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SHOULD SPECIAL SCHOOLING BE PROVIDED
TO QUALIFY SELECTED COMPANY GRADE OFFICERS TO BE
COMBINED ARMS TASK FORCE COMMANDERS?

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PREFACE

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The author wishes to express his appreciation to the staff of the United States Army Infantry School Library for its assistance in obtaining source material, the Officers of the Second Infantry Division for their time and opinions on this subject, and his wife for her time and cooperation for typing and editing this monograph.

The point of view expressed in this paper is that of the author and not necessarily that of the United States Army Infantry School or the United States Army.


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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this monograph is to discuss whether or not special schooling should be provided to qualify selected company grade officers as combined arms task force commanders.

This problem will be discussed by analyzing the schools which company grade officers are already required to attend, limited to those subjects which have some connection with task force operations. Although logistical and administrative support in the operation of a task force are becoming ever-increasing burdens to commanders, these problems will not be included. Only subjects which deal with the tactical employment of task forces will be discussed.

A task force is defined as follows: "1. Temporary grouping of units under one commander, formed for the purpose of carrying out a specific operation or mission; 2. Semi-permanent organization of units under one commander for the purpose of carrying out a continuing specific task..." (1/296) This term and the term combined arms team will be used throughout this discussion and will have the same meaning.

Annex A shows a typical platoon-type task force. (2/203) All elements of this particular force are organic to a rifle company, but elements from different arms could be attached to this force, depending upon the mission.

Annex B shows a typical company-size task force. (4/30) Other than infantry, there are four different arms represented, armored, transportation, medical, and artillery (forward observer party habitually attached to the rifle company from the organic mortar battery). The organization of task forces and combined arms teams is not fixed and any element or unit which is needed to accomplish the mission may be attached to form

the task force.

DISCUSSION

After the fall of Poland in World War II, the German Army started its march toward Belgium. The Belgians were quite confident of their Liege fortifications and of the ability of their army, small though it was, to stop the Germans at this line. They placed their best troops in Fort Eben-Emael, key fort in the Liege line, and awaited the German advance. Advance they did! Within twenty-four hours Fort Eben-Emael was occupied by the German Army.

On the morning of the attack, gliders landed German engineers directly on top of the fortifications and they began their mission of destroying the supply system within Fort Eben-Emael, by blowing up the fort's cupolas and ammunition hoists. Shortly after the engineers landed, the infantry advanced, supported by well-coordinated dive-bombing attacks along the entire length of the fortifications. In a shockingly short time, the Germans had mopped up all of the Liege line. Not only the Belgian people, but also most of the western world was astounded that modern fortifications such as these could fall in less than twenty-four hours. Was it due to incompetence on the part of the military leaders? Was it the work of the "fifth column"? In actuality, it was neither. "The real reason was skill, plus the action of the air-borne troops, and the coordination of all German arms, both ground and air, in the attack." (5/9/543)

The action against Fort Eben-Emael was a typical task force operation. This type of maneuver is not at all new to military tactics. Task force operations can be traced back through history to the days of Alexander, the Great, when he flanked his Phalanxes with cavalry or to Hannibal who placed his elephants with his spearmen to attack a city.

Germany used task force operations throughout World War II against the Stalin line in Russia. Allied forces used this same type of maneuver successfully against Germany, during this same war and against the Communist forces during the Korean conflict.

Since this type of military operation is not new, why is a special school for task force commanders on a company grade level being considered? In the past, task forces have been of such magnitude that they were normally commanded by general officers or senior field grade officers. With the development of nuclear weapons, however, the emphasis is on dispersion and mobility instead of mass forces. This makes the semi-independent, hard-hitting, rapidly-moving, small unit task force of greater importance in modern warfare. Therefore, the company commander, with his combined arms team, will find himself operating more and more on his own.

The task force has no fixed organization; its composition depends entirely upon the mission to be accomplished and the forces available. For instance, it seems unlikely that a unit would be given an armored element to accomplish a helicopter-borne mission. On the other hand, if the mission is to penetrate and secure a key terrain feature, such as a bridge, the armored element is almost imperative.

Annex A shows a platoon-type task force. This organization can be used for such missions as security, limited attack, and limited defense. As much equipment and personnel as possible are obtained from the parent unit. All other equipment and personnel will be made available by higher headquarters. The task force shown is a rifle platoon which has been reinforced with mortar and anti-tank elements from the parent unit. In order to effectively employ this force, the commander must not only have a thorough knowledge of his own platoon, but he must also be familiar with the attached units.

