

INFANTRY LETTERS



SPLIT FORMATION

I read with concern "The Mechanized Infantry Team in the Offense," by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas V. Morley and Captain Anthony J. Tata (INFANTRY, May-June 1990, pages 16-19). The split formation they describe is not tactically sound, and it does not enable the company team commander to properly command and control his team. It appears to be an "ad hoc-ism" devised especially for the meeting engagement at the National Training Center (NTC).

The team that is described in the article—two mechanized infantry platoons, a tank platoon, a fire support team (FIST) and an improved TOW vehicle (ITV) section—should employ overwatch techniques. By using bounding overwatch or travelling overwatch (depending upon METT-T) the team can accomplish the same tasks as those depicted in the article while still maintaining subunit integrity.

The team commander in this case has five maneuver elements that can be used to overwatch each other. The ITVs and the tanks can overwatch the mounted infantry; the Bradley fighting vehicles or M113s can overwatch the dismounted infantry, and so on. The FIST should always be positioned so that it can observe and call for fire on the commander's most critical targets—not follow the team commander around the battlefield.

Chapter 13 of Field Manual 71-1J lays out company team movement techniques that are excellent for accomplishing any offensive mission. The critical part is that the Field Manual, in talking about teamwork, says that "to achieve teamwork, platoon integrity must be maintained, and platoons must work with platoons."

The bigger issue, which the authors imply, is a lack of confidence in the ability of "young" lieutenants to "fight" their platoons. The authors firmly believe

that the commander and the XO should "fight" the company. It is thinking such as this that prevents platoon leaders from becoming proficient in leading their platoons and that will eventually reduce the ability of the captains of the future to "fight" their companies. The example should be a test of the company commander's ability without further compounding the issue by requiring him to "fight" individual tank sections.

As we are taught time and time again at the NTC, "Basics Win" and company teams that achieve mass by getting all of the platoons synchronized so that they mass their fires at the critical time and place will be victorious. What is needed are company teams that can execute the battle drills in FM 71-1J and achieve mass, not new battle drills that violate platoon integrity. If the platoons in the authors' example perform to standard, within the team commander's scheme of maneuver, there will be no need for "ad hoc" battle drills.

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ROADMARCHING

My congratulations to the U.S. Army Physical Fitness School for an excellent series of roadmarching articles in INFANTRY. ["The Soldier's Load: Planning Smart," by Lieutenant Colonel John S. O'Connor and Michael S. Bahrke, January-February 1990, pages 8-11; "Load Carrying Ability Through Physical Fitness Training," by Dr. Bahrke and Colonel O'Connor, March-April 1990, pages 33-36; and "Roadmarching and Performance," by Colonel O'Connor, Dr. Bahrke, Captain Joseph

Knapik, and James A. Vogel, May-June 1990, pages 31-33.]

For two years, I participated as an evaluator in a roadmarch program that required each of 23 companies to pass graded roadmarches of 12 miles (or six-and-one-half miles for some support units) with full combat load in three hours or less (four miles per hour). There were no rest stops. The units were tested every six months.

I was one of four evaluators who participated in every roadmarch, and we soon discovered that units waited until the end of every six-month window to schedule their semiannual test. As a result, we routinely conducted three 12-mile roadmarches every week, under full combat load, for the last six to eight weeks of each six-month period.

To say the least, 36 miles of forced roadmarching every week was a grueling pace. But I do feel we developed some valid insights into roadmarch training, techniques, and benefits.

First, we quickly learned that our primary vulnerability was in our feet. Foot care was paramount, and each of us developed very elaborate and deliberate foot care rituals. Interestingly, none of us ended up using the same style of boots or the same techniques of foot care. But by trial and error, we all quickly came to different solutions that worked; the four of us rarely had blisters. The point is that without frequent roadmarch training, soldiers cannot adequately devise such foot care formulas that work for them.

Second, a soldier's load is as much a matter of comfort and balance as it is of weight. We became so attuned to the configuration of our rucksacks that our occasional joke of adding a five-pound brick to an evaluator's load was always instantly detected by the victim. But once we achieved a comfort zone, our backs and shoulders learned to serve as efficient

scales for measuring and balancing any variation of mission load. Although the exterior of our rucksacks remained uniform and standard, the interior load required individual flexibility. Again, **weight distribution was a matter of personal preference determined by trial and error, and all four of us packed our rucks differently.**

Third, a roadmarch trained unit strides along in a consistent rhythm like a metronome. It is almost hypnotic. Sounds of foot shuffling from shortened strides or of bouncing rucks from soldiers running to catch up are the early signs of an untrained unit. The idea of conducting uncontrolled, every-soldier-for-himself, free-for-all roadmarches is nonsense. Few activities are more bonding or contribute more to cohesion than the successful completion of a stressful unit roadmarch.

