

TRAINING NOTES



Team Spirit Light Infantry in Mid-Intensity Conflict

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Light infantry divisions are designed, first and foremost, to be used as quick-reaction forces in low-intensity conflicts. Their first priority is to get there fast and, ideally, to deter armed conflict, but they may also be called upon to fight.

The Army recognizes, however, that while light divisions are designed to defeat light forces in low-intensity conflicts, they must also retain their ability to fight in mid-intensity environments. This dual mission places an enormous responsibility on the leaders of these divisions.

The fundamental debate regarding the light division organization seems to boil down to one question: Can the battlefield skills, initiative, and leadership in the division offset its inherent lack of organic sustainability, mobility, and combat power? This issue is of some concern even in low-intensity conflict, but it is an overriding consideration in the application of light forces in mid-intensity scenarios.

The Army's intention to augment a deployed light infantry division with corps assets appears to be a logical response to the concern about the division's sustainability and tank killing capability. Whether or not such augmentation can realistically be expected within the

48 hours prescribed by Army doctrine—particularly in contingency areas where there is no U.S. military presence—is, again, a nagging question in low-intensity conflict and a question of survival in mid-intensity conflict.

Exercise Team Spirit in Korea annually tests the ability of the 25th Infantry (Light) to reinforce a forward deployed force in a notional mid-intensity conflict. During these exercises, the 25th Division receives augmentation from I Corps, the Eighth Army, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army.

Although the augmentation that can be provided to a light division in a mid-intensity conflict is paramount, it is the amount of augmentation that reaches the battalion level that will ultimately determine the success or failure of light forces.

In preparing to operate in a mid-intensity conflict such as Team Spirit portrays, what are the implications of the battlefield operating systems in regard to the necessary augmentation of a light infantry battalion? The recent experiences of one light battalion—the 4th Battalion, 22d Infantry—during one of these exercises suggest some answers.

Command and Control. There is one overwhelming aspect of mid-intensity

conflict that a light infantry commander must confront immediately and master quickly if he is to survive: Heavier forces have an immense superiority in battlefield mobility. The resulting tempo of operations and the time and distance factors involved are much more of a shock to the command and control system of light forces than any firepower advantage an enemy motorized force may have over them.

The command and control of a light infantry battalion task force in Exercise Team Spirit is extremely difficult because of the increased distances and because the commander must provide guidance to the augmenting maneuver units as well as to the battalion's organic companies. The frequent and rapid displacements of the tactical operations center (TOC) and the rugged terrain of Korea further compound the challenge.

The battalion must plan on getting help for its single retransmission station, and must consider using relays, particularly if stay-behind forces are used. In certain circumstances, tactical satellite (TAC-SAT) communications may be required from higher headquarters. The AM radios that are now being fielded may offer a limited, but unsecure, solution.

In short, the major difference between low- and mid-intensity conflict in terms of command and control is the tempo of the operations. The possible increase in the number of maneuver elements, the speed of events, and the time and distance factors involved place stress upon the entire command and control system and a premium upon anticipating requirements.

Maneuver. Whether in offensive, defensive, or retrograde operations, a light infantry battalion must be augmented by other maneuver elements in a mid-intensity environment. These other elements consist primarily of armor, anti-armor, and aviation assets.

Armor units provide a mobile reserve, a powerful force for counterattack, a degree of mobility for some of the infantrymen, and a great tank-killing capability. In the offense, tanks provide the shock effect needed to penetrate enemy defensive positions that a light division does not have.

The TOW light antitank (TLAT) companies found in the Reserve Components are ideal augmentation forces for light infantry battalions. A TLAT company has 12 TOW systems and a mounted scout platoon.

The use of helicopters to insert, reposition, or extract soldiers is fundamental to light infantry operations in a mid-intensity environment. In the offense, some appropriate missions for light infantry units are air assault operations to seize key terrain behind enemy lines or to thicken the forward line of troops (FLOT). And here again, to conduct a link-up with the air assault elements, light forces must be augmented with tanks.

Fire Support. Fire support for light forces in a mid-intensity conflict does not differ measurably from that in low-intensity conflicts. In addition to 105mm howitzers, a light infantry battalion needs access to heavy artillery units, not simply for added range and firepower, but for the special munitions needed against heavier enemy forces.

Intelligence and Air Defense. The implementation of the intelligence and air defense systems at battalion level in a mid-intensity exercise such as Team Spirit is much the same as in a low-intensity exercise, although the division

will certainly be augmented by corps level assets.

If one is available, a ground surveillance radar attachment may improve the battalion's early warning capabilities. But the battalion will surely benefit from information and intelligence acquired and disseminated by any deep battle units that may be augmenting or supporting the division.

Mobility and Countermobility. Corps level engineer augmentation may be the single most important support that can be provided to a light division in a mid-intensity environment, particularly in a defensive situation. It is difficult to argue (particularly in the defense) that any other operational system can increase a light infantry unit's staying power more than mobility, countermobility, and survivability. Given the restrictive terrain in Korea, heavy engineer support is the great equalizer for light infantry.

ENGINEER SUPPORT

While the organic combat engineer battalion of a light infantry division does excellent work, the requirement for tank traps, alternate and supplementary TOW and tank firing positions, and general countermobility is beyond its capabilities. Bulldozers and backhoes in large numbers are vital force multipliers for light infantry units in the defense. And any requirement for fording streams must depend not only upon heavy engineer augmentation but also upon a smoke-generating capability from corps level chemical units.

