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Visual Tracking and the Military Tracking Team Capability: A Disappearing Skill and Misunderstood Capability

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Of all the potentially valuable skills in the military the one that is most commonly misunderstood and underestimated is Visual Tracking. Unfortunately most opinions are based on misconceptions within the civilian tracking community. Trackers who are teachers of a holistic form of tracking that focus their instruction on a spiritual aspect have crushed any true debate on the virtues of tracking as a military specialty skill. Visual Tracking is not an exclusive skill associated with the Native American, San Bushmen, Iban, or Dyak trackers.

Visual Tracking, at its very basic level is the natural predatory hunting instinct of man. The sign that the tracker reads, is the “Physical Evidence” that his quarry leaves behind. The Trained Tracker is able to locate, identify, pursue and interpret those signs as well as form reasonably accurate conclusions based on the evidence left by the quarry.

In an environment where information on an enemy is limited the primary means of intelligence gathering will be through conducting patrols. Visual Tracking supports a commander's intent to find, fix and finish the enemy as well as be that human sensor that collects information. Soldiers who are taught the visual tracking skill will possess a greater attention to detail. Visual Tracking also provides them with a keener situational awareness to the environment around them.

It is very difficult for even the smallest element of men to move across any terrain without leaving some type of evidence. If one looks at sign left by the quarry and puts that into the context of military intelligence, then the physical evidence becomes intelligence indicators. Indicators observed by a trained tracker can provide immediate use intelligence about the quarry, such as:

- Enemy size
- Direction of movement
- Rate of movement
- Infiltration and Exfiltration routes and methods used
- “Safe Areas” being utilized
- State of training and discipline
- Enemy capabilities and intentions

Historically, Visual Man-Tracking has been used by many Militaries and Law Enforcement Agencies in other countries around the world with a great deal of success. The ability of employing Visual Trackers to locate and interdict a subject attempting to elude their pursuers, gather information for intelligence purposes or help rescue lost individuals and groups.

In today's Contemporary Operating Environment, Man-hunting techniques employed by the Military have been ineffective and reactionary. With The inability to immediately interdict insurgents, who commit attacks and flee a clear capability gap exists.

The Military over the past few decades have focused on methods other than patrolling, as a way to deter, detect and pursue an elusive quarry. Scent Dogs, Sensors, cameras, and the use of UAV's are some examples. Basic "field craft" skills have given way to the over reliance on technologies and dogs. This has dulled their natural human senses and ability to pursue their quarry.

Early Evolution of Visual Tracking

Tracking is the origin of Science. The observation and interpretive skills of the tracker are the origins of mathematics and physics.

- Louis Liebenberg, South African wildlife biologist

It's hard to determine when tracking became a necessary skill for human survival. Two million years ago a predecessor of modern humans named Australopithecus roamed the earth. Scientists discovered evidence of tools alongside these man-like creatures. It is believed by the tools found that Australopithecus was a meat eater and hunted for his food. In some circles of the tracking community they believe that this may be when primitive man first developed the tracking skill. As humans evolved, tracking played a significant role in everyday survival. Whether hunting for food, protecting the tribe or attempting an attack on another tribe, tracking has played a very important role in human survival.

U.S. Military Tracking History

Always mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy, if possible; and when you strike and overcome him, never let up in the pursuit so long as your men have strength to follow; for an army routed, if hotly pursued, becomes panic-stricken, and can then be destroyed.

-General Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson

Long before the United States won its independence; tracking had been utilized as a military skill by colonial frontiersmen. In the beginning, the colonists allied themselves with, and employed Native American Indians as Scout Trackers to help them survive their new environment. Eventually, the colonists learned how to track and scout from their Native American allies. Those colonists and their Native American allies were soon recognized for their unique scouting and tracking abilities. The British, whose soldiers were not accustomed to frontier warfare, formed independent companies of Colonial Rangers. The Rangers were excellent frontiersmen who blended the Indian and European methods of warfare. The famed Maj. Robert Rogers who's Rangers fought for the British Army during the French and Indian

War even mentioned Tracking in his original "*Rules of Ranging*";

"If you march over marshes or soft ground, change your position, and march abreast of each other to prevent the enemy from tracking you..."

And

"If the enemy pursue your rear, take a circle till you come to your own tracks, and there form an ambush to receive them...."

