

# The Division Cross-Domain Task Force

## *Re-imagining Division Reconnaissance & Security for 2030*

By MG John B. Richardson IV and MAJ John T. Pelham IV

The division cross-domain task force (D-CDTF), a division reconnaissance and security formation, is the pivotal formation translating convergence at the operational level of war into mass at the tactical level by enabling armored divisions to seek, sense, shape and secure. It is a division-level, cross-domain maneuver element that combines arms in the division close area under the division commander's command and control. The D-CDTF develops the situation, providing reaction time and maneuver space, while maintaining constant pressure on the enemy across four domains simultaneously. This allows the division to seize the initiative and unleash the brigade combat teams (BCTs) at maximum combat potential at the decisive point.

Anchored on, and commanded by, the armored division cavalry squadron (ADCS), the CDTF integrates the capabilities of the ADCS, intelligence and electronic warfare (IEW) battalion, and air cavalry squadron (ACS), allowing division commanders to make enemy contact with the smallest friendly element possible, presenting the enemy multiple simultaneous dilemmas, applying constant pressure in multiple domains, and facilitating transitions. In doing so, the Commander is better able to see the organization, see the enemy, and understand the operating environment in accordance with the imperatives of multidomain operations (MDO). In May of 2022, Headquarters, Department of the Army published Execution Order 148-22, directing U.S. Army Forces Command to "conduct limited implementation of armored division cavalry designs" within a designated division "to assess and refine organizations," commonly known as the Division Cavalry Pilot.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, Execution Order 148-22 sought organizational refinement addressing the key capability gap created by lack of designated reconnaissance and security (R&S) formations within divisions, the U.S. Army's primary

"By 2035, the Army will transform the way we fight in order to: Sustain the Fight, Expand the Battlespace, Strike in Depth Across Domains, Gain and Maintain Decision Dominance, Create Overmatch, and Prevail in Large-Scale Combat at speed and scale."

GEN James C. McConville, 40th Chief of Staff, U.S. Army

tactical unit of action (Combined Arms Center's (CAC's) large-scale combat operations (LSCO) Gap 9). The habitual relationship of a standing task force also enhances the effective synchronization of air, ground, EW assets to produce a cross-domain effect maintaining constant pressure and presenting the enemy with multiple dilemmas. As the Army transitions to the division as the decisive tactical echelon during LSCO, it must be resourced as such.

### What problem does D-CDTF solve?

As previously stated, during CAC's LSCO gap analysis, the Army identified a significant capability gap in the lack of designated reconnaissance and security (R&S) formations at corps and division echelons informed by multiple warfighter exercises (WFX) and CAC assessments between 2012 and 2022. During that period, multiple exercise after action reviews and modeling denoted that the lack of designated R&S capability forced corps and divisions to either task subordinate units to answer higher headquarters (HHQ) priority intelligence requirements (PIR) in addition to their previously assigned tasks or reduce the capability of subordinate units by detaching combat power to form ad hoc R&S formations.

Both approaches traded one problem for another; tasking subordinate units to answer HHQ PIR and provide security for the division exceeded their collection capabilities and detaching combat power from subordinate units to create ad hoc R&S formations degraded subordinate abilities to accomplish their assigned missions. In either case, the lack of designated security forces

to provide reaction time and maneuver space degraded corps and division performance in (simulated) combat.

The R&S Pilot has already shaped the division's new operating concept. The division integrates the D-CDTF early in military decision-making process, and then deploys it to answer PIR and shape the operating environment. As discussed, IEW battalions can provide critical intelligence and warning, but they cannot provide security. The division augments the D-CDTF with attack aviation support (Grey Eagle, Shadows, and AH-64s) and artillery to enable the D-CDTF's fight through the disruption zone and into the battle zone. Finally, if the Army Collection Enterprise intends to continue employing a "seek, sense, destroy" methodology in the future operating environment, then recent WFX experimentation suggests that ADCS is complementary to the intelligence and electronic warfare battalion (IEW) battalion vice diametrically opposed or an evolutionary ancestor: also charged with providing the commander with situational awareness and understanding.

IEW battalions of the future will possess a single comprehensive sensor package, the Terrestrial Layer System (TLS). What they will lack in organic sensors, they will make up for with access to Joint data and direct feeds from national sensors (space layer). With that said, the type of data being collected in support of MDO is not weather restricted. The IEW battalion is rich with sensors, but cannot hold terrain, fight for information, or typically operate in adverse weather, which was a major lesson learned during the employment of the battle-field surveillance brigades a decade ago.

