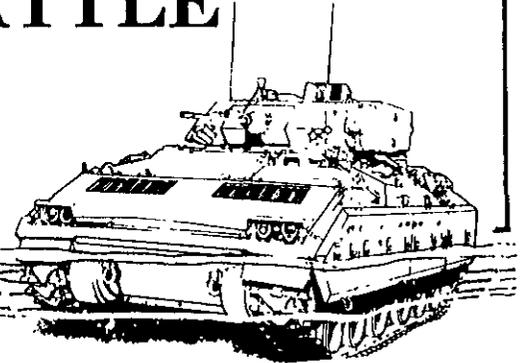


# THE MECHANIZED INFANTRY BATTALION TASK FORCE IN THE AIRLAND BATTLE

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**I**n the next few years, the Army will undergo a number of far-reaching changes, not only in its organizational structure — Division 86, for example — but in its adoption of major new weapon systems. The results will influence how the Army will fight.

The AirLand battle concept is the Army's strategy for implementing these changes. It encompasses a battlefield on which integrated operations will be conducted throughout its depth and extended deep into enemy-held territory.

The U.S. Army Infantry School is considering some ideas for developing combined arms doctrine for the AirLand battle concept and, at the same time, is taking a number of steps toward implementing the concept. The ideas on both development and implementation focus on a mechanized infantry battalion task force and on how the integrated and extended aspects of the AirLand battle might affect it.

## INTEGRATED BATTLEFIELD

A task force commander whose unit is committed to fight on an integrated battlefield will have many things to consider, some of them not necessarily new to him. He will still have to plan to disperse his forces over a wide area; he will still have to be able to concentrate his units quickly at the proper times and places; and he will still have to know how to use the terrain for its shielding effects and the weather to limit his opponent's vision. Similarly, his units will still have to know how to detect toxic agents and how to take the proper precautions for

operating in a contaminated environment.

What will be new is the need for him and commanders at all echelons to incorporate these considerations into their planning and training. Thus, in a defensive operation, the terrain that offers the best position in a non-integrated environment may not be the best terrain on which to position units that face the threat of a nuclear or a chemical attack. This may force the battalion to prepare defensive positions in valleys, other low areas, or towns to place cover between it and the nuclear explosions or chemical agent. And positions that provide good protection against the effects of nuclear weapons may be poor ones for gaining protection against chemical agents.

Plans must be made to move from these positions to better, more defensible terrain after the enemy has employed his weapons but before he closes for the attack. Of course, the task force must also be prepared to fight from its original positions if its opponents should launch an attack immediately after using a nuclear weapon or toxic agents, or if the terrain has been so altered by a nuclear blast as to make a move impractical.

The task force commander must also consider this possible alteration of terrain, because blast effects or contaminated zones can make good avenues of approach impassable, close roads and supply routes between battle positions, and completely alter fields of fire. Positions planned for combat support and combat service support units may also become unusable. Accordingly, the task force commander and his principal subordinates must be ready to make the necessary changes in their unit dispositions before the opposing forces get too close. Engineers must be used wisely because of the assistance they can



provide in digging in and in clearing obstacles.

To counter his opponent's weapon systems, the task force commander can take a number of actions before and during the battle. Deceptive measures are among the most important and must accomplish two things: they must deceive the enemy as to the intentions of the task force, and they must present a false picture of the units' actual dispositions. As his defenses are thinned out to obtain necessary dispersion, the commander must make the enemy believe that a strong, cohesive defense is still in place. Otherwise, the enemy may concentrate his forces and conduct a hasty attack. But in painting such a picture of combat strength, the task force commander must be careful not to paint such a rosy picture that it encourages the opposing force commander to use a nuclear weapon against him.

Further, all combat systems must be protected, particularly the task force's radios, wire nets, and computers, since these are most vulnerable to the electromagnetic pulse from a nuclear explosion. The task force's soldiers can also be ordered to wear all their protective clothing. While this clothing might diminish their in-

dividual performance, it does provide them a good measure of protection that could well mean the difference between winning and losing a battle.

At the same time, the commander should expect a nuclear or chemical attack against his units to cause a large number of personnel casualties and much damage to equipment, as well as psychological stress on an unprecedented scale. The evacuation of personnel casualties and the repair and replacement of equipment will require herculean efforts from all concerned.

If the task force does successfully withstand the blast effects from a nuclear explosion, it will then have to contend with radioactive fallout. The same will hold true for a chemical attack. Because platoons or companies may have to be taken from the front lines to be decontaminated, a process that could take several hours, it is safe to assume that, at times, units may have to fight with contaminated personnel and equipment before they can be withdrawn.

