



REORGANIZATION

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Battlefield casualties are a stark reality of war, but the stringent demands of combat preclude sustained fighting in such vastly understrength units as two-man squads or eight-man platoons. In combat, U.S. Army infantry units instinctively and routinely tailor themselves into viable, capable formations as changes occur in their field strength.

These same reorganization techniques must be learned and practiced in peacetime training as well. There are two reasons why they must: First, the techniques for reorganizing are essential to the combat readiness of small infantry units—seriously understrength units cannot fight properly, and units must train as they are going to fight. Second, full-strength units in a peacetime training environment are as rare as they will





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be in combat. Even overstrength units like the Rangers and the 82d Airborne Division seldom, if ever, field full-strength squads and platoons for training.

Leaders are misleading themselves if they think they are conducting squad training with three-man squads or platoon training with ten-man platoons. Some type of training is being done, to be sure, but it is not small unit collective training on "nuts and bolts" subjects like battle drills and tactics in situational training exercises. Before training begins, therefore, grossly understrength platoons and squads must be reorganized so that the unit can train properly and realistically. And this reorganization must continue during the training day as a unit's field strength continues to change. The entire leadership of a battalion, from the battalion commander through the fire team leaders, must know how their platoons and squads are to be organized when they have people missing.

I offer no cook-book recipes to be memorized or placed in notebooks (although the tables in this article might be put in a handy place as useful guidelines). Rather, I offer an approach to thinking through the challenges of reorganizing a unit whose strength is constantly changing to create organizations that will be able to accomplish their missions in combat.

The U.S. Army has two basically different categories of infantry—light and heavy. Each is organized differently and, to add a little challenge for infantry leaders, even the basic light and heavy categories have variations.

(The Army is currently experimenting with a third type—motorized infantry—but has not yet determined exactly how it will be structured. Motorized infantry has some of the characteristics of both light and heavy infantry. Although the reorganization of the motorized infantry platoons and squads are not addressed here, the principles presented can be readily applied to motorized infantry formations.)

The new Army of Excellence light infantry platoons and squads have three different organizations—pure light infantry, airborne/airmobile, and Ranger. Common to all of these is the nine-man rifle squad made up of a squad leader and two identical fire teams with a fire team leader, an automatic rifleman (AR), a grenadier, and a rifleman in each. In the pure light infantry and the Rangers, the rifleman can usually perform as a designated Dragon gunner if required.

The Ranger and airborne/airmobile units have weapon squads. The Rangers' weapon squad is built around the M60 machinegun, which is the platoon's long-range killing punch. The airborne/airmobile infantry units have two dedicated Dragon gunners and two assistant Dragon gunners in their weapon squads in addition to the M60 machinegun teams.

The number of M60 machineguns and their manning also differ among the types of light infantry. Only the Rangers retain three machineguns per platoon with the traditional three-man machinegun teams—gunner, assistant gunner, and ammunition bearer. The airborne and airmobile infantry have two M60 machineguns and a two-man crew for each. The pure light infantry has the same two-gun/two-man machinegun team structure, but their guns are located in the platoon headquarters.

All light infantry platoon headquarters basically contain the platoon leader, the platoon sergeant, and a radio-telephone operator (RTO). The Rangers have a medic assigned and are authorized an additional RTO (31C1V), who is usually present only for long-range communications when on independent platoon missions.

Heavy infantry comes in two types—Bradley and M113. Each has a platoon headquarters and three nine-man rifle squads. Each squad is subdivided into a vehicle crew and a rifle team.

The vehicle crew of the Bradley has three men—the track commander (who is usually the assistant squad leader or the squad leader), the gunner, and the driver. The less sophisticated M113 needs only a track commander (usually a team leader) and a driver.

The rifle team of a Bradley squad has six men—a squad leader, two automatic riflemen, one grenadier, and two riflemen, one of whom is a designated Dragon gunner. The M113 rifle team has seven men available to dismount—a squad leader, a team leader who can double as a grenadier, a machinegunner, an assistant gunner, an automatic rifleman, and two riflemen, one of whom can be armed with a Dragon.

The leaders of all these small infantry units must continually assess their situation to determine how and when to reorganize. The method of doing this is fairly simple, and it fits properly into the estimate of the situation that leaders

always make as they train or fight.

Reorganization, therefore, revolves around the application of five considerations:

Step 1. Apply METT-T. An analysis of the mission, the enemy, the terrain, the troops available, and the time available is the time-proven method of assessing a situation.