In the late 1800's the US Army employed Visual Trackers to pursue Native American fugitives. General Crook used Apache Scouts extensively to hunt Geronimo. Black Seminole Scouts tracked renegade Indians for over a thousand miles in thirty days, providing important immediate use intelligence for the US Cavalry. As a result of their many successes as intelligence collectors, the U.S. Army created a unit specifically for their skills, the United States Scouts (USS).

During the 20th Century, General Pershing utilized Native American trackers in his pursuit of Pancho Villa. One very famous U.S. Scout-Tracker was Frederick Russell Burnham. Burnham was appointed by Field Marshal Lord Roberts as his Chief of Scouts for the British Army during the Boer War (1898-1902). During the war, Burnham who had been recognized for his outstanding tracking and scouting skills was promoted to Major. Later he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for gallantry.

During the early Twentieth Century, warfare changed. The usefulness of the scout-tracker gave way to Trench Warfare and eventually the mechanization of armies. Through both world wars the Native American Scout-Trackers were never employed. However they remained a part of the army till 1947, when they were officially disbanded at Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

In 1966, with the war in Viet Nam escalating, General Westmoreland, Commander of Military Assistance Command Viet Nam (MACV), was impressed by the UK's use of trackers in fighting Communist insurgents in Malaysia. That year he sent LTC Starry along with a small team to the British Jungle Warfare School in Malaysia. LTC Starry was assigned the task of researching the UK's use of Combat Tracking Teams (CCT's). The U.S. Soldiers were trained by British and New Zealand instructors and the team returned to MACV with a very positive report on the value of Combat Tracking. Westmoreland approved the CTT concept and 140 U.S. soldiers were recruited to attend the British Jungle Warfare School's 65 day program.

After the soldiers completed their Tracker Training they returned to Viet Nam. The Trackers were organized into four teams per division, and broken down further into two elements per brigade. The primary mission of the newly organized Combat Tracking Teams was to re-establish contact with an elusive enemy and their secondary mission was to collect information on any recent enemy activity within a specific area of operations. The CTT was usually supported by a Platoon and worked well ahead of them to maintain noise discipline and the element of surprise.

The first CTT's were deployed in February 1967 and assigned to the 25th Infantry Div. The teams were assigned to all major units in all areas of operations. During

1967, 55 missions were completed and in 1968, 219 missions were completed. The 61st IPCT (Infantry Platoon Combat Tracker) assigned to the 1st ID supported major Div operations such as Junction City, Manhattan, Billings, and Shenandoah II. During 1968 the 61st IPCT was credited with the destruction of over 300 bunkers, capturing 35 enemy, killing 120 and salvaging over 1 ton of rice. The most successful mission for that unit was on 5 May 1968 when the team tracked to the edge of a base camp complex. The CTT called in Arty and Air and was credited with 70 enemy KIA and 6 detained.

Taken from the 1st ID Year Book covering 1968.

USARV COMBAT TRACKER TEAM

I. Mission: The mission of the combat tracker team (CTT) is to track the enemy in order to re-establish contact, typical missions include tracking:

- A. Enemy personnel who survive friendly ambushes.
- B. Enemy ambush parties after ambush of friendly units.
- C. Enemy mortar or rocket crews after attack on friendly units or installations.
- D. Enemy terrorists or mine-laying parties.
- E. Small enemy elements that have been observed by ground forces or air observers.
- F. Lost or missing friendly patrols or personnel.
- G. To gain intelligence information such as age of track, direction of travel, and composition of party. This information can be used to attempt to block or intercept the enemy using ground forces or airpower.

In June of 1969 during the war in Viet Nam **GTA 2I-4** was published and circulated to educate field commanders on the capability and missions of Combat Tracking Teams. The first paragraph of the GTA described the mission of the CTT's.

Overall about 240 trackers were trained at the British Army's Jungle Warfare School in Malaysia. Eventually the United States Army established its own Combat Tracking School at Fort Gordon, Georgia, but by the end of 1970 the school was closed. Ironically, in 1973 the U.S Army published FM 7-42, "Combat Tracker and Tracker Dog Training and Employment", but no longer employed that operational capability.

At the end of the Viet Nam War, Visual Tracking again began to disappear from military curriculum and doctrinal publications.

U.S. Army Tracking Doctrine

THE difficult art of trailing or tracking is of great importance In Indian warfare.

