Chapter 13

Reconnaissance Operations

You can never have too much reconnaissance.

General George S. Patton Jr., *War As I Knew It*, 1947

Reconnaissance operations **are those operations undertaken to obtain, by visual observation or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of an enemy or potential enemy, or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographical or geographical characteristics and the indigenous population of a particular area.** Reconnaissance primarily relies on the human dynamic rather than technical means. Reconnaissance is a focused collection effort. It is performed before, during, and after other operations to provide information used in the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) process, as well as by the commander in order to formulate, confirm, or modify his course of action (COA). The four forms of reconnaissance are route, zone, area, and reconnaissance in force.

13-1. Reconnaissance identifies terrain characteristics, enemy and friendly obstacles to movement, and the disposition of enemy forces and civilian population so the commander can maneuver his forces freely and rapidly. Reconnaissance prior to unit movements and occupation of assembly areas is critical to protecting the force and preserving combat power. It also keeps the force free from contact as long as possible so that it can concentrate on its decisive operation.

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