The ADCS' primary reconnaissance and security assets are its Troopers and vehicles, which are ground-domain centric, but have limited range because of the limitations of terrain and line-of-sight optics, which is mitigated by the ACS and IEW battalion capabilities. The synergistic effect of having the ADCS, ACS, and the IEW battalion working in concert paints the picture for the commander and enables him to shape the battlefield with less risk or signature than leading with the chin and employing an ABCT out front to make first direct fire contact. The complementary effects of the D-CDTF allow the division to shape deep with fires, while protecting and preserving the combat power of the BCTs. In essence, the D-CDTF allows the commanding general to seize the initiative at the decisive point, then unleash the full potential of the BCTs to penetrate, exploit, pursue and win.

## Capabilities

How does the D-CDTF solve the problem? By integrating the capabilities of the ADCS, IEW battalion, and ACS, supported by the combat aviation brigade (CAB) and division artillery (DIVARTY), the D-CDTF allows division commanders to combine arms in the reconnaissance and security fight to seek targets, sense targets, shape

targets, and enable their destruction while securing the division throughout the entire depth of the battlefield framework.

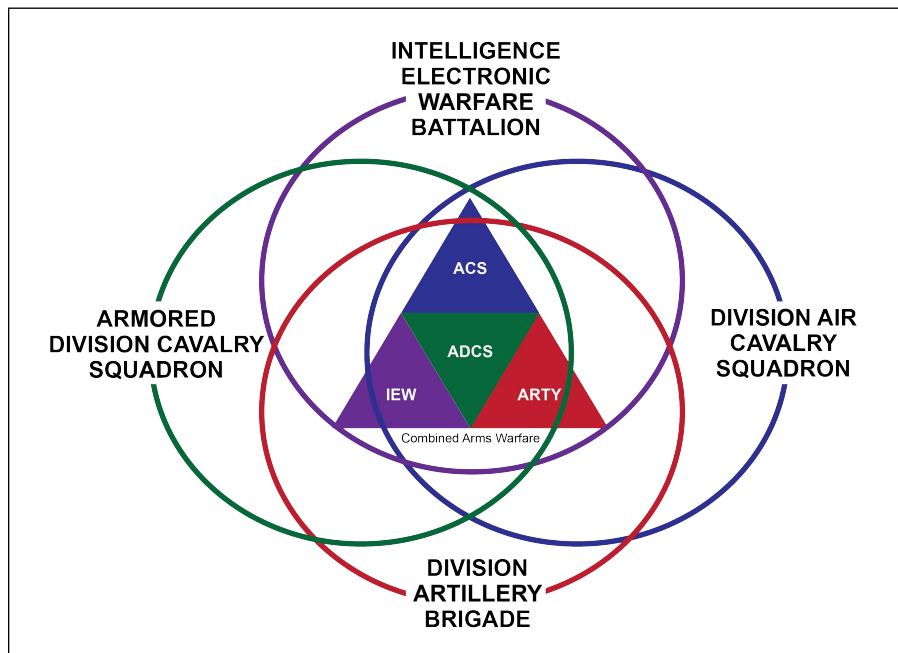
The D-CDTF accomplishes this by task organizing and integrating the following formations:

1. Armored division cavalry squadron: The ADCS provides all-weather reconnaissance and security capability (sense/shape/secure) in the division close area and enables the commander's visualization of the battlefield to support tactical decision making. The squadron preserves division combat power by developing the situation without committing a BCT or other resource. The ADCS gives division commanders the ability to fight for information in the division close area, secure key terrain, and protect the division main body to allow the division to mass at the decisive point with the maximum combat potential of the BCTs.
2. Intelligence and electronic warfare (IEW) battalion: Provides seeking and sensing capability in the division close area and beyond. By employing organic TLS and leveraging data from both Joint and National sensors, provides the commander with enhanced situational awareness and

understanding along with timely and accurate targeting support. Current equipment fielding includes the Tactical Ground Station Lot F that receives Moving Target Indicator data from Joint Sensors through the Global Broadcast Service. National Data is ingested via the Embedded National Tactical Receiver over the national Integrated Broadcast Service. Army of 2030 will utilize the Tactical Intelligence Targeting Access Node (TITAN) that will provide enhanced data from the space layer.

3. Air cavalry squadron (ACS): Provides rotary wing reconnaissance (seek/sense/shape/secure) and security capability in the division close area. With the ability to seek, sense, and shape targets across the entire division battlefield framework, the ACS eliminates enemy sanctuary areas in the battlefield framework, and exponentially increases the amount of reaction time and maneuver space available to the division via security operations. The ACS's organic Shadow unmanned aerial systems (UASs) allow the D-CDTF to position sensors and conduct reconnaissance forward of ground elements for long periods of time, weather permitting. This significantly decreases the amount of time and level of coordination required to get timely and accurate reports to the ADCS. The organic AH-64Es employed in an air cavalry role enhance the ground force commander's understanding of the enemy and environment, while simultaneously providing responsive and highly mobile attack aviation support to increase the relative lethality of the ADCS. Employment of the Shadows together with AH-64E helicopters as a team significantly increases aircraft survivability in a rapidly evolving threat environment.