Annex B depicts a company-size task force. Here, attached units from sources other than the parent unit, are emphasized. Two rifle platoons have been removed from a company and a tank platoon, an armored

personnel carrier squad, a maintenance section, and a medical section have been added, forming the task force. This combined arms team can be used to accomplish missions similar to those of the force mentioned in Annex A on a much larger scale.

The commander of this type of unit must show initiative and ingenuity if he is to accomplish his mission. The use of far-ranging motorized, or helicopter-borne task forces for reconnaissance, security, limited attack, and limited defense missions is becoming conventional and will place an even greater demand on the knowledge and leadership of commanders at all levels. (3/16)

Regardless of the type of force and its mission, there is certain basic knowledge a commander must have in order to efficiently employ this force. Primarily, he must be familiar with the different types of communications equipment used by the integrated elements of his force. He must be able to coordinate these different communication systems in order to have complete control of his entire unit at all times. Second, he must be familiar with the employment, capabilities, and limitations of the units which he will be using. This may include artillery, armor, army aviation, engineers, reconnaissance elements and transportation units, depending upon the mission. And he must know the capabilities and limitations of the weapons these units employ.

What training, pertinent to this subject, do company grade officers receive from schools now in existence? All personnel commissioned by any source, other than the Infantry Officer Candidate Course, must attend the Infantry Officer Leader Course, formerly the Basic Infantry Officer Course. This school is to familiarize new officers with the latest advancements in tactics and equipment and to recall to mind the various subjects and doctrines they studied in Reserve Officer Training Corps or at the Military Academy. (6) Out of a total of 352 hours, the IOLC devotes forty-eight hours to weapons training. This includes small arms, mine warfare, tank weapons, recoilless weapons, and mortars. Weapons capabilities and limitations are emphasized, as well as mechan-

nical operations. Ten hours of instruction are given by The Communications Department on radio procedure, the capabilities and operation of infantry radio sets, and field wire techniques. The young officer also learns how to combine the different nets into an operational communications system. The Ranger Department and The Command and Staff Department give a total of 128 hours in tactical instruction. Sixty-nine of these hours are given by The Ranger Department, dealing strictly with platoon tactics. Here, new officers are taught the employment of their platoons in different offensive and defensive situations. The remaining fifty-nine hours of tactics are taught by The Command and Staff Department. This instruction is to familiarize new officers with the fundamental employment of the associate arms. This includes six hours of instruction on the use of armor units, five hours on artillery units, seven hours on engineer units, and five hours on chemical warfare. Also included is a six-hour block of instruction on helicopter-borne task force operations. Upon completion of this school, new officers are not, by any means, experts in any one field, but they have a general knowledge of all units which they may encounter in their new assignments.

The Infantry Officer Candidate Course is very similar to the IOLC, except in the number of hours of instruction. (7) The candidate generally has not received the four years of instruction in military science as have the new officers in IOLC, and because of this, their courses are more detailed and the number of hours is greatly increased. For example, IOLC devotes forty-eight hours of instruction to weapons, whereas the candidate receives 285 hours of instruction from The Weapons Department. Like the graduate from IOLC, the candidate is not an expert in any one field, but he has a basic knowledge of units he may encounter in future assignments. (7)

The next service school required of all officers is the Infantry Officer Advanced Course. (10) This school is for company grade officers who have five to twelve years of commissioned service and is designed to further the company grade officers' knowledge of their basic

branch. This school gives only a short refresher course in weapons training and techniques, but much more time is devoted to the associate arms. Forty-eight hours of instruction are given on the employment of armor units. This includes a short review of the tactics used by small units and builds up to the employment of armor battalions and larger units. The student also receives twenty hours of instruction on artillery. The emphasis, here, is on the detailed coordination and planning of fire support for his unit and the tactical employment of the battle group's organic mortar battery. This course also includes information on the latest developments in missiles and artillery weapons. Seventeen hours are spent on engineer capabilities, organization, and the various ways the engineers can support an infantry unit. An additional thirty-seven hours is devoted to communications subjects. Here, again, the student is given the capabilities, limitations, and operation of the radio sets within the infantry division. He is taught both radio nets and field wire techniques. The tactical training during this course deals primarily with the battle group in various defensive and offensive situations. The problems used, during this course, deal with the battle group and its normal combat reinforcements. These are a tank company, an engineer company, a company of armored personnel carriers, and an artillery battery. Thus, the student practices, not only the employment of the infantry unit, but also the employment of the associate arms.

