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OUR INFANTRY HERITAGE

The regimental system that is now being implemented in the U.S. Army offers great promise for improvements in unit cohesion and esprit as well as in the overall quality of life for individual soldiers. The rich historical legacy of the Army is being used in this system to provide a home for career soldiers who in the past have viewed Army life as an endless succession of address changes, new patches, and different sets of unit insignia. Unfortunately, as with the British Army's many changes in its regimental system over the years, the advent of the U.S. system is proving to be painful, even for many of its most ardent supporters.

During the planning process, it became evident that restructuring the Army to form a workable regimental system would mean leaving out many old and famous regiments. For the infantry, 26 colors were determined to be the most that could be accommodated within a 16-division active force structure. This meant that the other 32 infantry regiments of the 1957 Combat Arms Regimental System (CARS) would have to be either inactivated or transferred to the training base. (Even with the recently planned addition of two infantry divisions, only about 30 infantry regiments can be represented in the system.)

The present plan also calls for pairing battalions stationed in the continental United States (CONUS) with battalions stationed overseas under one regimental flag so that each regiment will contain from three to six active battalions.

Although the history and tradition of some of these regiments will be retained in training battalions, few active duty soldiers will ever serve in any of these units. And the new recruits who pass through them will quickly and quite properly go on to transfer their loyalty and affection to their permanent regiments. Similarly, the training cadre will serve in these units only temporarily on "extra-regimental" assignments, then return to their home regiments.

Before long, all the veterans of such regiments as the 14th Infantry and the 28th Infantry will be gone. Those of the 508th Infantry who fought in the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and Grenada will never be joined by younger veterans of the unit. History books and a set of colors propped up in the headquarters of a training battalion will be the only reminder of the 10th Infantry, the 13th Infantry, and many others. Even the 3d Infantry (The Old Guard), the Army's oldest regular infantry regiment, will suffer an undeserved fate: Although listed as a regiment, it will be one in name only, since it will have just one active battalion and no permanently affiliated members. Thus, as in any other regimental system, only those regiments that maintain an active roll of affiliate members will stay alive. The others will gradually be forgotten.

At the same time, many divisions will be losing regiments that have served with them since World War I, because our planners considered those regiments too junior to be kept under the new system. To me, this disregard for the heritage of many fine infantry units is not

in keeping with one of the primary goals of the regimental system.

One key element of the British regimental system (which the U.S. Army studied before adopting its own system) is its efforts to maintain within its active regiments a strong link with their predecessors. In fact, even though that army has undergone many reductions in active regiments, it has seldom chosen to disband a unit. Instead, it has usually consolidated two or more regiments into a new formation that shared the history, honors, and traditions of its famous predecessors. The great shortcoming of the U.S. system is its failure to do something similar.

Light Infantry Mergers

Sr Regt	Jr Regt	CONUS	# Bns	OCONUS	# Bns
1	47	9 ID	2	25 ID	2
2	35	9 ID	2	25 ID	2
3	63*	MDW/7 ID	1/1	6 ID	1
9	31	7 ID	2	2 ID	1
11	61	101 AA	2	BERLIN/56 FA	1/1
14	53*	7 ID	2	6 ID/25 ID	1/1
17	55*	7 ID	2	2 ID	1
19	87	10 ID	2	6 ID/25 ID	1/1
20	51	10 ID	2	6 ID	1
21	32	7 ID	2	25 ID	2
22	25*	10 ID	2	6 ID	1
23	39	9 ID	2	2 ID	1
26	187	101 AA	2	193 BDE	2
27	327	101 AA	2	6 ID/25 ID	1/1
29	24*	INF SCH	2**		
30	38	101 AA	2	BERLIN	2

*Non-CARS Regiment.
**The 29th Infantry would provide infantry training battalions at Fort Benning.

TABLE 1

What follows is a detailed proposal for consolidating U.S. infantry regiments — a plan that could be carried out with only a minor modification to the plan now being implemented. Under this proposed plan, there would still be 30 regiments, but instead of transferring the excess infantry colors to the training base, all of the CARS infantry regiments plus certain selected non-CARS regular regiments would be reorganized and consolidated into 30 *new* regiments.

