

ticularly the high-rise kind.

It will be up to the battalion commander to decide how he wants to use his mortars and whether he wants them kept on or taken off their vehicles. For example, he may decide to place his entire mortar platoon — or a section of it — under the operational control of a single infantry company. Or he may decide to keep the platoon under his direct control to better concentrate its fires on selected targets.

When they are left mounted on their vehicles, the mortars can be posi-

tioned more easily, but only if the tracks can be maneuvered through the rubble. The vehicles will also provide the crews with more protection as well as with stable firing platforms.

Almost every war that has been fought during the past 50 years has seen infantry units engage in MOUT operations — at Hue and Quang Tri in South Vietnam, for instance, and, more recently, in Beirut. Such operations are almost certain to take place in any future war as well. If they do, the mortar, because of its high trajectory and immediate responsiveness,

will be the Infantryman's most valuable indirect fire support.

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Motorcycle Scouts

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The 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), in its efforts to find the proper mix of heavy and light forces, has been testing a number of different organizational concepts. Recently, during two weeks of desert training at the National Training Center, it used three motorcycle scout sections provided by the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). Both divisions learned some valuable lessons from the experience.

The motorcycle scouts linked up with the two heavy task forces allocated to the exercises — one armor, the other mechanized infantry — in their respective desert assembly areas two days before the operation began. Later, they rotated between the two task forces.

The heavy units had no experience in how to use motorcycle scouts, and the scouts, for their part, had only recently completed two weeks of

training on their new 250cc vehicles and had not tested them in the desert. But once representatives of both units started talking, the concepts involved were worked out, and each side came to appreciate the capabilities and limitations of the other.

MISSIONS

During the intense combat operations that followed, the motorcycle scouts conducted several specific missions: They reconnoitered zones, areas, and point locations; conducted listening and observation post, counter-reconnaissance, and linkup operations; provided security for tactical operations centers at task force and brigade levels; located OPFOR obstacles; and acted as messengers and guides.

The motorcycle scouts, working in

teams of two and using the terrain to mask their movements, were able to move to places no other military vehicle could possibly get to undetected. Their quiet engines made them virtually undetectable as reconnaissance vehicles.

When the scouts were forced to move in areas without cover, their motorcycles' small profiles and mobility saved them from being hit by small arms fire. They could cover the gaps between task forces and the intervals between teams to counter the OPFOR's reconnaissance efforts.

The M16s the scouts carried, like all the other weapons used at the National Training Center, were equipped with MILES (Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System) gear. The scouts also carried VIPERs; this weapon gave them an anti-vehicle capability when they needed it either to break contact or to

use in destroying OPFOR reconnaissance vehicles when the opportunity presented itself.

Because they required very little logistical support, the motorcycle scouts could conduct long-term missions, often operating for long periods of time to the front or the flanks of the task forces' heavy scout platoons.

Despite these positive aspects, though, the exercise was not without problems. The AN/PVS-5 night vision goggles were used extensively, but they did not offer much depth perception. This, coupled with the inherent instability of a loaded motorcycle, made night missions exceedingly difficult. But by simply slowing the speed of their cycles and by practicing night riding without visual aids, the scouts eventually improved in this area.

Another problem was that the cyclists could be neutralized by the OPFOR's massed indirect fire. A thorough knowledge of OPFOR tactical doctrine enabled the scouts to protect themselves by avoiding areas normally targeted by enemy artillery. Their training in the use of all available cover also helped them survive.

Surprisingly, one of the most positive attributes of these light scout units, their mobility, turned into a problem because they often outdistanced their support requirements, few as they were. Bulk items such as water and fuel had to be carried by someone else, and they had to have MOGAS instead of diesel fuel. (The heavy scouts carried these extra items forward for them.)

Communications were sometimes a real problem because of the distances over which the motorcycles could operate. But this was taken care of by

having the heavy scouts in each task force relay communications for the cycle-mounted scouts. In addition, the track-mounted scouts that were not equipped with TOWs often transported one or two motorcycles inside their vehicles to locations where the cycle scouts could operate more independently. But simple external racks for the motorcycles might also be mounted — similar to those used for helicopter-carried cycles.

INTELLIGENCE

Motorcycle scouts such as these are potentially one of the most valuable sources of intelligence for a brigade commander. But because intelligence on today's fast-moving battlefield is always time-sensitive, a brigade commander must see that his motorcycle scouts are closely controlled. He must also have an effective communications system that will ensure the timely transmission of information to the headquarters that needs it. In addition to receiving information, his headquarters must also be able to redirect the scouts' efforts quickly when rapid changes in the battlefield are required.

The test showed that other measures as well could be taken to increase the effectiveness of cycle scouts when they operate with heavy task forces:

- Each scout should be equipped with a radio such as the UHF model Ranger units now used. These radios are light and do not depend so much on line of sight.

- Routine SOP check-in times should be required to back up radio communications and to resupply the cycle scouts.

- Very specific missions should be given, and essential elements of information should be expected within specific time periods.

- The scouts must be told where to operate and, specifically, where the most likely areas of activity are instead of being given free run of an area.

In addition to these measures, commanders should emphasize training for cycle scouts in map reading, navigation, range estimation, and OPFOR vehicle and unit identification. These skills are vital, and accuracy is as important as timeliness. A cycle scout who can call for and adjust artillery may slow the enemy just enough for commanders to react, especially if the OPFOR has surprised them.

Motorcycle scouts, whether on a desert battlefield or on some other kind of terrain, can add flexibility, speed, and depth to the reconnaissance effort of our heavy units. But only through detailed planning for command, control, and communications can the motorcycle scouts be considered a meaningful asset. Motorcycle scouts can deliver timely, accurate OPFOR information that can well mean success to the resourceful commander who uses them properly.

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