

OPTIMUM ORGANIZATION OF THE RIFLE SQUAD

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The United States Army Infantry School  
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SUBJECT: Rifle Squad Organization

1. PROBLEM. To determine the optimum organization of the rifle squad for maximum control in combat.
2. ASSUMPTIONS.
  - a. The mission of the rifle squad will not change.
  - b. The minimum effective strength of the squad is six men and a leader. In combat, an attrition rate of 25 per cent can be expected. The squad, therefore, should be authorized ten men.
  - c. Current manpower and materiel resources can provide the additional personnel and equipment for reorganization.
3. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM.
  - a. The mission of the rifle squad, as a part of the platoon, is to close with and destroy or capture the enemy through fire, maneuver, and close combat. (1:3)
  - b. Control is the exercise of authority by a leader to insure the accomplishment of a mission according to plans, orders, and established principles. (8:5) It is the leader's greatest problem. (12:38)
  - c. The rifle squad must possess firepower, staying power, flexibility, and control. (1:14 and 4:D-5) The ~~minimum~~<sup>optimum</sup> size of the squad is a function of firepower and sustention; the ~~minimum~~<sup>maximum</sup>, a function of control. (2:29)
  - d. Control in a unit is affected by the following factors: the mission, unity of command, delegation of authority, and span of control. (Annex C)
  - e. The essence of control in the squad is communication. (1:19)
  - f. There are three types of line organizations.
    - (1) The unstructured organization has a fixed strength and no subordinate elements. (4:E-6)
    - (2) The semi-structured organization has a fixed strength and two or more subordinate elements in which the strengths may vary. (4:E-6)
    - (3) The structured organization has a fixed strength and two or more subordinate elements in which the strengths do not vary. (4:E-6)
4. DISCUSSION.
  - a. The rifle squad must be able to divide itself rapidly into two separate teams, the fire support and maneuver elements.

The two teams must be interchangeable, and each must be able to engage in close combat. The unstructured squad does not adequately provide for subdivision. Interchangeability is lacking in the semi-structured squad. The structured squad, however, has two permanent and equal teams, each of which can perform fire support, maneuver, or close combat missions. (Annexes A and D)

- b. The assumed size of the squad exceeds the number of men which can be controlled by one leader. Either the leader must be authorized an assistant or the squad must be subdivided. (Annexes C and E)
  - c. Unity of command is violated in the unstructured and semi-structured squads. It is observed in the structured organization. (Annexes A and E)
  - d. In the unstructured and semi-structured squads, the assistant squad leader and the fire team leader are not given the authority to function properly. In the structured squad, the fire team leader is responsible to the squad leader for the performance of his team. He has the requisite power. (Annex E)
  - e. The squad needs radios for intra-squad communication. The current squad has none. In the proposed organization, the squad leader has a receiver-transmitter and the fire team leader, a receiver. (Annexes A, B, and D)
5. CONCLUSIONS.
- a. The unstructured squad is unsatisfactory because its capability to execute fire and maneuver is limited.
  - b. The semi-structured squad, the ROAD squad, is not acceptable. The flexibility imposed upon it increases the leader's control problem. It violates unity of command and delegation of authority. Its fire teams are not equal.
  - c. The structured squad affords maximum control.
  - d. The fire team is the basic element for close combat. It consists of a fighting leader and four men.
  - e. The rifle squad is the basic element for maneuver. It is the smallest combat unit capable of executing fire and maneuver. The primary function of the squad leader is to control his two fire teams.
6. ACTION RECOMMENDED.
- a. That the conclusions stated above be approved.
  - b. That the attached Proposed Rifle Squad Organization (Annex A) be adopted.

  
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ANNEXES: A - Proposed Rifle Squad Organization  
B - ROAD Rifle Squad  
C - Basic Considerations  
D - Mission of the Rifle Squad  
E - Span of Control, Unity of Command, and Delegation of  
Authority  
F - Bibliography

CONCURRENCES: (Omitted)

NONCONCURRENCES: (Omitted)

CONSIDERATION OF NONCONCURRENCES: (Omitted)

ANNEXES ADDED: (Omitted)

ACTION BY APPROVING AUTHORITY:

\_\_ January 1968

Approved (disapproved), including (excluding) exceptions.