The schools illustrated are those which all infantry company grade officers will attend. However, the infantry is not the only branch which teaches the techniques of associate arms. For example, The Armor Basic Officer Course gives ten hours of instruction on infantry operations, seven hours on artillery, and fifteen hours on engineer units.

(8) The officer attending the Armor Advance Course receives sixty-seven hours of instruction on infantry operations, thirty-eight hours on artillery operations, and twenty-one hours on engineer units and techniques. (9) Likewise, all other associate arms devote some portion of their required schools to the various branches with which they may be

employed.

The next important factor in learning how to employ any type of unit is actual experience. This takes the officer out of the classroom to a duty assignment, either with a tactical or training unit. His first assignment will probably be as a platoon leader. Whether he is teaching basic trainees or employing his platoon on maneuvers with a tactical unit, he is practicing the concepts he learned during school and learning how to adjust to different problems and situations.

The on-the-job training the young officer receives is governed by training directives from Continental Army Command and other headquarters. Thus, when new concepts of operations are established, a new training directive is sent from appropriate headquarters and the young officer keeps abreast of all changes while gaining valuable experience in commanding a unit. For example, in 1956, when CONARC Training Memorandum Number 13, "Organization and Training for Mobile Task Force Type Operations," was published, I was serving with the 10th Infantry Division in Europe. Here, I witnessed many examples of company grade officers successfully organizing and employing small unit task forces with a minimum of refresher training. As a staff member, I also witnessed company tests where the commanders employed elements of the associate arms, armor and engineer predominately, with great success. When the division was reorganized under the pentomic concept, armored carriers became organic to it. This equipment, completely new to the rifle company, was readily accepted and successfully employed with no more confusion than is ordinary with a major change.

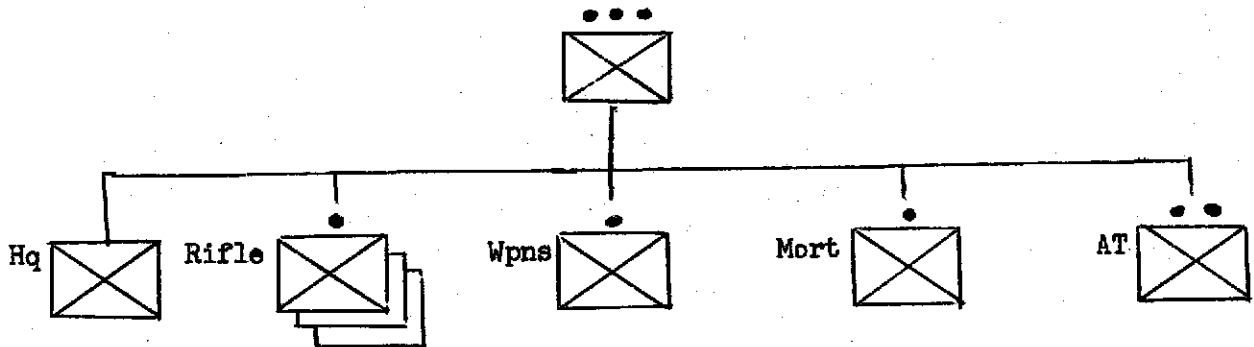
If a special school for task force commanders is established, what will the curriculum be? It will necessarily be instruction in the organization, employment, capabilities, and limitations of the associate arms, their weapons, and communications.

CONCLUSION

It has been established that for a commander to successfully employ a small unit task force, he must have certain basic knowledge. The required schools already established give every company grade officer the opportunity to learn these fundamentals. His actual duty assignments after attending these schools give him the opportunity to practice and put into use the concepts which he has learned in school, and also all new concepts in battle techniques. If, by the time a company grade officer has completed this training, he cannot successfully employ a small unit task force, either he or the schools now in existence are at fault. If the officer is at fault, would an additional school aid him or would it be an unnecessary repetition of previous training which he was unwilling or unable to grasp? If the schools are at fault, would it be wiser to have an additional school or revise the schools now in existence?

Are the schools at fault? No. It is felt that the schools now in existence are more than adequate to train company grade officers in the fundamentals necessary for small unit task force commanders. Tactical training, with his unit, provides the commander with the experience necessary to coordinate this training so that he is able to command this type unit in any situation. Therefore, it is unnecessary for a service school to be established to train selected company grade officers as combine arms task force commanders.

