

CHIEF OF ARMOR'S HATCH

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ATP 3-20.96, Cavalry Squadron, is Changing the Fight

In the next few months, we will publish the new edition of our ATP 3-20.96, *Cavalry Squadron*. This fighting manual represents a significant evolution in our cavalry doctrine, informed by what we are seeing in today's operational environment – and what we expect in tomorrow's. Simply put, the new doctrine anchors cavalry operations on its core missions to inform, protect, and fight for the main body. In this article, I will lay out where we have been, where we are going, and why it matters.

The *Cavalry Squadron* was last published in May 2016. While this might prompt us to ask, "why did we not update it sooner," I do not think that is the right question. A review of the 2016 manual shows us that our doctrine centers on reconnaissance and security as the two organizing principles for cavalry operations, and it is a great manual. So, I think the better question, is "why did we update the manual?"

Last year, four armored brigade combat team (ABCT) cavalry squadron commanders joined the Armor School and our doctrine team at Fort Benning for a week, where we collaborated on answering two questions: "does our cavalry doctrine need to change?" and "if it does, then how?" Their analysis accounted for the tenets and imperatives of operations, conducted in all

domains and dimensions (see FM 3-0, *Operations*). The group considered the character of war through the lens of recent and current wars (new/emerging capabilities, persistent observation, and greater battlefield lethality and depth). Importantly, the team grappled with the problem of how to conduct manned ground reconnaissance and security against a capable, prepared, near-peer enemy.

Their answer to all of this was incisive. Instead of focusing our doctrine on what the cavalry squadron does (reconnaissance and security), they reoriented it to what the cavalry does for the main body. This unlocked a different way to view operations, rooted in both looking forward and looking back to military history. The new approach to our doctrine reinforces the fundamentals of reconnaissance and security and the tactics/techniques for accomplishing them. But the approach now doubles down on how the squadron fights for the main body. Two historical examples are what General Buford did for the Army of the Potomac July 1st, 1863 at Gettysburg and what 3-7 Cavalry did for the 3rd Infantry Division during the Thunder Run. So, at its core, the new manual describes how the cavalry squadron operates in three ways:

Inform – Information for the Main Body.

- The cavalry squadron drives understanding of the operational environment for the main body.
- The cavalry squadron develops the situation for the main body.
- The cavalry squadron enables commanders' decision making by gathering information and improving shared situational understanding for the main body.

Protect – Survivability of the Main Body.

- The cavalry squadron fights to protect the main body.
- The cavalry squadron conducts operations to prevent the main body from being surprised.
- The cavalry squadron fights to preserve the combat power of the main body.
- The cavalry squadron fights to gain/retain the initiative for the main body to allow it to dictate terms of battle against the enemy.

Fight – Mobility and Firepower for the Main Body.

- The cavalry squadron enables the main body to maintain tempo, allowing it to fight with speed and mass over time (momentum).
- The cavalry squadron fights to create

and exploit opportunities for the main body.

- The cavalry squadron fights to allow the main body to concentrate at the position and time that the commander chooses.
- The cavalry squadron enables the main body to execute transitions.

I believe our new *Cavalry Squadron* manual is coming at a great time for the Armor Force. The manual lays out how to fight the cavalry in ways that reflect the realities of the operational environment. It does so by using the

foundational tactics and techniques that will be required whether we are fighting with the equipment we have today in our motorpools, or with the kit that we will field to our formations this decade. The shift from reconnaissance and security to inform, protect, and fight for the main body is important: it must inform how we train our units and develop our leaders moving forward. We are excited about the new ATP 3-20.96 and I would encourage every armor leader to read it.

In the pages of this edition of **ARMOR** Magazine there is more information on

the *Cavalry Squadron* manual. We are excited for you all to read it upon final publication. In the meantime, I appreciate what all of you are doing to drive readiness and develop leaders in your formations. The Armor School is available to assist you in all that you do. If there is anything that we can do to help you, just holler!