A light infantry force that has to conduct breakthrough and link-up operations must also have engineer as well as armor augmentation. In Korea, restrictive terrain, rivers, numerous culverts and bridges, and enemy obstacles can enable a heavy delaying force to slow a light infantry attacker to a snail's pace.

Combat Service Support. None of the operating systems in a light division is as dramatically affected by the shift from low- to mid-intensity operations as is combat service support (CSS). Light infantry units must plan for large and frequent displacements of the trains and the TOC, rapid transport of troop units on

short notice, long and time-consuming lines of communication and the need to anticipate all types of CSS augmentation to meet these challenges.

Battalion combat trains in a low-intensity conflict exercise, for example, may have to displace only every day or two over a five-to-eight-kilometer distance. In Team Spirit, however, the battalion encounters time and distance factors that the CSS system may never have imagined.

Whether in the offense or the defense, light forces must be able to offset the mobility of their heavier opponents. The only way to do this is to use a combination of trucks and helicopters to move soldiers and equipment. To move its equipment, a light infantry battalion needs at least six trucks under its operational control, either two-and-one-half-ton or five-ton. (During Team Spirit, these were provided by the host nation.)

One of the trucks should be attached to the main command post and the others to the combat trains. One truck per rifle company should always be loaded with A-bags and NBC protective clothing (MOPP gear). (The need for A-bags is critical in a cold-weather environment like Korea.) One of the other two trucks should be used to carry the battalion's diesel fuel bladder and the other to carry ammunition.

Since these five additional trucks, except in emergencies, are always loaded with their Class II, III, and V supplies, they obviously cannot be used to move troops. Because of the distance between the brigade support area (BSA) and the forward line of troops, therefore, commanders must plan to use division support command trucks assigned to the BSA for this purpose.

Planners must also anticipate concurrent requirements for transportation for the rifle companies, the main CP, and the combat trains. A good combination—assuming the trucks and helicopters are available and the weather permits air operations—is to use helicopters for extracting the rifle companies that are last in contact following a rearward passage of lines, and trucks for moving the reserve unit and CSS assets.

Link-up with air assault elements in the offense and stay-behind forces in retrograde pose special CSS challenges. A

link-up in 48 to 72 hours should be a reasonable objective. Even then, unless adequate cache sites were planned (and were not discovered by the enemy), water and ammunition will almost certainly have to be resupplied by container delivery or helicopter sling loads to forces that are staying behind or conducting an air assault. Stay-behind forces may have to operate without resupply for 7 to 10 days or more. During Team Spirit 88, one rifle company in the 4th Battalion, 22d Infantry, conducted a successful and undetected week-long stay-behind operation supported only by cached Class I and V supplies.

The distances involved in Team Spirit and the rugged terrain of Korea exact a high price in vehicle maintenance. The battalion must receive assistance from the brigade maintenance section, along with a tailored automotive prescribed load list package. With the BSA 30 to 40 kilometers from the FLOT, the goal of fixing equipment as far forward as possible

takes on a new meaning. The battalion combat trains must have on hand glow plugs, spare tires, and control boxes.

This kind of augmentation comes, of course, with its own CSS price tag—the light infantry battalion's logistical structure picks up the additional support requirements.

The major lessons for a light infantry battalion in a mid-intensity conflict that were revealed by our battalion's Team Spirit experience are the following:

- Anticipate the need for and the employment of combat, combat support, and combat service support augmentation forces.

- Plan for time and distance factors imposed by a scenario in which the flow of battle moves more than 20 kilometers a day. The tempo of mid-intensity operations will not allow a unit merely to react to events without severe penalties.

- Plan to support augmentation forces with every class of supply.

- Have a back-up plan and redundant

support systems. If the CDS doesn't fly, how will that element be resupplied?

- Have a good tactical SOP that is broadly understood. Units *will* lose communication, trucks *will* get lost, delays *will* occur. The augmenting units must understand the light infantry battalion's SOPs.

Army doctrine calls its light infantry division a strategically responsive and flexible division that is organized, equipped, and trained to respond to a broad spectrum of contingencies and to reinforce units that are deployed forward. The challenge in a mid-intensity environment is to be aware of the division's limitations and vulnerabilities and to see that it is appropriately augmented.

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Organic Air Defense For A Light Infantry Company

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After serving for two years in a light infantry company, I am convinced that organic air defense is needed at the platoon and company level. The probable areas of deployment for a light infantry company and the nature of its missions make it extremely vulnerable to aircraft on the AirLand Battlefield.

In light infantry battalions today, a great deal of emphasis is put on antiarmor capability. For example, the antitank section in the company headquarters is

made up of six Dragon teams, and these teams often conduct extensive training on the use of the Dragon antiarmor missile. Unfortunately, there are no similar teams to help with air defense.

Yet, in most of the terrain for which the light infantry unit was created, a platoon can run from armor but can find no place to hide if a helicopter gunship shows up. A platoon in this situation could be rendered combat ineffective in a matter of minutes. (A good example of

this is the terrible mauling the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army took at the hands of our coordinated airpower because they had no air defense at the small unit level out in the paddies and the jungle.)

Too, the nature of a light infantry platoon's mission sometimes requires it to operate independently or behind enemy lines. As a result, that platoon leader will not always be able to rely upon higher headquarters to provide him with air