

PROFESSIONAL FORUM



The German Infantry Headed for the Year 2000

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The history of the German infantry is a long and largely successful one. Such personalities as Field Marshal Irwin Rommel, Colonel General Heinz Guderian, and Field Marshal Erich von Manstein all played vital roles in making the infantry a highly efficient and capable force.

While it is true that the most spectacular successes were invariably achieved in interaction with other arms and services—notably with armored units in World War II—the German Army's chances of victory in future military conflicts will remain greatly contingent on the combat power and operational readiness of the infantry.

The following, in broad outline, are the developments the German infantry is scheduled to undergo by the year 2000 and the responsibilities it is intended to assume as part of the German Army.

New Mission

Following the reunification of Germany and the extensive changes affecting security policy conditions throughout the world, the Federal Armed Forces will be assigned the following tasks:

- The immediate protection of the

state and its citizens. In the future, the accomplishment of this mission under conditions requiring the employment of all the armed forces will be contingent on a lengthy period of preparation, given the reduced number of forces available and a national territory enlarged by 40 percent.

- Fulfilment of the crisis management and defense obligations Germany has as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance. Deployment of the crisis reaction forces will ensure NATO-wide accomplishment of this part of our mission even after a comparatively short preparation and warning time.

- Deployments in environmental and disaster control missions.

- Worldwide deployments within the scope of United Nations peacekeeping missions.

In preparing for these new tasks, the Federal Armed Forces are currently adopting a new structure (Army Structure 5). In the Army, whose future peacetime strength will be 255,000 troops, the reorganization of combat units now in progress is scheduled to be largely completed by the end of 1992.

At the end of 1994, the Army will consist of three major subsystems: Reaction

forces, main defense forces, and a military base organization (Figure 1).

The New Infantry Structure

Whereas, until 1990, the German Army was mainly tailored to the defense of our national territory, its newly imposed mission now confronts it with the need to change its basic organizational structure and, at the same time, to bring its training and equipment in line with the newly defined mission requirements.

As far as the infantry is concerned, this implies, on the one hand, the need for establishing effective mechanized formations comprising armored units that are capable of forcing decisions in high-intensity battle and, on the other hand, an increased demand for light, mobile, and airmobile forces, which may assume a pre-eminent role as part of the reaction forces.

In this regard, the German "Chief of Infantry," Brigadier General Gero Koch, recently made the following remarks:

The progressive sophistication of reconnaissance and target location systems, as well as smart ammunition, will lead to a situation where combat action will increasingly shift to covered ter-

rain. In such an environment, however, weapon systems and all other types of equipment will come to rely to an ever greater extent on infantry protection. Frequently, the infantry will be called upon to assume the leading role in combined arms operations. In this process, advanced technology cannot replace troops fighting dismounted, but will rely upon them as a necessary complement.

In order to be able to meet these exacting requirements, the German infantry will provide the largest force contingent under the new force structure, with a total of 43,000 regular servicemen (19.5 percent of all Army forces). Its organization will be as shown in Table 1.

Following the adoption of its new structure, the German Army will include three corps (North, South, East), subdivided into eight divisions (two of them in the East) comprising a total of 28 brigades. Twenty-three of the 28 brigades will be mechanized brigades and thus will have a uniform basic organization (Figure 2) consisting of two mechanized infantry battalions, two armored battalions, and one artillery battalion each. Three of the remaining brigades are airborne, one is mountain, and one is a German/French light brigade.

In addition, the infantry will have eight independent light infantry regiments with four battalions each. The organizations outlined above will provide for differing degrees of operational readiness and availability (Table 2).

Thus, in peacetime the infantry will have 46 active battalions, seven partly active battalions, and 107 unmanned equipment-holding battalions. Following mobilization, there would be a total of 160 infantry battalions under arms.

The Mechanized Infantry

Colonel General Guderian, the father of the mechanized infantry force, not only developed the fundamental concepts of the mechanized infantry battle during World War II, but—being a brilliant military leader—he also crafted the principles for cooperation with armored forces. Ever since that time, the German Army has had superior

