lion per division—or $17 million for all five. (Of course, life-cycle costs would have to include 60mm ammunition for training and prepositioned war reserve stocks as well.) Offset savings in 7.62mm ammunition would most likely be $5-$10 million.

Without going into cost calculations any further, it is obvious that my proposal would cost a lot of money over 20 years. So the idea may be doomed from an affordability standpoint.

There is an option available, though. The 60mm mortar program could be funded with the cost savings in training ammunition that the 60mm would create across the entire Army mortar family. Thus, the M252 81mm and the new 120mm mortars could be equipped with a 60mm mortar subcaliber kit, and training could be conducted with the cheapest mortar round—the 60mm. The development standard would be the 60mm mortar subcaliber kit currently issued with the M30 4.2-inch mortar. (In 1961 my 4.2-inch platoon fired hundreds of 60mm mortar rounds in Germany while preparing for a division-administered annual Army training test, and the training was highly successful.) Overall, the subcaliber ammunition would cost less than half as much as the ammunition used with the 81mm and 120mm mortars.

The M224 60mm mortars may well be the most overlooked, under-utilized, yet most important weapon of leverage in today's infantry arsenal. Can our light infantry platoons afford to deploy without it?

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Heavy Mortar Platoon
Stepchild or Hip-Pocket Artillery?

CAPTAIN TERRY L. DURAN

The J-series heavy mortar platoon, as the battalion task force's "hip-pocket artillery," is a potentially priceless asset, but all too often it is misused—or not used at all.

Most company and battalion commanders grew up with the H-series mortar concept—a three-gun 81mm mortar platoon in each of three line companies and a four-gun 4.2-inch (107mm) heavy mortar platoon in the combat support company. The J-series mechanized battalion—both Bradley and M113 transition—has only a six-gun 107mm platoon in its headquarters company. While this makes things easier on the four J-series rifle company commanders and puts more indirect fire punch under the battalion's control, it is an overall decrease of 44 percent in the battalion's ability to put mortar-delivered steel on target.

The J-series 107mm mortar platoon does have two organic M577 fire direction centers (FDCs). Although this organization enables the platoon to operate as two fully independent sections, it does not totally offset the decrease in available mortar support. To make up for this decrease, therefore, a battalion commander, his S-3, and his company commanders have to be familiar with the capabilities and limitations of mortars.

Too often, though, when company commanders think of indirect fire assets they tend to think only of field artillery. But the battalion heavy mortar platoon is often more responsive: The mortar platoon leader (and sometimes the FDCs) can monitor the battalion net directly without having to go through a fire support officer (FSO). Forward observers (FOs) can talk directly to the FDCs or the platoon leader on the fire direction net. The mortar platoon leader can call for fires directly on the basis of spot reports rendered by the scout platoon over the battalion net. Also, the mortar platoon doesn't have to fire for any other unit except that battalion—ever. On a highly electronic mechanized battlefield, the mortar platoon will also be closer to the companies (and therefore usually easier to reach) than the battalion FSO, and certainly closer than the firing units themselves. (This is true even in peacetime maneuvers.)

The mechanized infantry battalion commander I worked for in Germany told his company commanders repeatedly to plan for mortar fires. "The mortars," he would say, "are your hip-pocket artillery. The field artillery batteries are going to be too busy with counterbattery fire to support you very much." And what I saw as a mortar platoon leader supported that position. Unfortunately, most officers now serving as commanders and S-3s were never mortar platoon leaders as lieutenants and now, with only one platoon per battalion, still fewer of them serving in those positions in the future will have had that experience.

Too often, therefore, the mortar platoon is treated with benevolent neglect, and the subunit mission paragraph on mortars reads, "GS to the battalion." Then, when the mortar platoon leader asks the FSO for guidance, he is told, "Oh, just do whatever you think is best." This car-

ries down all the way to the FOs, and sometimes the FDCs have to wake them up over the radio and plead with them to call a fire mission. But once a company commander flunks an ARTEP task for not calling for smoke when withdrawing, the lesson is learned.

In the field, the mortar platoon leader does not work for his nominal boss and rater, the HHC commander, but for the battalion commander, the S-3, and the FSO. In some units, either the S-3 or the FSO is the intermediate rater on the mortar platoon leader's officer evaluation report. His job is equal in importance to that of the scout platoon leader, who—if he's good—garners the glory because he is in a more visible position, out in front of the battalion.

