

can be almost everywhere — or they can certainly seem to be. Numerous well-trained and imaginatively used snipers can achieve the following objectives:

- They can inflict high losses on enemy officers and NCOs, who can be expected to be up front, particularly in urban combat, where decentralized operations require close contact and supervision.

- They can kill such critical personnel as reconnaissance and communication troops, vehicle commanders, engineers, and exposed artillery crewmen.

- They can force vehicle crews to button up, reducing their vision and thereby increasing the vehicle's vulnerability.

- They can slow an enemy's advance and dilute his offensive capability by making him divert his resources for the clearing, denial, retention, and monitoring of likely sniper locations.

- They can cause heavy losses and increase the psychological strain on the attacker and damage his morale.

No one seriously expects snipers — in whatever numbers — to win every urban battle. The combined efforts of infantry, artillery, combat engineers, armor, and air power may not win every one, either, especially when the defending force is seriously outnumbered. But if an urban defense cannot always defeat an enemy, it can always delay him, disrupt his offensive timetable, tie him down, and in-

lict high losses on him

Friendly forces may have to fight outnumbered, but they do not have to be outfought. A number of well-trained, resourceful snipers, imaginatively employed, well-coordinated and well integrated into the overall defense, could help make the difference between winning and losing.



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Arctic Airborne Mortars

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Alaska, a land of few roads with limited aviation support, lines of communication that are measured in hundreds of miles, and sometimes brutal weather conditions, represents a real challenge to the weapons platoon of an arctic airborne infantry company. I know. I had three years of experience with such a platoon and went through everything Alaska had to offer during three mortar ARTEPs, numerous field training exercises, and year-round training in mountains and muskeg.

From this, I have come to the conclusion that the present MTOE for the weapons platoon in the arctic air-

borne infantry company is not only unworkable, it is also unrealistic. The major problem areas can be grouped under three general headings: manpower, mobility and firepower, and antiarmor capability.

Manpower

Its current MTOE gives the platoon a total of 1 officer and 17 enlisted men. These 18 soldiers must carry three complete 81mm M29 mortars and, during the winter months, must tow a minimum of two akhio tent groups. In addition, each man must

carry his individual weapon and a rucksack. When the unit goes to the field, every man carries either a radio or a major gun component, plus one round of 81mm mortar ammunition. The tent groups are critical during the winter months, and the rucksacks are a must during all seasons of the year. Unfortunately, when the platoon is engaged in a fire mission, no one is available to provide security.

The platoon needs at least eight additional soldiers — two radio-telephone operators in the headquarters squad plus two ammunition bearers in each mortar squad. These would give the platoon enough men to



switch off the heavy loads, to carry more ammunition, and to provide security during its fire missions.

Mobility and Firepower

The platoon now has four M880 series trucks, but it is not authorized any drivers for them. This is probably just as well, since the trucks are seldom used during operational missions. They cannot be air-dropped, their cross-country performance is only marginal, they break down frequently, and spare parts are hard to get. When they are operational the company usually takes them to use as resupply vehicles.

The M880 truck presents other problems as well: It is underpowered, it cannot carry a mortar, its crew, and its authorized ammunition at the same time, and a mortar cannot be carried mounted on the vehicle or fired from it.

Therefore, the platoon is badly in need of a suitable vehicle, one like the M125A1 mortar carrier or the Comando VO-150 armored car. The vehicle must be one with a good cross-country capability, one that a

mortar can be fired from, one that can carry the portion of the basic load of ammunition that goes with the mortar (80 rounds), and one that can be air-dropped and sling-loaded by helicopter. The vehicle should also be equipped with two radios and should have a mount for either a machinegun or an automatic grenade launcher.

The most important thing is for the platoon to have vehicles that are suited to its mission; we should quit trying to fit the platoon's mission to its vehicles.

The right kind of vehicle would also ease the platoon's firepower problems. The platoon requires large quantities of ammunition when it is engaged in combat firing missions. Without appropriate vehicles, the platoon is now forced to rely on its own manpower and on airborne and airmobile sources of resupply. The latter presents great problems in Alaska, because of the distances aircraft have to fly and because of the bad weather conditions that often prevent aircraft from flying.

With vehicles that could be air-dropped along with the soldiers, the platoon's full ammunition load could be moved from its drop zones, and an

adequate resupply effort could be established. As it is, even with airborne and airmobile support, the platoon simply has no way to move large quantities of ammunition when it moves from one firing area to another.

Antiarmor

Because an arctic airborne rifle company does not now have an authorized antiarmor section, I believe an antiarmor section should be formed and assigned to the weapons platoon. Initially, the section would consist of a section sergeant and three three-man gun teams armed with the six 90mm M67 recoilless rifles that the company does have. At a later date, the section could be equipped with the Viper antiarmor weapon and keep the same organization. Each man could carry four or five. The section, of course, would need its own vehicles, three at least.

Without these additional soldiers and these materiel and organizational improvements, the platoon will continue to be tied down to an area within a few kilometers of its base camp, and it will remain severely restricted as to the amount and kind of ammunition it can carry.

With the suggested additions and improvements, the increase in the platoon's mobility and firepower would revolutionize tactics and movement in the Arctic. The changes in manpower, mobility and firepower, and antiarmor organization would enable the platoon to move, shoot, and communicate anytime and anywhere in Alaska.



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