

HEAVY—LIGHT

Connection: BRIGADE

Maneuver, mobile armored warfare, offensive action, synchronization, concentration, integration — all of these terms describe the way our armored brigades are planning and training to fight in Europe. At the brigade level we want to channel an attacking enemy, strike his flanks and rear, sweep through his artillery units and command and control elements, and disrupt and disorganize the continuity of his attack. We will hit him, move, and hit him again and again until the enemy commander's will is broken and he can no longer continue. In short, we intend to outmaneuver our adversary.

At first glance the thought of giving a footmobile light infantry battalion to a highly mobile armor brigade to use in its defensive sector seems to contradict the very essence of mobile armored warfare. How can a light battalion, highly vulnerable and capable of moving at only three miles an hour, possibly contribute to the swirling tank battles we expect in Europe? Could this battalion help an armor brigade defeat Warsaw Pact armored columns, or would it be nothing more than a ball and chain hanging on the brigade's tow pintle?

Light infantry battalions are not designed to fight in Europe. They can get there quickly, though, and they do have a significant close-in antiarmor capability. (There



will also be plenty of them.) In a short-warning scenario, therefore, it makes sense to plan to fly those battalions or divisions to Europe to add their firepower to the NATO defense. But if this is done, how should these units be employed once they get on the ground?

Under corps control, and as alluded to by General Galvin earlier in this issue, light divisions can guard key installations, establish a defensive line through which armor divisions can withdraw to prepare for offensive action, or perhaps conduct either an air assault or a parachute jump behind enemy lines as part of a corps attack. A light brigade under the control of an armor or mechanized infantry division can perform many of the same missions and, perhaps, if the terrain supports light infantry, assume a defensive sector to free an armor brigade for offensive action.

There are, of course, a number of other ways light infantry units can be employed under corps or division control. Some have been tried on various REFORGER exercises with moderate to considerable success; others still need to be analyzed and tested. One option available to a division commander who receives a light infantry battalion, and the one to be addressed here, is to attach that light battalion to one of his heavy brigades.

An armor or a mechanized infantry brigade commander should not be given a light battalion unless the terrain in his general defense plan (GDP) sector favored its employment and he could use it to good advantage to execute maneuver warfare within his sector. Protecting rear areas is not the best way to use this battalion. Although the light battalion could be employed to guard trains areas, tactical operations centers, or bridges, it would be badly fragmented in doing so and would be incapable of coordinated action. It would not have the mobility to concentrate to counter an enemy rear area threat or to keep up with any mobile units it was guarding. The battalion's command and control structure would be stretched to the limit and its cohesiveness as a maneuver unit lost.

There are a number of advantages to keeping the battalion intact as a fighting force. Preserving the mobility of the brigade's armor task forces, for example, is a major consideration. A brigade commander maneuvers battalions. He would rarely want to cross-attach a light infantry company to an armor or mechanized infantry battalion because this would tie that battalion to a specific piece of terrain. Without a change in task organization, he could not maneuver that battalion about the battlefield or make it available to another armor or mechanized infantry brigade.

Some might like the idea of dispersing a light infantry battalion among several armor task forces and having its soldiers hitch rides on the armored vehicles. Although many tankers would love having a few infantrymen around for local security, the brigade commander would lose much of the effectiveness of that light battalion as a fighting force. If the terrain favors defense by light dismounted infantry, it is best to keep the battalion under its

own chain of command, augmented as necessary, but fighting as one unit.

Light infantry fights best in forests, mountains, ravines, and built-up areas. It fights in depth and at close range, using mutually supporting dug-in positions and limited, local ground attacks. It survives enemy artillery fires by digging deep, dispersing, and preparing positions in depth. It must fight armored vehicles in places where those vehicles must travel in single file and where they can be jammed up and killed from the flanks at close range. Enemy infantrymen can be killed as they dismount, or when they are hung up in antipersonnel obstacles after dismounting.

An enemy must be forced, channeled, or drawn into the light infantry's defensive area. In that area, bypass routes should be blocked by natural or manmade obstacles or by strong defensive positions. Thus, the bottled-up enemy must clear the area inch by inch. But all the while, his closed up formations will offer lucrative targets for artillery and air attacks or for offensive action by mobile armor battalions. Not all brigade GDP sectors have a piece of terrain that favors defense by a light infantry battalion, but when it does, a light battalion can be used quite effectively. In fact, a brigade commander can structure his whole plan around such a strong defensive position. If the enemy force can be channeled down the desired approach and held up in front of the light infantry's positions with no way to bypass them, that force is right where the brigade commander wants it, and it can be defeated by fire and movement. The light infantry, then, becomes the cork in the bottle.

