

pocket," so to speak, by having him ride in the commander's vehicle. In the Bradley, these commanders will have to provide the FSO with one of their own two radios or let the FSO ride "blind." No longer will the FSO be able to plug his radio into an "extra" mount in the back of the vehicle.

Future communication equipment will certainly reduce the physical size of the radio itself. Theoretically, four radios of the scaled down SINC-GARS family could fit in the Bradley. Of course, an antenna multi-coupler (allowing two or more radios to use one antenna) would be needed to stay

within the current turret design limitation of two antenna blisters. But the proposed inclusion of PLARS (Position Location and Reporting System, SNAP (Steerable Null Antenna Processor), anti-jam devices, and other developmental devices in the communication station of a commander's Bradley could use up the space saved by smaller radios, once again limiting the commander to two radios.

As advanced weapon systems are integrated into our combat units, writers of tactical doctrine should be aware that the products of modern

technology will affect their tactical studies. Limiting a commander in the Bradley to two radios may not be a real problem, but any agency that is involved in developing tactics for this highly effective weapon system at least has to take it into consideration.

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# Where's the Commander?

CAPTAIN BARRY E. WILLEY

Much has been written about where in a formation the company commander should be when leading his unit, in training or in combat. The consensus among Infantry officers is that the commander should be where he can control his company. But just exactly where is that?

Field Manual 71-1 offers some sound principles to guide the mechanized infantry commander in most situations — mounted and dismounted, while moving and when in contact. But these general principles need to be translated into concrete examples on the ground.

Perhaps some examples from my own experiences as a mechanized infantry company commander in Panama will help. Sometimes I made the right decision, sometimes the wrong one, and sometimes I made a decision that was wrong by the book

but right for the particular situation. (There aren't many textbook cases for the jungles of Panama, where mechanized infantry terrain is scarce.)

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**A commander's boldness and decisiveness in training will carry over into combat. But he must always remember that boldness and brash heroics are distinctly different things.**

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Controlling a mounted or dismounted formation rarely calls for heroics, but it does call for spontaneous, sound judgments and orders. In my first training exercise, when the lead platoon came under fire, my first instinct was to dismount

with my RTO and move to the action, .45 caliber pistol in hand. So that is what I did, and I was promptly "killed" by a nearby controller. It was an embarrassing moment, but I learned a valuable lesson.

Of course, the situation may sometimes make it necessary for a company commander to be at a bottleneck, but he should not step in until his subordinate leader at the scene has tried to solve the problem. Even then, it may not be necessary for him to show up. He can send calm and deliberate instructions by radio, land line, or messenger to the unit in contact, which should allow him to stay where he can control the big picture — near his radio to higher headquarters and to his other subordinate elements. In other words, it is better for him to be in control of the action than *in* the action.

In a mounted movement, the key location for a company commander is where observation and communication are best — where he has good observation of the terrain and excellent communications with his subordinate elements and with his higher command support elements. If he can find such a location, he should not have too much trouble controlling his unit.

For example, during a conventional ARTEP in the only suitable mechanized infantry terrain in Panama, my company was moving to contact using traveling overwatch. The lead platoon encountered a deliberate minefield that was covered by enemy fire and could not be bypassed.

I knew that the platoon leader on the scene, though new, was well-trained and self-confident. Still, I itched to go to his location and speed the process of clearing the minefield and rounding up the enemy resistance. I held back, though, for what seemed like an eternity, keeping my command track in defilade with my overwatch platoon and in radio contact with all my other elements, including my fire support.

The platoon leader was extremely competent in the actions he took, and before long the company was moving again. As it turned out, a little restraint and common sense had kept my track from an antitank ambush, and at the same time the subordinate leader had gained some valuable experience.

Another incident involved 18 APCs moving in column trying to penetrate a dismounted enemy position. Because navigation was critical, I placed my command track, not in the lead, but directly behind the lead track. When the company made contact with the enemy position at his weakest point, my lead track was knocked out by a hasty ambush. Our speed and resultant shock action carried us through the enemy lines for an eventual envelopment, but if my command track had led, the attack probably would have foundered.

My choice of even a second-place

position in the formation for my track was certainly questionable. But if I had been much farther back, accurate navigation and sensitivity to the enemy situation would have been jeopardized. If I had been facing real Sappers and a real enemy, though, I probably would have thought twice about that location in the formation. Still, artificialities in training are ever present and must be dealt with judiciously, and boldness and decisiveness in training will carry over into combat. But we must always remember that boldness and brash heroics are distinctly different things.

### DISMOUNTED

The usual mechanized infantry dismounted movement was difficult to practice in Panama because of the terrain. Dismounted movement for my company consisted primarily of single-file, unconventional movement techniques.

Our mission one evening was to conduct a company dismounted night attack. We entered the jungle at 1900 in a 90-man file. I chose to move with my headquarters behind the lead platoon, about 25 men back from the lead man. I designated my most competent squad leader as compassman and gave him explicit instructions on when to change azimuths. Being so far back, though, I was unable to adequately check the movement of the front of the column, and the compassman missed the azimuth change. We marched about five hours off course before we detected the problem and changed course. We eventually hit the objective, but by that time the men were much the worse for wear after 11 hours of jungle movement. If I had been closer to the front, and if both the lead platoon leader and I had verified the compass readings, the company would have been more fit to fight at the objective and beyond.

The final mission in that ARTEP proved very instructional. A week of sustained operations with little sleep was taking its toll. Our mission was to

conduct another dismounted attack close to midnight, over fairly open terrain. Enemy contact was not likely except at the objective. My manpower had been depleted through "casualties," and I also had to secure our vehicles during our attack.

While giving the operations order, I found myself and my platoon leaders nodding off every few minutes. Realizing that few of us were alert enough for any kind of complicated maneuvers, I decided to run the attack like a ranger patrol, and except for point security, I chose to lead the patrol.

I was later criticized for exposing myself in this way, but I knew that the condition of my men and the nature of our mission allowed no time for reconnaissance. Although we never found the opposing force (*it* was lost), I am convinced that I did the right thing under the circumstances, and I would do the same thing again under similar circumstances.

As always, the mission, the terrain, and the specific circumstances dictates a company commander's location, but that is not always where the action is hottest. Rather, it should be where he can communicate with and control his elements. Choosing a location may require him to take calculated risks, and he may have to exercise restraint when he feels a strong urge to jump in with both boots.

Perhaps the most effective way a company commander can learn these lessons is through trial and error. Sometimes, though, the experiences of others can help future company commanders weather those trials in training before the crucial test of combat eliminates any second chances they might have had. I hope that mine do just that.

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