

TRAINING NOTES



Light Battalion Operations At the National Training Center

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As the senior light task force trainer at the National Training Center (NTC), I have witnessed first-hand some of the challenges that confront a light battalion when it trains here with a heavy brigade. I'm convinced that light battalions add important capabilities to the NTC battlefield and that most are up to the challenges.

I would like to review some of these capabilities and outline some employment concepts that I believe will help you, as a light battalion commander, and your staff prepare for your heavy-light rotation at the NTC. Finally, I will suggest some areas of training that you may want to consider.

What unique capabilities does your battalion add to the heavy brigade at the NTC? As the following examples will explain, the effective employment of a light battalion can increase the heavy brigade's operational tempo (OPTEMPO) in the offense, and allow the brigade to mass its heavy systems more effectively in the defense. Additionally, your light battalion can assume infantry roles that Bradley units would normally perform but typically cannot because of reduced manning levels. Finally, your battalion can perform several missions—such as air assault, dismounted infiltration over long

distances, and trench clearing—that are not trained in many heavy units.

Increasing the Brigade's OPTEMPO

Securing Restrictive Terrain. Your battalion's ability to infiltrate before a brigade attack can allow the brigade to move faster through restrictive terrain along its attack axis. In the example shown in Figure 1, the brigade conducted a deliberate attack along Axis Blue to seize Objective Dog 20 kilometers to the south. Line of departure (LD) time for the heavy force was 0530.

The brigade staff's analysis indicated the brigade would be hindered in its movement along the axis at Red Pass, where the opposing force (OPFOR) had positioned security forces in restrictive terrain. To ensure that the brigade could pass rapidly through this area, the brigade commander directed the battalion to infiltrate the night before to the heavy force LD to secure routes through Red Pass, and to pass the brigade through at first light.

To accomplish this mission, the light battalion crossed the LD at 1900 and conducted a dismounted infiltration by company. By 0300 the battalion had completed company infiltration and

linkup. By 0500 OPFOR security forces were destroyed and routes through the pass secured. Passage lanes were established, and at first light the brigade moved through the restrictive terrain unimpeded, passed through the light battalion, and continued its attack.

In this case, the light battalion was able to infiltrate 12 kilometers at night, defeat the enemy security forces holding the pass, clear and hold the restrictive terrain, and pass the brigade through. As a result, the brigade was able to attack more rapidly toward its objective.

Protecting a Flank. The battalion's ability to conduct a battalion air assault can also contribute to the brigade's success. In the example in Figure 2, the brigade conducted a deliberate attack at 0700 along Axis White to defeat an OPFOR battalion at Objective Rat. Along the attack axis, the brigade was subject to attack by OPFOR security zone forces that could use the cross-mobility corridor at Granite Pass to attack into the brigade's flank. The light battalion was directed to conduct a night air assault to seize the pass.

The battalion air assaulted at 0001—seven hours before the brigade would cross the LD. Before the air assault, battalion scouts infiltrated to observe landing zones (LZs) and the

objective area. The battalion used three LZs in the vicinity of planned company battle positions on the most likely avenues into the brigade's flank. The battle positions were supplemented with squad-size antiarmor ambush patrols. TOW systems and 81mm mortars were loaded into UH-60 helicopters and manpacked to the battle positions. Additional TOW, Dragon, and mortar ammunition was sling-loaded on the helicopters, along with 10 modular packed mine systems to follow the initial air assault. By 0600, the pass was secure and the brigade's flank protected.

Enabling the Brigade to Mass

How can your battalion contribute to the brigade defense-in-sector fight? In this example, the brigade, consisting of one heavy battalion task force (two mechanized infantry companies and one armor company), and a light battalion, defended against an attacking regiment. The brigade sector was 12 kilometers wide and included several battalion-size avenues of approach (AAs). To achieve the desired force ratio on what he considered the most probable AA, the brigade commander directed the development of a brigade engagement area (EA). Then he directed the light battalion—augmented by a tank platoon and reinforced with a series of brigade-directed obstacles—to defend a sector that included the secondary AA (Figure 3). The brigade commander's intent was to deny this avenue to the OPFOR.

