

fantry divisions as integral units is a sensible approach. But it will destroy the cohesiveness that is supposed to be an inherent part of the light infantry division as the White Paper describes it.

Light infantry can be effective in a European war, but if the commanders on the ground want to use it in pieces smaller than a division, then a better approach might be to build light infantry brigades in the first place. These brigades could then be

employed as integral units in consonance with the plans of our USAREUR commanders. Certainly, light infantry brigades that were designed to fight independently would provide a stronger overall force than the same number of brigades trying to fight as pieces of a broken division.

In Army force design, form must follow function. When organizing new units such as light infantry, the first consideration must be its planned employment — its clearly defined

role — on the battlefield. The innovative employment of infantry has always been the key to success in battle. Its imaginative organization today could prevent time-wasting reorganization on the battlefield tomorrow.

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Heavy-light infantry

Assessing the Challenge

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In the July-August 1984 issue of *INFANTRY*, Lieutenant General John R. Galvin, the VII Corps commander, presented an excellent discussion of the reinforcing missions that light infantry divisions might assume in the early phases of a mobilization to meet an impending Warsaw Pact attack in Europe. I would like to expand further on the issue of heavy-light forces. (Portions of this article will appear in a more detailed and comprehensive treatment of low-intensity conflict in a forthcoming issue of *MILITARY REVIEW*.)

Current U.S. defense policy and general-purpose force structure and modernization programs continue to focus heavily on a NATO contingency — a contingency that is increasingly inappropriate, given the global power shifts now under way and the newly identifiable threats now developing in other areas. A critical assessment of the political and military realities affecting international security reveals:

- The increasing frequency and intensity of terrorist incidents as a

means of obtaining political goals.

- The armed forces of at least 36 countries — one in five of the world's nations — involved in military opera-

“The nature of warfare today is such that we cannot await the outbreak of hostilities before initiating suitable and necessary military preparations, especially in light of the military power of other nations — particularly the Soviet Union — maintain in constant readiness.”

John O. Marsh, Jr.
Secretary of the Army

tions, more than 30 of which involve revolutionary or separatist insurgencies.

- Increasing Soviet-Cuban involvement in Central America.

- Little hope for the early cessation of the Iran-Iraq war.

- The continued Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the buildup of Soviet forces along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

It is evident then that the type of warfare the Army will face for the remainder of this century is unlikely to be the traditional NATO/Warsaw Pact scenario (World War II military operations but with more sophisticated technology). Rather, it is likely to involve the use of combat force at the lower end of the conflict spectrum. (“Low-intensity conflict” is the term currently in vogue to describe this range of activities. Other terms, often used synonymously, include “small or minor wars,” “low-level violence,” and “limited contingencies.”) The Army will face many types of low-intensity challenges over the next decade. It must suffice here to say only that such military operations will be limited in scope, confined principally to the Third World, and directed toward accomplishing limited political-military goals.

The low-intensity battlefields of the

future, therefore, will require smaller, more flexible, and more strategically responsive Army forces — forces that are organized to respond to a broad spectrum of combat operations and a wide array of contingencies. Such forces must be equipped so that they can be sustained in regions where there are limited support facilities or no U.S. or allied bases.

Preparing for low-intensity conflict does not mean that the Army must forego military innovation and modernization. Technology and the military threat are growing too fast for that. It does require, however, that a more concerted effort be made to improve the Army's military capabilities for low-intensity conflict. Such an effort will require some shifting of resources, priorities, and emphasis (special operations are an excellent example) from the short, intensive, European-war scenario to power projection and Third World intervention capabilities. And these shifts must be made while continuing, and in some instances increasing, security assistance and arms transfers to critical U.S. allies and to Third World countries.

The various types of contingencies for which the Army must prepare — engaging an enemy at levels of conflict ranging from counterterrorist operations to full-scale conventional or nuclear war — will require forces of various sizes and capabilities.

PROGRESSIVELY HEAVIER

From the end of World War II, the Army's force structure became progressively heavier. There were several reasons why that was so:

- The need to counter the long-standing conventional force advantages of the Soviets and the other Warsaw Pact nations.
- The general trend toward mechanization and modernization.
- The shift in focus to the NATO battlefield in the post-Vietnam era.

Thus it has been difficult for the Army to design its doctrine and its light forces to respond to low-intensity

conflict, because it has not been in the Army's fundamental interests to do so. After all, light infantry, Airborne, Ranger, and Special Forces units must compete for resources with major weapon programs. Now, for example, seven major new weapon systems — all of which are more suited to mid- and high-intensity conflict — are in the process of being introduced into the Army. The M1 Abrams tank, the Bradley fighting vehicle, the Apache attack helicopter, the Blackhawk utility helicopter, the multiple-launch rocket system, the Patriot air defense missile system, and the Sergeant York division air defense gun.

Until recently, in fact, the traditional Army establishment has resisted the creation of additional forces to respond to the challenges of low-intensity conflict. At least four factors, however, have focused new attention on the importance of such forces. One is the steady proliferation of U.S. commitments throughout the Third World, which requires forces with greater strategic and tactical utility (a basic premise behind the creation of the light infantry division). A second factor is a principal conclusion of a report entitled "Strategic Requirements for the Army for the Year 2000" that low-intensity conflict — psychological warfare, high-technology terrorism, Soviet-supported revolutions, urban guerrilla warfare, and more conventional proxy wars — will constitute the greatest challenge to the Army during the 1990s. A third factor is the success of the light forces in the U.S. military operations in Grenada. The final factor that has focused attention on these forces is Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger's statement in his FY 1985 Annual Report to the Congress that "the high priority we have assigned to SOF (Special Operations Forces) revitalization reflects our recognition that low-level conflict . . . will pose the threat we are most likely to encounter throughout the end of this century."

Accordingly, the Army has initiated a number of changes designed to deal with the warfare of the future. These include the conversion of the 7th In-

fantry Division to the light infantry organization; the activation of a seventeenth active component division, which is to be based on the light division design; the addition of a third Ranger battalion; and the activation of a new Special Forces Group. The reassessment of the role of light forces is a step in the right direction, if the Army is to meet the challenges of the next decade.

CHALLENGES

The emerging international security environment requires Army forces that are capable of responding to unconventional challenges. In recent years, the Soviet Union's primary military activity in the Third World has been in the areas surrounding the U.S.S.R. — eastern Europe, the Middle East, Mongolia, and the Far East, and, most recently, Afghanistan. But Soviet achievements in the Third World for the foreseeable future are likely to be pursued farther and farther from the Soviet homeland and are likely to be pursued more assertively. Thus, a continual, detailed review of the Army's doctrine, its strategy, and its forces is required if the Army is to be prepared for situations that are likely to affect U.S. interests.

In sum, the Army's heavy-light force structuring needs to be thoughtfully and pragmatically assessed. United States political-military goals, the threat, a clear understanding and appreciation of military power, and the recognition of resource limitations must all be factored into the Army's calculations regarding the best mix of these heavy and light forces.

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