- LT. Edward S. Farrow, Commander of Indian Scouts, Department of the Columbia. 1881.

Visual Tracking and the conduct of tracking patrols has been written in plenty of Army publications to include:

➤ **FM 7-42. Combat Tracker and Tracker Dog Training and Employment-1973**

The mission of the combat tracker team is to reestablish contact with and to collect information about enemy forces; the team avoids contact with the enemy whenever possible.

One of the problems that face security forces during counter insurgency operations is that of following the enemy after a contact has been made. Only by vigorously pursuing him to wherever he is located will it be possible for the security forces to dominate an area and reduce the activities of the enemy.

➤ **FC 21-77. Dismounted Patrolling-1984**

Tracking...gives the commander definite information on which he can act immediately. For example, a unit may report that there is no men of military age in a village. This information is of value if it is combined with other information to make a composite enemy picture in the area. A tracker, however, that interprets trail signs and reports to his commander that he is 30 minutes behind a known enemy unit, that has been moving north, and that he is located at a particular location, gives the commander information on which he can act at once. He may use the tracking unit as a pushing force and relocate another unit to block, and he can do this immediately.

➤ **FM 21-75. Combat Skills of the Soldier- 1984**

In all operations, you must be alert for signs of enemy activity. Such signs can often alert you to an enemy's presence and give your unit time to prepare for contact. The ability to track an enemy after he has broken contact also helps you regain contact with him.

➤ **FM 7-70. Light Infantry Platoon and Squad-1986**

Tracking Patrols. These patrols also gather Intelligence. Men, machines, and animals leave signs of their presence as they move through an area. These signs may be as subtle as an odor or scent, or it may be as obvious as a well-worn path...attention to detail, common sense, logic, knowledge of the environment and enemy habits allow soldiers to get even more valuable information from the signs they find in the battle area. Reading the signs and observing the environment is part of every mission.

➤ **FM 7-8. The Infantry Platoon and Squad-1992**

A platoon or squad may receive the mission to follow the trail of a specific enemy unit. Soldiers look for signs left by the enemy. They gather information about the enemy unit, the route, and the surrounding terrain as they track.

➤ **FM 7-92. The Infantry Reconnaissance Platoon and Squad- 1992**

The reconnaissance platoon can be given the mission to follow the trail of a specific enemy force. When operating in a low-intensity conflict environment, the reconnaissance platoon has a greater likelihood of receiving a tracking mission.

➤ **FM 17-98. Scout Platoon-1999**

A tracker can obtain information that, when combined with information from other sources, indicates enemy plans. Tracking is one of the best sources of immediate-use intelligence!

➤ **FM 3-90.98. Reconnaissance Platoon- 2002**

A platoon or squad may receive the mission to follow the trail of a specific threat unit. Soldiers look for signs left by the threat. They gather information about the threat unit, the route, and the surrounding terrain as they track.

➤ **FM 3-05.222. Special Forces Sniper Training and Employment- 2003**

Tracking is the art of being able to follow a person or an animal by the signs that they leave during their movement... a tracker follows a trail, he builds a picture of the enemy in his mind by asking himself these questions: How many persons am I following? What is their state of training? How are they equipped? Are they healthy? What is their state of morale? Do they know they are being followed? To answer these questions, the tracker uses available indicators—that is, signs that tell an action occurred at a specific time and place. By comparing indicators, the tracker obtains answers to his questions.

➤ **FM 3-21.8. The Infantry Platoon and Squad-2007**

A tracking patrol is normally a squad-size, possibly smaller, element. It is tasked to follow the trail of a specific enemy unit in order to determine its composition, final destination, and actions en route. Members of the patrol look for subtle signs left by the enemy as he moves. As they track, they gather information about the enemy unit, the route it took, and the surrounding terrain. Normally, a tracking patrol avoids direct fire contact with the tracked unit, but not always. Tracking patrols often use tracker dog teams to help them maintain the track.

➤ **FM 2-91.6. Soldier Surveillance and Reconnaissance: Fundamentals of Tactical Information Collection-2007**

Tracking may be planned, but is often a result of combat or reconnaissance patrolling, tactical site exploitation, or an IED event.

➤ **FM 3-22.10. Sniper Training and Employment- 2008**

A sniper team might have to track and kill an enemy sniper ... Success in this case depends greatly on the team's tracking ability.