The task given to the light battalion was to defend in sector to defeat an OPFOR battalion and to turn the regiment south into the brigade's primary EA. The careful placement of the light battalion denied this avenue to the OPFOR—effectively reducing the brigade frontage from 12 to 6 kilometers—and turned the regiment into the massed fires of the brigade's primary EA.

Infantry-Intensive Roles

Some of the infantry-intensive tasks that Bradley units would normally perform are conducting dismounted

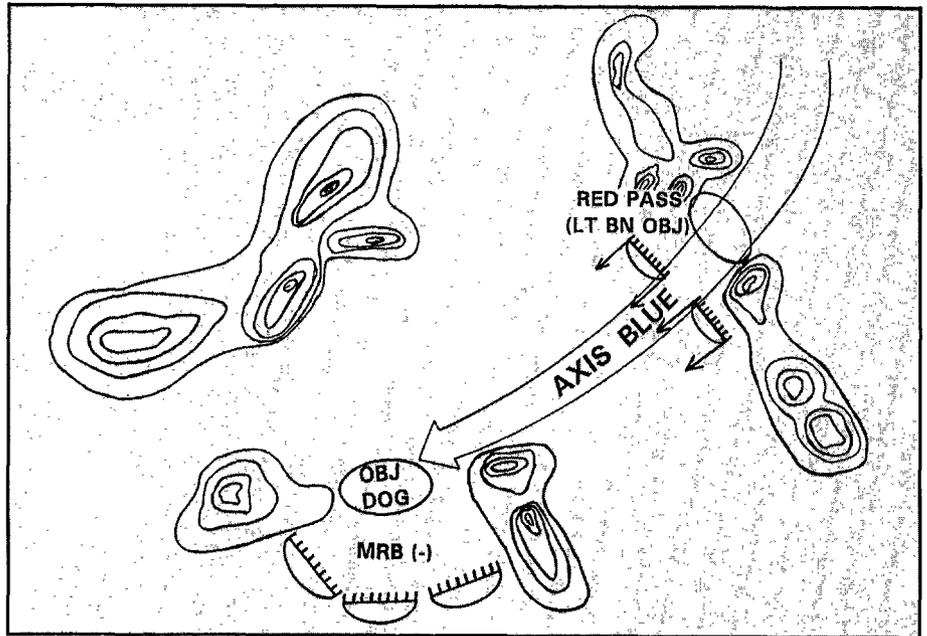


Figure 1

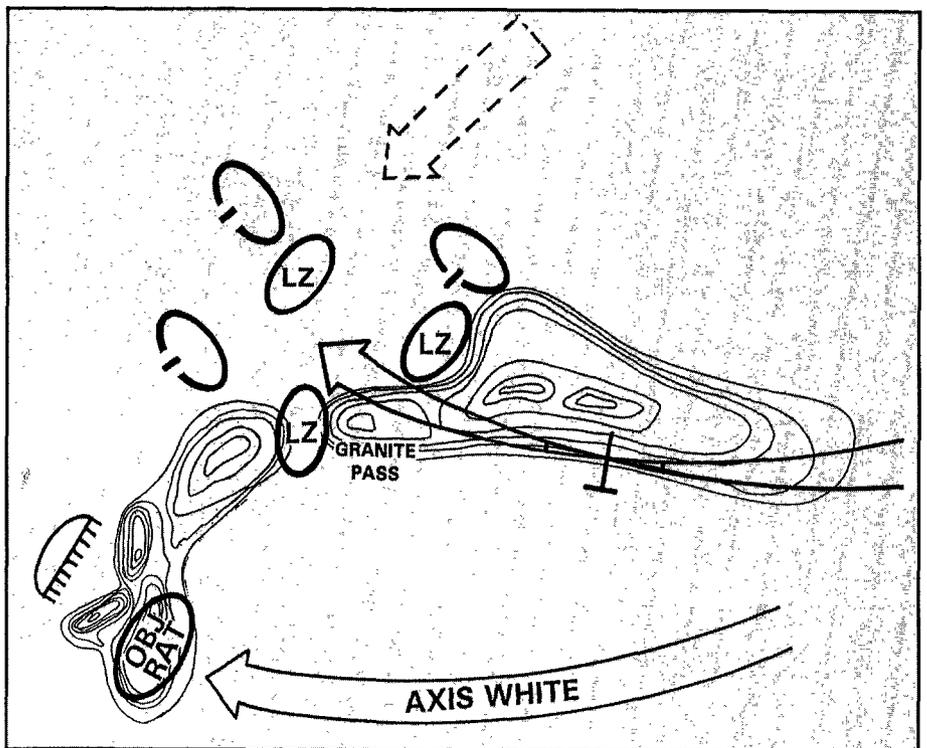


Figure 2

operations to clear restrictive terrain and clearing a trench line, for example.

In the example in Figure 4, the brigade, organized with a balanced heavy task force and a light battalion, attacked along axis Green to seize Objective Horse. As the brigade staff members analyzed the terrain along the attack axis, they identified several areas

of restricted terrain through which the brigade would have to pass on its way to the objective. Additionally, intelligence indicated the OPFOR had established a combat security outpost consisting of a reinforced platoon (one tank, three BMPs, and dismounted infantry) in a trench line at point Y astride the attack axis.

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Because of the restrictive terrain around this position, the brigade commander assigned this intermediate objective (Objective Cow) to the light battalion. Further, because there were no suitable flanking routes into the objective area, he augmented them with a company team consisting of the two Bradley platoons and a tank platoon. The task given the light battalion was to clear the restrictive terrain leading to Objective Cow, seize the objective, and then pass the rest of the brigade through.

The light battalion led with dismounted infantry to clear the restrictive terrain along the axis leading to its objective and followed with light infantry soldiers mounted on the Bradleys. As the artillery preparation began, the tanks and Bradleys moved forward to an attack-by-fire position and began to suppress. As the artillery shifted to the rear of the objective, tanks and Bradleys engaged and destroyed the BMPs and the tank. The Bradleys continued to suppress as engineers moved forward under smoke and breached the obstacle; they continued to suppress while moving forward to dismount light infantry into the trench. Following the destruction of the OPFOR platoon and seizure of the trench, the rest of the brigade passed through and continued to the final objective. As the brigade passed through, the Bradley company team that had been under the light battalion's operational control returned to the heavy task force for the next phase of the attack.

Although mounting the light infantry in Bradleys presented its own challenges, it also offered several advantages over moving dismounted. Primarily, it gave the infantrymen more protection and allowed them to close with the trench more rapidly. Most important, the ability to perform the tasks of clearing restrictive terrain and seizing a trench was one the brigade otherwise would not have had without the light battalion.