Fourth, adequate roadmarch training must ignore environmental conditions. **Marching in new-fallen snow, on ice-covered trails, in rain, in heat, at night, in daylight, on pavement or in forests—all conditions we routinely experienced—help prepare soldiers for roadmarching. Nature's obstacles are a fact of our profession and should not be allowed to cancel or postpone roadmarch training. We learned something new about roadmarch techniques every time the weather, route, or time of day changed.**

Finally, conducting a unit 12-mile forced roadmarch without proper training should be classified as soldier abuse. One quickly discovers that highly trained long-distance runners have only one thing going for them—mental discipline. Consequently, they drive their bodies to perform despite soft feet, weak shoulders, and legs that have been trained for speed and distance instead of strength. It should be no surprise that injuries are the outcome.

I am therefore not surprised at the results of the 6th Infantry roadmarch test conducted by Fort Benjamin Harrison. Although I wholeheartedly support most of the conclusions, I tend to disagree with the idea that a unit can maintain roadmarch proficiency by marching only twice a month. We found that our "off season" training required roadmarches

of four to six miles once a week to maintain properly conditioned tough feet, our principal concern. Further, the speed of these weekly training roadmarches was more important to maintaining foot toughness, leg strength, and shoulder preparation than was distance or weight.

Because roadmarching can be time consuming, I have since used a cycle of 4-6-4-8-4-12-4-6 weekly miles in current roadmarch training to maintain a quarterly roadmarch standard of 12 miles in three hours with full combat load. But I believe a straight 4-6-4-6 weekly cycle would be just as effective in preparing soldiers to march 12 miles.

Further, and unfortunately, training reality dictates that a unit occasionally will not be able to conduct a weekly roadmarch. Foregoing one roadmarch in a twice-a-month schedule may mean three or four weeks of "softening" and the chances of an increase in injuries when the soldiers resume roadmarch training.

After all, according to Vegetius (390 A.D.); even the Romans customarily marched their infantry 10 miles to camp and return three times a month, carrying 60 pounds (exclusive of their arms), while in military step.

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MORTAR RENAISSANCE

General Michael F. Spigelmir's recent vote of confidence on the mortar's role on the combined arms team (INFANTRY, May-June 1990, pages 1-2) should boost the morale of infantry mortarmen everywhere. The influence of mortars on the U.S. Army's force structure has waned in the post-Vietnam era.

During that period, mortar unit training has been complicated by the reassignment of the observer to the fire support team (FIST). Battalion-level training coordination is now required. Too, mechanized infantry companies have lost their 81mm mortars, which reduces the quantity and responsiveness of indirect fire support to committed rifle platoons.

The U.S. Army lost an opportunity to

develop terminally guided antiarmor mortar projectiles (TAMPs) as a top-attack countermeasure to Soviet tanks equipped with explosive reactive armor (ERA). Several TAMP technologies have since been exploited by European defense companies.

In addition, the momentum behind the replacement of our World War II-vintage 4.2-inch mortars with new 120mm mortars has been slowed by fiscal restraints.

~~So much for the bad news.~~ As for the good news, there are indications that infantry mortars may be poised for a battlefield renaissance. The infantry enters the decade of the austere 1990s with a modernized family of light, medium, and heavy mortars. The coming shift in U.S. strategic interests from Europe to the Third World will likely deemphasize armor and reemphasize infantry as the primary threat.

The diversity of terrain and an intermittent line of sight (LOS) could hamper fields of fire in Third World environments. A realignment of the combat power balance between direct fire and indirect fire weapons may be forthcoming.

Threat vulnerability to deep attack is somewhat lessened in Third World low- and mid-intensity conflicts, but there will always be a close-in battle somewhere along the FLOT (forward line of own troops).

The mortars' traditional advantage of small crews, high rates of fire, and decentralized employment are better exploited in contingency operations than other types of indirect fire systems.