The main reason why a brigade commander would want to dig in a light infantry battalion in his sector would be to free his mechanized or armor forces either for use in another area or to carry out an offensive action. It is true that mechanized infantry units can defend virtually anywhere light infantry units can defend. But if a light infantry unit can defend a critical area that otherwise would have to be defended by a mechanized infantry battalion, then it is certainly a wise move for the brigade commander to defend the area with his light infantry and use his mechanized unit elsewhere in a way that will best take advantage of its mobility and firepower.

Military history from Hannibal to modern times is filled with examples of combining mobile and static forces at all levels of command to defeat an attacking enemy. The tactics in these examples are the same: Draw the enemy in, fix him with the foot soldier, and move on his flanks and rear with horse- or vehicle-mounted forces. The static position becomes the anchor, the pivot point around which mobile forces maneuver. *Panzergrenadier* battalions in the German *Bundeswehr* use the same plan at battalion level in their defensive sectors. Their infantrymen dismount and defend deep in sector. Their Marders — German infantry fighting vehicles — pick up the battle early and, using the infantry positions as pivot points, maneuver against the enemy's flanks. If the terrain is right, the same concept can be used today in a U.S.

brigade sector in Europe.

Let's look at an example. Figure 1 illustrates a brigade sector and a defensive plan. This brigade has two tank battalions and two mechanized infantry battalions, augmented with a light infantry battalion. The sector is astride a major enemy regimental or divisional avenue of approach, which, deep in sector, passes through defiles, villages, and rough terrain. The brigade commander has decided that he wants to defeat the enemy's first echelon regiments forward and then the second deeper in sector.

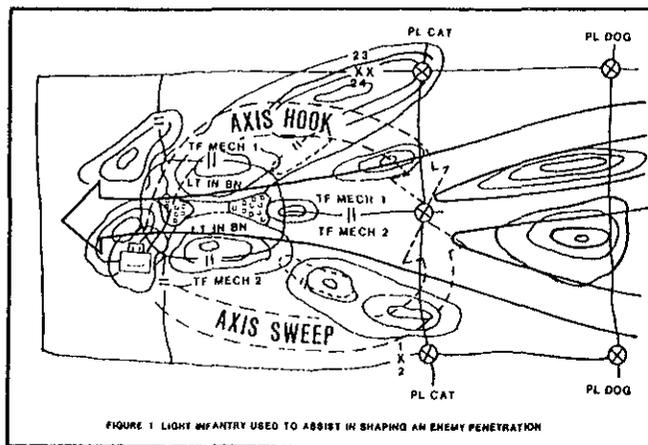


FIGURE 1 LIGHT INFANTRY USED TO ASSIST IN SHAPING AN ENEMY PENETRATION

He knows exactly where he wants to fight.

The commander uses an armor task force in the covering force area between Phase Lines CAT and DOG. He expects this task force to fight a stiff covering force battle using aggressive maneuver, coordinated firepower, and carefully selected obstacles. He does not want the covering force to become decisively engaged, but he does expect to hurt the enemy, causing him to fully deploy and spend time getting to Phase Line CAT. At Phase Line CAT, the battle passes to the main battle area task forces as the covering force moves through them to a rearming and refitting area to prepare for further commitment or to revert to division control.

The two mechanized task forces on Phase Line CAT also fight a stiff battle, but again do not become decisively engaged. The brigade commander wants these task forces to stay on the enemy's flanks, using obstacles and fire to invite him down his path of least resistance through the center of the brigade sector. These task forces take every opportunity to attack the enemy's flanks, but they allow him to continue his advance toward the light infantry position while they also secure the shoulders of the penetration. By this time, the enemy is probably committing the second echelon battalions of his leading regiments.

If the light infantry's defensive area is well prepared, the funnel is sealed. As the enemy stacks up before that area, he is engaged by attack helicopters, air strikes, artillery fires, and more flank attacks by the mechanized task forces. At the right time, the brigade commander launches an attack by his reserve armor task force on one of several axes deep into the enemy's rear, and then gets set to launch a second attack, with the rearmed covering

task force, if it is available. Thus, with the help of a light infantry battalion and with skillful maneuver by its armor and mechanized infantry forces, this brigade should be able to defeat an OPFOR division and then continue the battle as a fully capable maneuver force.