The 30 regiments would consist of 28 infantry regiments, one parachute regiment, and one Ranger regiment. The 28 infantry regiments would be formed by mergers of two regimental colors. Thus, the first 28 CARS regiments (1st through 23d and 26th through 30th) would provide the senior component. Their junior partners would come from the younger regular regiments organized during World Wars I and II, except for those with an airborne background. This merger (as shown in Tables 1 and 2) would preserve the number and recognize the seniority of the infantry regiments that made up the small Regular Army of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Mechanized Infantry Mergers

Sr Regt	Jr Regt	CONUS	# Bns	OCONUS	# Bns
4	34	24 MX	2	3 MX	2
5	36	FA SCH	1	3 AD	2
6	46	5 MX	2	1 AD	2
7	58	197 BDE	2	3 AD	2
8	48	4 MX	2	8 MX	2
10	52	5MX/NTC	1/1	1 AD	2
12	62*	4 MX	2	8 MX	2
13	54	194 BDE	1	8 MX/3 MX	1/1
15	50	24 MX	1	3 MX	2
16	56*	1 MX	2	1 MX(F)	2
18	60	INF SCH/9 ID	1/1	193/2ID	1/1
28	41	2 AD	2	2 AD(F)	2
5 CAV	12 CAV	1 CD	2	2 ID	1

*Non-CARS Regiment.

TABLE 2

The history and traditions of the junior regiments would be incorporated into the new regiments by consolidation.

In addition to the CARS regiments, seven regular regiments that were not organized under CARS would be reconstituted and merged with a senior partner. Therefore, practically all of the regular infantry regiments that have earned campaign credits would be represented.

This system is simple, and it avoids many of the emotional and subjective judgments that must be made with schemes that use any criterion other than seniority. Moreover, since all of the regiments would be represented,

The Parachute Regiment

Old Regt	Associated Bn	Unit
501	1	82 AB
502	2	82 AB
503	3	82 AB
504	4	82 AB
505	5	82 AB
506	6	82 AB
507	7	ABN TNG BN
508	8	82 AB
509	9	SETAF
511	11	82 AB
513*	13	INACTIVE
514*	14	INACTIVE
515*	15	INACTIVE
517*	17	INACTIVE
325	25	82 AB
551*	51	INACTIVE
188	88	SEP COMPANIES
194*	94	INACTIVE

*Non-CARS Regiments.

NOTE: 187th and 327th Infantry are consolidated with light infantry regiments to provide historical connection for home-based regiments of the 101st Abn Div.

TABLE 3

veterans of the many regiments not included in the current plan would have a regimental home.

The exceptions to the system of paired regiments would be the airborne and Ranger units. None of these special units could compete with the rest of the infantry in seniority, but their special character and heritage is certainly worth preserving. The solution is to organize a parachute regiment in addition to the present Ranger regiment.

The Parachute Regiment (its formal name) would be large, with 11 active battalions. Each of the active battalions would represent one of the former airborne regiments. The 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment, for example, would represent the 501st Infantry, the 2d Battalion, the 502d Infantry, and so forth as shown in Table 3. All of the old airborne regiments except the 187th Infantry and the 327th Infantry would be consolidated into the Parachute Regiment. The regimental headquarters would provide a single home for all airborne infantry while the active battalions would keep alive the identity and the traditions of the individual parent regiments.

Since all battalions of the parachute regiment should be airborne units, the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) would not have these battalions assigned to it as long as it remained an air assault division with no units on jump status. Of course, the 501st, 503d, and 506th Infantry would all return to their historic employment as airborne forces by serving as active battalions of the Parachute Regiment.

The 187th Infantry and the 327th Infantry would be consolidated with the 26th and 27th Infantry Regiments, respectively, and homebased with the 101st. This would give the 101st two regiments with a history of service with the division, and the combination of the 26th (Blue Spaders) with the 187th (Rakkassans) and the 27th (Wolfhounds) with the 327th would form partnerships rich in tradition and history.

This proposed merger of regiments would offer a number of advantages over the present plan. Because of the requirement in the present plan to pair overseas and stateside battalions, many divisions will no longer contain battalions of the regiments traditionally assigned to them. This is particularly true for divisions linked with the younger regiments that have not been included in the present regimental system.

It is hard to imagine the 9th Infantry Division, for example, without the 39th Infantry, 47th Infantry, and 60th Infantry; nevertheless, since none of these regiments were among the colors selected to be kept on the active rolls, they will all disappear from the "Old Reliables." But a merger of these regiments with the 23d Infantry, the 1st Infantry, and the 18th Infantry, which are to be assigned to the 9th Division, would give the new regiments a solid link with the Division's World War II and Vietnam heritage. This would also enable the veterans of the 9th Division to maintain a regimental home in the division that was tied to their old unit.

Most of my proposed mergers, in fact, are based on divisional affiliations and would return many fine regiments to their home divisions as a part of a new consolidated regiment. Other mergers would link regiments that share a common heritage. The 30th and 38th Infantry, for instance, served in the same brigade during World War I where they both earned the title "Rock of the Marne." The merger of these two regiments would perpetuate that tradition as the "Marne Regiment."