➤ **FM 3-55.93. Long Range Surveillance Unit Operations-2008**

The LRS teams must learn crucial tracking skills and techniques for use while in enemy territory. This allows them to provide immediate intelligence on the frequency and flow of enemy traffic on a trail. Tracking is also useful when a LRS team conducts a PR mission to retrieve a downed pilot.

Good tracking skills enhance countertracking skills, and good countertracking skills assist in the success or failure of a mission by allowing the team to effectively evade anyone tracking them while in enemy territory.

Both skill sets increase the Soldier's general awareness and reduces the chance of being caught off guard.

➤ **TC 3 1-34-4. Special Forces Tracking and Countertracking-2009**

Understanding the ancient art and science of tracking lays a firm foundation for a variety of activities useful in SF operations. A Soldier trained in tracking techniques can use deception maneuvers that minimize telltale signs and throw off or confuse poorly trained trackers who do not have the experience to spot the signs of a deception.

➤ **CALL No. 10-01 Commander's Guide to Snipers Handbook -Oct 2009**

Footprints, shell casings, food wrappers, excreta, and other signs found by enemy trackers might indicate that snipers are in the area. Knowledge of countertracking techniques and the discipline to observe them are valuable tools to snipers, not only

to remain undetected but also to collect battlefield information. This especially pertains to IED countertracking. A sniper's skill in tracking may be crucial in determining the possible or probable route of an IED emplacer or triggerman from the IED site back to his hide site. In establishing and monitoring training of his snipers, the prudent commander will ensure that some effort is expended and skill is developed in this area.

A sniper team might have to track and kill an enemy sniper operating in the friendly area of operations. Success in this case depends greatly on the team's tracking ability. If a sniper team has trained and demonstrated skill in how to track humans, this team may also be effectively employed to track an IED emplacer or triggerman, at least from the site of the emplaced IED to a nearby covered and concealed location. A sniper team's tracking skills may also be useful in and around cache sites. A sniper team's tracking skills may also be applied in personnel recovery missions.

Countertracking skills help the sniper team avoid detection and survive the mission.

➤ **FM 3-24.2. Tactics in Counter Insurgency-2009**

Reconnaissance units must locate insurgent forces, tracks, or other indicators of direction or location. In rural and some border operations, well-trained trackers can identify and follow insurgent tracks that are hours or even days old. Units tracking the insurgent must be prepared to react to insurgent contact and avoid likely ambush situations. Leaders must ensure support for the reconnaissance force if it is compromised.

The key words and phrases in the paragraph above being "*locate ... tracks, or other indicators ... and use them to locate the enemy*" and "well trained trackers can identify and follow enemy tracks ..." Although visual tracking has been written within Army doctrine since 1973 it has faded from army operational employment. It can only be assumed that after 9 years of an Army at war fighting an elusive enemy the reason for ignoring visual tracker training is due to the overreliance of technology, a lack of understanding of the tracking capability by unit commanders, no qualified Army instructors to implement the training or the reluctance of any Army Center of Excellence to adopt, develop and resource the training.

Examples of Visual-Tracking Used Abroad

Historically, The ability of employing Visual Trackers to locate and interdict a subject has been used by many Militaries and Law Enforcement Agencies in other countries around the world with a great deal of success. Even some allies of the United States, have not been so reluctant to get rid of their tracking capability. For example the British Army has maintained a tracking capability based on their combat experiences during WWII, Malaysia, Kenya, Cyprus, and Borneo. Today visual tracking is taught through their Jungle Warfare Wing in Brunei. The Malaysians have also retained a Visual Tracking School since the British moved their Jungle Warfare School to Brunei.

The Australians and New Zealanders have recognized the value of tracking since 1942 when both countries soldiers were trained in Australia by British instructors for the conduct of unconventional warfare operations behind Japanese lines during WWII. Today both countries still run tracking programs for their soldiers based upon the experiences and lessons learned from WWII up to the Viet Nam war. Even recently the Fijian, New Zealand and Australian Armies have conducted tracking patrols in support of security operations in East Timor.