The mortar platoon leader in the field is, in effect, a separate company commander. His is a small company, true, with only ten vehicles and no XO or other lieutenants—but he works directly for the battalion commander, has his own separate missions, and can directly affect the outcome of the battalion's mission.

Since this is the case, the mortar platoon leader must be chosen carefully. The job should not be thought of as just a bone to toss to a lieutenant who didn't get a company XO position or staff job after he had paid his dues as a rifle platoon leader. It should be considered a job for an aggressive, mission-oriented, and self-confident officer who is capable of becoming technically proficient in everything dealing with mortars—from boresighting a tube to operating an aiming circle to plotting rounds in the FDC. This means, preferably, a lieutenant who has attended the Infantry Mortar Platoon Course (IMPC).

But the IMPC, which is conducted at Fort Benning, is not usually one of the courses lieutenants in the basic course choose as follow-on schools—Airborne and Ranger, perhaps, and maybe Pathfinder or ITV Trainer. Then, when a mortar platoon job does come along, those lieutenants will not know much about it. All they will probably know is that there is one mortar platoon in the battalion; mortars are heavy and cumbersome (they may have dragged one around doing crew drills during an afternoon's instruction in IOBC); they hung a couple of rounds on some kind of mortar during the basic course; and it was a lot louder than the things that went "thoonk" in the Special Forces. They also probably have negative, non-glamorous perceptions about the job, because they have seldom if ever heard anything about mortars unless something has gone wrong.

Even if the lieutenant chosen did go to IMPC after IOBC, he has probably spent the past year or more as a rifle platoon leader and has forgotten most of what he ever knew about an M16 or M19 plotting board.

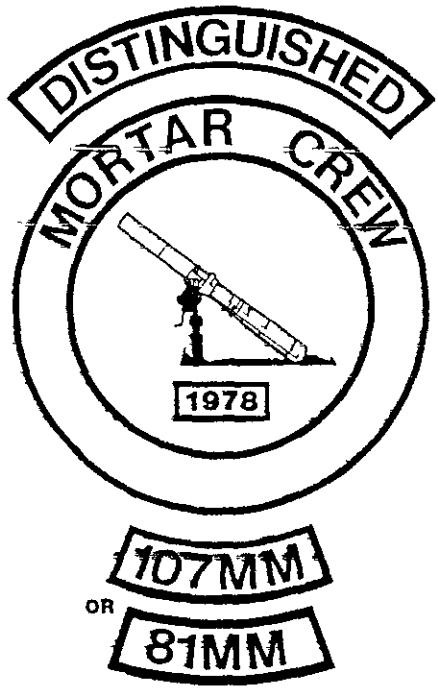
Part of the solution to this problem is to send the lieutenant picked for the mortar platoon job to IMPC on a TDY-and-return basis. Even in these days of budget cutting, it will be well worth a unit's time and funds in combat readiness gained by sending a proven, capable officer to the course.

This often does not happen, though, and the lieutenant must learn on the job—especially in Europe. If he has a good platoon sergeant and good NCOs and is himself intelligent and self-starting, then this may not be a problem. But if he has below-average NCOs and can't figure things out for himself—watch out! This situation amounts to a disaster just looking for a place to happen. And that's not fair to the lieutenant, the soldiers in his platoon, or those of the rest of the battalion, who may not get the necessary support in wartime from a poorly trained mortar platoon.

BOOST MORALE

The other half of the solution is to increase the overall prestige of the mortar platoon. A new live-fire ARTEP with "distinguished" standards—and a revival of the mortar qualification patch or its equivalent—would greatly boost morale and esprit among mortarmen.

Some divisions today do have division-wide live-fire competitions to build morale among their mortar platoons. Others say, "It's not a competition"—but to the troops and NCOs it's *always* a competition. (Once when my mortar platoon did better than the other two platoons in the brigade on a live-fire ARTEP for the second year running, the brigade FSO said, "It's not a competition." But the brigade commander complimented the



platoon for "beating the socks off of" the other platoons.) Competition is always a prime motivator, and often a competitive attitude results in the difference between an average mortar platoon and a finely honed indirect fire team.

