

Divisional SHORAD: Using Historical Examples to Build a Future Formation

by CPT Leopoldo Negrete

The average armor or infantry Soldier has probably never met an air-defense-artillery (ADA) Soldier wearing the same divisional patch. The 14-series military-occupation specialty Soldiers in a division usually serve in either the air-defense airspace-management/brigade aviation element, the air-missile-defense (AMD) element in the G-3 or the Sentinel radar section in the division artillery. Further, most 14-series Soldiers serve in one of the Army Air and Missile Defense Commands around the world.

However, it will soon be a common sight to see air defenders wearing division patches.

As a young tanker on my first National Training Center (NTC) rotation in 2001, I was part of Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 34th Armor, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division. During a break in the battle, a Bradley vehicle pulled up next to our Abrams tank. I assumed it belonged to our sister infantry battalion, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment. I looked at the bumper number that read “4-3 ADA” instead of “1-16 IN.” I asked myself, “Who are these Soldiers wearing the same patch as myself, riding in a Bradley, but are not infantry?”

I approached the two Soldiers who had dismounted from the Bradley and had a good conversation about the roles and capabilities of the Bradley Stinger Fighting Vehicle (BSFV). The BSFV carried a dismounted Stinger team in addition to the vehicle crew. I was relieved to know there were air defenders organic to 1st Infantry Division fighting right next to my tank.

ADA and maneuver forces

The relationship between ADA and maneuver forces traces its history back to World War II. “In 1942, after the North African invasion, [GEN] Jacob Devers, commander of the Armored Command, and [GEN] Dwight D. Eisenhower, Operation Torch commander, argued that antiaircraft artillery was needed continuously by ground units,” according to an Office Chief of Air-Defense Artillery (OCADA) publication.¹

Soon thereafter, ADA units were organic to divisions for almost 60 years. When Task Force Centurion (1st Battalion, 34th Armor) deployed to Kuwait in Fall 2001 for Operation Intrinsic Action, a platoon of BSFVs deployed as part of the task force. When 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, deployed to Iraq in Fall 2003, Charlie Battery, 4-3 ADA deployed as part of the brigade. The 4-3 ADA was an integral part of the Big Red One. They fought next to infantry and Armor Soldiers and were tasked with many of the same missions as their fellow Devil Brigade brothers and sisters. Those tasks included many non-ADA tasks. This was not unique to 4-3 ADA but was common to every other divisional short-range air-defense (SHORAD) battalion.

During the mid-2000s, the Army removed the SHORAD battalions from divisions. There were no enemy rotary or fixed-wing aircraft to pose a threat to maneuver forces in Iraq or Afghanistan. The Army needed other capabilities in both the brigade combat teams (BCTs) and air defense. SHORAD units were inactivated or reflagged. The 4-3 ADA was stripped of its Bradley vehicles and eventually converted to a Patriot battalion. The need for high-to-medium altitude air-defense capabilities exceeded those of SHORAD. After 60 years, SHORAD was no longer organic to divisions.

Rebirth of SHORAD

Recent conflicts around the world have brought SHORAD back to the forefront. There are many examples of how unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) can be a pivotal factor in combat operations. Also, a layered air-defense system can vastly reduce or eliminate a force’s ability to provide close-air support, as we have seen in Ukraine. The proliferation of UAS and our ability to conduct multidomain operations re-established SHORAD’s relevancy on the modern battlefield.

This is why air-defense modernization is a priority. GEN Mark Milley said in 2017: “None of this is going to matter if you’re dead, and that’s why you need air defense.”²

The 1st Cavalry Division (6-56 ADA) and 1st Armored Division (4-60 ADA) are the first two divisions to receive a SHORAD battalion organic to their formations. These two battalions, along with 5-4 ADA in Europe, are part of the Army's modernization effort to meet the current strategic environment. These battalions will be fielded with Maneuver-SHORAD (M-SHORAD) and additional ADA systems. The Army plans to field more SHORAD battalions across other divisions.

So why place M-SHORAD on a Stryker platform? "The M-SHORAD battalions provide a maneuverable and survivable air-defense capability in direct support of BCTs and the subordinate maneuver battalions against rotary-wing and fixed-wing aircraft and UASs," according to Field Manual (FM) 3-01.44, *Short-Range Air-Defense Operations*.³ The Army did not bring back the BSFV or the upgraded Bradley Linebacker with mounted Stinger pods, and it is also not investing in the Avenger.

"The Avenger air-defense system entered the Army inventory in 1988 and has not seen a major upgrade since 2004," according to Mann, Mathews and Mahon. "It is a rear-area air-defense system, not designed to support a maneuvering force, and it would not survive nor be effective in defending a heavy force on the move. M-SHORAD is the right solution to solving this operational need."⁴

The Army is working diligently to ensure ADA has the most modern technology in the fight.