What is the unit's mission? Attack? Defend? Ambush? Establish an OP? A platoon leader must have a clear concept of the intent of both his company and battalion commanders. Squad leaders must have a similar grasp of the platoon and company situations. Only in this way can they counter the confusion and isolation inherent in intense combat and take advantage of any unforeseen opportunities for accomplishing the missions that may present themselves on the battlefield.

What type of enemy forces will the unit encounter? Light? Heavy? Guerrillas? Third World? How are they armed? What tactics do they employ? How will they react to contact with us? What is their expected mission? The answers to these questions will have a major effect on how a unit organizes and arms itself.

Where is the unit fighting? Forest? Desert? Urban area? What cover and concealment is available? What are the fields of fire for our weapons and for his? Avenues of approach? What is the weather now, and what is the prediction for 12 and 24 hours from now? What is the light data?

Troops available is the crucial question. Although present-for-duty strength determines how a unit reorganizes, it is not quite that simple. The leader needs to know not only how many soldiers he has available but also who they are—how well trained, how much experience they have had, who is reliable and who is not.

How much time is available before the unit moves out or before the enemy is expected to arrive? Is there enough time to train the unit or even brief the troops on a reorganization? It doesn't take long to orient well-trained and well-disciplined soldiers on a new situation and on their responsibilities and duties. Likewise, a good unit can accomplish a lot of high-payoff training in just a few hours. The point is that valuable time must not be wasted. Time will determine a leader's options as he reorganizes.

Once the small unit infantry leader has made his estimate of the situation using METT-T, he is ready to begin the actual reorganization.

Step 2. Fill the key leadership positions. Units even as small as fire teams will not function properly unless someone is in charge. Key positions must therefore be filled with soldiers who can do the job. On some occasions, leaders have to consolidate units because adequate leadership is just not available.

Because of the Army's two basic types of infantry, the key positions to be filled are not exactly the same. But all infantry platoons—light and heavy—must have at least a qualified platoon leader, a platoon sergeant, and squad leaders for all the squads that can be manned.

Light infantry units must have fire team leaders—the fighting leaders who maneuver their fire teams by their own personal, up-front example.

Heavy infantry units—M2 Bradley or M113—must have

track commanders. When the infantry dismounts, a qualified soldier must be left in charge of the vehicle—to move it and to direct its weapon systems—and another qualified leader must be in charge of the dismount element or rifle team.

Step 3. Man the most potent, most applicable weapons. The enemy and terrain will have a major effect on the weapons a leader chooses to man. Light infantry units fighting enemy armored or motorized forces will probably want all the antitank weapons they can get—Dragons, LAWs, M202 Flashes, and AT mines if in the defense. The same light infantry units fighting in the jungle against lightly equipped forces will most likely take no Dragons or AT mines, but AR men and riflemen will probably be at a premium.

Since the M60 machinegun is a principal weapon to light infantry units, seldom will those units fail to man all of their available M60s. To heavy infantry units, however, the M60 machinegun and the dismounted Dragon may be less important, especially if the units are employed near their carriers.

A leader's choice of soldiers to man the essential weapons is especially important. A machinegunner, a Dragon gunner, or an AR man must be capable of employing his weapon effectively.

Step 4. Determine the minimum acceptable manning level for small units. This is the crunch point. Units must

RIFLE SQUAD/TEAM FILL					
POSITION	STRENGTH				
	9	8	7	6	5
<u>Light Infantry</u>					
Squad Leader	X	X	X	X	X
Fire Team Leader, A Team	X	X	X	X	X
Automatic Rifleman	X	X	X	X	X
Grenadier	X	X	X	X	X
Rifleman	X	X	X	X	X
Fire Team Leader, B Team	X	X	X		
Automatic Rifleman	X	X	X	X	
Grenadier	X	X			
Rifleman	X				
<u>Heavy Infantry (Bradley)</u>					
Squad Leader/Asst Squad Leader				X	X
Automatic Rifleman				X	X
Automatic Rifleman				X	X
Grenadier				X	X
Rifleman				X	X
Rifleman				X	
(NOTE: Assumes the three-man vehicle crew is fully manned.)					
<u>Heavy Infantry (M113)</u>					
Squad Leader	X	X	X		
Team Leader/Grenadier	X	X	X		
Machinegunner	X	X	X		
Assistant Machinegunner	X	X	X		
Automatic Rifleman	X	X	X		
Rifleman	X	X			
Rifleman/Ammo Bearer	X				
(NOTE: Assumes the two-man vehicle crew is fully manned.)					