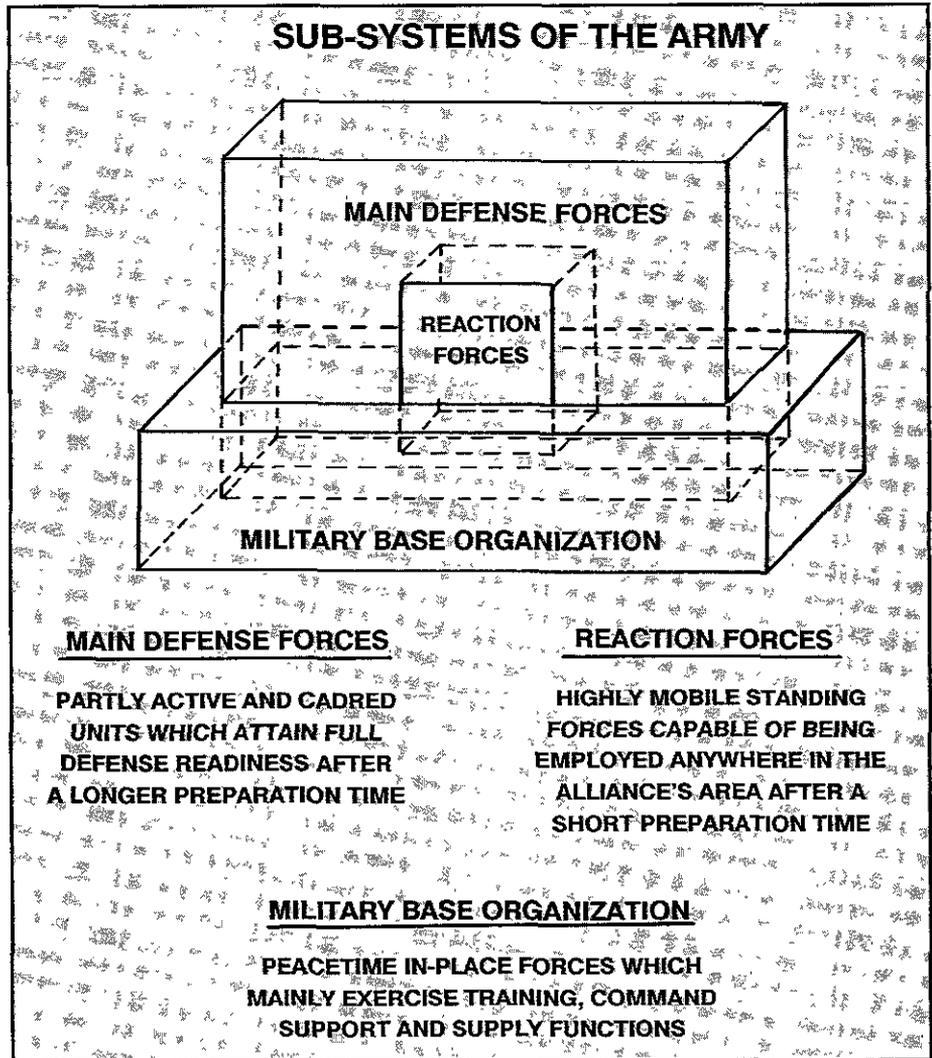


Figure 1

NEW INFANTRY STRUCTURE			
	PEACETIME	WARTIME	RATIOS
Mechanized Infantry	23,800	46,000	1:2
Light Infantry	11,000	92,000	1:8.4
Paratroops	5,300	7,000	1:1.3
Mountain Infantry	2,900	3,300	1:1.1
Totals	43,000	148,300	1:3.5

Table 1

OPERATIONAL READINESS AND AVAILABILITY			
	ACTIVE	PARTLY ACTIVE	EQUIPMENT HOLDING
Mechanized brigade	3	18	2
Airborne brigade	2	1	0
Mountain brigade	1	0	0
German/French brigade	1	0	0
Totals	7	19	2 = 28
Light infantry regiment	1	5	2 = 8