During the 1970's and 80's the Rhodesian Tracker Combat Unit, SAS, Selous Scouts and Grey Scouts all had a remarkable tracking capability that was employed against insurgents in their country and many cross border operations. South Africa and Southwest Africa (Namibia) also had a very robust tracking capability that they employed against insurgents infiltrating across the Angolan border. One unit with exceptional success was the South African Police's (SAP) Koevoet (Afrikaans for "Crowbar"). Koevoet was an organization that combined their police investigator skills, tracking capabilities, along with "Casspir" and "Wolf" land mine protected vehicles and air support. While tracking had always been a military tactic for the South Africans, it had never been used as a strategy that was constantly employed. During its ten years of operational existence it fought in over 1,615 contacts and killed or captured 3,225 insurgents, while suffering only 160 killed of their own policemen.

Since 1948 the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) has employed Bedouin trackers. The entire Tracker Unit is made up of volunteers. What isn't known to a lot of people, however, is that the Tracker Unit has lost more soldiers in combat proportionally, than any other IDF unit. The IDF has also started to employ trackers of Ethiopian descent.

Today most of the world's militaries have incorporated some type of formal tracking capability into their military professional development curriculum. The lessons learned from others, regardless of where they originated from, are important in that they may change the way tactics are employed and save lives.

Previous Options

The Military over the past few decades have focused on methods other than patrolling, as a way to deter, detect and pursue an elusive quarry. Scent Dogs, Sensors, cameras, and the use of UAV's are some examples. Basic "field craft" skills have given way to the over reliance on technologies and canines. This has dulled the soldier's natural human senses and ability to pursue his quarry.

Scent Dogs

Scent tracking is probably the most widely accepted method of tracking to pursue human beings. Scent dogs that have been used primarily in the Law Enforcement and Search and Rescue community are now being used heavily in the military's CIED initiative. However, there are some disadvantages associated with using dogs. The most difficult job a dog can perform is to follow a scent trail. The level of effort is so intense that most dogs cannot work longer than 20 to 30 minutes at a time, followed by a 10 to 20 minute rest period. At best, dogs can perform this cycle no more than 5 or 6 times in a 24-hour period before reaching complete exhaustion. The efficiency of the search also decreases as the dog tires. If the subject keeps moving and stays out of the detection range of the dog and handler, the subject can outlast scent tracking dogs.

Some examples of Unfavorable Scent Tracking Conditions are when;

- Heat – that causes rapid evaporation of the scent.
- Extremely rugged terrain.
- An Unverified Start Point at an incident site will cause a dog to follow the wrong route or scent.
- Low humidity causes the scent to disperse more rapidly.
- Dry ground does not preserve the scent.
- Wind may disperse scent that will cause the dog to track downwind.
- Heavy rain will wash the scent away.
- Distracting scents will take the dog's attention away from the trail. (Some of these scents are blood, meat, manure, farmland, and populated areas).
- The scent becomes covered by elements of nature and cause the scent picture to be partially or completely covered. Examples are sand that can blow over the tracks and help to disguise the track; snow and ice that can form over the track and make it nearly impossible to follow; and water which is one of the most difficult conditions for a tracker dog team.

Other things to take into consideration is what it takes to support that canine, such as carrying food and water for the dog on long operations. Canines are great for alerting a patrol as to human presence. However, a dog can also give away that friendly patrol location as well.

Technology

Sensors, cameras, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) have become very popular to detect human presence and passage. These types of technologies although impressive have been used to replace the human on the ground instead of augment them. These costly technologies have been over relied upon and have not proven their worth over the long run. The high incidence of illegal activity, that crosses the United States border every day, is a good example of that. Unattended Ground Sensors utilized in both military and law enforcement sectors have never really proven their worth. Insurgents as well as criminals have always been able to find and render them inoperable. Cameras employed in static positions or mounted on UAV platforms although used widely will indicate human passage but haven't been productive in interdicting or apprehending those subjects.

Modern Military Tracking

Modern Military Tracking is the merging of old world Visual Tracking skill sets with those of modern day technology. More emphasis is placed on the individual soldier and his team to be the actual sensor to gather and process information. The use of technology is merely for data collection and dissemination. Some examples of modern day technology that can be integrated in to assist the Tracking Team record and share information are the uses of:

- Digital cameras are used for taking digital photos of forensic evidence.
- Small portable POGO type printers, for printing out and disseminating footprint impression evidence with other tracking team members as well as other tracking teams.
- GPS devices to record the location of forensic evidence as well as the team's position.