There is also the Directed Energy (DE) M-SHORAD. DE M-SHORAD is a Rapid Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office project that will mount a laser weapon system to a Stryker chassis. What this capability will look like and how it will be incorporated into division SHORAD battalions is yet to be seen. There are many ADA modernization projects out there; however, M-SHORAD is the backbone of the division SHORAD battalion.

While I was attending the ADA Captain's Career Course, I was informed there was a possibility I would be joining 4-60 ADA as my follow-on assignment. As a former enlisted tanker, I was excited about the possibility of working with an armored formation again. As a future battery commander, I could envision the challenge of training my platoon leaders and vehicle commanders in maneuvering with an armored formation. ADA has not maneuvered with an armored formation in 20 years. There is also no current doctrine for M-SHORAD at battery level and below.

However, as an historian I looked to the past, referencing my copy of FM 71-1, *Tank and Mechanized Infantry Company Team*.⁵ This FM is easy to read and full of illustrations on offensive and defensive operations on the micro level. If I had this as a tanker, I knew there also had to be a BSFV SHORAD FM. I located FM 43-44, *Bradley Stinger Fighting Vehicle Platoon and Squad Operations*.⁶ This was the perfect gold mine I needed to develop training and products until the Army publishes updated doctrine.

FM 44-43 is also easy to read, with many illustrations on formation and movement techniques at platoon and squad level. It covers offensive and defensive operations in support of a battalion task force. FM 44-43, along with FM 71-1, are the historical foundations to begin the process of relearning M-SHORAD. A soon-to-be-published 4-60 ADA Battalion tactical standing operating procedure (TACSOP) will incorporate the doctrine found in these two publications. It will be a TACSOP we will share with not only our fellow air defenders but also our maneuver brothers and sisters.

A division SHORAD battalion in 2001 was composed of three BSFV batteries and one Avenger battery, in addition to the maintenance and headquarters battery. The BSFV batteries were task-organized to support one BCT each. The Avenger battery was normally tasked to provide ADA coverage for the division command post and the division-support area. At the BCT level, the BSFV platoons were task-organized based on the brigade commander's guidance. Normally, one platoon would support a task force. In a task force, the platoon would be split into sections to support company teams.

In 2003, most mechanized divisions looked the same, so division SHORAD battalions in support of mechanized divisions looked the same. The battlefield is changing with emerging technology and modern threats. Army divisions will be designed to support a variety of different objectives. With that in mind, division SHORAD battalions should not be a cookie-cutter design as in 2003. Each SHORAD battalion should reflect the division it is assigned to.

Building relationships

What can a division SHORAD battalion provide right now? A valuable resource. Building positive relationships now can pay dividends in the future. Currently we cannot accompany brigades to NTC or their next operational deployment. We can, however, begin building support relationships.

The Mission Training Complex (MTC) provides many valuable resources to provide training in the digital realm. Our formations have master gunners who can conduct and evaluate sustainment training for a division's 14M additional-skills identifier (ASI) population. (14M is the ASI awarded to non-ADA Soldiers who complete Stinger-team training.) Every commander at every level is responsible for air defense; we can provide the subject-matter experts to support training for non-dedicated combined-arms air defense.

February 2023 CPX

In February 2023, 4-60 ADA supported 1st Armored Division during a command-post exercise (CPX) at Fort Bliss, TX. Our battalion sent a team to augment the division AMD section and provide operators for the BIZWIZ system at MTC. It was a great opportunity for our battalion to integrate into the division. The 4-60 ADA team learned a lot from its participation and seeing how the division fights. Relationships were established at every step from planning to the final after-action report.

One of the lessons-learned was how to control a division SHORAD battalion on BIZWIZ. M-SHORAD platoons and sections were spread across the entire battlefield. More operators were needed to support each brigade or battalion's scheme of maneuver and tactical tasks. In addition to the more BIZWIZ operators, an air-defense response cell was needed to deconflict and coordinate with supported units. For example, it is a challenge to provide air-defense coverage to a divisional Cavalry squadron or regiment spread out in front of a division. However, by working together, any challenge can be overcome.

Those of us currently serving in M-SHORAD battalions wish we could snap our fingers and have all our equipment fielded this week. The Army and its partners are moving as fast as they can to have all M-SHORAD battalions fielded as quickly as possible. As M-SHORAD and other systems are fielded, we will begin the process of relearning how to provide SHORAD to a maneuver force. Our maneuver brothers and sisters will also need to relearn how we can integrate within their formations. The process will be long and challenging, but exciting and rewarding at the same time. However, we will not be doing anything that hasn't been done before. I acknowledge that multidomain operations during large-scale combat operations have changed the battlefield, yet the fundamentals are the same.

Maneuver units also need to ensure ADA Soldiers are part of the planning process and understand the scheme of maneuver. "In offensive situations, BSFV or Bradley Linebacker units will accompany the main attack. They may maneuver with the task force's lead company teams, orienting on low-altitude air avenues of approach," according to FM 71-1. M-SHORAD will also need to accompany the main attack. Having air defense in a close fight is where M-SHORAD will be expected to deny the enemy air support. Condition checks will need to be established and communication will be key to ensure successful re-integration.

