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# Let's Reorganize Our BFV Companies

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It is not news to anyone connected with the mechanized infantry force that the dismounted elements seldom influence the battles at the Army's combat training centers. This poor performance is not universal, and it is not caused by any lack of motivation or discipline on the part of our infantrymen. But it is real, continuing, and far too widespread.

The problems that affect the force are caused by factors that fall into four general categories:

**Employment.** Leaders at battalion and company level seldom develop detailed plans for employing dismounted infantry. Company commanders and platoon leaders—although generally eager to get their dismounted infantrymen into the fight—do not recognize when and why to dismount them. All too often, dismounted infantrymen find themselves “dying” in the back of a Bradley fighting vehicle (BFV). Dismounted actions, when they do occur, are often hasty and are not coordinated with the supporting vehicles.

**Training.** The training of the dismounted element generally does not approach that of the mounted element—in either quantity or quality. Dismounted soldiers provide support for gunnery, mounted training, and numerous smaller tasks. When units do conduct training, they often do not integrate the mounted and dismounted elements.

**Leadership.** Units often assign their most senior and experienced noncommissioned officers as Bradley com-

manders, leaving less experienced or capable leaders for the dismounted element. The pressure to obtain good BFV gunnery results seems to contribute to this outcome. And the eventual fielding of a precision gunnery system for the Bradley, while improving effectiveness, is likely to place an even greater premium on mounted crews. As a result, the young dismounts do not get the training, experience, or tools they need for success. All of this, further evidenced by problems with training and manning, creates the perception of the dismounted infantrymen as second-class citizens.

**Manning.** Mechanized infantry units routinely deploy to the training centers with their dismounted squads at 50 percent strength or less. While personnel turbulence is part of this problem, the continuing practice of using infantrymen to fill positions at division, brigade, and battalion levels also contributes to it.

The problems listed above paint a bleak but fair picture of the state of our dismounted infantry force. There are exceptions, of course, that generally result from exceptional focus and commitment on the part of some battalion and company commanders. These commanders believe that dismounted infantry brings to the battlefield a significant capability and that mechanized infantry units are neither desirable nor effective when used as “light tank” forces. Even exceptional leaders struggle with at least some of the same problems.

The infantry community must ad-

dress solutions to the systemic shortcomings that afflict the dismounted force, beginning with organizational change.

## Organization

The current organization of the mechanized platoon resulted from a 1989 white paper that addressed doctrine, force design, leader development, and training strategies for BFV-equipped mechanized infantry units. (See “Bradley Platoon Organization,” by Major General Michael F. Spigel-mire, *INFANTRY*, January-February 1990, pages 1-2.) The existing organization at the time was a holdover from M113 days, with each squad having a three-man mounted crew and a six-man dismount element. The paper concluded that this organization was ineffective and recommended the consolidation of the dismount element into two nine-man squads, with the BFV crew organized into a separate mounted section. General Spigel-mire, the Chief of Infantry at that time, described some of the merits of the new organization:

*Thus, the new organization provides a standard platoon structure that focuses leadership for dismounted and mounted operations and for training. This focus of leadership, with Bradley commanders in the turret and squad leaders in the dismount positions, eliminates the switching of leadership responsibilities from the back of the vehicle to the turret when the squads must execute dismounted infantry missions. This standard platoon structure also aligns the Bradley-equipped mech-*

anized infantry with the rest of the infantry force.

For the same reasons that led to the 1989 white paper, it is now time to go one step farther. The organization of our mechanized infantry units should be tailored to promote their effective training and employment on the battlefield. This article will propose a reorganization of the BFV infantry company into a configuration of two mounted and two dismounted platoons (2x2). This reorganization would address the first three of the four problem areas. With very few additional resources, it would promote a more effective employment of dismounted infantry, improve the quality and amount of training, and put more experienced leaders on the ground.

A 2x2 BFV-equipped mechanized infantry company would consist of four platoons—two mounted and two dismounted, plus a headquarters section. Each mounted platoon would consist of six BFVs and 18 men. Each dismounted platoon would consist of three nine-man squads and a headquarters section—a platoon leader, a platoon sergeant, and two radiotelephone operators (RTOs)—totaling 31 men. Reorganizing in this fashion would require the addition of three men to the company's authorization: one platoon leader (a second or first lieutenant), one platoon sergeant (sergeant first class), and one RTO (the present company organization has three).