Table 1

have well-thought-out guidelines for reorganizing before they go into combat or when they train. The following are some guidelines for both light and heavy infantry units, and the leader on the spot should be given the latitude to reorganize his unit on the basis of his estimate of the situation.

In light infantry units, a fire team must have at least four men—the fire team leader plus three team members. If the first fire team is filled, then it takes at least a two-man buddy team to make up the additional fire team, and one of these members must be capable of filling the role of the fighting leader, the fire team leader.

A rifle squad must have a squad leader and at least one full fire team—a total of five men, the squad leader and the minimum acceptable four-man fire team. If there are fewer than five qualified men, then it is not possible to have a squad.

As Table 1 shows, with five qualified men a light infantry

LIGHT INFANTRY PLATOON FILL

FIELD STRENGTH	Platoon Hqs	Weapon Squad	Rifle Squads	Platoon Total
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Light Infantry (authorized 34)

34 or more	7		3x9 +	34 +
22 or more	4		3x5 +	22 +
17 or more	4		2x5 +	17 +
12 or more	4		1x5 +	12 +

Less than 12 No platoon can be formed—
Cross-level with another platoon.

Airborne/Airmobile Infantry (Authorized 39*)

39 or more	3	9 + *	3x9 +	39 +
27 or more	3	9 + *	3x5 +	27 +
22 or more	3	9 + *	2x5 +	22 +
17 or more	3	9 + *	1x5 +	17 +

Less than 17 No platoon can be formed—
Cross-level with another platoon.

*Includes full manning of the two-man Dragon teams in the weapon squads.

Ranger Infantry (Authorized 41*)

41 or more	4*	10 + **	3x9 +	41 +
26 or more	4*	7 + **	3x5 +	26 +
21 or more	4*	7 + **	2x5 +	21 +
16 or more	4*	7 + **	1x5 +	16 +

Less than 16 No platoon can be formed—
Cross-level with another platoon.

*Does not include additional RATELO (31C1V) in platoon HQ.

**Accepts two-man MG teams instead of authorized three-man teams.

Table 2

squad is at minimum acceptable strength. Six men produce a squad with a five-man fire team—in this case with an additional AR man. When the initial four-man fire team is present, it takes at least two more to man an additional fire team. Seven or more men create a squad with two fire teams.

The weapon squad found in the airborne, airmobile, and Ranger infantry platoons must have a squad leader and minimally manned crew-served weapon teams. The weapon squads are very important in the light infantry, and many times

HEAVY INFANTRY PLATOON FILL

FIELD STRENGTH	Platoon Hqs	Vehicle Crew	Rifle Team	Platoon Total
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Bradley-equipped (Authorized 32)

32 or more	5	3x3*	3x6 +	32 +
29 or more	5	3x3*	3x5 +	29 +
24 or more	5	3x3*	2x5 +	24 +
19 or more	5	3x3*	1x5 +	19 +

Less than 19 No platoon can be formed—
Cross-level with another platoon
if infantry is to be dismantled.

*Assumes situation demands a three-man vehicle crew; two-man crew is possible for added dismantled strength.

M113-equipped (Authorized 31)

31 or more	4	3x2	3x7 +	31 +
25 or more	4	3x2	3x5 +	25 +
20 or more	4	3x2	2x5 +	20 +
15 or more	4	3x2	1x5 +	15 +

Less than 15 No platoon can be formed—
Cross-level with another platoon
if infantry is to be dismantled.

Table 3

soldiers will be shifted from the rifle squads to man the critical crew-served weapons.

It takes at least two men to operate an M60 machinegun properly—a gunner and an assistant gunner. An M60 must not be manned by only one soldier. And this goes for the mechanized infantry as well. A machinegun just doesn't work very well if only one man is dedicated to it. With two men, the gun performs adequately; add an ammunition bearer, and it works better still. (And that machinegunner should be made a corporal. He's an important soldier in a light infantry platoon with a great responsibility as a team leader; that responsibility should be recognized.)

In airborne and airmobile units, the weapon squad has two Dragon teams composed of a gunner and an assistant gunner. The minimum acceptable level of manning for this squad depends upon the situation. If there is a strong enemy armor threat, it should be fully manned—maybe even augmented with another ammunition bearer.

An airborne-airmobile weapon squad is authorized nine men and in a high threat enemy armor environment, all nine are needed to man the machineguns and the Dragons. In a low armor-threat situation, seven may be able to do the job—a squad leader, two machinegun teams of two men each, and two Dragon gunners without their ammunition bearers.