Preparing Before a Rotation

For all the capabilities your battalion can add to the heavy brigade, there are

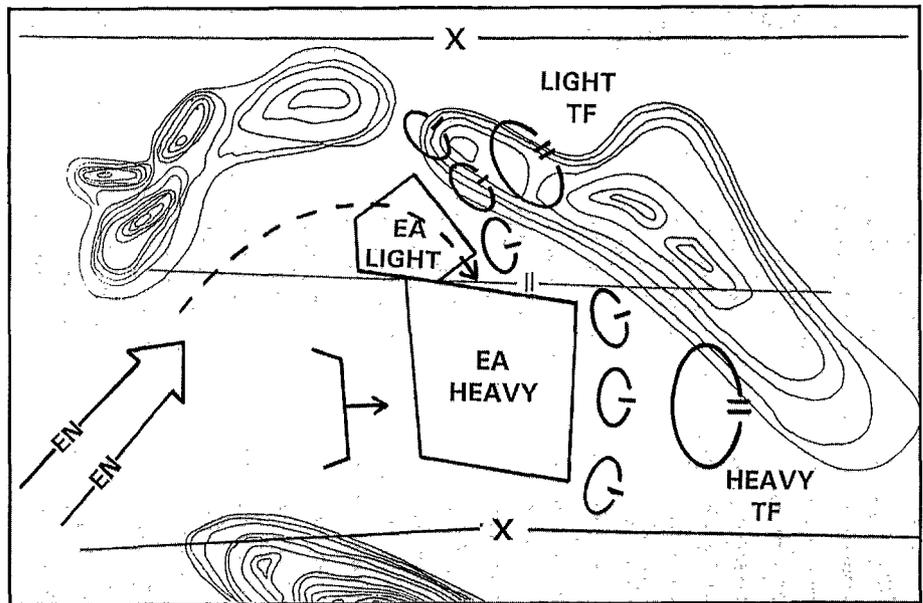


Figure 3

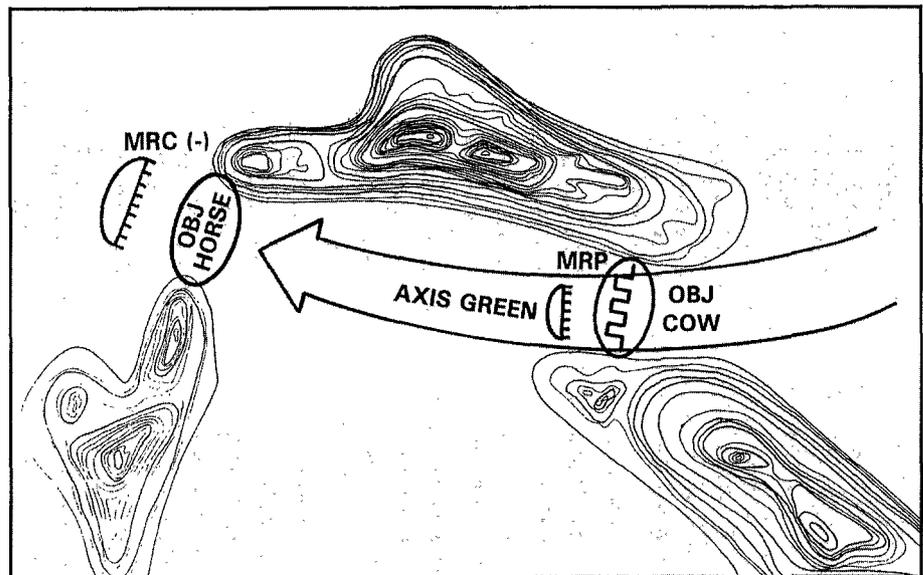


Figure 4

some things that may warrant further training emphasis before your rotation. Ensuring your battalion is proficient in these tasks will enhance your training experience at the NTC and allow you to make a greater contribution during the brigade fight. The following are a few of these areas:

Managing the Soldier's Load. Left to their own devices, your soldiers will often carry too much equipment into battle. Field Manual 7-10, *The Infantry Rifle Company*, recommends that the individual fighting load not exceed 30 percent of the soldier's body weight, and that the approach load not exceed

45 percent. Given that the average soldier weighs 160 pounds, this means the fighting load should not exceed 48 pounds and the approach load (which includes the fighting load) should not exceed 72 pounds. On recent rotations, however, fighting loads usually exceeded 100 pounds, and loads of 130 pounds were not uncommon. In one case, a soldier went into battle carrying 160 pounds. Needless to say, overloaded soldiers do not fare well under fire at the NTC or anywhere else.

How can you better manage the soldier's load? During the planning phase for each mission—after a

thorough analysis of METTT (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time)—your leaders must determine precisely what equipment will be required. Then they must determine what the soldiers will carry (the combat load) and what can be transported on trucks (the sustainment load).

The combat load should be further divided into the approach load, which will be dropped at the assault position or on contact, and the fighting load, which will remain with the soldier. Although mission requirements may dictate that loads be heavier than recommended on some operations, this should be a conscious decision, made by informed leaders on the basis of the tactical situation and with consideration of the training and fitness levels of the soldiers involved.