- Small Rugged portable type PC's such as the GoBook® MR-1 for collecting and recording digital information as well the ability to communicate and disseminate that information to other elements.

Although given some examples of technology that can be incorporated. Tracking Teams are capable of conducting their mission without the listed equipment. The Tactical Tracking Team is a cohesive team where by all team members are trained Visual Trackers. The employment of multiple Tracking teams along with other supporting ground and air assets as part of a pursuit operation. Tactical Tracking is the tactical operation conducted to aggressively pursue the enemy, collect information on the enemy, or aid in the conduct Personnel Recovery

The Tracking Team (TT) can quickly assess an incident site, collect any available enemy footprint impression evidence, determine the size of the quarry, and the direction the quarry went. The unit commander along with the TT and support element uses this "immediate use information" to conduct a pursuit operation to close the "Time and Distance Gap" (TDG) and reestablish contact with its quarry.

Other TT's can be employed when the enemy's direction of travel has been assessed or the enemy has set a recognizable pattern. The supporting TT's can "leap-frog" further ahead along the enemies direction of travel to areas where the quarry may cross and cut for sign. If the quarry's sign is found the supporting TT now takes lead while the other TT leaps forward to a new area to cut for sign or join them in the pursuit. This technique allows the unit the ability to cut down the TDG between themselves and the quarry at a rapid pace. Once the gaps been closed and the enemy captured or eliminated, the teams return to base to prepare a debrief detailing the conduct of the operation. The debrief will provide detailed information on the enemy such as strength, composition, movements, routes taken, and TTP's used. The Debrief also provides information about the operational area such as terrain, local attitudes, locations of old or new enemy camps, enemy contacts, and lessons learned by the team. The information will give the Commander and his staff a clearer understanding about what is going on in the AO as well as provide information that may influence current or future operations. The Debrief also is a historical record that will help other units after the team or higher unit has rotated back home.

An example of Modern Military Tracking

Somewhere in the current theater of operations insurgents had just initiated an ambush with an IED destroying the lead vehicle within the convoy. After the fire fight, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and Weapons Intelligence Team (WIT) arrive at the outer cordon of the incident site. Once the IED location is identified, EOD clears the area to ensure there are no secondary devices. Immediately the WIT and the Tracking Squad comprised of two 4-man Tracking Teams (TT) from 2nd Platoon began conducting coordination's. Once EOD notifies the WIT Team Leader that the area has been rendered safe, the WIT team, minus two members, head down to the blast seat of the incident site to begin their site exploitation. At the same time, the remaining two members from WIT conduct a sweep around the outside of the incident site.

During the exploitation of the incident site, a command wire is found heading north by members of both the EOD and WIT. A Tracker from WIT is told where the command wire is so he can investigate, and identify if there is any evidence beyond the blast seat of the IED detonation. Through initial investigation, the WIT Tracker identifies two enamel covered thin copper wires draped over some tall grass. Looking further ahead the WIT tracker attempts to

identify where the wire goes; he cautiously probes forward while everyone else remains behind so there is no contamination of the site. Within 50 meters from the IED detonation site, a small ditch full of water is found, but is noticeably too wide to jump across. Analyzing the copper command wire that stretches across the ditch, the outline of a still noticeably damp foot impression is located on the other side of the ditch. It is apparent that the individual that laid the wire was unable to jump across the ditch, and chose to walk through the water, which left foot impression evidence that clearly identified the exact outline of what appeared to be a military style boot with a star and lug type Vibram pattern.

Concurrently, the other two WIT members conducting their sweep detect what they believe to be the insurgent's entry and exit point to, and from the incident site heading north. One of the tracks identified is a military style boot with a star and lug type Vibram pattern identified. They mark, and record the suspected entry and exit point and continue to conduct their sweep.

Back at the Incident Site the WIT Tracker continues his attempt to identify where the insurgent could have gone with the command wire. While moving around to another location that the WIT Tracker believes will intersect with the command wire, he looks back to get an idea as to what type of visibility the insurgents may have had. So far there has only been evidence of at least one individual found, and the command wire continues to travel north. As the tracker continues to bump the line, he eventually identifies litter the insurgents left behind, but he also locates two additional individual's footprints to and from the IED site.

After the two members of the WIT team concluded their sweep they report their findings to the WIT Team leader and the Tracking Squad Leader.

