More on Infantry

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: Last year, INFANTRY published my article "Three Kinds of Infantry" (July-August 1985, pp. 11-13). Subsequently, a letter to the editor appeared in the magazine (March-April 1986, p. 7) by Captain Jack E. Mundstock from Fort Bragg, disagreeing with what I had said. This present article is my response to Captain Mundstock's letter.

Along the broad spectrum of infantry functions, there are three specific areas. Infantry support to rapidly advancing tanks is one extreme, and light infantry operations in mountainous terrain is the other. In the middle ground are the traditional infantry missions that require heavy firepower, position defense, and assault of fortified positions.

Our traditional approach has been to improve our infantry's performance on their middle ground missions. Having served in mechanized, "straight leg," and airborne infantry units of the recent past, like Captain Mundstock, I can say the three weren't all that different. They were designed for the middle ground primarily, with the mechanized infantry being more useful in support of tanks while the others were better in difficult terrain.

With the arrival of the Bradley infantry fighting vehicle and the new light infantry organizations, however, we have a new situation. The Bradley infantry is designed to support the M1 tank, and Bradley infantry *is* significantly different from M113 infantry — or so my friends who command Bradley outfits are telling me. Although they cannot put as many soldiers on the ground for dismounted operations, they can more than make up for this with high speed mobility and heavy firepower.

The new light infantry is also significantly different from the previous H-series infantry. It is truly better for mobile operations at night and in extremely difficult terrain. It cannot dig in and hold ground or assault hostile positions as well as what I call "regular" infantry. It cannot carry heavy weapons, pioneer tools, mines, and sandbags as easily. But it is much better at infiltration tactics and is much more mobile in mountainous terrain.

Clearly, when required to do so, both Bradley and light infantry can dig in and hold a fixed position or assault an enemy strongpoint. But by organization, equipment, and training emphasis, neither is best for that role.

VOID IN THE MIDDLE

Having made our infantry types most effective near the ends of the spectrum, when we convert all active duty infantry to the J-series TOEs, we will have a void in the middle. That was the main point I tried to make in my earlier article.

If the functions at the ends of the spectrum are important, then we need to recognize that the skills required by Bradley and light infantry will be quite different. Not having commanded a Bradley unit (but having commanded an M113-equipped mechanized infantry battalion), I can only imagine the initial culture shock of NCOs who are new to the Bradley. I do know that light infantry tactics require a considerable "mind-set adjustment" for NCOs — even those who have an airborne background. With the 11M MOS we have already recognized the significant differences between Bradley and other infantry. Since all mechanized infantry units eventually are to be equipped with the Bradley, the current mechanized 11B will become extinct.

I submit that the light infantryman needs attitudes and skills as significantly different from those of the H-series regular infantryman as those of the M113-equipped infantryman are from the Bradley-equipped infantryman. Since we are converting all regular infantry to light infantry, all non-mechanized 11Bs will become light infantrymen. Some may be air assault and some may be airborne, but all will be some variant of light infantry. It is a purely academic exercise, therefore, to speculate whether we would need a separate MOS for "regular" infantry.

Every criticism of both Bradley infantry and light infantry boils down to a perception of their difficulty in carrying out the middle ground traditional infantry chores — the "regular" infantry domain. Just as the missions of supporting the rapid advance of the tank and fighting in different terrain are important, so are the missions of digging in quickly and effectively, converting a village or town into a fortress, or taking those kinds of positions away from the enemy.

The current M113-equipped units are best for those tasks, because they can carry the weapons and equipment required for those missions. We should not give up this important capability. Moreover, we should make our mechanized infantrymen better at those tasks by fo-

cusing their training in those areas and developing the equipment they need either to go to ground quickly or to root the enemy out of the ground quickly. That requires heavy firepower, a great deal of ammunition to sustain fire, and special skills and attitudes. As a mechanized infantry battalion commander, I made a practice of making sure each company has an opportunity to dig itself in *completely* every quarter, because the habits and skills associated with that activity are highly perishable.

SPECIALIZATION

As I matured in the profession and as an infantryman, I came to recognize that the entire range of tactical infantry functions are important and useful in the larger tactical scheme of divisions and corps. I also recognize that to do them well, we must develop specialized organizations and the people to man them.

It is because of specialization that most armor and artillery NCOs appear impressively proficient compared to the average infantry NCO. That is not to say that infantry NCOs are any less professional or talented, but their craft is much more complex and more difficult to master and would be a great deal easier if they specialized.

For the future, we have chosen to have (basically and functionally) two kinds of infantry (with one possible exception I will mention shortly). The light infantry variants of Ranger, air assault, and airborne are still fundamentally "light" infantry. The motorized infantry of the 9th Division is a "light" variant of the regular infantry. It is more air transportable than M113-mounted infantry, and it has equal or greater firepower. But being lighter in weight, it may not be able to carry all of the equipment and tools regular infantry requires to build fortifications. In fact, the designers of the motorized infantry recognize this and have opted for mobile, cavalry-like tactics, relying on long-range antiarmor systems to keep the enemy at arm's length from the infantry. Such a force may be useful, but it does not replace regular infantry.

