

PRO TIPS:
The Infantry

Lesson 5: The Infantry Battalion

References: FM 7-5; FM 7-20.

Study assignment: *Scan* FM 7-20 **The Infantry Battalion**, Paragraphs 3-6, 7-23; Chapter 3; Chapter 6, section II; Chapter 8, Sections I-VII; Chapter 9, Sections I-III. **NOTE:** To *scan* a section of text is to read it over, noting its organization and general content. *Review* course in map reading, Lesson 2; operations, Lesson 4.

Introduction

As a matter of practical leadership and doctrine, the battalion is the largest formation that can be represented by reenactors in the field. At large events, "battalions" may be designated that consist of perhaps 60-120 soldiers, usually bundles of small independent units. We call these battalions to justify rank, but we can't fight them as battalions. The US Army tactical doctrine of WW II requires that units and organizations be of a certain size and structure. Up to company level, we can—on rare occasions, and with flexible and willing leadership—field something like a realistic tactical unit. Above that level: well, the hobby needs to evolve.

But at large field exercises such as the former Gap, we would sometimes be able to deploy and move as a virtual battalion, in terms of numbers of players and numbers of maneuver units. We may choose to call the large composite force a regiment or a combat command or anything we choose. But what we are really simulating has never been larger than a single battalion. So it makes sense to look at what an infantry battalion was in the US Army by 1944, what it did, and how it did it.

What is a battalion?

In the hobby we have some confusion about battalions, partly because we never really see one, and also because so many hobbyists started in the Civil War organizations and confuse the battalion in the 1860's with the battalion in WW II. Let's deal first with the confusion.

In the American Civil War, the designations "battalion" and "regiment" were used interchangeably. This happened because of a lot of confusing factors—customs in the British Army, where a regiment was an administrative term (a regiment could have several color-bearing battalions, or only one). An American regiment could at needs be temporarily organized into 2-3

In WWII, the operational level maneuver unit was the regiment, but by 1944 the battalion was becoming the "chess piece" (which it still is). This trend was reinforced by the GHQ reserve of separate battalions. An Infantry battalion in an RCT (equivalent to a modern BCT (brigade combat team)) would very likely be reinforced with a tank company from a battalion attached to the regiment, forming a combined arms team.

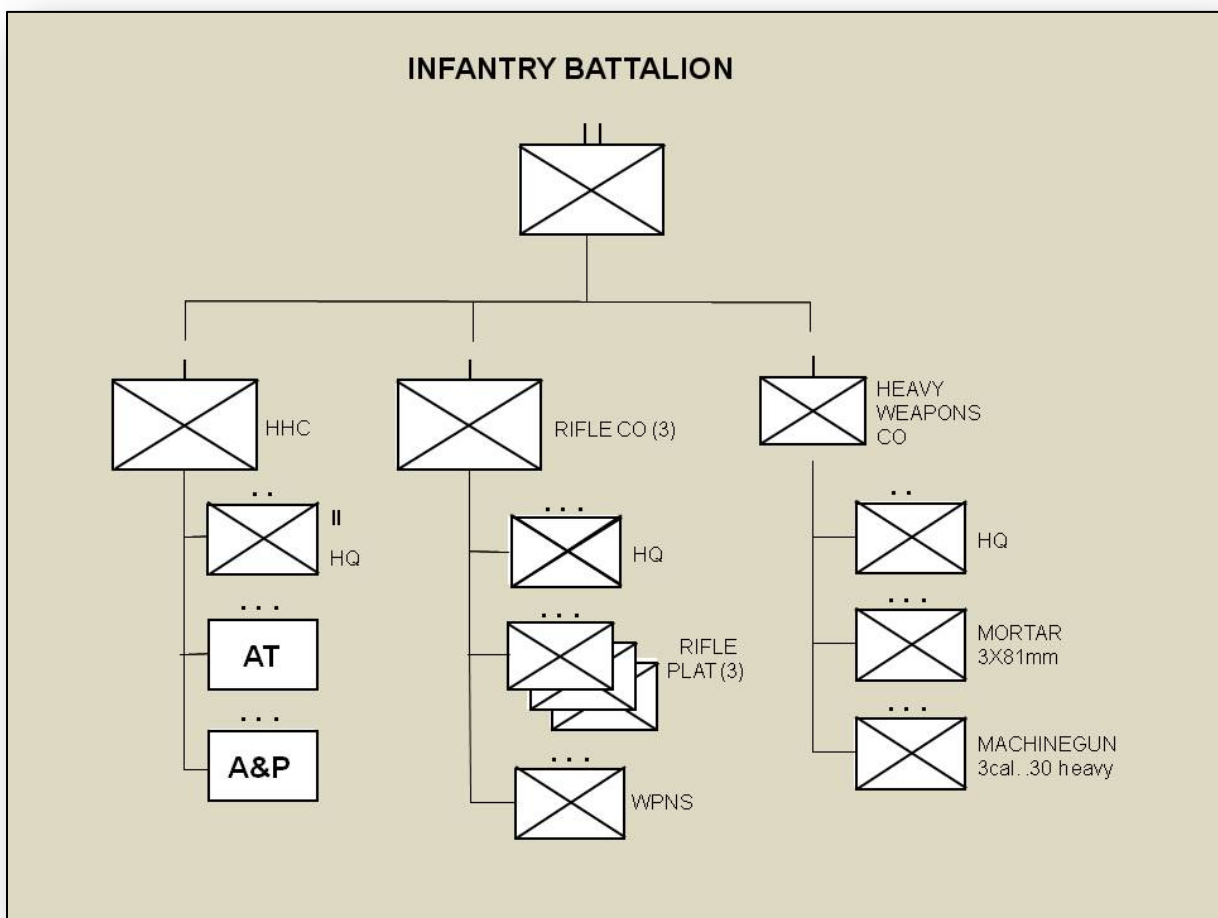
Also: battalion command is the first level at which a CO will not be able to see most of his maneuver elements without moving from place to place.