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## Annex A -- Proposed Rifle Squad Organization

### 1. Organization and Equipment.

1	SSG	Squad Leader	11B40	Note 1
2	SGT	Fire Team Leader	11B40	Note 2
2	Sp4	Automatic Rifleman	11B20	
2	Sp4	Grenadier	11B20	
4	Pfc	Rifleman	11B10	

- Note 1: Equipped with Radio Set AN/PRT-4 and AN/PRR-9.  
Note 2: Equipped with Radio Receiver AN/PRR-9 only.

### 2. Schematic Organization.

	Squad Leader	
Fire Team Leader		Fire Team Leader
Automatic Rifleman		Automatic Rifleman
Grenadier		Grenadier
Riflemen (2)		Riflemen (2)

### 3. Mission.

- a. The basic combat mission of the rifle squad is to close with and destroy or capture the enemy by means of fire and maneuver, fire and movement, and close combat or to repel his assault by fire and close combat.
- b. The squad is the basic element of maneuver, the smallest combat unit capable of employing fire and maneuver.
  - (1) A leader and two fire teams make up the squad. It is augmented by attaching to it an additional fire team, a machine gun team, or an anti-tank team. The total number of subordinate elements, organic and attached, should never exceed five.
  - (2) Normally, the squad operates as part of the platoon. It may, however, be given limited, semi-independent missions such as occupying combat outposts or patrolling.
- c. The fire team is the basic element for close combat.
  - (1) The fire team, shown above, is a permanent organization, an integral part of the rifle squad. It can function effectively at a reduced strength of three men.
  - (2) The fire team maneuvers against and assaults enemy forces, or it supports by fire another maneuver unit. It must be prepared to change rapidly from one role to the other as required by the situation.
  - (3) While the fire team is usually employed as a part of the squad, it may be used for limited, semi-independent missions such as local or march security or reconnaissance patrols. When it is employed separately, the fire team must be augmented with communications personnel and equipment.

CONTINUATION OF ANNEX A

4. Control.

- a. The squad leader is responsible for the discipline, training, welfare, control, and tactical employment of his squad and for the combat readiness of its equipment. He controls the squad through the team leaders.
  - b. The fire team leader leads the fire team. He is a fighting leader, responsible to the squad leader for the discipline, training, welfare, control, and tactical employment of his team and for the maintenance of its equipment. He exercises control through direct communication and personal contact with his men.
5. Flexibility. The rifle squad adapts itself to changing conditions by grouping permanently organized teams under one leader rather than by internally reorganizing the individual members of the squad.

Annex B -- ROAD Rifle Squad

1. Extract, TOE 7-47G. (3:153)

1	SSG	Squad Leader	11B40	Note 1
2	SGT	Fire Team Leader	11B40	
2	Sp4	Automatic Rifleman	11B20	
2	Sp4	Grenadier	11B20	
3	Pfc	Rifleman	11B10	

Note 1: The squad leader is equipped with the Radio Set AN/PRC-6. It is employed on the platoon radio net.

2. Schematic Organization. (1:4)

Squad Leader

Fire Team Leader	Fire Team Leader
Automatic Rifleman	Automatic Rifleman
Grenadier	Grenadier
Rifleman	Rifleman
	Rifleman

Annex C -- Basic Considerations.

1. General. An organization is a group of individuals whose purpose is the accomplishment of a common mission. (7:1)
2. Unity of Command. One man must be responsible for the organization and insure the success of its operation. The net result of having one leader at each operating echelon is that each man knows to whom he reports and each leader knows for whom he is responsible. (7:3)
3. Delegation of Authority. A leader is always totally responsible for his organization and its performance, but he can hold his subordinate leaders responsible to him for the performance or supervision of portions of the overall mission. To be effective, these subordinate leaders must be given the right to make decisions and the power to take action on matters for which they have been given responsibility. (7:9-11)
4. Span of Control. The number of men which one leader can effectively control varies with the experience of the leader, the training of the subordinates, the complexity of the mission, the environment in which the action must be performed, and the distance over which orders must be transmitted. (7:3-8)
  - a. One leader can control only seven men under ideal conditions in the field. (11:27)
  - b. Under combat conditions, one leader can control seven men during daylight and five during the hours of darkness. (6:3)
  - c. A fighting leader, one who adds his own fires to those of his men while exercising control over them, can control only four other men in combat -- two on either side. (9:2-3)