Some military analysts have written about the utility of organizing the U.S. Army into permanent brigades. The best argument goes like this:

- Our current force structure lacks the maneuverability and flexibility of World War II formations in which divisions were packaged as permanent combined arms formations, which were grouped by field armies under corps for tactical missions. During the course of a campaign, divisions could be moved between the corps readily because the corps had no logistical function. Divisions were plugged into field army logistics.
- Today's corps performs all of the functions of a World War II field army and in terms of combat power is probably superior to it.
- Today's division operates over the terrain of a World War II corps and is as powerful. But unlike a World War II corps, it has a division support command (DISCOM) to which all of its brigades are tied, and it is basically a homogeneous force. Often an armored division finds itself in terrain that needs more "regular" or "light" infantry. Likewise, a light infantry division often needs armored and mechanized infantry in portions of its sector.
- We often find a corps trying to generate a reserve, being tempted to pull reserve brigades but stymied by logistics arrangements. The World War II field army merely tapped a corps headquarters to give up its committed divisions to flanking corps and to draw its reserve division and other available reserve divisions into a potent new reserve corps. If our divisions were more like World War II corps and brigade structures, then corps operations would be easier to handle.
- A brigade level force today can wield the combat power of a World War II division, and this is the level at which the primary combined arms ought to be brought together into a permanent team.
- Some say that brigade packages are easier to deploy within joint contingency plans than "brigade slices." This may or may not be true.

If we organized the Army along brigade lines, then I would see infantry organized along the following lines: There would be three kinds of light infantry brigades each capable of functioning in any corps, under any kind of division. They might be capable of conducting both airborne and air assault operations and there might be fewer of them in our force structure than currently envisioned.

A regular infantry brigade would be composed of three motorized battalions with ample antitank systems and an organic engineer platoon. It would also have a combined arms battalion of tanks and "armored" infantry. An armored brigade would be made up of three combined arms battalions composed of tanks and "armored" infantry in infantry fighting vehicles.

The "regular" infantry would be of two types. Those deployed in Europe would be oriented on the M113A1, the M113A2, or a similar heavy transport with artillery shrapnel protection. Those in the continental United States would be of the "expeditionary" variety, mounted on lighter vehicles but otherwise identical in organization and function. The tanks in the "expeditionary" brigades might be replaced with additional ground antitank systems and attack helicopters, but the infantry soldiers' training and functions would be the same.

The armor brigades, equipped primarily with M1s and M2s, would be the ground striking force.

In addition, I can see two basic types of cavalry regiments. Heavy cavalry regiments would be similar to those we now have. Light cavalry regiments would be developed around light attack vehicles such as those in the 9th Division.

Aviation would also be reorganized as follows:

- Air cavalry regiment organizations would be specially designed for corps screening missions, rear area protection, and flank security. Air attack brigades would be totally air-transportable, deep-strike formations. These would counterattack in the defense or exploit armored breakthroughs in the attack. For employment, they could be attached to a division. (It is conceivable to have two armored and two air attack brigades under a division.)
- Combat assault brigades composed of mostly lift and escort helicopters, at corps level, would be either attached to

Soldiers from the 25th Infantry Division during Team Spirit 86 in Korea.

divisions that were made up entirely of light brigades or detached as necessary. They would have primarily general support or direct support missions within divisions. But being corps assets, they could be moved and regrouped as necessary.

• Heavy lift brigades composed of heavy lift helicopters would be assigned to a corps to support its combat and logistical lift requirements. They could quickly reposition light infantry brigades and their supporting artillery. They could also support the rapid advance of armored brigades and air attack brigades by moving field artillery and supplies forward.

Artillery organizations would also have to undergo transformation, and robotics could do much to reduce the number of soldiers required in battery *and* support roles.

Brigades would have organic artillery to provide close support and countermortar fires. (A good case can be made for having a battalion's indirect support systems manned by artillerymen.) Corps artillery should all be long range, and its functions should be to reinforce division artillery fires, to provide counterbattery fires, and to conduct deep interdiction fire missions.

Divisions would become like World War II corps with appropriate division troops but no logistics functions. The current DISCOM functions would either go down to the brigades or back to the COSCOM (corps support command).

Like the old corps artillery, the division would have a DIVARTY (division artillery) of about three battalions of long-range tube artillery. MLRS (multiple-launch rocket system) battalions could be attached from corps artillery. All tube artillery would be either in DIVARTYs or BRIGARTYs (brigade artilleries). There would also be air defense, signal, engineer, CEWI (communication, electronic warfare, intelligence), cavalry, military police, and aviation troops appropriate to the division.

All divisions would be capable of handling any configuration of brigades and regiments from two to five in number. Division troops based in the continental United States would be equipped for easy transportability; some would be airborne and more light forces oriented. The commanders of these divisions might command three like brigades or a mix of two to four of several different kinds.

During wartime, brigades would be assigned to corps for extended periods and COSCOMs would be specifically tailored to support war plans. Some COSCOM units might be stationed on division posts to provide peacetime support.

Divisions and corps would be given primary and alternate missions for contingency planning. Brigades might be assigned to different divisions based on contingencies and war plans.

Obviously, I am not looking at the implementation of any such organization in the immediate future, and I realize that these ideas don't coincide completely with Army 21 concepts. But for several years, during my tenure at Fort Leavenworth both as a doctrine writer and as director of the School of Advanced Military Studies, I have looked at our ability to wage war with our current organizations from top to bottom. Therefore, although my conclusions may be controversial, I do not think they are trivial.

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