A second example illustrates another use of a light infantry battalion. Figure 2 depicts a brigade sector that contains a fairly large area of rugged, mountainous terrain. A secondary, but dangerous, enemy avenue of approach cuts through this mountainous area, requiring that the area be defended by more than just screening forces. With his two armor battalions and one mechanized infantry battalion, the brigade commander would normally defend with a covering force battalion and two task forces on line in the main battle area. The addition of a light infantry battalion, however, enables him to fight a different kind of battle. By moving the forward edge of the main battle area, Phase Line BLUE, back to the mountains, the brigade commander can defend his northern sector in the mountains with the light infantry battalion. This allows him to hold a fresh armor task force to maneuver against the enemy.

In this example, the brigade again fights a strong covering force battle between Phase Lines RED and BLUE with an armor task force. The brigade commander has decided he wants to fight the enemy in the south, in front of and within the mechanized infantry task force's sector. He devises his obstacle and fire plans to channel the enemy force in that direction. The light infantry battalion defends the routes through the mountain passes with mines and dug-in infantry, but still must be regarded

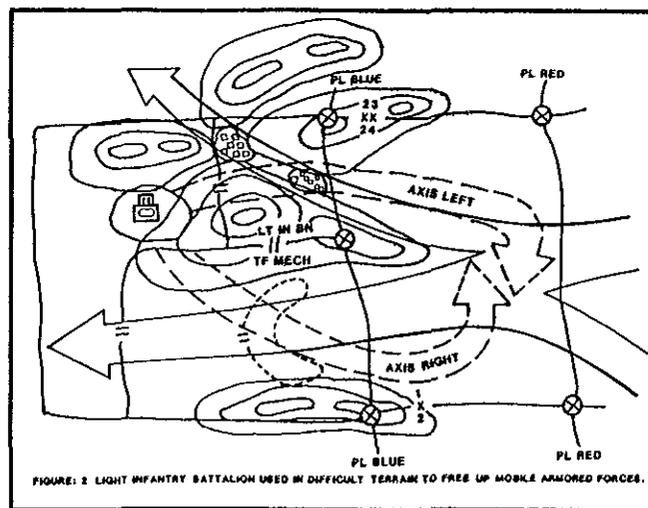


FIGURE 2 LIGHT INFANTRY BATTALION USED IN DIFFICULT TERRAIN TO FREE UP MOBILE ARMORED FORCES.

as operating in an economy of force role.

At the right time, as the enemy force is drawn into the mechanized infantry battalion's sector, the brigade commander launches his armor task force on a coordinated attack along Axis LEFT using the light infantry battalion to secure the line of departure and to guide the task force to Phase Line BLUE. The light infantry's positions, therefore, not only serve as the secure shoulder on which the attack can be hinged; they also provide a secure area to which the armored attack force can withdraw to



In either case, the light infantry unit will be left behind. When delaying or defending on a different piece of terrain or while attacking, the brigade will probably have no need for the light infantry battalion, and little time or resources to move it. The battalion will have to revert to the control of the division or its own parent brigade and will probably move by foot, helicopter, or truck to another place on the battlefield where the terrain and scheme of maneuver will best support its use. Or it may be left in sector as a stay-behind force to harass and interdict OPFOR supply lines. The main point is that in the examples shown here the light infantry battalion's use to the heavy brigade is limited to one specific piece of terrain and to one specific defensive plan.

regroup for a second attack.

If the enemy makes a determined push on the northern avenue of approach, the light infantry can bottle up the lead elements in the narrow defiles. At the right time, then, the brigade commander can launch his attack on Axis RIGHT into the rear of the enemy formations. In this instance, the mechanized infantry battalion secures the line of departure and provides the hinge point for the attack.

In either case, the brigade's attacks are violent and supported by all available fire support. Again, the target is artillery positions, command and control installations, and logistical elements. If these can be destroyed, the forward OPFOR combat units will wither on the vine.

Now, in either of these examples, what will the situation be if the brigade is ordered to withdraw out of sector, or perhaps to attack in some unexpected direction?

If the terrain supports its use, a light infantry battalion can help a heavy brigade fight a battle of maneuver. The battalion should be kept intact and employed in infantry terrain, and the brigade's scheme of maneuver should be built around the light battalion's defensive positions. The light battalions can hold the nose or shoulder of an enemy penetration, or it can replace mobile forces in difficult terrain as an economy of force element. Because of the rapid deployability of our light forces, when war seems likely, they might well be the first CONUS-based units to arrive in Europe. We therefore need to look now at where and how they can best be employed.



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