

**CHAPTER X.  
INFORMATION.**

(See also "Field Service Regulations, Part I," Chapter VI.)

*137. General principles.*

1. The object of reconnoitring the enemy when he is at a distance will usually be to locate his columns, to ascertain their strength and the direction in which they are marching, and in this manner to give the commander-in-chief information on which to base his strategical plan of operations. When the enemy is near, the object will be to discover the tactical dispositions of the opposing force with a view to furnishing the commander with information on which to base his tactical plan of operation.

In either case the object is to gain information of the enemy, and troops performing this duty should not be restricted in their movements by the necessity for remaining in close touch with their own columns, though they should be able to transmit at once any information of importance they may obtain. Patrols and other bodies employed for these purposes are therefore given an independent mission.

In addition to the reconnaissance carried out by bodies acting independently reconnaissance is required in connection with protective duties by every force at all stages of the operations, whether at the halt or on the move, to ensure the security of the force by giving timely warning of hostile enterprises. The movements of bodies employed for this duty will usually depend on the movements of the force, the safety of which it is their duty to secure.

2. Patrols are the usual means by which information is obtained. A well arranged service of protection on the part of the enemy or the presence of hostile inhabitants, will, however, often stop patrols before they have gained their object. Unless supplemented by larger bodies ready to fight their way through they will often be able to find out but little, or should they succeed unsupported in penetrating a protected line they will be unable to send back their information. In favourable circumstances skilfully handled patrols or larger reconnoitring detachments may sometimes obtain information of value without the employment of force; but, as a rule, to carry out an effective reconnaissance, troops must be prepared to fight, and to fight successfully a certain concentration of force is necessary.

3. Throughout the service of reconnaissance economy of strength should be practised.

It will be impossible to use officers as leaders of all patrols, generally speaking they should be employed only to lead those of particular importance.

4. The strength of a patrol should be limited; for the larger it is the more difficult will it be to escape observation. It should, however, be sufficiently strong to ensure that the information gained is transmitted without delay to the superior commander to whom reports have to be furnished.

When a patrol is not in itself strong enough to get into a position from which it can observe, or to transmit its information back, a larger reconnoitring detachment should be sent instead. These larger reconnoitring detachments throw out patrols to which they act as supports. They open up the way for their patrols and provide a

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refuge for them. They collect information themselves by taking prisoners and seizing telegraph offices, &c. They also act as collecting stations for information; and keep communication with the forces in rear.

Their size will depend largely on the number of patrols they have to furnish; the distances they have to go; the resistance they are likely to meet from the enemy; and the attitude of the inhabitants.

It is obvious, therefore, that their size cannot be fixed by rule, but must always be considered with reference to the task they have to perform and the conditions under which they have to work.

5. No commander should ever move or remain halted without taking steps to ascertain if hostile troops are near and if so what they are doing.

6. Every reconnoitring detachment should endeavour to keep touch with that portion of the enemy's forces it has been sent to reconnoitre until the moment when it has information from superior authority that its mission is over.

### 138. *The conduct of patrols.*

1. Patrols like all other bodies of mounted troops should move in bounds, covering the distance between good positions rapidly.

2. They should adopt such formations that if surprised by the enemy they cannot all be captured. Sometimes it may be advantageous to extend laterally; at others, when for instance the patrol is marching down a road with high fences on both sides, it may be better to extend from front to rear.

3. Protection should be arranged on all sides, as is the case with all bodies of troops of whatever size. As advanced guard two men may often be pushed ahead of the patrol. The flanks and rear may often be pushed ahead of the patrol. The flanks and rear may often be sufficiently protected if different men riding with the patrol are made responsible for keeping a look out on each flank and to the rear, both when the patrol is moving and when halted.

4. Patrols employed upon protective duties should usually carry their rifles drawn ready for use in order that in case of attack or ambush early information may be conveyed to the troops in the vicinity.

5. Any place likely to harbour an ambush, such as a wood, ravine, or village, if it cannot be avoided, must be approached with caution. Scouts should be sent forward and round it before the whole patrol approaches within close range. It is usually best for advanced scouts to move quickly when near such a position, so as to discover the presence of any enemy concealed in or behind the position. By moving fast the risk of being hit by the fire from an ambush is lessened.

6. When in the vicinity of the enemy patrols should vary the direction of their march when they get under cover, so that they emerge from the cover at a place where they are not expected by the enemy. In this way they reduce the risk of capture.

139. *Gaining information.*

1. Information may be gained by personal observation of the enemy; by questioning the inhabitants, prisoners and others; by tapping telegraph wires, taking letters and newspapers from the post offices; or by observation of tracks, dust, fires, deserted camp-grounds, uniforms, &c.