The merger of the 17th Infantry and the 55th Infantry is another example of a consolidation that would recognize historical ties. The 55th Infantry was formed with personnel from the 17th Infantry and assigned to the 7th Division during World War I. This merger would therefore renew the ties of these two units and bring back to the 7th Division one of its original regiments. This merger is also one of nine that would be accomplished by recon-

stituting a non-CARS regiment.

A few of my proposed consolidations neither strengthen divisional associations nor recall historical ties. They simply pair the remaining senior regiments with a junior partner. Even so, these new regiments could use the achievements and traditions of their predecessors to build a new and stronger regiment. By consolidation, the veterans of all the regular regiments would gain a regimental home and could help to ensure that the spirit of their old regiments was fully represented in the new.

Each of the new regiments would be more than just a unit of assignment. It would be a lifelong home for soldiers and would provide them with a sense of belonging and team spirit. The consolidation plan would help in this effort to make the regiment an institution that would strengthen the cohesiveness of the Army.

Each new regiment would inherit the lineage and honors of its predecessors, but it would use the number of its senior component and would display that regiment's coat of arms on its organizational color. The coat of arms of the junior partner would be informally displayed by the unit. Additionally, each new regiment could be granted devices to be displayed on the corners of the organizational color. These augmenting devices could come primarily from charges or crests on the coat of arms of the junior regiment. The use of the devices would also provide an opportunity to commemorate the significant actions of both regiments during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

The new regiment should also be entitled to adopt a regimental badge. One design could be authorized for each new regiment for wear on garrison caps and, in a subdued version, on BDU caps in garrison. These badges could also be worn on belt buckles. The design might be new, incorporating elements of the heritage of both regiments, or it might be a modified version of the insignia currently in use by one of the regiments.

Distinctive Unit Insignia (DUI), known as "unit crests," would continue to be worn, but each regiment would wear the DUI of only one of the old regiments, normally that of the senior partner. For example, the 2d Infantry (2d and 35th Regiments) would continue to wear the DUI of the 2d Infantry, but it could adopt as a regimental badge a device that incorporated design elements from both regiments. Likewise, the 10th Infantry (10th and 52d) could wear the badge of the 10th Infantry and the DUI of the 52d. The Parachute Regiment could adopt a regimental badge to be worn by all its members. The battalions could continue to use the beret flash, wing background, and DUI of the old regiment that they represented.

The adoption of a regimental badge would provide a way of identifying soldiers with their affiliated regiment without cluttering the uniform and without devising a complex system for wearing DUIs on different uniforms. The soldiers affiliated with a regiment would wear the DUI of their current unit. (Soldiers who were not affiliated with a regiment would wear a corps or branch badge that would be designed for each of the current branches of the Army.)

For the 39 years since the end of World War II, the Regular Army has consisted of between 14 and 20 divisions, and this general size is unlikely to change any time soon. The integration of the present regimental system into this force structure will never allow room for more than about 30 infantry regiments. Even a large-scale expansion of the Army during a national emergency would be met by a call-up of Reserve Component units. Although this call-up might be followed by some expansion of the Regular Army, this expansion would undoubtedly be accomplished by the activation of additional battalions of the active regiments. Therefore, any regiments that are not included in the regimental system would be forever relegated to the inactive list, or, at best, to service as training units.

The consolidation option I have outlined here is the only practical way the history and tradition of all the regular regiments could be preserved and continued in the combat elements of the Regular Army. Moreover, such a consolidation, in many cases, would improve the regimental system by strengthening the ties between the regiments and the divisions to which they would be assigned. And for soldiers with strong attachments to their regiments, this consolidation would permit them to maintain a tie with their old unit by requesting affiliation with the new regiment. For instance, the affiliation of veterans of the 31st with the new 9th Infantry would help to ensure that the traditions and the legacy of "America's Foriegn Legion" were not lost.

The proposed consolidation of light, mechanized, and airborne infantry (as laid out in the tables), could be accomplished with little modification to the current plan, and the 75th Infantry would continue its role as the Ranger Regiment. The plan is based on the most current information available and includes the new 6th and 10th Infantry Divisions. Future changes to force structure might change the plan slightly, but the flexibility of the system could accommodate these changes.

Although the changes to the current system would be few, there will doubtless be resistance to reopening this issue. But our regiments are more than just numbers on TOE documents. They are corporate symbols of the Army's past achievements and a source of inspiration for present and future soldiers. Moreover, we should not restrict the consolidation scheme to infantry regiments.

Our regiments deserve better treatment than they are getting in the current regimental plan, and the consolidation proposed here would provide a workable and honorable alternative.

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