The mortar platoon sergeant is, if anything, even more important than the platoon leader. He usually stays in the platoon longer than the lieutenant and furnishes continuity and stability. Since the mortar platoon functions as a de facto separate company in the field, the mortar platoon sergeant is more of a First Sergeant than any other platoon sergeant in the battalion. The Infantry School recognized this a while back when it made the mortar platoon sergeant slot a master sergeant position.

With this extra rank, the mortar platoon sergeant in the field should be able to coordinate and interact directly with the battalion staff when supplies or support are needed. Field Manual 7-90, Tactical Employment of Mortars (June 1985), is an excellent manual, but it calls for the J-series mortar platoon to request supplies and support through the HHC executive officer or First Sergeant, as well as forwarding all required reports through them.

This just does not work very well. The HHC XO in the field is usually acting as the officer in charge of the TOC (tactical operations center) or is performing some

other important function and is not really able to act as company XO much. The HHC First Sergeant, who is usually in the combat or field trains, often just cannot be responsive enough. As a de facto separate company, the mortar platoon should be able to talk directly to the support elements (maintenance, communications platoon, S-4, and the like) without going through anybody.

A Division 86-style, six-gun, two-section heavy mortar platoon can be either a potent combat multiplier for a battalion task force or a frustrating ne'er-do-well unit that adds nothing. The key elements that determine which it will become are the competence of the mortar platoon leader and the way the battalion commander views his mortars—as stepchildren unworthy of his full attention, or as his own "hip-pocket artillery."

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Light Artillery

LIEUTENANT CARL R. MOORE

The U.S. Army has traditionally been organized to counter heavy conventional forces, but with recent increased instability throughout the world, there was a need for some modification of conventional operations. To fill this need, the Army created the light infantry, a force capable of negotiating all types of terrain and operating during day and night in all geographical regions. With the emergence of the light infantry concept, the traditional role of the Field Artillery also had to be modified. This new fire support organization is the light artillery.

Light artillery differs from traditional field artillery in several ways. While the normal infantry brigade is supported by an artillery battalion, here in the 2d Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, there are no supporting artillery units. The chief source of firepower is the 81mm mortar at battalion level and the 60mm mortars in the companies. With such limited fire support assets, a company fire support officer must carefully consider engaging targets with the proper type and amount of munitions.

Another difference comes in the area of fire support personnel. In conventional units, fire support personnel are consolidated at the artillery battalion, which permits little coordination between the artillerymen and their infantry counterparts. In this brigade, however, the fire support personnel are organic to the infantry battalion and attached directly to the rifle companies they support. Because of this attachment, a unique relationship is formed between company commanders and their fire support officers (FSOs), who also serve as company headquarters platoon leaders. Because of this close contact, the FSOs can formulate their fire support plans to suit their commanders' intents with little or no guidance.

Another distinction of the light artillery in this brigade is the rating scheme. The infantry leaders have a direct role in writing the efficiency reports of artillery officers and NCOs—the battalion S-3 and commander rate the battalion FSO, the company and battalion commanders rate the company FSOs, and the company commanders endorse the ratings of company fire support NCOs.

In the light artillery, an artilleryman must train to become a good infantry soldier as well as a good artilleryman. This dual-training is accomplished through two field exercises—Light Fighters Courses I and II.

During Light Fighters Course I, the artillerymen receive training in the basic soldiering skills: common task training, construction of defensive fighting positions, tactical road marches, and land navigation. During Light Fighters Course II, the emphasis changes from infantry training to forward observer training. The major event in this exercise is a certification of forward observer skills, which involves an evaluation of basic communications skills, day and night land navigation, and observed fire procedures. The fire support teams also operate with their supported companies in tactical missions, developing an awareness of the value of stealth, noise and light discipline, and cover and concealment.

At the conclusion of these two courses, the artillerymen are qualified forward observers and infantrymen, ready to tackle any light artillery mission. They know light infantry tactics, appreciate mortar capabilities as well as artillery capabilities, can go where the light infantry goes, do what the light infantry does, and maintain an ability to shoot, move, and communicate.

The light artillery has moved into the limelight alongside the light infantry. These two comrades-in-arms hold the key to success on the modern, low intensity battlefield. A soldier in the light artillery faces many difficult challenges, but if he has what it takes, he emerges as one of the most powerful forces on the battlefield.

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