Air defenders have had a very specific way of doing things for the last 20 years. We have focused on asset protection from fixed or semi-fixed positions. Most ADA units have been deploying to a "base" to provide air defense at the operational level. However, our training and future doctrine will need to focus on now providing air defense at the tactical level. FM 3-01.44 is a good first step in the right direction for integration.

SHORAD doctrine states that "SHORAD supports the specific mission of the supported commander against air threats."⁷ This is true from an ADA section all the way to the division SHORAD battalion. Although air-defense employment is guided by employment tenants, there is no directive on how to deploy SHORAD units.⁸ Furthermore, "The SHORAD mission is defined by the BCT or battalion task-force commander, who assigns air-defense priorities."⁹

Air-defense commanders will have an implied responsibility to teach capability/employment to our maneuver commanders and cultural changes will need to occur. This can happen now during warfighter exercises on the macro level. SHORAD battery commanders and platoon leaders can also begin to dialogue and share techniques, tactics and procedures with battalion/company-level commanders and staff. Joint leader professional development and platoon-level field-training exercises with maneuver units are methods of creating a shared

understanding among junior leaders and Soldiers. As stated earlier, building relationships and trust now can pay dividends in the future.

Maneuver doctrine also needs to change to reflect the addition of divisional SHORAD. Current doctrine states, “A ground force’s primary air-defense systems are joint fighter aircraft, such as today’s F-22 and F-18s, conducting offensive counter-air operations operated by the joint-force air-component commanders.”¹⁰ With M-SHORAD, even company commanders will have a dedicated air-defense system at their level. Employment of those systems will take a team effort. FM 71-1, Chapter 6, Section 3, has a good description on ADA support.

There is also the subject of M-SHORAD being used in a ground-support role. M-SHORAD vehicle crews will need to know how to fight their vehicle against ground targets. The ability to incorporate into a maneuver formation to accomplish tasks not associated with air defense cannot be overlooked. Platform proficiency on M-SHORAD will be key.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom in March of 2003, COL Charles Branson earned a Silver Star while in a ground-support role in a Bradley Linebacker. Branson, who was a captain and a battery commander at the time, was given a tactical mission order by the commander of 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division. His mission was to secure a bridge with his two Bradley Linebacker platoons and was also given a platoon of tanks from 3-69 Armor.¹¹ According to Branson’s Silver Star citation, “An air-defense battery commander leading a Bradley and tank company team in an attack was unprecedented.”¹² Branson’s actions were bold and aggressive in securing the bridge and setting up Task Force 3-69 Armor for success. We will need to train our air-defense leaders and Soldiers to be able to execute any mission.

I hope what I experienced at NTC in 2001 will become a common scene soon. I already picture a young tanker approaching a young air defender, having conversations about the roles and capabilities of M-SHORAD. Both ADA and maneuver leaders will have challenges as the integration of SHORAD begins at every division; however, with a good attitude and a drive to make positive change, nothing is impossible. The 4-60 ADA mission is “the enemy will not surveil, target, interdict or attack our formations from the air.” This is a promise we plan to keep. The future looks bright.

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Notes

¹ Frank J. Caravella, *First to Fire*, Fort Bliss, TX: OCADA, 1995.

² David L. Mann, Roger F. Mathews and Francis G. Mahon, “None of This Is Going to Matter if You’re Dead”: Modernizing Integrated Air and Missile Defense Must Remain Army’s Top Priority,” *Real Clear Defense*, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/06/16/none_of_this_is_going_to_matter_if_youre_dead__modernizing_integrated_air_and_missile_defense_must_remain_armys_top_priority_115381.html.

³ FM 3-01.44, *Short-Range Air-Defense Operations*, Headquarters Department of the Army: Washington, DC, July 21, 2022.

⁴ Mann, Mathews and Mahon.

⁵ FM 71-1, *Tank and Mechanized Infantry Command Team*, Headquarters Department of the Army: Washington, DC, Jan. 26, 1998.

⁶ FM 44-43, *Bradley Stinger Fighting Vehicle and Squad Operations*, Headquarters Department of the Army: Washington, DC, Oct. 3, 1995.

⁷ FM 3-01.44.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense, Volume 1*, Headquarters Department of the Army: Washington, DC, April 13, 2015.

¹¹ *Military Times*, “Charles Earnel Branson,” The Hall of Valor Project, <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/3833>.

¹² Ibid.

Acronym Quick-Scan

ADA – air-defense-artillery

AMD – air-missile-defense

ASI – additional-skills identifier

BCT – brigade combat team

BSFV – Bradley Stinger Fighting Vehicle

CPX – command-post exercise

DE – directed energy

FM – field manual

M-SHORAD – maneuver short-range air defense

MTC – Mission Training Complex

NTC – National Training Center

OCADA – Office Chief of Air-Defense Artillery

SHORAD – short-range air-defense

TACSOP – tactical standing operating procedure

UAS – unmanned aircraft system