The Army's present austere manning would undoubtedly make the addition of another officer and senior NCO exceedingly difficult. But if the additional slots could not be found in other areas, these positions could be authorized but not filled for the time being, leaving one of the company's platoons with an NCO platoon leader. Although this is not desirable, it is fairly common in the force as currently configured and should not be permitted to prevent the reorganization.

The 2x2 organization would help solve the problems in the four general categories discussed earlier:

**Employment.** Because battalion commanders plan two levels down,

**BRADLEY INFANTRY PLATOON ORGANIZATION**

<b>SECTION A:</b>	<b>1st SQUAD:</b>	
<b>BFV 1:</b> BFV DVR (SPEC) SR GNR (SGT) PLT LDR (2LT) (BC)	<b>TEAM A:</b> GNR (SPEC) TM LDR (SGT) AR SPEC	<b>GRN (PFC)</b> AA SPEC (PFC) FO
<b>BFV 2:</b> BFV DVR (SPEC) BFV GNR (SPEC) MST/GNR (BC) (SSG)	<b>TEAM B:</b> SQD LDR (SSG) TM LDR (SGT) AR SPEC	<b>AR SPEC</b> AA SPEC (PFC) PLT RTO (PFC)
<b>SECTION B:</b>	<b>2d SQUAD:</b>	
<b>BFV 3:</b> BFV DVR (SPEC) BFV GNR (SPEC) SSG (BC)	<b>TEAM B:</b> SQD LDR (SSG) TM LDR (SGT) AR SPEC	<b>AR SPEC</b> AA SPEC (PFC)
<b>BFV 4:</b> BFV DVR (SPEC) SR GNR (SGT) PSG (BC) (SFC)	<b>TEAM A:</b> TM LDR (SGT) AR SPEC GRN (PFC)	<b>AA SPEC (PFC)</b> AIDMAN FO RTO

dismounted infantry platoons, as separate and distinct entities, would be an explicit part of the planning process. Furthermore, since a dismounted platoon's strength and capabilities would be similar to those of light infantry platoons, appropriate missions and tasks for them could be standardized across the force. (Under the current or-

*A BFV platoon would be habitually associated with a dismounted infantry platoon and would always provide it with transportation .*

ganization, when a commander orders a dismounted platoon to conduct a mission, all he gets is a reinforced squad in many cases.)

The company commander would be required to develop a task and purpose for his dismounted platoons, something often neglected under the current organization. In addition, the commander would have dismounted platoon leaders to help develop detailed plans for their employment. Ideally, because of the challenges associated with leading a 31-man organization on the battlefield, the dismounted platoon leaders would

be the most senior and most experienced lieutenants in the company.

The 2x2 organization would still offer considerable flexibility for cross-attachment with an armor company, but simply swapping platoons would no longer be the preferred solution. Commanders could truly allocate infantry platoons to tank companies on the basis of anticipated mission requirements. A tank company attacking to seize an objective against a prepared defense might get an entire dismounted platoon and the associated BFV platoon as well. On the other hand, a tank company with few or no anticipated infantry tasks might get an infantry squad and a section of two Bradleys for transportation.

Tactics, techniques, and procedures for the employment of a six-vehicle BFV platoon already exist in Field Manual (FM) 17-98-1, *Scout Leader's Handbook*. Although there are significant differences between the missions of cavalry platoons and those of mechanized infantry platoons, this manual could serve as an interim reference until FM 7-7J, *Mechanized Infantry Platoon and Squad (Bradley)*, could be rewritten to conform to the new organization.

