

# Lightening The Load

## On the Commander

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Recently, the Infantry has developed a renewed, healthy interest in lightening the infantryman's load. To that end, much time has been spent calculating the precise weight and value of each item the infantryman might carry into battle. The results have caused us to reconsider the policies that have driven these loads up to the point of impairing the fighting ability of our infantrymen.

The time is right to think about another type of load that may affect the fighting ability of even more soldiers, and more units, by impeding training and readiness. This load is the burden we place upon our company commanders in the form of regulations, reporting requirements, and administrative procedures.

The company commander has always been asked to do a great deal, and the administrative workload on him has increased dramatically since the end of World War II. A company commander in 1987 has the same amount of time he had in 1946, of course, but he is being asked to do too many things, things he simply cannot do in the time available. This forces him either to ignore requirements or to falsely report his compliance.

Instead of arguing conclusions—too many demands or, in the context of time and mission, improper demands—we need to work through this problem the way we are working through the fighting load problem. We should first measure the total administrative load to determine the precise nature of the

problem, then go for a solution.

We could begin with the company commander's "administrative TA-50," otherwise defined as all of the regulations that apply to company operations and activities. Every policy, procedure, or regulation that reads, "A company commander will" needs to be identified and the time necessary to do that task calculated to the nearest tenth of an hour.

Once that has been done at the Department of the Army level, all other requirements should be calculated down through the chain of command to the battalion level to pick up each additional responsibility. The time necessary to do these tasks should then be added to arrive at a grand total. Only then will we get a sense of how heavy a load the commander carries into training, administration, and tactical exercises, and ultimately into combat.

The next step would be to establish a regulatory budget or "a company commander's load plan." The writers of regulations and procedures (who don't have to pay the costs of compliance by actually doing the work) have a great incentive to levy endless, detailed requirements that will make their own lives easier but ignore the trade-offs caused by time constraints on the commander. It takes only a few minutes to write a requirement for a company commander to do something, but the day-to-day, month-to-month implementation of that one requirement may take hours, accumulating into days.

Then we should establish branch level allocations of the commander's

time for major functions at the company level, such as training, security, mess, and the like. It would then be up to the proponent agencies to justify their individual current time demands against these allocations. Once time allocations had been made by branch, additional requirements within a functional area would have to be compared with the previously allocated time. Thus, an existing lower priority requirement would have to be deleted before a new one could be added.

In summary, this program would add up existing requirements; it would establish an overall allocation of responsibility for time management within each functional area; it would mandate a zero-based time budget by functional area; it would cause everyone who generated a requirement to justify the benefits against the cost of executing that requirement; and it would force an equal reduction of existing requirements before any new ones were initiated.

We frequently give future company commanders an in-box drill to test their ability to set priorities. This program would put requirement writers in the same position and would ensure that commanders have time to do the things that truly count in preparation for future battles.

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