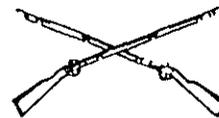




Commandant's NOTE



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Chief of Infantry

TRAINING THE LIGHT INFANTRY FORCE

As most infantrymen know by now, the Army is in the process of building its new light infantry divisions. It will begin by converting the 7th Infantry Division to the new structure by Fiscal Year 1985, and will add more light forces during the following years. Many infantrymen, however, may not understand what is really new and different about these new light organizations.

Forming a light infantry division is not simply a matter of taking away heavy weapons, support, and vehicles from a heavy division. It entails building a new organizational structure that makes the most of the infantry soldier's inherent mobility and of his physical and moral strength and toughness. It also means combining that footmobile force with our latest technology so that these units can go anywhere and be sustained there. Most important, it involves changing the tactics to capitalize on the new light infantry organizations. (Recent events such as the British action in the Falkland Islands and our own in Grenada emphasize the need for highly deployable forces. These actions also clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of properly trained and employed light infantry units.)

Accordingly, the Army plans to build light squads, platoons, and companies that will be able to accomplish all of the traditional infantry missions while making the best use of their ability to fight dispersed, aggressive small-unit actions. Raids, ambushes, infiltration, and night operations will be the normal mode of employment for these fighting units.

If our light units are to perform these missions successfully, we must first set very high standards of training for the people in them. Our soldiers must become expert marksmen and skilled navigators. They must be accomplished in the art of survival and skilled in their ability to fight and move at night. Clearly, they will need skilled leaders and special training to bring them to these high standards. To help reach these standards rapidly, three new light infantry battalions will be built using the battalion COHORT system.

At the heart of our efforts to make the new light battalion succeed will be effective, demanding small-unit training. Toward this end, the Infantry School, along with its continuing emphasis on heavy infantry, has developed a training program to support the conversion of the 7th Infantry Division and the activation of a new division yet to be formed. The major elements of the program revolve around improving the light infantry skills of the soldiers during their One-Station Unit Training

(OSUT); conducting special training at Fort Benning for complete sets of unit leaders so that they can conduct better squad and platoon training once they return to their units; and infusing Ranger-trained leaders into the divisions. (The key leaders of a battalion, for example, will be Ranger-trained; all infantry platoons will have some Ranger-qualified personnel assigned to them.)

The courses in this training program are the following:

The Light Leader Course. This four-week course, conducted by the Ranger School, is a "train the trainer" course for all infantry unit leaders. Battalion sets of unit leaders, from company commander to team leader, will be trained at one time.

The Light Fighter Course. This course, focused on squad and platoon training, is conducted in four weeks by the division for infantry companies and in one week for non-combat units.

The Light Infantry OSUT COHORT. This special OSUT course for light infantry COHORT units is proposed to be 15 weeks long. The course will be evaluated during Fiscal Year 1985 using a COHORT battalion from the 7th Infantry Division. If it proves worthwhile, future COHORT battalions will undergo this training.

The Ranger School. Now nine weeks long, it will train Rangers as it always has. The priority of allocations will be given to soldiers assigned to Ranger battalions and light infantry units, and to infantry lieutenants. Ranger School will be expanded, as needed, to support the total needs of the Army as the light infantry training requirements increase.

This training program is an essential part of the Army's desire to build a high-quality light infantry force quickly. During Fiscal Years 1985 and 1986, the results of this intensive training effort will be closely monitored and evaluated. The Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) will conduct an external evaluation of the organizational concept as well as the performance of the light infantry division. The key points everyone will be watching for are how well the units can meet the new and rigorous standards and how well the new training concept supports the transition to light infantry units.

This brief overview cannot capture the entire light infantry effort. But the main thrust of the effort is quite clear — to build highly proficient units made up of leaders and soldiers who are physically and mentally tough, units that are oriented toward low- to mid-intensity conflicts, and units that have the capability to go anywhere and win.