

INFANTRY DIVISION

(Light)

This article has been compiled from information supplied by various departments of the Infantry School and by the

Combined Arms Combat Development Activity at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The Infantry Division (Light) is a compact force of some 10,000 soldiers. It is a strategically deployable force that will focus on defeating light enemy forces in low-intensity conflicts, but at the same time it is capable of being employed in mid-intensity conflicts when it is augmented by additional combat support and combat service support units. (See Major General James J. Lindsay's Commandant's Note, *INFANTRY*, January-February 1984, pages 2-3.)

Its organic infantry units, which are footmobile, are characterized by their ability to operate on a decentralized basis on close terrain against other light infantry forces. Their hallmarks are speed, agility, initiative, and physical lightness. They will be trained to be iron-willed fighting units that are fully proficient in small unit operations, night fighting, marksmanship skills, and conventional infantry tactics.

The division's close combat maneuver force is the light infantry battalion. This unit can conduct the full range of offensive actions against opposing light forces in all types of terrain. But because it has only a limited number of antiarmor weapon systems and no organic tactical mobil-

ity, the battalion must be augmented to fight effectively against enemy armor. When it is not augmented, it should be employed in close terrain (built-up areas, forests, mountainous terrain) when taking on enemy armored forces.

The focus of the battalion, however, is on defeating light enemy forces in a low-intensity setting, and it has a large number of night observation devices and weapon sights to improve its soldiers' ability to fight under limited visibility conditions.

The battalion can participate in a deep attack as part of a larger force if it is augmented with aviation or other mobility assets. Its ability to conduct movements to contact or hasty deliberate attacks is essentially the same as that of other light infantry forces, but unless the battalion is augmented, such activities will be footmobile.

The battalion can pursue opposing footmobile light forces and, if provided with mobility assets, can effectively move about the battlefield to exploit situations. It is also able to conduct such special purpose missions as reconnaissances in force, raids, ambushes, feints, and demonstrations.

In short, the battalion is well suited for offensive operations that are manpower intensive rather than system intensive, because its ratio of fighters to supporters is very high.

The battalion is best suited to defend against light forces, although it can defend against tank and motorized forces in close terrain when it is augmented with anti-armor weapons. It is capable of combining static and dynamic elements of defense but is better suited for the static unless given mobility assets.

The battalion defends to hold terrain or to protect key installations and facilities, and it can conduct economy of force missions. Because of its limited organic transportation assets, the battalion is not ideally suited to conduct delaying actions against opposing forces other than light ones. With proper augmentation and in close terrain, though, it can delay against heavy enemy forces as well. Regardless of the opposition, its engagement ranges in the delay will be close, since the battalion does not have many long-range weapon systems.

ORGANIZATION

The light infantry battalion consists of a headquarters and headquarters company and three rifle companies (see Figure 1). It has a "from the ground up" structure that is