battalions, but in practice this almost never happened—the regiments were single battalions, chess pieces on the map board of large-scale battles. But each regiment/battalion had a set of national and regimental colors. Nothing lower had that honor.

By 1917, when the US entered the European war, armies were vast and uniformly organized. Regiments were made up of battalions. The regiment had colors, as did the battalions; however, when the regiment paraded together, the battalion colors were not displayed. By WW II, the system was firmly in place, and battalions were designated by regiment (e.g., 1/61 was the first battalion, 61st Infantry). The regiments were seldom split except to task organize for specific missions, a practice we'll discuss later.

Organization of the infantry battalion

This is an infantry battalion:



Headquarters and Headquarters Company. Every organization of battalion size or larger has a HHC. This includes the actual headquarters section—the commander (a lieutenant colonel) and his staff—and a company HQ, commanded by a captain growing old before his years. At

battalion HHC, there were two assigned platoons: the antitank (AT) platoon, of towed 57mm guns by 1944, and the A&P (ammunition and pioneer platoon).¹

There is a heavy weapons company, consisting of a company headquarters section, a mortar platoon equipped with the 81mm mortars, and a heavy machine gun platoon with cal. .30 water-cooled weapons.

Finally, there are three rifle companies. Companies are designated within the regiment: that is, 1st battalion has companies A, B, and C (D is the heavy weapons company), 2nd battalion has E, F, G, and H, etc. If you come across an EASY company, you know without asking that it's in the 2nd battalion.²

Note that the heavy weapons companies might billet, eat, and march together (with their heavy gear on trucks), but they did not fight as a company. Their assets—mortars and heavy MG's—were placed where they were needed tactically. As with the rifle company's MG's and mortars, *their placement has priority over rifle elements in the defense*. More about this later.

We also have to consider battalion trains. These are all the vehicles that support the battalion operations. Most of these, however, are consolidated routinely with regimental trains under the regimental service company. This has been mentioned before, and it's a little difficult to understand why it works this way. Why not just give each battalion all the vehicles it needs on their own table of organization and equipment?

And it is much more efficient to have doughfoot infantry and vehicles move separately, in a marching column and in a convoy (the trains). Anybody who remembers the Old Gap, with infantry and random columns of trucks trying the share the same icy roads will understand this.

The reason actually makes sense. Vehicles, like horses, can't be "rode hard and put away wet." They have to be maintained on an intensive and continuous basis. This requires a dedicated maintenance base, which is found in the regimental service company. So most of the battalion vehicles are on loan.

Limitations of the infantry battalion. An experienced soldier will notice a couple of problems unique to the WW II battalion that have been eliminated in the decades since WW II.