Plans for reconstituting the task force when the need arises must be made above task force level. The brigade reserve can be used to replace a forward unit, for exam-

ple, and that unit can then be moved to a reserve position where it can be reconstituted. The battalion can also help itself by using "straggler platoons" to reconstitute companies.

Although the integrated battlefield will be a challenge, to say the least, it should not be put in a "too hard to handle" box. Instead, how to handle it should be considered now and included in all operational planning and training programs.

**THE DEEP BATTLE**

The integrated battlefield can be thought of as having three complementary components: rear area combat operations, the close-in battle, and the deep battle. Battalions and brigades are normally most concerned with the close-in battle. Divisions and corps fight the close-in battle and the deep battle as part of a unified battle plan.

The goals of the deep battle are to take the pressure off the forces conducting the close-in battle, and to create opportunities for those forces to eventually initiate offensive operations. The objective is to take away some of the opposing force's combat power that might otherwise be brought to bear against the units conducting the close-in battle. Thus, deep attacks can be made against an opposing force's reserve or follow-on units, against its command and control facilities, or against its supporting infrastructure.

While the deep attack usually will be conducted with long-range weapons, including air interdiction sorties, ground maneuver units may conduct deep attacks, either by air assaults or by deliberate ground attacks by combined arms forces equipped with Bradley fighting vehicles and Abrams tanks. Thus, a mechanized infantry battalion task force could be sent around an opposing force's lines or through a gap in them to attack "soft" targets 10 to 15 kilometers behind the front lines. Typical targets would include artillery units, air defense weapons, logistical installations, and command posts. Limited attacks could even be made against maneuver units.

The deep attack itself will closely resemble a raid in that the attacking force should hit quickly, inflict the greatest possible damage, and get out before the opposing force can react. On rare occasions, plans could call for linking up with friendly units at a designated place after the deep attack force had carried out its mission.

Admittedly, the decision to commit a battalion task force to a deep attack could be a risky one. But the tremendous payoff that could result from a successful operation makes it definitely worth considering. It is an operation that is normally planned and controlled by division — the attacking task force must be augmented with enough combat support and combat service support assets to allow it to accomplish its mission and get back to friendly lines. These must include engineer, air defense artillery, and attack helicopter units.

If a decision is made to use a battalion task force in a deep attack, certain requirements must be met before it is sent off.

- The operation should be planned and controlled by

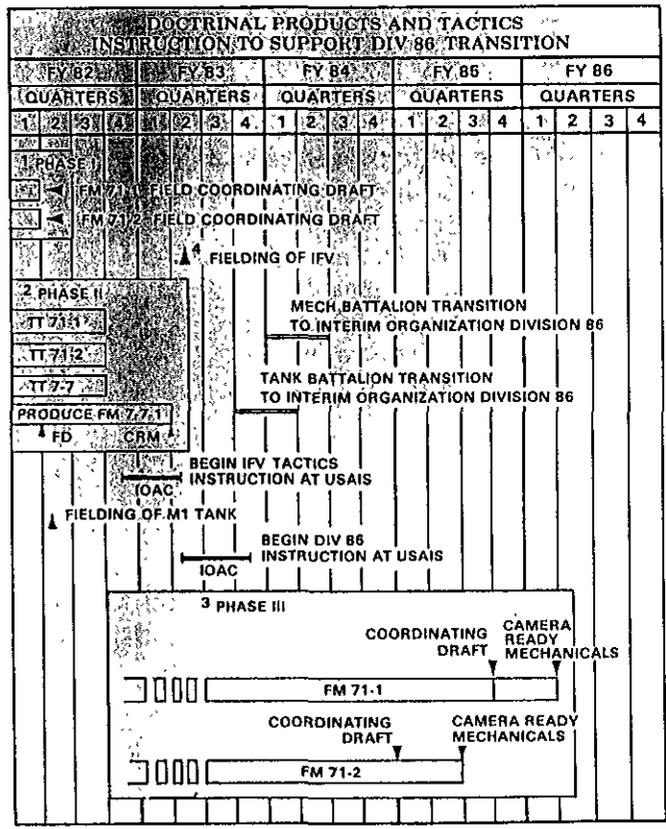
the headquarters of the division to which the task force belongs.