4. DIVARTY and the CAB's attack aviation battalion: Provide shaping capability via long-range massed and precision fires in the division deep area; by massing joint fires against targets sought and sensed by the IEW battalion, DIVARTY and attacks out of contact by attack aviation enable the degradation of



**Figure 1: Visual Depiction to describe how massing effects within the D-CDTF is integrated. (U.S. Army graphic)**

enemy targets to favorable force ratios with which the division can close with and complete their destruction in the close fight with the BCTs.

## Enabling operational level convergence

As echelons above division (EAD) achieve convergence creating windows of opportunity for divisions via the cross-domain task force (CDTF) and corps fires at the operational level, the D-CDTF enables seizure of initiative, penetration, exploitation, and pursuit within such windows via the ADCS cross-domain troop and other D-CDTF assets at the tactical level.

The combination of the three elements (ADCS, ACS and IEW battalion), supported by attack aviation and DIVARTY, can seek, sense, shape and secure across multiple domains.

This formation reduces risk for the commander by creating the best possible understanding of the operational environment in air, ground, electromagnetic and cyber domain/environments. By enabling exploitation of operational level windows of opportunity, the D-CDTF achieves cross-domain effects at the tactical level allowing EAD to achieve continued convergence and retain the initiative.

The cross-domain effects achieved by the D-CDTF at the tactical level create a “feedback loop” enabling continued creation of windows of opportunity at the operational level, contributing to the achievement of operational objectives and ultimately strategic ends.

## Security

The D-CDTF enables the division to exploit windows of opportunity created by convergence at the Operational Level first by rapidly developing the situation during reconnaissance operations, but primarily by providing reaction time and maneuver space to the division through security operations.

Security provided by the D-CDTF mitigates and diversifies risk for the division across the entire battlefield

framework and generates options for the division commander.

The D-CDTF accomplishes this by:

1. Enabling the division to seek, sense, shape and secure through cross-domain effects.
2. Contact layering:
  - ADCS develops the situation by fighting across four domains in the division close area, setting conditions for the enemy’s destruction by BCTs; the ADCS can seek, sense, shape, and secure the division continuously in the division close area, but is limited in the division deep area beyond the coordinated firing Line. The ACS and IEW battalion set conditions for the ADCS to expand its footprint and enable the division to “spring load artillery and sustainment” into sector.
  - IEW battalion seeks and senses in the division close area and beyond to identify targets in accordance with the high-payoff target/high-value target lists; the IEW battalion can seek and sense targets in the close area and division deep area to facilitate deep fires but cannot secure the division.
  - ACS develops the situation while shaping targets in the division close area and provides periodic in contact attacks in support to the ADCS. The ACS cannot seek or sense targets comprehensively, nor can it provide continuous security for the division, but it is reinforcing and complementary to the ADCS. Like the IEW battalion, its capabilities can be limited during inclement weather.
  - DIVARTY and attack aviation shape targets in the division deep area, but cannot seek or sense targets comprehensively, nor can they secure the division.

## Way forward/conclusion

The D-CDTF is designed around a problem that is equipment agnostic, so as new materiel solutions come online, they can fit into this structure with relative ease (unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs), air launched effects, etc.).

By continuing with this pilot, the division maintains a task organized unit and “landing spot” for future technology where these planned and unique technologies have a place to be fielded, employed, and assessed. Furthermore, this equipment-agnostic quality emphasizes the D-CDTF’s adaptability and resiliency, demonstrating that this formation will avoid obsolescence and remain not only relevant, but vital into the future.

As we modernize to fight the Army of 2030/2040 concepts most effectively, IEW battalions will possess their full suite of sensors to include TITAN. The ADCS will field robotically combat vehicles and other robotics in its scout and tank platoons, as well as the cross-domain troop’s full suite of sensors and UAS.

These developments, in conjunction with DIVARTY’s fielding of Extended Range Cannon Artillery further demonstrate the increasing capability of an already robust formation, a formation capable of conducting reconnaissance and security out to operational-level ranges in the future. These capabilities diversify risk not only for division commanders, but also for operational commanders, and the joint and coalition force.

The D-CDTF is agile, adaptable and postured to evolve continuously towards Aimpoint 2035.