First, the battalion has no separate reconnaissance or scouting assets. This means that necessary recon functions must be delegated to the rifle companies, which may stretch their already

¹ There is very little written about the A&P platoon. It was really just a pool of soldiers who did various scut work jobs around the CP or (in camp) the HQ. Ammo soldiers haul ammo; pioneers are basic engineers; they move dirt and saw logs. Sad experience convinces me that the A&P soldiers were not the cream of the crop: malingerers, disciplinary problems, men less intellectually gifted than the average, and irredeemable Bolsheviks. But somebody had to hump ammo and somebody had to dig latrines and put up and take down tents and dig holes, and the A&P platoon was ready for action.

² This causes some confusion for more recent veterans. In the 1950's the old regiments were broken up as part of a failed reorganization—the "Pentomic" division. The three regiments were replaced by five "battle groups", each larger than a battalion but smaller than a regiment. The Combat Arms Regimental System (CARS) assigned historical names to the BG's (e.g., "1st Battle Group, 18th Infantry"). Pentomic was quickly replaced by the Reorganization Objective Army Division (ROAD) structure, but the regiments were still gone, replaced by 7-15 battalions formed as brigades to allow the division commander to tailor his three maneuver units. These battalions kept the old designations, but they were (in most cases) simply separate battalions in imaginary regiments. Since the battalions were separate, even when there were two or three battalions they all had the same company designations ("Company C, 2-506 Infantry (ABN)"). My own home unit was the first battalion, 77th Armor, which began as the 753rd Tank Battalion in WWII, then changed during Korea to 77th Heavy Tank Battalion, then 77th Medium Tank Battalion; finally as 1st and 2nd Battalions, 77th Armor. It kept the same lineage and crest (A tiger holding a bloody axe, with the motto *Insiste Firmiter* ("stand fast")). This constancy keeps me in personalized coffee cups, if nothing else.

limited capabilities. The regiment has its Intelligence and Reconnaissance (I&R) platoon, a very light jeep-mobile force that sent most of the war evolving from a jeep-less squad provided to the S-2.

Second: as noted, logistical support—in particular maintenance—was very thin to nonexistent in the battalion. This kept the battalion tied to the regimental apron strings and made it difficult for the battalion to operate separately for very long. By the late 1950's, most of the regiments no longer existed except in heraldry (see footnote 2), and the battalions were separate, though keeping their old regiment's designation, and had more organic support assets.

Battalion command

Battalion is the lowest level of combat commands that has a formal staff. Reenactors are generally aware of this, but have not put much thought into the idea. The staff is discussed in detail in the course on operations, but here is the basic functional organization:

The **Executive officer**, usually a senior major, is the statutory second in command. In combat, he is generally at the battalion command post, and runs the CP whenever the commanding officer (CO) is away. If the Old Man is out of action, the XO automatically assumes command, so he has to be aware of the tactical situation at all time—if the commander is going to be out of action, it will probably happen when the situation is tense, and the XO won't have time to catch up. Any officer assigned as XO should therefore be selected as if he will be the commander.

As is the case with the company XO, the battalion XO's usual duties involve administration, logistics, and coordination. The CO is looking forward and directing the fight; the XO is looking around and looking back to make sure the battalion stays in fighting condition.

The **principal staff** consists of an **S-1**, an **S-2**, an **S-3**, and an **S-4**.

In WW II the infantry battalion **S-1** wore three hats, and probably wished he had three heads. As S-1 he was the **personnel officer**, and managed the assignment and maintenance of strength, plus enforcement of Army policy and a blizzard of paperwork and requires reports. But he was also the adjutant, originally the commander's senior secretary but now the commander's official mouthpiece, managing correspondence and reports. Finally, he was the **commanding officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Company**. Yes, he was probably sleep deprived—but so is everybody else in combat. *Quit whining and suck it down, buttercup.*

The **S-2** was the **intelligence officer**. At battalion level, he monitored intelligence estimates and bulletins from regiment, supported POW interrogations, checked the weather report, examined reports of enemy activity from the front. In practice, he worked for and with the S-3.

The **S-3** was (and is) the heavy hitter, and the senior member of the battalion principal staff. He managed **operations, plans, and training**. He was responsible to assembling staff estimates, coordinating with regiment on plans and operations, managing the battalion training requirements, and was the prime mover in putting together field orders. To do this, he had to have a firm grasp of doctrine, manage and develop a battalion tactical SOP, and be able to read and interpret a map. He also made sure the battalion situation map was constantly updated. Being an S-3 was often a stop on the way to battalion command (promotions are fast in the middle of a world war).