## Annex D -- Mission of the Rifle Squad

1. "A rifle squad is the smallest combat unit under one leader which can be employed tactically -- to utilize within itself a base of fire force and a maneuver force to gain an objective."  
(10:I-8) Once the objective is reached, the squad must engage and defeat the enemy in close combat. (2:21)
  - a. The squad must be able to divide itself into two teams -- one for fire support and one for maneuver -- with a minimum of delay. During their movement to the objective, the teams may be required to exchange missions. One, or both, of them will conduct the assault. (1:230-231)
    - (1) To permit complete interchangeability, the fire support and maneuver elements should be identical. (9:36)
    - (2) To reduce reaction time, eliminate reorganization under pressure, and facilitate teamwork within the elements, they should be permanently constituted. (5:54 and 10:I-18)
  - b. In the execution of fire and maneuver, the elements of the squad may be out of visual and voice contact with each other. An electrical means of intra-squad communication would allow the squad leader to transmit orders to his element leaders without delay and without unnecessarily exposing himself to enemy observation and fire.
2. The unstructured squad (the nine-man squad used during the Korean Conflict is an example) contains no subordinate elements. The formation of fire support and maneuver elements would involve a major reorganization, resulting in delay and possible confusion. (9:18)
3. The ROAD squad (Annex B) is a semi-structured organization because the composition of its fire teams can be altered. (1:4) If the teams are reorganized, delay and confusion could result. The effectiveness of the fire teams would also be reduced. (1:230) In the "standard" configuration, the teams are not identical; thus, they are not completely interchangeable.
4. The structured squad (Annex A) meets all of the requirements mentioned above. The radio receiver with the fire team leaders provides the squad leader with one-way communication with his element leaders.

Annex E -- Span of Control, Unity of Command, and Delegation of Authority

1. Span of Control. War, unlike the proverbial ball game, is not called because of darkness. It continues into the night. Therefore, the number of men for which one leader is to be held responsible should be limited to that number which he can effectively control in the dark -- specifically, five. (Annex C) Since the squad requires ten men to sustain itself and to generate sufficient firepower, it must either be subdivided or its leader must be authorized an assistant.
2. The Unstructured Squad.
  - a. Theoretically, it is possible for two men to control eight others. In the pre-1954 squad, the squad leader maintained a direct relationship with each of his men. The assistant squad leader inherited those personnel whom the squad leader could not supervise. (9:18)
  - b. The assistant leader concept failed because it violated unity of command. The squad leader ran the squad while his assistant checked internal details such as camouflage, dispersion, local security, and execution of orders. Although their areas of interest differed, the men whom they supervised were the same. The squad, in effect, had two heads. As a result, the assistant leader became an over-paid rifleman. (10:C-6)
3. The Semi-structured Squad.
  - a. The ROAD squad (Annex B) can be controlled by the squad leader if he uses his fire team leaders.
  - b. Unity of command does not exist in the current squad. The fire team leaders are excluded from the chain of command. (1:5) The squad leader is permitted to bypass the team leader at any time. (1:231) As in the unstructured squad, the soldiers work for two masters.
  - c. The fire team leaders do not possess the authority that they need to perform effectively. Their exclusion from the chain of command deprives them of all the rights and powers of leadership.
4. The Structured Squad.
  - a. In the proposed rifle squad (Annex A), the squad leader controls two fire team leaders. The team leaders, who are fighting leaders, are responsible for four men each.
    - (1) The employment of a fighting leader in the fire team is the most economical utilization of personnel resources. It provides the same on-line fighting strength as one leader and five subordinates while it reduces the size of the team by one man.
    - (2) The fighter-leader concept also provides for a logical sequence of individual advancement. A soldier is promoted from fighter to fighter-leader to leader.

CONTINUATION OF ANNEX E

- b. Every soldier is a member of a permanently organized fire team which is an integral part of the squad. Each man works for his team leader, who, in turn, works for the squad leader.
- c. The team leaders lead their teams. They are responsible to the squad leader for all that their teams do or fail to do.

Annex F -- Bibliography

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AJIIS-D

17 January 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Instructional Methods Division

SUBJECT: Classified Information

1. This memo has been read and signed by the content evaluator,  
a person with expertise in the subject area.

65<sup>2.</sup> To the best of my knowledge, this staff study (roster number  
, IOAC 1-68) contains no classified information, and in the  
opinion of the undersigned requires no classification IAW AR 380-5.

Robert Lee  
(NAME)

(CONTENT) (EVALUATOR)  
Company Operator  
(DEPARTMENT)