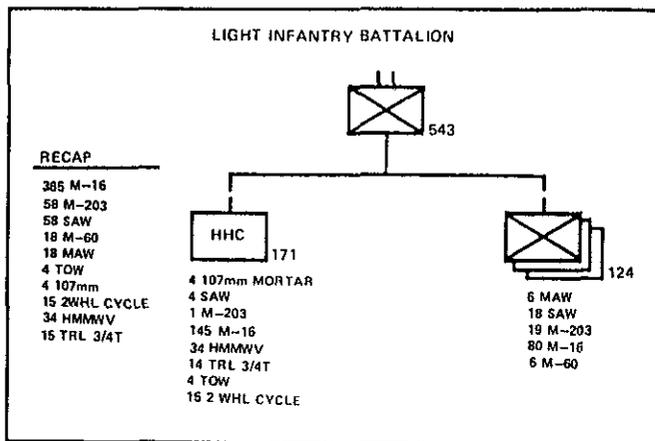


FIGURE 1

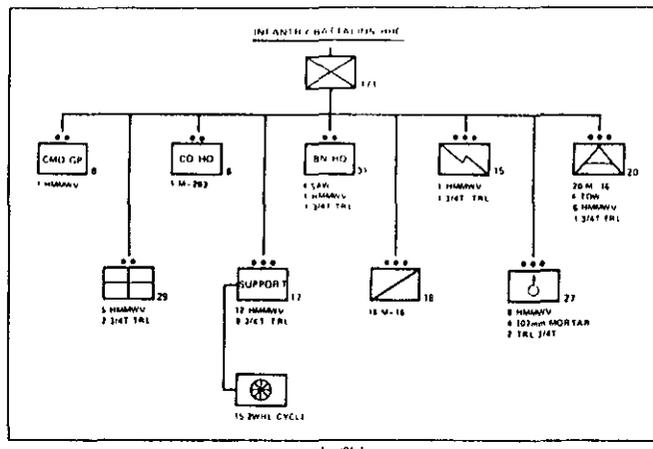
designed to meet the requirements of a low-intensity battlefield. It is very light and can be moved easily in U.S. Air Force aircraft. Additionally, all of the battalion's assets can be moved by UH-60 helicopters.

Although the battalion has a limited number of anti-armor and indirect fire weapon systems, it can readily accept augmenting systems. And it does have a large number of automatic weapons and the type of communications equipment it needs to operate in low-intensity settings.

The battalion has exceptionally austere combat service support assets and relies on its brigade for mess and maintenance support. While it can operate for 48 hours without resupply, it can operate indefinitely if it is provided with additional logistical support. It has only two types of vehicles — the High Mobility Multi-purpose

Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) and the motorcycle.

The organization of the battalion's headquarters and headquarters company is shown in Figure 2. The com-



mand group, headquarters section, company headquarters, and communications platoon are similar to those same elements in other light forces.

The medical platoon is larger than one normally found at battalion level and provides the company aidmen as well as the battalion aid station. A surgeon is organic to the battalion, and the structure of the platoon is such that medical support is provided well forward in the battle area. The medical platoon supports the battalion and any other organizations located in the battalion's area of operations.

The support platoon contains vehicles and motorcycles that can provide transportation assets to the battalion's units as they are needed. The 15 motorcycles, for example, are available for liaison activities, for messengers, and for reconnaissance purposes.

The reconnaissance platoon is footmobile and lightly armed. It is capable of performing close-in reconnaissance and limited security and can get some mobility through the use of the support platoon's motorcycles.

The antiarmor platoon has four TOW launchers, which give the battalion a limited heavy antiarmor direct fire capability. It can operate in split sections to provide continuous overwatch while moving. When the battalion is employed in areas where there is no enemy armor threat, the platoon can be used as an additional reconnaissance unit.

The heavy mortar platoon has the battalion's only organic indirect fire assets — four 107mm mortars. This platoon, like the antiarmor platoon, can operate in split sections to provide continuous fire support while moving.

RIFLE COMPANY

The rifle company is organized as shown in Figure 3. It has no organic vehicles. The companies may use the support platoon's motorcycles for various purposes.

When the company is in an area where there is no enemy armor threat, its light antiarmor section can be used as an additional rifle unit. The medium antiarmor

weapons have been consolidated at company level to improve training, to ensure rapid response to the company commander, and to preclude encumbering the rifle platoon.

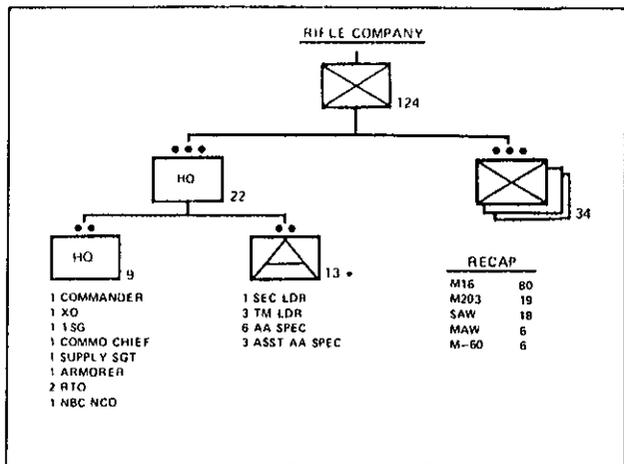


FIGURE 3

toons with a bulky weapon system that might impede their rate of movement.