The **S-4** was the **supply officer**, absorbed with logistics and transportation. A WW II quirk: he was also carried on the morning report of the regimental service company, not the battalion with whom he lived and functioned. He monitored supply estimates (which had better be right)

and transportation, including organization and movement of battalion trains. The "Four" was and is a busy man.

The battalion **special staff** consisted of a group of subject matter experts who were staffers as an automatic additional duty:

—The **motor transport officer**, who was also the XO of the battalion headquarters company, and who supervised the movement of battalion trains as well as second-echelon maintenance for trains vehicles.

—The **antitank officer**, who was also the anti-tank platoon leader. His duty on the staff was working with the S-3 to plan placement of antitank weapons to assure they supported the plan (Covered the right enemy avenues of approach, pointed down the right roads, etc.).

—The **heavy weapons company commander**, who advised the battalion commander and the S-3 on employment of HMG's and mortars.

—The **communication officer**, who saw to the technical training and performance of comms personnel and managed the radio and land line comms across the battalion front and manned the communications center in the CP.

—The **battalion surgeon**, a medical corps officer from the regimental medical company who coordinated services to the battalion and supervised the aid men down to company level, plus medical supply and evacuation.

—The **artillery liaison officer** (ALO), an experienced artillery officer (senior muzzle monkey) who advised the CO on fire support and supervised the FO's (forward observers) attached to the battalion.

Whenever I see a reenactor 37mm or even the rare 57mm AT guns deployed in the field by reenactors, they are invariably sitting on a road and pointing into the woods. Don't so this. Put them at the edge of the woods, pointing down the road (usually in the direction of the enemy.)

Principles of battalion maneuver

Like the company, regiment, and division, an infantry battalion is *triangular*: it has three maneuver units. In practice, this means the battalion is like a company multiplied by three, each rifle company constituting a maneuver unit. Conveniently, the rifle company commanders report directly to the battalion commander. There are good reasons for this scheme, but we need to go back to 1917-18 to understand why.

The square division and trench warfare. The US Infantry division in WWI was organized in the "square" fashion: four regiments forming two brigades of two regiments each. This was a response to the special needs of trench warfare. Many historians scorn the idea of "static warfare" as a reflection of the stupidity of generals. Most historians, however, have not commanded large formations in combat. "Static warfare" was the last thing most commanders in WWI wanted. Everybody understood that it was better to maneuver and head-fake the enemy than to assault across a field of mud-filled shell craters into enemy fire. The problem was making the maneuver happen when opposed by an enemy determined and equipped to stop you. By 1916, the British forces in Flanders were exhausted and the French Army was in a state of mutiny. The same historians who criticize commanders for dull static warfare also heap scorn over the results of efforts to break through and start maneuvering.

There were technical and technological responses—for example, the rolling barrage and the tank—but they were not enough by themselves. Technology usually isn't.

One answer (not a terribly revolutionary one) was the “square” division. Two brigaded regiments went “over the top” and flailed around in the mud and bullets and shrapnel until exhausted, and then the second brigade of two regiments would emerge from the trenches and stumble over the wreckage of those who went before. It was a way of maintaining momentum. Of course, there had to be momentum to maintain. This didn't happen until the combination of artillery, tanks, and increased manpower (“Lafayette, we are here”) overcame an exhausted Germany.

Creative geometry: “square” to “triangular.” The square division stayed around for some time. It was peacetime. Who cares about tactical innovation when it's peace time and there's money to be made? Until shortly before America's entry in 1941, infantry divisions were still four-regiment organizations. Then the thoughtful skull sweat of twenty years finally won out in the usual rushed fiasco that accompanies American entry into a large war, and every division lost a regiment (of course, the manpower was dispersed elsewhere; the 29th Division, which comprised the 115th, 116th, 175th, and 176th regiments, bid farewell to the 176th.

The change was dictated by the assumption (correct, luckily) that the new war would be fought as the war of maneuver that WWI “should have” been. Maneuver with three main combat elements allowed a commander to put maximum force forward (two elements) when the enemy's strength and dispositions were known while maintaining a third in reserve to double down on

NOTE: If you haven't done the lessons on squad through company, be a sport and finish them before trying to run a battalion. Just a suggestion.

success or, at worst, to deal with nasty surprises. As noted in discussions of platoon through company, this suggested formations—column, V, “inverted V”, line, and echelon—to fit the immediate tactical situation and mission.