The battle is far from over, though. To keep mortars in the force structure, the infantry must carry the fight to the critics' home turf of cost effectiveness. With manpower the dominant factor in life-cycle costs, combat developers must take a hard look at improving mortar operational effectiveness on a crew member—that is, an individual—basis.

In this context, it appears feasible to "splice" mortars in such a way that operational effectiveness (output) can be increased on the basis of each crew member's input.

One option is to develop a sub-caliber kit for the larger caliber mortars. Equip-

ping the 120mm mortar with a 60mm sub-caliber device, for example, would result in a five-fold increase in the sustained rate of fire of high explosive (HE) ammunition.

Another option would be to group two mortar tubes of the same caliber, using a shared baseplate scheme. Predictable, range-dependent sheaf widths could be designed into the dual-mortar standard. The savings in gunner and assistant gunner spaces could be reinvested by fielding additional mortars.

Open parapets are a persistent problem. Given the Soviet's counterbattery and countermortar capabilities, some sort of pre-fabricated, shell-like enclosures, with cutaways for muzzle and sight, is needed to protect battalion mortar crews in light forces.

In the coming decade of austerity, the infantry must continue to fight hard to keep its superb family of mortars intact.

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JUST ISSUE EIBs

In my letter in the May-June 1989 issue of *INFANTRY*, I mentioned my concern that a requirement for periodic requalification would make the EIB impossible to get. But my intent was also to show that the EIB is a mark of excellence in our field and should be tough by the already established standards.

Now here I sit, a year later, heartbroken over the other side of the coin—making the award a “Give me.”

In my brigade this year, soldiers can re-start the test six times. That means a soldier can “NO GO” out and just start over six times—12 NO GOs!

I know that soldiers who met the tough standards before this test are shocked. Why test? Why not just issue the badges?

In addition, the Army will be looking for discriminators for promotions, assignments, and retentions. The EIB has always been that. It sets a soldier apart from his peers for promotions. As we cheapen the award, we cheapen the Army.

I cannot believe that the people at Fort Benning condone this type of testing. If

they do, what are their reasons?

Let's get with it and keep this award the Expert Infantryman's Badge.

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EIB, SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

As the U.S. Army's primary point of contact for all Expert Infantryman Badge matters, I would like to try to clear up the confusion surrounding the current EIB standards.

Recently, our office, as well as *INFANTRY Magazine*, has received numerous letters—such as the one above and the one from Sergeant First Class Maddox in *INFANTRY's* March-April 1990 issue (page 4)—claiming that the badge has been devalued and should either be abolished or changed to “The Infantryman's Badge,” since “the standards are the same as those required for the average infantryman.”

In the development of the current EIB test, most of the task standards were derived from the same tasks as those found in the *Soldier's Manuals*, or from similar tasks. In most cases, however, a tough but realistic time standard was added. These standards were aligned to preclude the contradictions between different publications. It should also be noted that the EIB test requires Expert qualification with an M16 (36 of 40 shots) while the Army standard is only Marksman (22 of 40) and tasks such as night land navigation and the 12-mile foot march have no *Soldier's Manual* or Armywide equivalent.

Additionally, all EIB tasks must be satisfactorily completed within a five-day period with only two retests (only one on any one station). *Soldier's Manual* tasks, while they represent the Army standard, are imposed on a soldier only when specifically placed on the Common Task Test (CTT) or a soldier's respective Skill Qualification Test (SQT). Soldiers are not required to receive all “GOs” on the CTT or to score 100 percent on their SQTs.

The bottom line is that the test, while more attainable in the past, remains a test of expert standards. In 1989, only 21.6 percent of all the candidates tested, including those retested from previous years, received the badge.

The current EIB test publication is U.S. Army Infantry Center Pamphlet 350-6, dated April 1989. All previous publications are obsolete. Questions or comments may be addressed to Commandant, U.S. Army Infantry School, ATTN: ATSH-TDT-I (EIB), Fort Benning, GA 31905-5593, or AUTOVON 835-1670/7670.

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11th AIRBORNE DIVISION ASSOCIATION

The 11th Airborne Division Association of World War II fame is looking for any ex-members who served with the division from 1942 until 1959.

This includes the 11th Air Assault Group and the 187th RCT from the Korean War period. Both of these groups are considered part of the 11th Airborne Association and are eligible for membership.

For membership information, write or call Paul Brown, National Secretary, or James Hembree, Membership Director, 11th Airborne Division Association, 20 Binks Drive, Clarksville, TN 37042; or call (615) 552-7761.

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