- Intelligence data must be accurate, detailed, and continuous.
- The terrain and weather must lend themselves to a deep attack.
- Fire support, from artillery units and from aerial elements, must be immediately available to the task force all the way to the objective.
- The task force must have plans for treating its personnel casualties since their evacuation might be difficult at best.
- Damaged or disabled vehicles, weapon systems, and other equipment will have to be destroyed in place, and the task force must carry along the necessary means to do the job.
- Detailed plans must be made for the task force to re-enter friendly lines, either as a complete entity or broken into smaller elements.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

The Infantry School recognizes the importance of implementing the AirLand battle concept as quickly as possible. The dates for the introduction of the new family of fighting vehicles and the Division 86 organization, and for the preparation and use of new doctrinal literature are shown in the accompanying chart.

The development of the Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle (BIFV) and its introduction into the Army in early 1983 will form the centerpiece of the Infantry's con-



tribution to the AirLand battle. The Infantry School's BIFV training strategy has been developed to help units field the new vehicles.

The development of doctrinal literature to support that strategy is an important aspect of the School's overall program as well. Based on guidance in the Division 86 Transition Plan, published by Headquarters, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), 8 April 1981, the Infantry School and the U.S. Army Armor Center (USAARMC) have jointly agreed to produce doctrinal publications in three phases.

Phase I includes reviewing FM 71-2, *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force*; FM 71-1, *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Company Team*; and FM 7-20, *The Infantry Battalion (Infantry, Airborne, Air Assault)*. The revision will be based on the changes in doctrine in the latest edition of FM 100-5, *Operations* (Draft). The manuals themselves will be based on the H-series TOE and on such current equipment as the M60 tank and the M113 armored personnel carrier. The manuals are to be fielded in coordinating draft form (soft cover) by April 1982.

Additionally, the Infantry School has sent Special Text 7-7-1, *The Mechanized Infantry Platoon and Squad (BIFV)*, to all service schools and to selected field units and headquarters for review and comment. After the Active Army has converted to the Division 86 organization, all of these manuals will be used by the Reserve Components until they, too, have been reorganized.

During Phase II, the Infantry School will develop training texts (TTs) for mechanized infantry units, and the Armor School will develop training texts for armor units. TT 71-2, *The Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force*; TT 71-1, *The Mechanized Infantry Company Team*; and TT 7-7, *The Mechanized Infantry Platoon/Squad* will be fielded by the Infantry School before 1 July 1982.

These Phase II texts will expand on the Phase I publications to include doctrine for units organized under a Division 86 interim organization and equipped with either old or new equipment, or both. More specifically, these texts will tell a commander how to conduct a battle if his organization is equipped with M1 tanks and M2/M3 fighting vehicles, or with a mixture of M1 tanks and M113s or of M2/M3s and M60 tanks. FM 7-7-1, *The Mechanized Infantry Platoon/Squad (BIFV)*, will also be fielded during this phase.

In Phase III, FM 71-2 and FM 71-1 will be developed

to provide the doctrine needed by units that are organized under the Division 86 scheme and completely equipped with the new systems. These efforts will begin in the latter part of Fiscal Year 1982, but drafts of the publications will not be fielded until the latter part of Fiscal Year 1983.

A second and equally important feature of the overall plan will be the introduction of the AirLand battle concept into the Infantry School's instructional program. The integrated battlefield is now being taught, and classes in the Division 86 organization and in the tactics associated with the BIFV have already begun. Specifically, the transitional mixtures of vehicles (M113/M60A3, M1/M113, M2/M60A3, and M1/M2) and the effects of these mixtures on task organization and tactical employment are being discussed, as well as the effects of the addition of a maneuver company and an anti-tank company in a Division 86 battalion.

The Commandant of the Infantry School has also begun a program to disseminate information to the field on the doctrine and training needed to support the fielding of the new weapon systems, the Division 86 organizations, and the AirLand battle concept. The initial package in that information program, entitled "Dialogue 82," consists of television tapes and magazine articles such as this one.

## THRESHOLD

In the months and years ahead, the Army will undergo many changes, and the Infantry School finds itself on the threshold of a major undertaking. Its initial task is to inform the infantry community on what is happening and to make plans that will help it implement the AirLand battle concept, field the new systems, and move into the Division 86 organization as painlessly as possible.

During the critical transition period ahead, infantry units must be ready to fight if they are called on. The *Infantry School feels that the efforts it has begun will help infantry units everywhere to accomplish that goal.*

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THE AUTHORS, at the time they prepared this article, were serving as writers of the Infantry doctrine at the U.S. Army Infantry School. Colonel Griffis was chief of the Doctrinal Literature Division of the Command, Tactics, and Doctrine Department. Majors Pierce and Sherwood were senior project officers in that Department.

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