Tactical summary. Armies (unlike reenactor groups) organize the way they fight. The square organization was at least *theoretically* appropriate for WWI. The triangular form has ruled the corridors of doctrinal thought since.³

The best way to explain this is to go back to the virtual field and maneuver an imaginary battalion.

Battalion in the defense

Situation. For this example, we will use the 1st Battalion, 476th Infantry. The imaginary 476th is a standard heavy infantry regiment, basic ground-pounders. We will presume that it is

³ Sort of. The extended (or alternatively, “endless”) battles that began after the invasion of Iraq and the intervention in Afghanistan seldom called for division-sized elements after the fall of Baghdad. As a matter of tailoring the Army to fight, as we say, “the war we've got”, the major maneuver unit became the “brigade combat team” (BCT). This is a sort of separate brigade. Prior to the forever war, divisions of all kinds had a division base and three brigades. The demands of operating in Iraq and points east led to dividing up the division base among its three brigades so they could be self-sustaining convenient packages to load and ship everywhere. But the brigade concept from the early 60's was designed to give the *division* commander flexibility to build task-organized maneuver teams. The BCT's are already organized clusters of battalions (infantry, armor, etc.) poised to be deployed as is; they arrive in Trashcanistan in a “come as you are” state, which means they can't be altogether organized for a task.

Of course, history informs us that no war, whatever the media may say, is “forever”; and eventually we will have to reorganize yet again, providing diversion for an army (lower case “a”) of creative thinkers and doctrine writers to come up with blindingly bright ideas.

Figure 1. In this scenario, 1/476 Infantry is in the defense on the left flank of the 105th Infantry Division; 2/476 is to the right. The regiment is defending a line running south of Pine Knot Creek and blocking a main avenue of approach: the heavy duty road (red-filled highway) and its bridge over Pine Knot Creek. Some details to consider:

—A battalion has three maneuver units, but generally covers only a two-company front. This is because we typically deploy two companies forward and keep one in reserve. (This is true of most echelons—“two up and one back”, whether you’re a platoon, a company, a battalion, a regiment, or a division.

—Note the two heavy MG sections deployed forward. These are from (in this case, 1/476) the battalion heavy weapons company. These weapons—M1917A1’s, the old retro-looking Brownings with water jacket—have a higher rate of fire than the air-cooled LMG’s of the same caliber at company level), and use a stable heavy tripod that, combined with a gunner’s quadrant to measure elevation and a firing table can allow the MG’s to fire like artillery, saturating a grid location within range with “plunging fire). They can also contribute significantly to final protective fires (FPF), hosing down the area to the battalion front with steady grazing fire. Just keep plenty of water around.

—The 81mm mortars, also from the heavy weapons company, are placed in defilade behind C company. Because of the relative narrowness of the front, their range (3 km) permits them to be fired in battery (all three together) while covering the critical target areas.

—Here, two 57mm AT guns from the battalion HHC have been emplaced, one at GIRD 132912 covering the main avenue of approach by the enemy (the heavy duty (red) road), while the second is placed 125913, firing from enfilade (from the side) so enemy vehicles moving down the heavy duty road are caught in a crossfire.

—For simplicity I have shown only the battalion heavy weapons. Keep in mind that there are six light MG’s and nine 60mm mortars also available at company level (see Lesson 3). Also remember that every heavy weapon has three positions: (a) *a primary position*; (b) *a secondary position*, to which the crew and weapon can displace if the enemy has located them well enough to bring aimed fire; and (c) *a supplementary position*, which can be occupied if the enemy (who always gets a vote) decides to take a different approach not covered by the primary or alternate positions. Yes, this is a lot of work, a lot of dirt to be moved, a lot of camo ingenuity.

—Keep in mind that the overlay indicates the security zone (OPL to MLR) and the combat zone MLR) by coordination points (the crosses/circles). There is no line drawn between them. The reason is that the actual placement of combat elements is based on the terrain, not on an arbitrary line. Sometimes an overlay will use a dotted line to show the “trace of the MLR”, but this isn’t common.

Battalion in the attack

As with any infantry formation, our mission in the attack is: *close with and destroy the enemy by means of fire and maneuver*. Now things start getting interesting. **The good part:** your side will be taking the initiative. **The bad part:** your side will have to maneuver under enemy observation and fire, exposed to discomfort, inconvenience, and death.