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MAJ John Pelham is the operations officer for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, Fort Cavazos, TX. His previous assignments include deputy G-5, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division; team leader, Combat Advisor Team 1, Company B, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB); commander, Company B, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> SFAB; commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 6<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> ABCT, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division; commander, Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> ABCT, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division; and platoon leader, Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition Platoon, Troop B, 5<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> SBCT, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. MAJ Pelham's military schools include the Advanced Military Studies Program (School of Advanced Military Studies), Command and General Staff Officers' Course; Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape School; Pathfinder School;

Combat Adviser Training Academy; Cavalry Leader's Course (CLC); Air-Assault School; MCCC; Cold Weather Leader's Course; Army Reconnaissance Course; Armor Basic Officer Leader Course; and Airborne School. MAJ Pelham has a Bachelor's of Arts degree in history from Tennessee Technological University; a Master's of Science degree in organizational leadership from Columbus State University; a Master's of Military Arts and Science degree from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), Art of War Scholar; and a Master's of Arts degree in Military Operations from CGSC (School of Advanced Military Studies). MAJ Pelham's awards include the Bronze Star Medal and the Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA), Execution Order 148-22, (Washington, D.C.: HQDA), 2022.

## Acronym Quick-Scan

**ACS** – air cavalry squadron  
**ADCS** – armored division cavalry squadron  
**BCT** – brigade combat team  
**CAB** – combat aviation brigade  
**CAC** – Combined Arms Center  
**D-CDTF** – division cross-domain task force  
**DIVARTY** – division artillery  
**EAD** – echelons above division  
**HHQ** – higher headquarters  
**LSCO** – large-scale combat operations  
**MDO** – multidomain operations  
**PIR** – priority intelligence requirements  
**R&S** – reconnaissance and security  
**TITAN** – Tactical Intelligence Targeting Access Node  
**TLS** – Terrestrial Layer System  
**UAS** – unmanned aerial system  
**WFX** – warfighter exercise

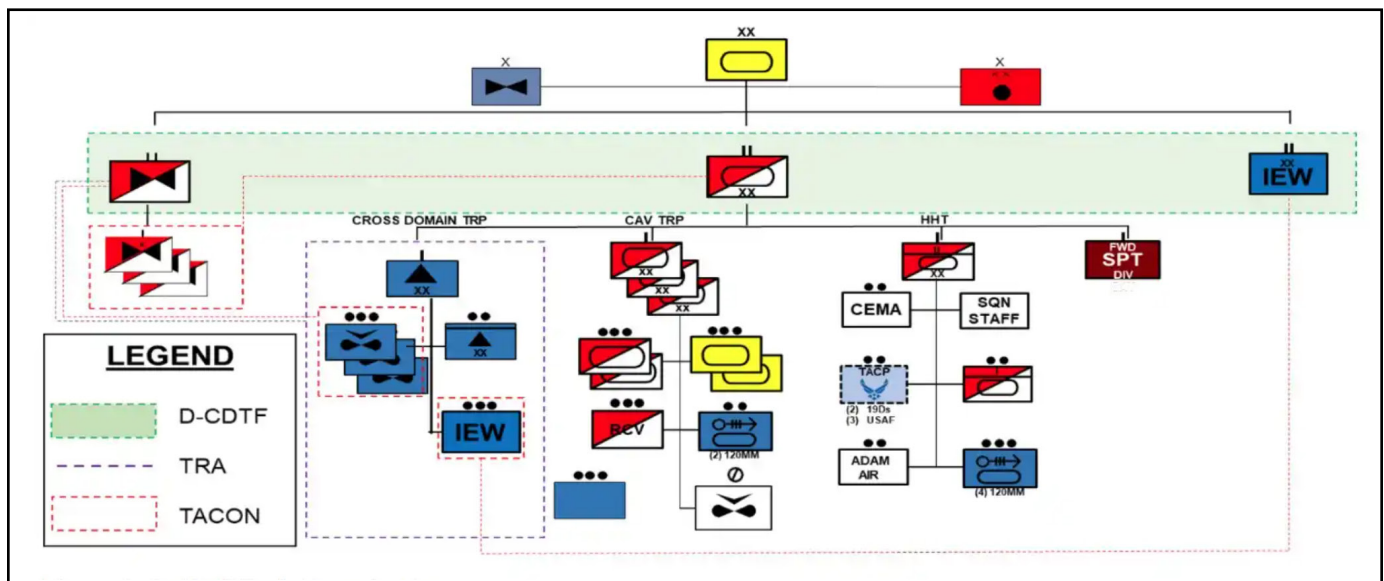


Figure 2: D-CDTF Task Organization