During mission preparation, leaders at all levels must supervise relentlessly. Soldiers cannot be allowed to determine their own loads. And during execution, leaders must know who is carrying the heaviest loads and where these soldiers are traveling in the formation. Finally, leaders must manage the task force trucks. Soldiers who are confident that the trucks will show up on time with their sustainment load won't try to carry extra items.

Planning and Executing Truck Moves. To improve tactical mobility, light battalions are typically augmented by a light truck platoon for the rotation. The effective use of this platoon can allow your battalion to get to the objective more quickly and to be better able to accomplish the mission when they get there.

Moving a battalion by truck is challenging at the NTC. Truck moves are frequently done the night before the heavy force LD time. A typical mission could have your battalion moving forward by truck from an assembly area some time after EENT (early evening nautical twilight). The trucks will move the battalion to the platoon or company detrucking point, then the battalion will infiltrate dismounted the rest of the way to the objective. Although this may sound easy, units that have not trained to move by truck usually have problems.

The following tips may help you make better use of the truck platoon and move more effectively:

- Select, reconnoiter, and secure the truck route early. Conduct a thorough map reconnaissance, and identify tentative routes. Then infiltrate scouts to confirm and observe. This will help avoid lost truck serials on unsuitable terrain, which often costs valuable time.

- Plan truck loads and load plans. Maintain platoon integrity on trucks. Carefully plan where mission critical equipment will travel. This will help you keep track of both the critical equipment and key personnel.

- Develop a plan for radio communication during movement. Key leaders should ride in the cab with their radios on. This will facilitate command and control and allow you to make adjustments on the move in response to scout reports.

- Train truck drivers to drive off-road, at night, with and without night vision devices. The augmenting truck platoon frequently comes from corps transportation units in which off-road driving at night may not be a training priority.

Given some forethought, your battalion's ability to move by truck can improve your tactical mobility and have a corresponding effect on the battlefield. If you do not meet the truck platoon leader until after your arrival at the NTC, you will be in for a long rotation.

Finally, in coordination with the supporting truck platoon, develop a standing operating procedure (SOP), train your staff to write a detailed truck movement annex, and include the truck platoon in your train-up.

Planning and Executing Air Assaults. Light units at the NTC often have opportunities to execute battalion air assaults. These, like truck moves, can significantly improve the battalion's tactical mobility if training has been conducted and SOPs are in place before the rotation. The following tips are based on experiences in recent rotations:

- Coordinate the movement and landing plans to see that they support the ground tactical plan. To succeed,

these plans must be synchronized. If they are not, the proper mix of men and equipment won't arrive at the right time and place to accomplish the ground tactical mission.

- Develop a detailed pickup zone (PZ) plan, and designate a PZ control officer to mark, organize, and control operations on the PZ. This officer should be a captain from the S-3 section who knows the details of both the movement plan and the ground tactical plan.

- Make and execute a bump plan that supports the ground tactical plan. Key leaders and mission essential equipment must have priority.

- Be prepared, at the air mission briefing (AMB), to brief the ground tactical plan, coordinate with the air mission commander, and adjust the plan as needed.

Training and preparation before you arrive at the NTC will pay big dividends. As a minimum, your planners should meet with planners from the supporting lift element to review and synchronize SOPs. Field Manual (FM) 90-4, *Air Assault Operations*, is a good place to start, and Appendix F of the manual provides a good outline for a training plan. The task of training soldiers to load and unload the aircraft is fairly easy and can be trained and rehearsed at the NTC before the first mission. Unfortunately, coordinating planners from the brigade, the lift company, and your battalion may not be accomplished as easily.

Constructing Fighting Positions. Recent rotations at the NTC have indicated that this is not one of our strong points in training. Many units that come to the NTC have not spent enough time training soldiers and leaders to construct fighting positions to standard. The following tips may be helpful:

- Leaders and soldiers must be trained on position construction. Many are not. This means many leaders are unable to supervise properly. As a result, some soldiers think "individual fighting position" means that each designs his own without regard to requirements for positioning, overhead

cover, aiming and limiting stakes, and parapet width and height.