2. In questioning prisoners and hostile inhabitants it is as well that each should be examined out of the hearing of the others. The questioner should endeavour to lead them to suppose that he knows more than he really does about the subject, and give the impression that to many of his questions he already knows the answers, but is putting them to test the truth of the speaker.

3. Men not accustomed to seeing large numbers of troops are apt to exaggerate their strength, a fault which a scout should be careful to avoid.

A scout should know what are the usual formations of the enemy, and what are the normal strengths of his various units.

Troops moving along a road or defile, may be timed passing a certain point. For each minute, the following numbers would approximately go past:

Cavalry at a walk, in sections .....	120
Cavalry at a trot, in sections .....	240
Artillery guns, or wagons, at a walk .....	5
Infantry in fours .....	200

4. Information as to the uniforms of the enemy, number of regiment on the button or badges, &c, may be of great use.

140. *Reports.*

(See also "Field Service Regulations, Part I," and the "Manual of Map Reading and Field sketching.")

1. The writer should be careful to state the time and place of despatch, and also to give the the position he holds as well as his name.

2. He should avoid giving unnecessary detail, and when time permits and the message is long he should give a summary of the report.

The writing should be so clear that it can be read easily in a bad light.

Indelible pencil should not be used, for messages written with indelible pencil become unreadable if exposed to moisture.

4. It is usually advisable to keep a copy of all messages sent, so that the writer can refer to his former messages and correct or confirm information already transmitted.

141. *Transmission of information.*

1. However valuable the information obtained by reconnoitring parties may be, it is of little use unless it reaches the commander of the force in time for him to act upon it. Great care should be taken therefore to ensure that all information is transmitted to its destination safely and rapidly.

2. Skilfully placed connecting posts will much facilitate the transmission of information.

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Their number and strength will be regulated by the nature of the country, the attitude of the inhabitants, the proximity of the enemy, and the troops available.

As a general rule when a reconnoitring detachment is to proceed a considerable distance its commander should drop his own connecting posts as he advances.

These should be carefully hidden, well away from villages and towns, and close to water. In certain circumstances it may be advisable to entrench them or to make them sufficiently strong otherwise to withstand the attack of hostile detachments.

Every man in the reconnoitring detachment should know where connecting posts are situated.

3. The despatch rider should be a man of resource, capable of finding his way across country. As a reconnoitring detachment advances the despatch riders, who should be detailed before the party starts, should have their attention drawn to all the roads and other routes likely to be useful on their return journey.

4. The name of the person to whom the despatch is addressed, and the place in which he may be found, must be explained clearly to the despatch rider.

It will often be advisable for despatch riders to work in pairs, for confidence is greatly increased by company. Important despatches must be sent in duplicate by different routes, and it may be advisable to employ officers to carry them.

5. The sender of a verbal message should always make the messenger repeat the message before leaving. The orderly should usually be told the contents of a written message.

6. All messengers on approaching a body of troops or group of officers should call out loudly and without hesitation the unit or rank and name of the officer to whom the despatch or message is to be delivered.

Messengers should as a rule dismount immediately after handing a message to an officer. If the latter is in an exposed position or under fire, the man should dismount, hand his horse over, and come up on foot. A dismounted messenger, after handing over his message to an officer in an exposed position or under fire, should lie down.

Messengers should when possible be given receipts for their messages.

### *142. The despatch of a patrol or larger detachment on an independent mission.*

1. When time permits written orders in addition to verbal instructions should be given to the patrol or detachment leader.

He should be informed:

- i. what is known of the enemy and of the area and inhabitants of the country in which he is to operate.
- ii. The probable moves of neighbouring reconnoitring detachments as far as they concern him.
- iii. What information is required.
- iv. Approximately to what distance and in what direction he must go.
- v. About how long he may expect to be away.
- vi. Where reports are to be sent and by what means.

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He should be given an opportunity of considering his orders and of asking questions on any point that is not clear to him.

Scouts when sent out on a mission should receive similar instructions.

The copy of the instructions given to the patrol leader should be destroyed before the patrol or detachment starts.

2. When patrols or detachments have to march considerable distance success will to a great extent depend on the careful arrangements and preparations made by the patrol or detachment leader before starting.

Such questions as the time of starting, supplies, transport, water on the march, possible positions for connecting posts must all be weighed, and a clearly defined plan of action must be adopted.

3. If any supplies, &c., other than those carried on the horses are taken it is most important that only the minimum necessary should accompany the detachment or patrol, and that they should be carried on the best and most suitable transport available.

4. After receiving his instructions and forming his plan of action the leader should explain his instructions and intentions to his subordinates, so that every man may know how to carry on the duty in the event of accidents.