While the remaining WIT Team continues to exploit the incident site, the two WIT team members who conducted the sweep guide the Tracking Squad and 2nd Platoon to the location of the entry and exit point. The patrol stops short of the entry and exit point location. The WIT Team members, Lead Tracker, his Team Leader and Tracking Squad Leader move up and assess the entry and exit point. The WIT Team members conduct a "hand off" with the Tracking Squad and gather any footprint impression evidence associated with their quarry. The tracker determines they are tracking at least 3 men who were moving at a leisurely pace and that the impressions were no more than 12 hours old.

The Squad Leader returns and briefs the rest of his patrol as well as radios the Platoon Leader (PL) with all information taken from the Initial Start Point (ISP). As the Tracking Team follows the insurgents sign (evidence) he interprets the track line in an attempt to get into the mind of his quarry (the insurgents). He observes that the stride patterns from the insurgents going toward the Incident site are shorter than those going away. He concludes that they may have traveled during the night to emplace the IED and traveled back up the same route at just about dawn.

As the Tracking Squad pursues the quarry the rest of 2nd Platoon follows at a distance as to not give away the Tracking Teams position, but can deploy quickly if the Trackers make contact. When the squad reaches the top of a hill over watching the incident site, they discover the insurgents ambush position. The Tracking Squad, Squad Leader halts the patrol to investigate the area further with his Alpha Team Leader, and Lead Tracker. Meanwhile, the rest of Alpha Team provides flank security. As they investigate the ambush position, they discover (12) fighting positions. Conclusive evidence found at the site indicates the insurgents were armed

with at least (2) RPG-7's (RPG-7 booster wrappers, damage made from the back blast), (2) RPK machine guns (bipod leg impressions, 7.62x54R shell casings, (1) 25-round non-disintegrating linked belt dropped by fleeing gunner), and (8) AK-47 rifles (7.62x39mm shell casings at each position with magazine impressions in the ground). A blood trail from one of the firing positions indicates that at least one insurgent is wounded. The wound appears to be in the left shoulder area identified by the blood pool left at the insurgents firing position.

While observing all the foot impressions, the tracker noticed that all of the impressions except one were made from a flat tennis shoe sole with either a zigzag shaped, or diamond shaped tread pattern. The one impression that stood out from the others, was a star and lug type Vibram boot sole pattern with a definitive heel. This Vibram type impression seemed to move between the two RPG positions. The tracker concluded that the insurgent who wore the Vibram boots was either a foreign fighter, or the leader of the insurgent element. They also discovered the insurgents track line departing from the ambush position in an easterly direction.

Quickly the Tracker Squad leader disseminates all information to his squad as well as to the PL. The Tracking Team continues to follow the track line until coming to a contaminated area of ground. The Tracker halts before entering the contaminated area. As the Lead Tracker and Team Leader contemplate the scene, they realize that the insurgents must have stopped and rested.

The Tracker moves cautiously around the scene, being careful not to contaminate the area himself. He discovers discarded materiel soaked in blood. Noticing the blood soaked rags are still wet, he also notices some of the blood that has leaked out onto the ground is now dry. It appears the injured insurgent is losing a lot of blood, and will most likely slow his comrades down. The Tracker along with his Team Leader counts the flattened and marred areas, and determines that they are still following all 12 insurgents. The Lead Tracker and Team Leader move around the rest area, and detect two exit points moving away from the rest spot in completely different directions. Determining that one insurgent element consisting of eight, to include the individual with the Vibram type sole, still appeared to be moving in an easterly direction. While one group of four, including the wounded insurgent, has shifted to the north.

The squad leader conducts a quick map recon of the area in an attempt to figure out where each element may be heading to. A village is identified as being just north of the Tracking Teams position, and appears to be the most logical place for the insurgents with a wounded individual to move to. The eight insurgent's, and the one individual with the Vibram sole, appears to be heading to a village that is near the country's border. The Squad Leader calls back to the rest of the 2nd Platoon to inform the Platoon Leader of the details concerning the quarry's separation point. It is decided that the Tracking Squad from 2nd Plt will mark the quarry's separation point with some orange surveyor tape that includes the time, date and grid coordinates written on it. This will aid another Tracking Squad or team to identify the separation Point at a later time. Meanwhile, the Tracking Squad from 2nd Plt continues to track the eight insurgents, including the one found to have the Vibram sole. The Platoon Leader from 2nd Plt radios back to the Company Command Post (CP) to alert the Company Commander as to the current situation. The Tracking Squad from 2nd Plt continues their patrol following the insurgents heading east.