ANNEX A - Platoon Size Task Force (2/203)



PERSONNEL

Headquarters

Commander (Rifle Plat Ldr)

Platoon Sergeant

Messenger

Medical Aid Man

Rifle and Weapons Squads

1st Rifle Squad

2d Rifle Squad

Weapons Squad (-)

3d Rifle Squad

LMG Team

RL Team

Attachments

81mm Mortar Squad

106mm Rifle Section

Tank or Assault Gun Section

VEHICLES

1/4 Ton truck

Three 1/4 Ton trucks

2 1/2 Ton truck

2 1/2 Ton truck

3/4 Ton truck (organic)

Two 1/2 Ton trucks (organic)

Organic

RADIOS

AN/PRC-10

AN/PRC-6

AN/PRC-6

AN/PRC-6

AN/PRC-6

Two AN/PRC-10

Two AN/PRC-6

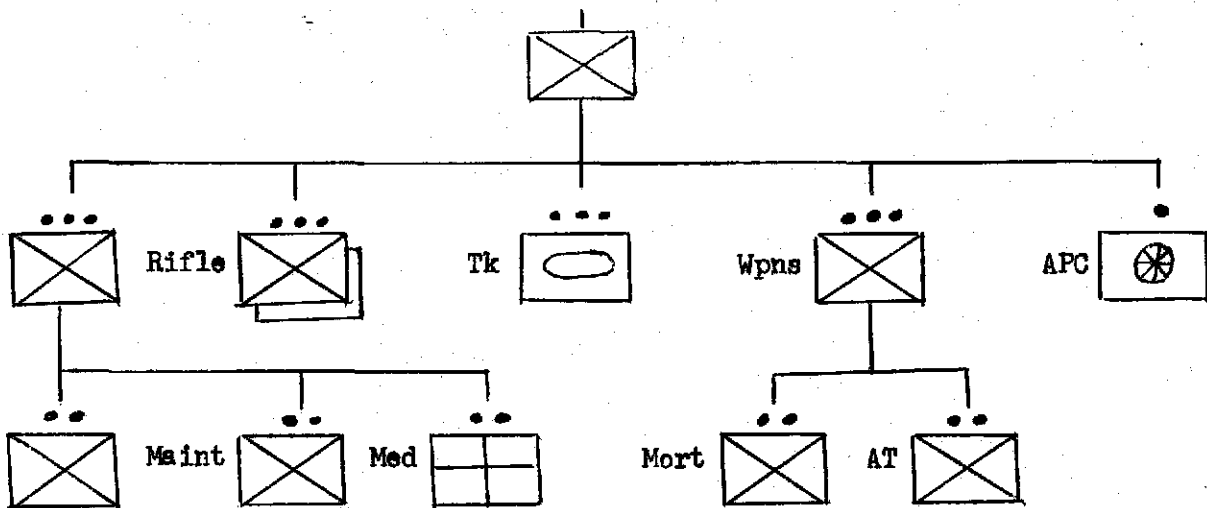
Organic

NOTES: 1. TOE equipment is included, plus items listed above

2. Platoon sergeant and medical aid man ride in 2 1/2 Ton truck

3. Vehicles and extra radios provided by the company or battle group

ANNEX B - Company Size Task Force, Type I (4/30)



PERSONNEL

VEHICLES

RADIOS

Headquarters

Commander (Rifle Co Comdr) APC
 Communications chief
 Radio operators (2)
 Messenger
 First sergeant
 Wireman

AN/GRC-8
 AN/PRC-6
 AN/PRC-10

Rifle Platoon

Four APC's

AN/GRC-8
 AN/PRC-6

Rifle Platoon

Four APC's

AN/PRC-6

Tank Platoon

Five Tanks, 90mm gun

AN/GRC-7
 Four AN/GRC-8's

Weapons Platoon

Platoon Headquarters

1/4 Ton truck
 3/4 Ton truck

AN/PRC-10
 AN/PRC-6

Mortar Section

Three 3/4 Ton trucks

Two AN/PRC-10's

AT Section

Two $\frac{1}{4}$ Ton trucks

Two AN/PRC-10's

Medical Detachment

Two $\frac{1}{4}$ Ton trucks (litter)

Maintenance Section

$\frac{1}{4}$ Ton truck

NOTES: 1. Units are organized and equipped per TOE

2. Forward observers and a forward air control team are often included.

(This organization was adapted from CONARC Training Memorandum No. 13, 4 June 1956, "Organization and Training for Mobile Task Force Type Operation.")

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