Within the company, a BFV platoon

## BRADLEY 2x2 ORGANIZATION

### MOUNTED PLATOON SECTION A:

**BFV 1:**  
BFV DVR (SPEC)  
SR GNR (SGT)  
PLT LDR (2LT) (BC)

**BFV 2:**  
BFV DVR (SPEC)  
BFV GNR (SPEC)  
SSG (BC)

### SECTION B:

**BFV 3:**  
BFV DVR (SPEC)  
SR GNR (SGT)  
PSG (BC) (SFC)

**BFV 4:**  
BFV DVR (SPEC)  
BFV GNR (SPEC)  
SSG (BC)

### SECTION C:

**BFV 5:**  
BFV DVR (SPEC)  
BFV GNR (SPEC)  
MST/GNR (SSG) (BC)

**BFV 6:**  
BFV DVR (SPEC)  
BFV GNR (SPEC)  
SSG (BC)

### DISMOUNTED PLATOON 1st SQUAD:

**TEAM A:**  
AA (SPEC)(PFC)      GRN (PFC)  
TM LDR (SGT)      PSG (SFC)  
AR SPEC      PLT RTO (PFC)

**TEAM B:**  
SQD LDR (SSG)      AR SPEC  
TM LDR (SGT)      AA SPEC (PFC)  
AR (SPEC)      AIDMAN

### 2d SQUAD:

**TEAM A:**  
TM LDR (SGT)      AA SPEC (PFC)  
AR SPEC      PLTL LDR (2LT)  
GRN (PFC)      PLT RTO (PFC)

**TEAM B:**  
SQD LDR (SSG)      AR SPEC  
TM LDR (SGT)      AA SPEC (PFC)  
AR SPEC

### 3d SQUAD:

**TEAM A:**  
SQD LDR (SSG)      AR SPEC  
TM LDR (SGT)      AA SPEC (PFC)  
AR SPEC

**TEAM B:**  
TM LDR (SGT)      AA SPEC (PFC)  
AR SPEC      FO  
GRN (PFC)      FO RTO

would be habitually associated with a dismounted infantry platoon and would always provide it with transportation. The BFV platoon would be organized into three sections of two BFVs each, with each section transporting a dismounted squad. As a rule, one dismounted fire team would ride on each of the six BFVs, with the platoon leader, platoon sergeant, and each squad leader in a different vehicle.

The reorganized BFV platoon would focus on only two things: transporting its associated dismounted platoon safely to the point where the dismounted infantry could get into the fight, and providing direct fire support to the dismount element once it was on the ground. This would not prevent the BFV platoon from performing other tasks, but the guiding rule would have to be that, against an enemy with anti-armor capability, the BFV platoon would avoid mounted combat while

infantrymen were riding in the back. The BFV was created to be more than a battlefield taxi, but infantry and armor leaders must stop thinking of it as a light tank and trying to maneuver it accordingly.

The BFV platoon leader would no longer face the decision of whether to dismount or remain with his vehicles. While the rule of thumb has always been that the platoon leader dismounts with his infantry, this often leads to a lapse in command and control. The platoon leader loses valuable time getting "dressed," organized, and up on the net. With the 2x2 organization, he would always be ready to dismount immediately. If a dismounted platoon received an independent mission—such as an air assault, an infiltration, or a stealth breach—neither the mounted nor the dismounted platoons would lose key leaders.

Finally, the fielding of Force XXI

technology would be optimized in a 2x2 company. This technology would improve the mounted platoon leader's ability to control his six-vehicle platoon. Likewise, the fielding of a Land Warrior system would fully integrate the dismounted platoon into the heavy combined arms team.

**Training.** Today, a BFV infantry platoon leader faces a daunting task. He is responsible for training a mounted section that must master as many skills as a tank platoon, and for training a dismounted section in most of the skills of a light infantry platoon. Admittedly, the platoon leader gets help from the company and the battalion, but the performance of many of our mechanized infantry platoons at the training centers confirms the difficulty of this task.

One of the specified reasons for switching to our current organization of two nine-man squads per platoon was to improve the training focus for the dismounted element. Under the original BFV infantry organization, the dual-hatted squad leaders were asked to shoulder too heavy a load. Now the platoon leader faces the same problem, with the result that most of his time and effort is devoted to the mounted element. While some battalions and companies are able to establish effective dismounted training programs, many are not.

The consolidation of the dismounted squads into two platoons with dedicated platoon leaders and sergeants would improve both the quality and the quantity of training. These lieutenants and senior NCOs would not need to divide their time among the motor pool, the conduct-of-fire trainer, BFV crew training, and dismounted training. Furthermore, because of their seniority, these leaders would have much more influence than our current squad leaders in developing, resourcing, and advancing training plans.