Situation is as in the earlier example, and we will start from what were your battalion defensive positions. This time, however, somebody (probably division) has decided to go on the offensive (that is, “coffee break’s over”). Regiment has given you the task of securing the highest ground to your front, designated OBJECTIVE IRENE. That seems like a simple task, but it isn’t. There are two challenges: (a) the enemy, and (b) the terrain.

The enemy occupies positions with excellent observation and fields of fire. The easiest avenues of movement for the attack are exposed on clear high ground or through woods in low ground.

The terrain is tricky. This is part of the flood plain of the Chattahoochee River--it looks hilly, but it actually fairly level ground that has been eroded by stream flows into the Chattahoochee and Upatoi Creek, forming ravines defined by intermittent streams. The ravines are generally wooded (scrub pine and oak with dense secondary growth), providing cover and concealment but complicated for movement—it's a bit of a slog, though fairly easy to navigate.

Here's the problem: we can move fairly swiftly by the high ground, but unless we move at night the enemy will observe our movements for at least a kilometer before we reach anything like a good attack position. If we move through the woods and the low ground, progress will be slower, and night movement is not a good option (enemy OPs will locate our advancing units by the muffled sound of cursing), and at some point we will have to assault the objective across at least 200m of open ground.

Well, we will just have to earn those CIB's. The most basic principles of war:

1. Two up and one back.
2. Infantry through the green, armor through the white (on the map).
3. Feed the troops a hot meal.

We go through the green, get as close as we can to the objective before starting the final (assault) phase, and guard against surprises.

Basic maneuver plan:

—**C company** attacks from their defensive positions, crosses line of departure (LD) at 0610 hours, moving along the main road as far as possible, then slipping to the right to screen movement using the high ground to the northwest and assaulting OBJ IRENE from the south.

—**B Company** moves from its reserve position at 0430, marching (quietly) to its assembly area (AA B) in the woods along the front slope of the MLR, crosses LD at 0530 and moving along the ravine to assault OBJ IRENE from the east. The earlier departure of B accounts for the slower march rate for B Company, allowing the two-direction attacks to come off at the same time.

—**A Company** crosses the LD at 0600, moving across Pine Knot Creek and securing the high ground at GRID 123920, designated OBJECTIVE TRIXIE, screening the left flank of the C Company attack and prepared to move on order to secure OBJ INEZ.

The details.

Fire support: The battalion ALO (artillery liaison officer) arranges for supporting batteries to fire smoke or WP rounds as shown in the overlay to complicate observation by the enemy. Exact timing and location of rounds is based on the tactical situation and the direction the wind is blowing (an ill wind can render smoke useless or blow it in your face). Smoke for screening can be chemical (HC) smoke, which is usually time fused to go off a bit above ground level, or white phosphorous (WP or "Willie Pete"); the latter produces dense white smoke and, unlike regular chemical smoke, encourages the enemy to take cover because of the falling chunks of fiercely burning phosphorus. I like Willie Peter, but happily it's not an available choice for reenactors. (Regular HC smoke grenades in the hands of umpires can do a fair job, at least, of simulating smoke.

Meanwhile, regular artillery support is planned for the attack, and precisely timed for start and for that moment when you are so close to the objective the artillery support has to be lifted. For us this will all be simulated; it would include the battalion's 81mm's (with their 3,000 meter range, the objectives are an easy shot without shifting the tubes from their defensive positions) plus fire from the direct support (DS) 105 mm howitzer battalion. Regiment might cut loose a platoon from the 105mm Cannon Company to help out. If things get tense, or if your battalion is making the main attack, 155mm general support (GS) tubes might pitch in. And who knows? The air liaison officer might be able to bring in a couple of P-47's to add to the general unpleasantness on the objective. You can never have too many jugs flying air support.

(All this is the stuff of dreams for us most of the time, but umpires can help out.)

What about the heavy weapons? As noted, the 81mm platoon can stay put until the objective(s) are secure because they have plenty of range. In this case, the two HMG sections from battalion accompany the companies (A and C), displacing forward to positions where they can support the main assaults.

We'll send the 57mms up with the lead companies (B and C); since the towed guns are not very useful in most attack situations, they will be used to complete the consolidation on the objectives, providing AT support against the inevitable German counterattack.