- Study FM 21-75, *Combat Skills of the Soldier*, and FM 7-8, *Infantry Platoon and Squad*. Both are good training references, as is Graphic Training Aid (GTA) 7-6-1, "Fighting Position Construction Infantry Leader's Reference Guide." Time spent teaching soldiers and junior leaders the requirements before a rotation will save a lot of defensive preparation time at the NTC and contribute to the effectiveness of your defense.

- Ensure that you have a solid plan to forecast construction material requirements. Build platoon survivability packages, and have them delivered to the platoons. GTA 7-6-1 can help you forecast requirements.

Finally, video tapes are available that show soldiers the effects of artillery fire on dug-in soldiers and equipment. Viewed in training, these will help put the importance of properly constructing positions into perspective.

Constructing an Engagement Area. The brigade defense against an attacking regiment will present the brigade commander with one of his greatest challenges. Often the brigade will defend with two battalions, one a light battalion and one organized as a balanced heavy task force. Brigade frontage may be 12 kilometers wide. Given this frontage, the terrain at the NTC, and the forces available to the brigade, the ability of your battalion to deny an avenue of approach to the OPFOR will be vital to the brigade's success.

When the brigade defends, your battalion will normally be assigned to conduct a defense in sector. Your ability to defend your sector and defeat a motorized rifle battalion may depend largely upon your ability to construct an effective EA. The EA must mass all available direct and indirect fires and optimize their effects at the point where the terrain and emplaced obstacles make the OPFOR most vulnerable.

The following are some of the basic tasks that must be accomplished if the EA is to be effective. While this list is not intended to include everything, it

does include most of the common problems light units have faced on recent rotations:

- Understand how the EA fits into the brigade concept for the defense; this will help ensure that you meet the brigade commander's intent. The EA is a technique for concentrating fires into the particular place where you intend to kill the OPFOR. It does not free the unit from responsibility for the assigned sector.

- Analyze the avenues of approach into the brigade sector. This analysis will provide a starting point for developing the EA by highlighting where the OPFOR is likely to go. From that, you can determine where best to place obstacles to impede his progress and where to place weapons to mass fires.

- On the basis of the S-2's depiction of OPFOR formations and number and type of systems, determine the type and number of weapon systems required to defeat each element at the point where you have decided to engage it. This will help you determine whether you have enough systems to kill the OPFOR you expect to face or should ask the brigade for more.

- Determine how you want to engage the OPFOR. Generally, there are two techniques for engaging: Either have each system engage at its maximum range or allow the OPFOR to enter the EA and engage it with all systems at the same time. Each technique has advantages, and you must decide which to use before positioning your antiarmor systems.

- Incorporate enough direct and indirect fire control measures into the plan. Establish trigger lines on recognizable terrain, or emplace target reference points (TRPs) to control when weapons will engage. Control of fires is imperative if you expect to achieve mass.

- Assign sectors of fire within the EA to ensure interlocking fires, and use TRPs to facilitate concentration of fires on the OPFOR.

- Develop the indirect fire plan at the same time as the direct fire and obstacle plans. Then refine it as positions are constructed and obstacles are com-

pleted. Direct fires, indirect fires, and obstacles must all work together.

- Rehearse the defensive battle, including direct and indirect fires and repositioning. And don't leave out combat service support; casualty evacuation rehearsals are absolutely necessary.

- Plan the time when preparations must be completed, and have a system in place in the tactical operations center to track their progress. Once construction of the EA has begun, changes and adjustments are constant. Your battalion must have a system that will tell you the status of preparations at any time so you can adjust resource priorities.

Building an effective EA is difficult. To be effective, it requires detailed planning and tireless effort by soldiers and leaders. For the most complete coverage on EA development, review chapter 4 of FM 71-123, *Tactics and Techniques for Combined Arms Heavy Forces: Armored Brigade, Battalion/Task Force, and Company Team*.