Table 2

MECHANIZED INFANTRY IN THE MECHANIZED BRIGADE

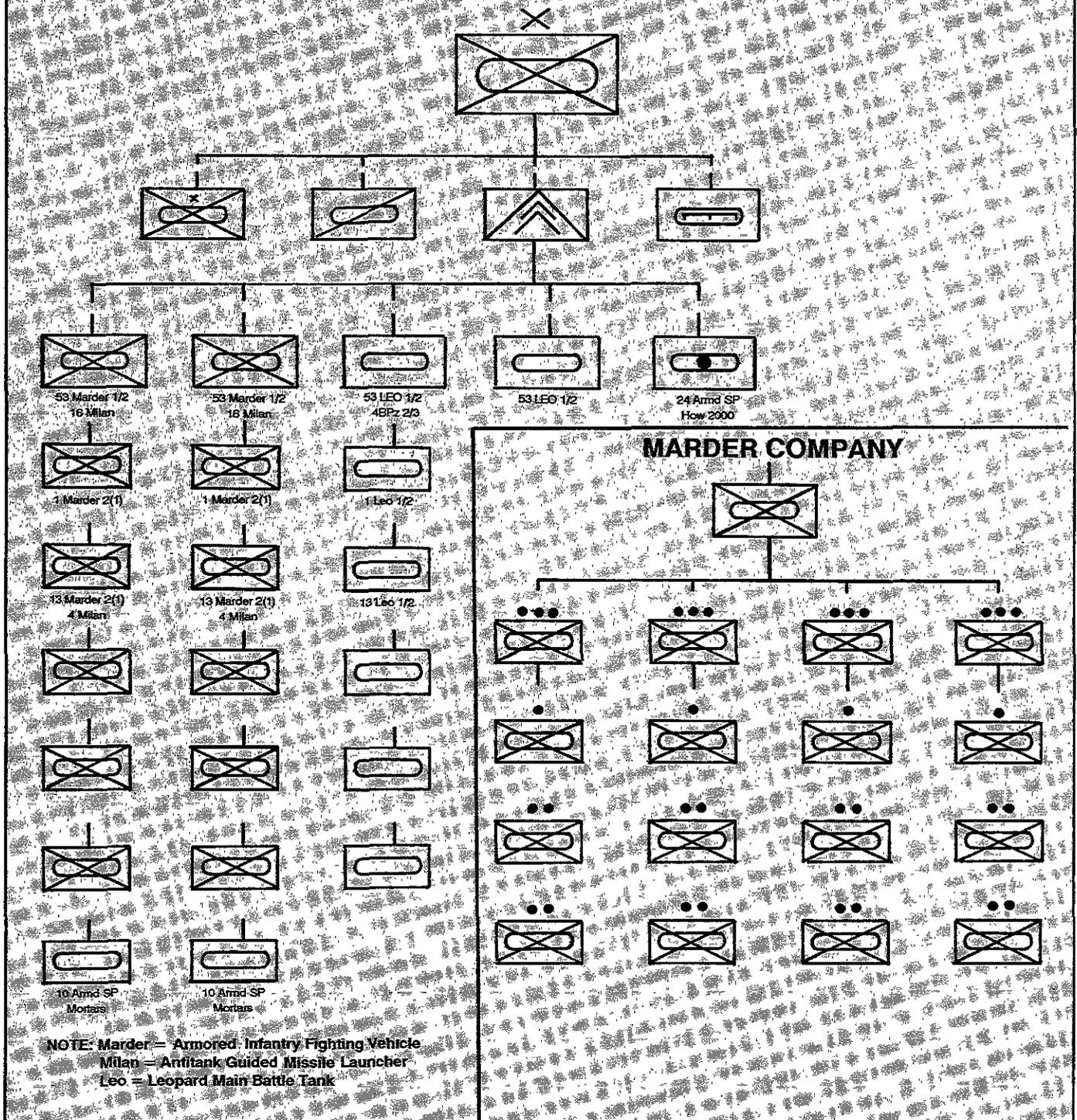


Figure 2

know-how and the most extensive experience with this branch of service, which today is still one of the decisive factors in combat.