For me, one of the most challenging parts of working "tacticals" at the Gap was the tendency for commanders to spend their time looking for a chance to shoot instead of doing their jobs as commanders. A commander is not there to expend ammo. A commander is supposed to *direct the battle*. If he finds he has to shoot back at anybody at all, it's because he screwed up. Lesson: *do your job and don't screw up*. (This is excellent general advice for getting through life without bankruptcy, despair, and hypertension.)

Note also that hobby commanders tend to enjoy zipping around the battlefield in a jeep. In general, a jeep in a battle is usually about as much use to a battalion CO as a Twitter account. Subordinate commanders need to know where you are. You need to know where they are. You need to work together. You need to *command*, not go off on a shooting toot. Your guys will respect you for it.

What about the battalion HQ? Ah, this is the kind of thing reenactors never seem to consider. In fact, the idea of a headquarters at all is sort of lost on the traditional hobby imagination. After several years of nagging, I finally managed to get a tactical command post set up to manage the Allied operations in the field. We had good commo, good security, good operational control. It worked. Of course, that was the last Gap.

But back to our hypothetical battalion. What we will do is split the HQ in two. A forward CP, which includes the commander, will move forward—usually behind the lead units—while the rear CP, usually with the Executive Officer in charge, remains behind to provide continuous communications. Once the attack is complete and the objective is being consolidated, the forward CP will establish itself at or near a predetermined point. Once communications are in place, the rear CP will fold its tents and displace forward to join the forward HQ.

Why? Because in the attack the commander will want to be close enough to the action to have a good sense of progress and to influence the action as needed to reinforce success and minimize failure. Wire communications are not practical when the CP is on the move, and messaging will be by radio (fast) or messenger (slow—"yesterday's news, tomorrow"). Battalion internal nets were generally FM radios, which transmit line of sight. If the forward CP has to drive through a ravine, transmission range will be shortened. The CP—or at least *a* CP—must be continuously functional.

The Infantry battalion in reenacting

At the largest events, we can often muster a battalion in numbers. But we are seldom a battalion in organization. It takes more than 500 reenactors in one place to be a battalion. Before we can organize for the field, we need to know what a battalion is, how it is organized, and why. This is why we added this lesson to the online course covering the Infantry.

For us, the next step is building a way to organize something like an actual battalion for the field. It isn't an easy task, and it runs against decades of bad hobby habits and assumptions. But the benefits are there.

As a review and check on comprehension, be sure to take the self-assessment test with this lesson.



LESSON SUMMARY

- 1. An Army battalion consists of a battalion “base” of command and control, combat support, and combat service support units and three maneuver units (rifle companies).**
- 2. The infantry battalion is the lowest level of combat organization in which the commander will seldom be able to view the extent of his part of the battlefield; company commanders must be reliable enough to do their jobs in combat without close supervision.**
- 3. The “triangular” structure of the battalion (as well as the rifle regiment and all divisions) is designed for mobile warfare, and a departure of the “square” organization of WWI best suited for static trench warfare.**
- 4. At the top of the infantry battalion is the headquarters and headquarters company (HHC), which included command and control functions, an antitank platoon (towed guns), and a general duty ammunition and pioneer (A&P) platoon.**
- 5. Fire support at battalion level is provided by the heavy weapons company (within a rifle regiment, companies D, H, and M). This unit provides 81mm mortar and heavy machine gun support.**
- 6. The infantry battalion did not have an organic scout or reconnaissance capability.**
- 7. In the defense, placement of heavy weapons takes priority over all other assignment of positions.**
- 8. Supply support and transportation is with the battalion trains. However, in practice the battalion trains were consolidated under the regimental trains.**
- 9. An infantry battalion is commanded by a lieutenant colonel; his second in command (a major) is the executive officer. Battalion is the lowest level to have an assigned principal staff (S-1—S-4).**

10. In defense, the battalion is generally deployed with two rifle companies forward (on the MLR) and one in a reserve position in depth: “two up and one back.” The reserve company has two functions: to serve as a counterattack force to seal off enemy penetrations, and to provide depth in the defense so the enemy can’t just poke a hole in the MLR and march through.

11. In the attack, the battalion will usually advance with two companies to the front and one in reserve; however, this may be varied (as with the rifle company’s platoons) based on terrain and enemy dispositions.

12. The battalion commander’s job is not to get into a personal fight and expend ammo. His job is to command the battalion. Command the battalion. *Command the battalion.*