He should warn them that if captured and questioned they should refuse to give any information beyond stating their rank and name, and tell them that in civilised warfare by international custom they cannot be punished for refusing to give any further information.

*143. The leading of a patrol or larger reconnoitring detachment sent on an independent mission.*

1. Common sense rather than rules must guide the conduct of a reconnoitring detachment or patrol. The leader may employ mobility, deception, force, or extreme boldness in order to obtain information; safety may be sought in mobility, secrecy, or a wise choice of routes. But to obtain the required information it is essential that he must not be drawn away from his mission.

The action reconnaissance must as a rule be carried out by the leader of a patrol; the men who accompany him being employed to provide his protection and to transmit his messages.

2. The normal method of advance in daylight is to move rapidly from one suitable position to another, feeling the way forward on each occasion by detaching scouts. By advancing in this manner the patrol is less liable to be surprised and the leader obtains more time for observation than would be the case if the patrol moved at a regular pace throughout the journey. The general rate of advance will depend on the proximity of the enemy and the nature of the country; when there is reasonable ground for belief that the enemy is at a distance the time spent in searching ground may be curtailed.

3. Security on all sides should be assured; the commander or a reconnoitring detachment should, however, keep the greater part of his force well concentrated, the numbers employed on protective duty being reduced to a minimum.

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4. Information will usually be obtained in the daytime; but when it is impossible to move forward in daylight without being discovered, it may be advisable to move by night up to the neighbourhood of the enemy, and to observe by day from a concealed position.

5. When moving by day, every precaution must be taken to avoid being seen by the enemy. Should the patrol come under the observation of the enemy every effort must be made to mislead him as to the commander's intentions. When in the immediate neighbourhood of the enemy it may be advisable to avoid the roads, where hoof marks or dust may betray the presence of the patrol. Scouts should keep in the shadows as much as possible whether by day or night. The light of the sun on a bright button or on the polished seat of a saddle may disclose the presence of an otherwise hidden patrol.

Halts for the night should be made in isolated woods or lonely farms, the inhabitants of which have been seized, and which the enemy's patrols are not likely to visit. If small detachments halt before darkness sets in, they should change their position after dark; it will usually be safer to change the position even when a halt is made after dark. They should be clear of their night resting places before daybreak.

The commander of a party halted should post a few look-out men to watch in each direction, and the men should rest by their horses.

6. No man should carry any written instructions or private diaries or papers, such as might give information to an enemy.

In the presence of civilians whether friendly or otherwise no mention should be made of the direction from which the detachment or patrol has come or of the intended advance; it is often advisable to give the inhabitants false information.

7. A patrol on finding the enemy should as a rule send in a report and then, unless such action would be contrary to instructions, should follow him up, watching from safe hiding places. Detailed information as to his strength, dispositions, and moves should be sent in as soon as obtained.

8. If the enemy is not found where he was expected, the reconnoitre should consider what his commander would require him to do; as a rule, negative information should be sent back.

9. Although patrols are not sent out with primary object of fighting, and although they should seldom fight if without it they can attain their object by a careful use of the ground, it must be clearly understood that if they suddenly meet small parties of the enemy the assumption of a resolute offensive will often be their best course of action.

10. If a patrol is cut off by the enemy, its members must make every effort to get away, so that at least one may arrive back with the information already gained, if necessary scattering and rallying again at the last halting place if no other place has been pre-arranged. Every member of a patrol, while advancing in an enemy's country, must take notice of all landmarks and distances as he goes along, so as to be able to

find his way; subsequently, when moving back, he should not usually adhere actually to the road by which he came, as that may lead him into ambushes. When working in the presence of any enemy, patrols must never cease their attempts to obtain the required information. They must be both bold and cunning, and if stopped at one point they must try again at some other.

11. During reconnaissance when the opposing armies are not far distant from each other it may often be advisable for the detachment to dismount and open fire in order to engage the enemy's attention, whilst its patrols move forward to suitable points for observation from which the attention of the enemy has been diverted.

144. *Ground scouts.*

1. The duties of ground scouts are to ascertain whether the ground in the immediate vicinity is passable, to point out obstacles, and to indicate the best points of passage.

Reconnaissance of ground from a tactical point of view is not their function. The use of ground scouts, therefore, in no way obviates the necessity for reconnaissance of the ground by specially detailed officers. (Sec. 147.)

2. The number of scouts employed, and the distance to which they are to go out, will depend upon the size of the force, the nature of the ground, and the rapidity with which the body is moving. They should not, however, be more numerous than is absolutely necessary, and whilst sufficiently in advance to give ample warning of obstacles, should never be out of sight of the body of troops for which they are scouting.