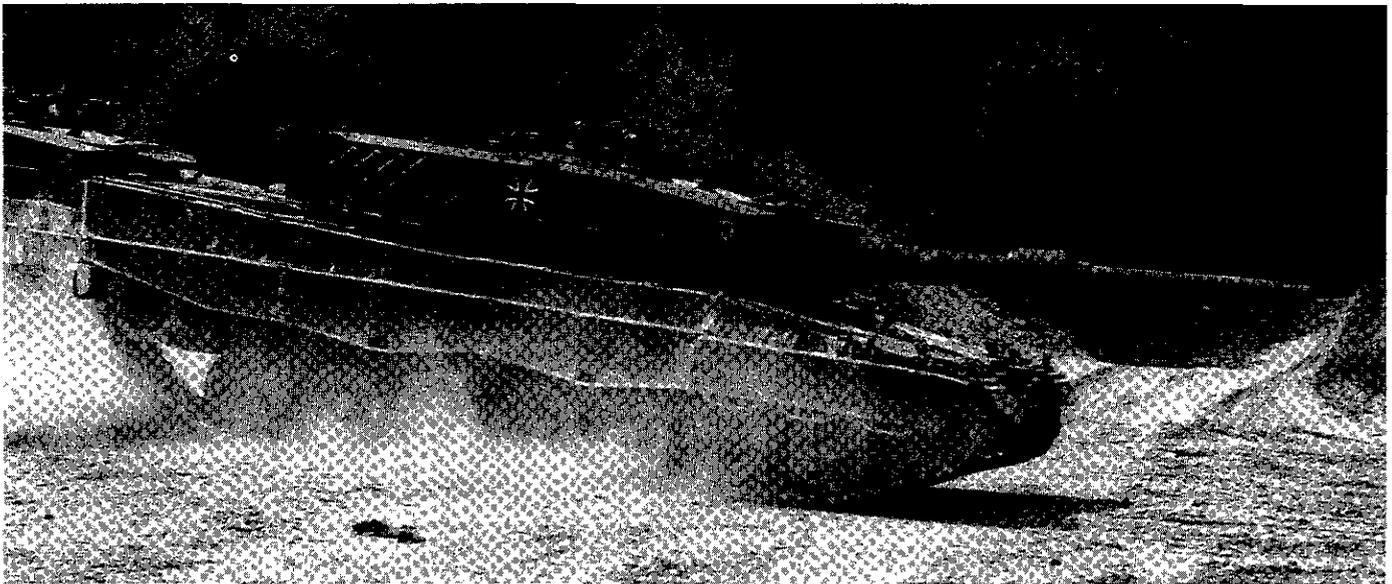
Based on such knowledge, the mechanized infantry will be organized, trained, and equipped under the new

structure to enable it to emphasize successful battle against enemy infantry; that is, against armored combat vehicles as much as against dismounted infantry. The mechanized infantry's ability to stage both mounted and dismounted combat in mobile battle operations, as

required by the situation, attests to the importance of this branch of service, notably in cooperation with armor.

The future mission of mechanized infantry within the context of the armored combat troops will be:

- In peacetime, to keep elements



Leopard 2 Tank

combat ready at any time for deployment in support of joint alliance operations.

• In a state of defense or in support of allied operations, to channel, intercept, and defeat the enemy, and in particular his armored assault forces. In doing so, it will be essential to engage enemy infantry and weapon systems, to hold key terrain, and to overwatch wide areas, if required.

Each of the 46 mechanized infantry battalions will consist of the following:

- Four mechanized infantry companies with four platoons each.
- One heavy mortar company with 10 120mm mortars.
- 53 armored infantry fighting vehicles (AIFVs), Marder 2.
- 32 antitank guided missile systems (ATGMs), Milan.
- A dismounted combat strength of approximately 320 infantrymen.

The mix of main battle tanks and infantry fighting vehicles planned for the mechanized brigade, the so-called 4x4 employment mix at battalion level, and the organization of mechanized infantry platoons into three AIFV each, will remain. This will permit close cooperation between battle tanks and AIFVs, will facilitate the establishing of reserves as well as command and control and coordination by smaller "operational elements" for infantry, and will ensure the necessary leadership density.

Smaller operational elements promote

clarity, permit command and control by visual contact, and help bring fire fully to bear on the enemy. Mechanized infantry can thus be employed in concert with the armored combat troops, even outside our territory.

German industry has been working on a highly sophisticated AIFV, the phased fielding of which is planned but which will not be initiated until 1998, owing to current budgetary constraints. The new Marder 2 AIFV meets all standards to be placed on a modern AIFV. Equipped with a 35/50mm gun, it will be the backbone of the German infantry well beyond the year 2000. The Marder 2 will initially replace about 760 AIFVs (BMP-1s) which, for cost saving reasons, were taken over from the East German Army upon reunification and, after having been upgraded, are now employed by formations in Eastern Germany as stopgap solutions only.

The remaining mechanized infantry units are, for the most part, equipped with the upgraded AIFV Marder 1A3 version that comes with a 20mm gun.

The Light Infantry

With its wartime strength projected at just over 100,000 troops, the light infantry—Jaeger (motorized infantry), airborne, and mountain infantry—will account for approximately 70 percent of the infantry forces.

The light infantry forces will increasingly assume—in addition to their pre-

vious Territorial Army tasks—typical tasks of the Army in the Field. These tasks include border security and surveillance operations; overwatching and protecting areas and installations including wide areas; defensive operations in armor-restrictive and very difficult terrain; engagement of air-landed enemy; and raid-type combat.

Generally, the essential elements of light infantry must be kept combat-ready in peacetime for deployment at any time and support of joint alliance operations.