At the Company CP, the commander is informed of the ongoing pursuit of the insurgents. Immediately, 1st Platoon is notified to move to the separation point, and continue to follow the

track line north. The Company Commander contacts the Battalion to request that a blocking force be deployed to keep the insurgents from reaching the village, or crossing the border.

The Company Operations Center informs 1st and 2nd Platoons that a host nation force is being deployed to the target village near the border to keep them from entering it, or crossing the border to the east.

The 1st Platoon Tracking Squad locates the surveyor's tape marker left by 2nd Platoon identifying the quarry's separation point. At this time, 1st Platoon continues to follow the track line of the quarry with the wounded insurgent, which leads to the village north.

As the Tracking Squad from 1st Platoon nears the village, they conduct a halt and provide surveillance on the target village until the rest of the Platoon can link up with them. After conducting link up with the rest of the Platoon, over watch security of the village is established, as the rest of the Platoon move to enter the village. With security set, the Lead Tracker for 1st Plt continues to follow the track line into the village. After entering the village, 1st Plt discovers a funeral being prepared. Further investigation reveals that the one wounded insurgent bled out, and died from his wound. The three remaining insurgents were discovered hiding among the villagers, and apprehended due to the footprint evidence that was collected along the patrol. 1st Platoon completes their assigned mission, and is extracted back to the FOB for debriefing.

Meanwhile, the 2nd Platoon Tracking Patrol had aggressively followed its quarry to a shepherd's cabin west of the target village located on the border. Blocking Forces moved into the village, and provided a presence under the pretext of conducting a "village assessment". The 2nd Platoon Tracking Patrol, once locating the insurgents, conduct surveillance on the target building until link up occurred with the rest of the Platoon. Upon the rest of the Platoon linking up, security is established to seal off the objective. Through the Platoons interpreter, a "call out" is conducted. The insurgents open fire from the building, and 2nd Platoon returns fire. Seven insurgents are killed during the firefight, three are wounded, and immediately captured. The Platoon calls in a MEDEVAC, which transports the wounded insurgents to the Forward Operating Base (FOB) for debriefing as well.

Upon returning to the FOB, the Leaders of each Platoon conduct a "Hot Debrief" performed by the Company Intelligence Support Team (COIST). The purpose for the "Hot Debrief" is for the COIST to collect all time sensitive information so that it may have an impact on current ongoing or future operations. The Platoons are then given 24 hours to stand down, and produce a formal debrief report that will outline the specific details of the mission, which will provide information collected, and the lessons learned. This information is then entered into a database, such as Combined Information Data Network Exchange (CIDNE), that will provide all details of the mission, capable of being queried by intelligence analyst through the use of the Distributed Common Ground Systems (DCGS). This information can then be analyzed by intelligence analyst to produce intelligence products that will be utilized by commanders for future operations.

Conclusion

Lately, Visual Tracking has been sold as a Counter Improvised Explosive Device Tactic, to make soldiers more aware of their surroundings. Tracking has also been implemented in the Weapons Intelligence Course as a battlefield forensic tool. However, the Army has still not recognized the full value of Visual Tracker Training or its employment in Full Spectrum Operations even when doctrinally the Army's Maneuver Center of Excellence by virtue of it being written in their doctrinal publications.

Employing tracking whether as a CIED tactic to locate mines and bobby-traps by visual means, gathering information about the enemy and his movements, Counter Tracking to evade detection, conduct recovery of missing personnel, or the pursuit an enemy in order to reestablish contact, the tracking skill whether employed as an individual or as a team is of great value.

Currently, the Army still doesn't have a formal capability that their Doctrinal publications suggest. All of these units are considered the Army's "eyes and ears" of their respective units, but operate without the vital "fieldcraft" skills or capability to capture time sensitive information that can be collected by a trained Visual Tracker Team.

Only by Training soldiers in Visual Tracking techniques and employing those skills as a collective team will the Army be able to vigorously pursue the enemy where ever he is located, will it be possible for Security Forces to dominate an area and reduce the activities of the enemy.

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