A Ranger weapon squad is authorized ten men. The minimum acceptable fill is seven—the squad leader and three, two-man machinegun teams.

Looking at manning a light infantry platoon (Table 2), a platoon (to be one) must have a platoon leader, a platoon sergeant (for sustained operations), and a radio-telephone operator. A platoon must have at least two squads, and in an airborne, airmobile, or Ranger unit one of them could be the weapon squad.

(If less than two squads are available, then it is not possible to have a maneuver element and a base of fire element and, therefore, not possible to have a platoon.)

Manning heavy infantry units is, of course, somewhat different (Tables 1 and 3):

The weapon systems on mechanized infantry vehicles, especially on the Bradley, and the need for instant mobility, usually demand that a full vehicle crew remain with each vehicle. The vehicle crew for the Bradley consists of *three men*—a qualified track commander (TC), a gunner, and a driver. The Bradley TC can be the squad leader or the assistant squad leader, depending upon the situation. Current thinking, though, is that the squad leader will dismount with the rifle team in most tactical situations.

There may be times, however, when the commander's METT-T analysis leads him to increase his dismounted infantry strength and temporarily leave the Bradley with a two-man crew, with the TC doubling as the gunner and the driver. The Bradley's weapon systems, its mobility, and its ability to conduct sustained operations definitely suffer with a two-man crew. Less than full vehicle crews also greatly limit the flexibility and responsiveness of a Bradley platoon in reacting to *unexpected* developments.

The M113 can get by with a two-man vehicle crew—the track commander, who is normally one of the squad's team leaders, and a driver. It is rare to cut the M113 crew down to a single man.

The rifle team that fights from the Bradley and that dismounts from either vehicle is *composed* of the squad leader (or assistant squad leader in some cases with the Bradley) plus at least a four-man team. As Table 1 indicates, if a unit cannot dismount at least five men, then a rifle team does not exist.

As a general rule, heavy platoons man all of their vehicles even though they may not be able to man all of their squads. The Bradley, and even the M113 with its M2 .50 caliber machinegun and M175 Dragon mount, provides an excellent base of fire. But in order to be a platoon, the platoon must be able to generate at least one dismounted rifle team. If the platoon cannot do this then it is no longer a heavy rifle platoon, although in the case of the Bradley it may become something else in terms of providing a base of fire for the company.

Step 5. Cross-level as required, on the basis of the preceding guidelines. The application of the rules produces different results with the different categories and types of infantry.

The pure light infantry, airborne/airmobile, and Ranger infantry are cross-leveled as depicted in Table 2, assuming that qualified soldiers are available to fill the leadership positions

and man the appropriate weapons.

For example, a pure light infantry platoon can obviously field a full-strength platoon if it has 34 or more qualified soldiers. But what happens if it has only 18? Applying the rules established in Steps 1 through 4, an 18-man light infantry unit can field a full platoon headquarters of seven men, to include manning the two two-man machinegun teams, plus two squads of five and six men respectively. But if a light infantry platoon has less than 12 men, then it is not possible to form a platoon with a maneuver element and a base-of-fire element. When this occurs, the company commander must cross-level with another platoon to form a unit capable of both fire and movement.

An airborne or airmobile platoon can field a platoon headquarters, a full weapon squad, and three rifle squads with at least five men each if it has 23 or more qualified soldiers. If an airborne or airmobile squad has less than 17 soldiers, it cannot perform what is expected of a rifle platoon and should be cross-leveled within the company to form one.

These two examples both assume that the leader's METT-T analysis has led him to *fully man* his crew-served weapons and that he has qualified soldiers to cross-level. If the small unit leader's analysis of the situation has led him to believe he can afford to man less than his full complement of crew-served weapons and still accomplish the mission, then he will have additional manpower to fill his rifle squads and keep his platoon intact.

Heavy infantry units cross-level in a similar manner (see Table 3). A Bradley platoon of 29 or more qualified soldiers can fill all four of its vehicles with a full vehicle crew to man the potent weapon systems and maneuver the track and also fill at least three rifle teams with at least five men each. If this same platoon has 19 soldiers, it can fully man all four vehicle crews but can provide only *one* five-man rifle team on one of the vehicles. METT-T considerations will naturally produce slightly different organizations as trade-offs are made. The M113 platoon observes similar rules.

The five steps I have suggested here are merely guidelines that indicate a common-sense approach to finding a proper organization for combat and for training. At the very least, infantry leaders need to think about reorganizing, about how they will fight, and, accordingly, about how they will train to fight.

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