It is for this reason that two paratroop brigades, the mountain infantry brigade, as well as the German/French brigade, and elements of the Jaeger force will maintain full operational readiness in peacetime.

Paratroop and Mountain Infantry

The new organizational structure and future equipment of the paratroop and mountain infantry are aimed at ensuring permanent operational readiness and the rapid availability of the reaction forces. Building up these forces is currently a matter of primary concern in Germany. Brigadier General Koch describes these formations as follows:

Paratroopers and mountain infantrymen are specialized infantry forces which are used for special tasks in special terrain. Due to their special capabilities, both types of infantry will be in particularly high demand in the future

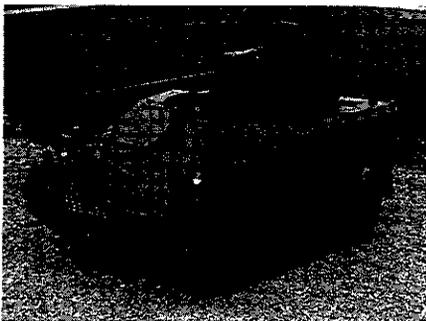
within the Army's widened range of responsibilities. Paratroop commandos and mountain infantry platoons (alpine) comprise infantry elite units for special deployments that call for toughness and excellent physical fitness on the part of personnel.

Each of the three airborne brigades will be composed of three battalions, with a total of 15 companies. Each airborne brigade will have the following main weapon systems available:

- 55 WIESEL (Weasel)-mounted TOW.
- 36 Weasel-mounted 20mm guns.
- 24 ATGM 3s.

The Weasel tracked armored weapon carrier was fielded in the German Army in 1990. Its excellent performance, versatility, and air transportability make it an important factor in enhancing the combat effectiveness of the paratroop force. (One CH-53 or CH-47 is capable of transporting two Weasels; one Boeing 747 may carry 24 Weasels.)

The mountain infantry brigade, with its alpine platoons, capable of fighting under extreme terrain and weather con-



Wiesel Weapon Carrier

ditions, will comprise, as chief components, three mountain infantry battalions with a total of 18 companies and one mountain field artillery battalion.

The brigade's battalions and independent companies will have the following equipment available:

- 55 FUCHS (Fox) armored transport vehicles.
- 122 two-ton trucks.
- 30 armored self-propelled mortars (120mm).
- 54 ATGM 3s.
- 18 Weasel-mounted 20mm guns.
- 15 Weasel-mounted TOWs.



Marder 2 Infantry Fighting Vehicle

Jaeger Troops (Motorized)

With a wartime strength of 92,000, the German Jaeger troops—a branch of longstanding tradition—will form an essential component of the infantry force.

To accomplish their manifold tasks (for example, area security and installation protection, security or overwatch of wide areas, engagement of airlanded enemy forces, defense in armor-inhibiting terrain, and the like), the Jaeger troops will be equipped with an armored combat vehicle such as the Fox armored transport vehicle. The introduction of such equipment is intended to eliminate the Jaeger troops' currently low tactical mobility and their vulnerability to enemy fire and, at the same time, to noticeably improve their combat power and momentum, also against armored enemy forces.

This is all the more important in view of the fact that Jaeger units, as a matter of principle, should be capable of performing missions outside Europe.

Following the reunification of Germany, much remains to be done in the armed forces. Drastic budget cuts notwithstanding, we will make every effort to build up viable and effective armed forces. Only if we succeed in this task will we be able to fully meet our commitments as a member of the NATO alliance and to satisfy the requirements imposed by the German constitution.

With the infantry as the centerpiece of the German combat forces, every effort should be made to speed up the adoption of the new structure, to proceed with the progressive introduction of advanced equipment—primarily the armored infantry fighting vehicle Marder 2—and eventually to place increased emphasis on the training of conscripts and leaders.

In this regard, it will be vitally important to provide for a smooth transition from a defense-oriented infantry to a mobile and effective infantry force that will be capable of accomplishing missions as a reaction force outside Germany.

For all our endeavors, we are fully aware that now—as in the past—we will remain dependent on our good cooperation with our Allies, notably our friends the United States. In the future, too, military success will be a matter of the proficiency of leaders, the spirit and motivation of forces, and friendship between allies rather than the availability of adequate arms or equipment.

Lieutenant Colonel Joerg Bahr is the German liaison officer to the U.S. Army Infantry Center and School. He has been a mechanized (Marder) company and battalion commander, an instructor at the German Combined Arms School, and a commander of the honor guard unit of the Federal Republic of Germany.
