, signal "all clear," and stop and start movement of the patrol. You and your Soldiers should be well versed in the standard hand-and-arm signals. While you might practice special signals as the unit leader, it's critically important that everyone in your unit know and understand them, your patrol plan, and your overall mission intent.*

## Reentering Friendly Lines

One of the most dangerous aspects of patrolling in combat is reentering your own lines. That's why your initial planning and coordination must include a detailed and complete plan for reentry of friendly lines that is well rehearsed.

Here's how reentry usually works: The patrol halts in the return rally point (RRP), which is out of sight, sound, and small-arms weapons range of friendly units, and establishes security. You radio the code word advising the forward friendly unit (FFU) of your location and that you are ready to return. The friendly unit acknowledges the message and confirms when and where the FFU guides will wait for you. If radio communication isn't possible, the procedure gets a little more dangerous. You, your radio operator, and a two-Soldier security element must move forward and try to locate and make contact with a listening/observation post (LP/OP) using the challenge and password. You can imagine how dangerous this can be—the LP/OP may detect you, but it has no way of knowing if you are a friendly or an enemy patrol. This is a good example of why Paragraph V of your OPORD (Command and Signal) must be very specific and complete. Once you have successfully given the LP/OP the far recognition signal, the LP/OP signals you closer and issues you the verbal challenge. You answer with the password. The OP notifies the friendly unit that your platoon is ready to return and requests a guide.

If you cannot find an OP, your situation becomes even more dangerous, as you must now move within direct fire range of the FFU and try to gain someone's attention without the FFU mistaking you for the enemy and firing at you. You then move with your radio telephone operator (RTO) and security element to locate the coordinated reentry point. You *always* move straight toward (or away from) friendly lines, *never* parallel to them. All lateral (parallel) movement should be outside of small-arms weapons range. Attempt this procedure only during daylight. At night, you should use other backup signals to make contact with friendly units. The preferred method is to wait until daylight if you don't make contact with the friendly unit as planned.

Once the FFU has acknowledged that you are ready to reenter, you return to your RRP, issue a five-point contingency plan, and move with your RTO and a security team on a determined azimuth and pace to the reentry point. Use far and near recognition signals to establish contact with the guide.

Once at the reentry point, you signal your platoon forward by radio or return and lead your Soldiers to the reentry point. Post your security element with the guide at the enemy side of the reentry point along with your assistant patrol leader (APL). Your APL counts and identifies the Soldiers as they pass through the reentry point. Once you have accounted for 100 percent of your patrol, the guide leads your patrol to the assembly area designated by the FFU.

You should then report to the FFU command post and back brief the FFU commander on everything of tactical value concerning the FFU area of responsibility. You then rejoin your patrol in the assembly area and lead your Soldiers to a secure area for debriefing.

## Debriefing

Immediately after the recon patrol returns, your higher headquarters personnel will want to conduct a thorough debriefing. This debriefing may include all members of the platoon or just the leaders, RTOs, and any specific personnel. Normally the debriefing is oral, but sometimes you will need to submit a written report.

Information in your written debriefing report should include:

- the size and composition of the unit conducting the patrol
- the mission of the patrol (type of patrol, location, purpose)
- departure and return times
- routes, including checkpoints and grid coordinates for each leg
- a detailed description of terrain and enemy positions identified
- results of any contact with the enemy
- personnel status at the conclusion of the patrol mission, including the disposition of casualties.



# CONCLUSION

Platoons and squads on patrol are the Army's eyes and ears on the battlefield. They must deliver timely, accurate, and reliable information to headquarters. Small-unit combat and tracking patrols are designed to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy. Conducting patrols is one of your most important leadership responsibilities as a platoon leader. The enemies US forces currently face in the Contemporary Operating Environment (COE) don't operate within lines or boundaries and don't care which branch of the Army you were commissioned in. Because of this all branches of the Army, not just the infantry, find themselves conducting small-unit patrols.

As in any troop movement, successful patrolling requires careful planning and coordination. Communications, security, route planning, and actions on the objective are just some of the aspects of patrolling you will need to consider. In this section, you've received a brief introduction to how the Army task organizes and plans patrols. But patrolling is a complex operation. The next two sections will provide you with a more in-depth look into this all-important task.

## Key Words

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**patrol**  
**reconnaissance**  
**backward planning**  
**rally point**

## Learning Assessment

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1. What is the purpose of a patrol?
2. Name the eight specific objectives accomplished by patrolling.
3. Describe the two categories of patrols and their purposes.
4. What are the steps in initial planning and coordination for patrols?
5. Identify and describe the five most common types of rally points.

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