

Specvlatores

Profile description

Specvlatores are a reconnaissance sub-unit operating within military units, assigned special tasks ranging broadly from scouting to ensuring the army's success even before battle. They carried out their missions in small detachments in order to conduct intelligence-gathering effectively. Their ranks could even include local warriors and guides serving in the auxiliary forces of the Roman armies. Their main task was to gather information for the legions concerning the activity of the enemy army and terrain conditions. They were a unit of the Roman army whose task was to collect as much information as possible about the enemy, his forces, and his actions through covert operations.

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Tasks and duties

Specvlatores are the equivalent of modern "commandos" assigned to special tasks. They have a broad range of duties, including carrying out:

- reconnaissance missions, including mounted long-range reconnaissance, and scouting along the Legion's marching route and in its area of operation, reporting all suspicions and irregularities, such as detected traps, terrain and natural hazards, and obstacles affecting the march of the units.
- sweeps of the surrounding area in order to detect enemy forces, gather necessary information about their location, activity, numbers, and their weak and strong points.
- marching far ahead of the head of the legion, securing the route and removing terrain obstacles in order to facilitate the passage of the troops
- sabotage of enemy machines, camp fortifications, or other strategic objects
- selecting a favourable site for the construction of a camp, which must provide:
 - a source of water
 - natural defence in the form of, for example, an elevated position, a rocky slope... etc.
- interrogations and torture of prisoners / deserters in order to extract the required information
- spreading rumours within the enemy faction and disseminating propaganda.

Construction of the camp

Specvlatores mark out the site on which the camp will be raised before the Legions arrive. After selecting the terrain for the castrvm, they immediately establish the layout of the tents and the course of the fortifications in cooperation with the [Cvstos Castrorum](#) and the [Centurio](#). They then proceed, together with the soldiers, to supervise the course of the works.

Creating plans for battles and demonstrations

Before each battle, the **Specvlatores** inform others about and outline a situational plan of the place where the clash is to take place. They provide information primarily on:

- the shape of the terrain and ways of using it to the advantage of the Legions
- the numbers, mentality, habits, types, and morale of the enemy troops
- possible locations of ambushes and hidden enemy positions

Daily duties

The head of intelligence manages the unit subordinate to him and organises at least one intelligence operation per day — and, in exceptionally threatened regions where the Legion is stationed, as many as two per day — as well as additional missions assigned by the command, in the number and scope determined by the [Centurio](#) or [Optio](#).

In consultation with the [Tesserarius](#), and based on his knowledge and reports concerning threats in the area, he outlines a draft plan for the defence of the camp in emergencies requiring armed intervention. They designate assembly points, defensive positions to which individual Contubernia will be sent, and special tasks such as the protection of the civilian population working within its area.

Staff meetings

The head of the intelligence network submits a situational report to the officers in the Praetorium on the state of security of the army and the threats present in the area. He informs them of all changes, suspicious activities in the vicinity, and the proposed safe marching route.

External links

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