Operating in an NBC Environment. The OPFOR uses chemical munitions in both the offense and the defense. In the offense, chemical agents will be used against you in the forward area—nonpersistent agents in front of an OPFOR attack and persistent agents to protect its flank. In the defense, persistent agents will be used to deny you the use of selected terrain and to channel your forces. Chemical agents may also be used to hinder your command and control and to break your momentum as you attack by forcing you to adopt protective measures that further hinder your performance.

The use of chemical agents can achieve the OPFOR's desired effects if you are not prepared to operate in this environment. The following are some keys to success:

- Your battalion must have specific SOPs that address under what conditions the battalion will go into mission oriented protective posture (MOPP) and when the MOPP level will be reduced. For each operation, specify the MOPP level and maintain MOPP discipline. And make sure individual soldiers and leaders are able to perform

all routine tasks in MOPP IV.

- Plan for decontamination and MOPP-gear exchange. Decontamination is a challenge for a light battalion. Since you will often need help from the heavy brigade, make sure the brigade is aware of your requirements before the battle.

- Make sure all soldiers in the battalion are trained to detect and determine types of potential agents using the M-256 chemical detector kit.

- SOPs for the defense must specifically address when and by whom M-8 chemical alarms will be emplaced.

You will increase your effectiveness at the NTC if you focus your training on avoiding contaminated areas, detecting the presence of chemical agents and

determining the type of agent, and being prepared to operate in an NBC environment when necessary.

The NTC is the only training environment in which a light battalion and a heavy brigade work closely together in a realistic scenario against a world-class opposing force and under difficult terrain and weather conditions. You will be guaranteed an opportunity to train yourself, your leaders, and your soldiers under the most stressful conditions available in training. And you'll return home more proficient in your job and with a better trained battalion. What's more, with proper preparation and training, your battalion can significantly affect the NTC battlefield.

One last piece of advice: Remember

that you bring unique light battalion capabilities to the NTC battlefield that the heavy brigade may not fully appreciate without your help. Work hard before the rotation to become part of the brigade team. Sell your battalion and its capabilities to the brigade commander and his staff. Then arrive ready to fight and win as part of the brigade team.

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Coordinating Conventional And Special Operations Forces

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As the Army becomes more involved in regional conflicts and operations other than war (OOTW), deployed units and Special Operations Forces (SOFs) will be required to work together more closely than they may have done in the past.

During Operations GOLDEN PHEASANT, DESERT SHIELD, and DESERT STORM, along with various rotations to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), infantry brigades were augmented by Special Operations Command and Control Elements (SOCCEs). It may be helpful to infantrymen to know the roles, organization, and functions of the SOCCE, and how it can help conventional units and, in turn, be helped by them.

A SOCCE is attached to a conventional headquarters when the conventional unit's area of operations overlaps that of an SOF. The SOCCE commander

advises the supported commander on the capabilities and limitations of the Special Forces (SF) teams and provides command and control links between the SOCCE and the unit.

The SOCCE's primary role is to ensure unity of effort by synchronizing SF and conventional force operations and intelligence requirements. The SOCCE accomplishes this by coordinating operational planning and intelligence with the supported commander's staff. It forwards target acquisition, intelligence, and weather reports from deployed SF teams. In particular, when SF is in the vicinity of a unit's objective, or when link-up becomes imminent, the SOCCE helps the conventional unit staff plan the link-up.

A SOCCE is usually based on a Special Forces Operational Detachment-B (SFOD-B) or B Team. The B Team is headquarters for an SF com-

pany composed of six A Teams. At full strength, each A Team is composed of 12 soldiers. A SOCCE may control from one to six teams. (B Team and A Team personnel are shown in Figures 7-9 and 7-10 of Field Manual 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*.)

A SOCCE is usually task organized into a command cell, an operations cell, a communications cell, and a support cell.

The command cell is made up of the detachment commander (a major) and the sergeant major. It provides command and control for the deployed A Teams and advises the conventional force commander concerning the capabilities and limitations of deployed elements.

The operations cell is composed of the executive officer and S-2 (captains), two detachment technicians (chief war-