Clearly, this training challenge would not go away with the adoption of a 2x2 organization, but the creation of dismounted platoons would give these critical units greater visibility at battalion level and above. Although this

would be no guarantee of effective training for the dismounted platoons, it would keep them from becoming absorbed in supporting mounted training.

**Leadership.** The 2x2 structure would enhance the leader development of infantry lieutenants, so long as these officers were given an opportunity to move from leading mounted platoons to leading dismounted platoons. Many of our current crop of mechanized infantry platoon leaders never get a good opportunity to lead infantrymen on the ground, simply because their platoons do not have any dismounted infantry. These lieutenants would be far better trained by serving one tour of duty in a 2x2 company.

**Manning.** The 2x2 organization would not resolve the issue of adequate manning for dismounted squads and platoons. This issue requires the constant attention of commanders at all levels and of personnel managers as well. First, we must assign soldiers to units in the field; then we assign them to fill infantry positions instead of having them serve in the headquarters, drive trucks, or work in personnel centers. Although all of these functions are important and may seem essential during garrison operations, these diversions come at a price, particularly if mechanized infantry units are called to battle on short notice.

Readiness reporting could be a tool for tracking our real dismounted strength if we modified the report to track infantry squads in greater detail. For example, the report could specifically track the number of nine-man infantry squads, eight-man squads, seven-man squads, and so on, in the battalion. The questionable practice of "battle rostering" soldiers in dismounted squads when they actually work somewhere else must be stopped in all units. If a soldier is not available to train with his squad routinely, he should not be counted as part of that unit.

There would still be a great temptation to take the best soldiers from the dismounted platoons to fill vacancies in the mounted platoons. If not controlled, this tendency would wreak

havoc upon the dismounted platoons, just as it now does on our BFV platoons. The best solution would be a smoothly functioning personnel system and 100-percent fill of all units with soldiers holding the correct military occupational specialties. Unfortunately, that standard has seldom been achieved in the recent past and is unlikely to be achieved in the near future.

The next best solution would be to place dismounted platoons at least on an equal footing with the mounted force; that is, we should not place higher value on filling a BFV crew position than on filling a dismounted squad position. Such a commitment might require us to accept two-man BFV crews in some cases. Of course, the trade-offs would have to be calculated. Companies would have to man enough BFVs to transport the dismounted force, and a three-man crew would increase the BFVs direct fire capabilities. Nonetheless, the most important contribution of mechanized infantry to the combined arms team is the ability to put infantrymen on the ground at critical times and places. Our mechanized infantry must avoid becoming, by default, little more than a light tank force.

### Why Not Dismounted Companies?

A logical argument could be made for taking this proposal a step further by creating dismounted *companies* within the battalion. (In fact, some leaders have argued for the authority to try this organization, only to be overruled within their divisions.) Dividing the mechanized infantry battalion into mounted and dismounted companies would be preferable to the current situation, but the 2x2 organization would be a better option for two reasons:

First, it would be easier to develop a habitual association between mounted and dismounted platoons under this organization. Soldiers' loyalties are strongest at the lowest levels—squad, platoon, and company—and decrease a bit at each higher level. Soldiers usually know all or most of the other soldiers in their company but may not

know many outside the company.

Second, organizing into mounted and dismounted elements at battalion level would require a great deal of formal coordination at higher levels for task organization and the linkup of mounted and dismounted forces. Within a 2x2 company, most of this organization could be done quickly and informally in company or team assembly areas without involving the staff or higher commanders.

No organizational change can remedy all of the shortcomings of our dismounted mechanized infantry force. But the changes proposed here would substantially improve the battlefield employment, training, and leadership of this critical element. There is no lack of motivation or discipline among the soldiers who now serve in our dismounted squads, but they are usually "the bill payers" for every other need within their units. This can be corrected only by putting our emphasis back where it belongs—on the *Infantry* instead of on the *mechanized*.

The 2x2 organization would create recognizable dismounted infantry platoons—led by more senior and experienced leaders—that are visible on the "radar screens" of battalion, brigade, and division commanders. We could institutionalize a higher standard of dismounted infantry performance without requiring our battalion and company commanders to expend an inordinate amount of effort in building, sustaining, and training a creditable dismounted force. Employed at the right place, at the right time, with the right training and equipment, dismounted infantry will be the decisive force on the battlefield. Let's give our infantrymen a chance to get into the fight!

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