received no training in maintaining missile system equipment.) Obviously, operators and supervisors also must be trained before they can do any PMCS, and the company executive officer must be trained in missile equipment maintenance if he is to supervise the unit's program.

Maintaining missile system equipment is not essentially different from maintaining vehicles, small arms, or radios in regard to publications, records, repair parts, personnel, training, and time. The most important factor, however, is command emphasis, which brings all the other factors together to produce an effective maintenance program and a combat-ready unit.

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Light Infantry Weapons Squads

CAPTAIN WILLIAM E. HARNER

Over the past two or three years, various agencies and subject matter experts have been developing organizations and doctrine for the Army's new light infantry divisions.

The 7th Infantry Division (Light), which converted to the new configuration toward the end of 1985, has become a member of the Rapid Deployment Force and has been involved in an extensive one-year certification process to validate light division concepts.

For light infantry units, one of the most important certification issues is to determine the most effective organization for employing M60 machineguns and medium antiarmor weapons (Dragons) in the rifle companies.

Eight of the nine infantry battalions of the 7th Division are formally organized under the current table of organization and equipment (TOE), with the Dragons consolidated in an antiarmor section under the company headquarters and with two machineguns assigned to each platoon headquarters. During its train-up period before receiving 333 graduates from One Station Unit Training (OSUT), the other battalion—the 4th Battalion, 17th Infantry—was chosen to implement the weapons squad concept instead.

A weapons squad consists of nine men with two Dragon teams and two machinegun teams under the control of a staff sergeant squad leader. Each of a company's three rifle platoons has one weapons squad.

The personnel and equipment to form the weapons squad came from the current antiarmor section and the rifle platoon machinegun crews. The weapons squad does require two additional staff sergeant squad leaders per company over the existing personnel authorizations.

SQUAD LEADERS

In organizing their weapons squads, the company commanders chose their weapons squad leaders carefully, looking for maturity, experience, initiative, and technical proficiency in both the M60 machinegun and the Dragon. The NCOs selected for these positions included former antitank platoon and section sergeants, a two-time captain of the winning team in an M60 machinegun competition, and several Vietman veterans.

These weapons squad leaders, as members of the COHORT battalion cadre, then attended the Light Leader Course taught by Fort Benning's Ranger Division. The program of instruction, which was based on Field Circular 7-15, Light Infantry Squad and Platoon Operations and ARTEP Mission Training Plan, had to be modified slightly to work with the weapons squad in platoon missions. This was an easy adjustment, however, because Ranger companies have weapons squads in their TOE.

By the time the course ended, several things were clear:

- The leader-to-led ratio was obviously better with the two additional NCOs. The weapons squad leader was responsible for only eight men instead of 12 as in the antiarmor section configuration.
- The weapons squad made NCO supervision of the M60 machinegun crews easier, thereby freeing the platoon sergeant to help the platoon leader lead the platoon.
- The internal configuration of the weapons squad could be arranged into mutually supporting teams, which had one machinegun crew and one Dragon crew each.
- The weapons squad leader became the assistant platoon sergeant.

The selection of soldiers to man the weapons squad was competitive. Before they graduated from OSUT, their individual training records were screened for their weapon qualification and Army Phy-

sical Readiness Test scores, and for their overall performance as shown by an informal critique the OSUT drill sergeants provided.

The relationship between the squad leaders and the drill sergeants, in particu- . ., proved invaluable in getting the weapons squad training program off to a fast start. Also, each weapons squad leader in the battalion had an unprecedented opportunity to observe future members of their squads for a fifteen-day period during an OSUT add-on evaluation at the Army raining Center at Fort Benning. (The low rition rate in the weapons squads over the next seven months was a direct reflection on the selection process.)

Once the battalion had been fully assembled at Fort Ord, an intensive six-month training cycle began. This period included the Rites of Passage; the light hters course; squad, platoon, company, and battalion ARTEPs; and battalion training in Celtic Cross III, the division's annual "war." (See also "COHORT Company Training Program," by Lieutenant Colonel Joseph C. Windle and Captain Harold E. Raugh, Jr., INFANTRY, November-December 1984, pp. 26-29.)

Although the learning process continues for the battalion, some conclusions can already be drawn.

Foremost among these conclusions is that light infantry doctrine has not caught up with the TOE force design. The Army Chief of Staff's White Paper on Light Infantry requires that our infantry forces ome experts in low-intensity operations in which "initiative, stealth, and surprise" are paramount. The lack of a formidable armor threat in a low-intensity conflict develops an undefined role for company Dragons (there is little use for them in attacks by infiltration, air assault, ambush, or raid).

In low-intensity warfare training, even the companies of the battalions organized under the regular TOE either have used their antiarmor sections in an informal weapons squad configuration or have used them out in front as reconnaissance forces. (Although this is only a technique, it is well documented that the Dragon gunner's skill is already highly perishable without putting the well-trained gunners and their weapons out front as regular infantry forces. Integrating antiarmor section personnel into platoons as rifle assets on a mission-by-mission basis only fosters confusion.)

The weapons squad configuration gives a commander more flexibility if the conflict should intensify, or in the event his unit is introduced into mid- or high-intensity operations. During the 7th Division's annual exercise in 1985, the brigade commander successfully took the 4th Battalion, 17th Infantry's TOWs and Dragons and attached them to another battalion that had an armor threat in its sector. Further, during company raid and stalking attack missions the weapons squads received additional machineguns and acted independently under the company commander's control, while the Dragon crews remained with their squads to provide local security. In an elastic defense, the Dragons were brought forward from the company trains and the weapons squad teams were set into mutually supporting positions. This flexibility can be directly attributed to the supervision provided by the leaders of the weapons squads.

The weapons squad provides the ideal responsiveness and concentration of antiarmor and machinegun firepower on the most likely enemy avenues of approach into platoon defensive sectors. Cross-training teams on both weapons should therefore be the rule, not the exception. Then, when his teams are deployed, a company commander can be assured that his crew-served systems will be correctly manned at all times. (The addition of the squad leader and Dragon crews also increases the foxhole strength of each platoon by five riflemen who are fully versed in platoon SOPs.)

Finally, in low-intensity situations, Dragon crews can be used as security teams for platoon missions, and the platoon's rifle squads will remain intact for the assault element.

The hallmark of light infantry units is their ability to conduct bold, aggressive actions anywhere in the world at any time. It is therefore incumbent upon our Army leadership to provide the best configuration for its cutting edge.

The weapons squad has proved its usefulness in the most demanding training through the flexibility and responsiveness it has given its commanders and through the punch it provides as a combat multiplier. It should be a part of the TOE of a light infantry rifle company.

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