All of the individual weapons allocated to the company use one caliber of ammunition — 5.56mm. Members of the rifle platoons are equipped with night vision sights, as are certain key personnel in the company headquarters and antiarmor sections. The rifle company, therefore, is capable of conducting operations under most conditions of limited visibility.

The simplicity of the design of the rifle platoon is intended to match the experience level of the platoon leader (see Figure 4). The two M60 machineguns are placed,

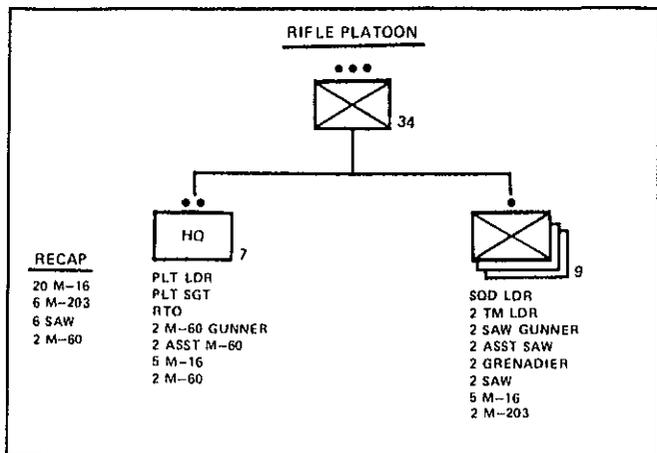


FIGURE 4

controlled, and displaced by the platoon leader. (These weapons may be replaced in the future by four SAWs, depending on the outcome of an analysis that is now comparing the two systems.)

The three rifle squads in each platoon contain nine men each (see Figure 5). They operate in two fire teams, with each team consisting of four men. The squad leader and team leaders lead by example in a "go where I go, shoot where I shoot" mode of operation.

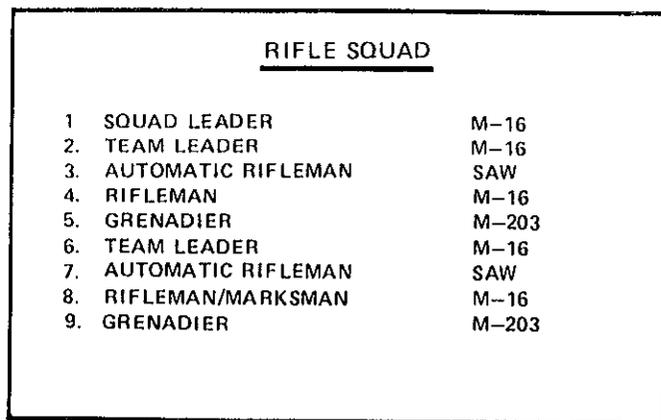


FIGURE 5

As General Lindsay said in his Commandant's Note, the infantry battalions "can look for immediate battle-field support from a division artillery composed of three 105mm howitzer battalions with 18 howitzers each; an aviation brigade that has 36 Black Hawks, 29 attack helicopters, and 31 scout helicopters, as well as a military intelligence/reconnaissance unit; an air defense battalion equipped with 18 improved Vulcans and 40 Stinger teams; and a light combat engineer battalion."

In addition, all of the major elements found in our current divisions are retained in the Infantry Division (Light), although at reduced strengths comparable to the smaller infantry battalions. Thus, the engineer battalion has only 284 soldiers and a minimum amount of equipment.

With less equipment and personnel to support, the division support command is very austere with 1,181 soldiers. The FASCO concept has been retained, and some battalion functions such as maintenance and mess have been consolidated at brigade level. And although the maneuver battalions have organic medical structures, the remainder of the division will operate under an area support concept.

The division artillery is also austere. It has no general support capability, and has reduced support and ammunition haul capabilities. But its basic fire support structure — FSEs and FIST — has been retained.

Even though the Infantry Division (Light) is austere, with the right corps and echelons above corps structures behind it, it allows the Army to meet many goals. Its force structure better matches the Army manpower that Congress has allocated; it is a strategically deployable force; it provides a more credible fighting capability that can react rapidly to the National Command Authority's requirements; and its structure retains all of the critical elements and command structures needed for it to be augmented, if necessary, for any conflict to which it might be committed.

All that remains now is to field infantry divisions with the new structure and to train our soldiers to fight effectively within them.