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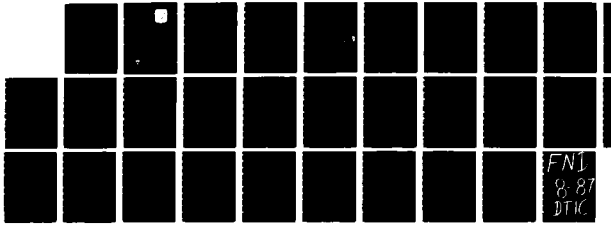

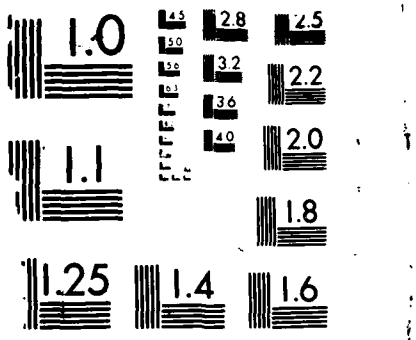

STUDENT ESSAY

ON LIGHT INFANTRY

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL KEITH KELLOGG

1 MAY 1987

US ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

ON LIGHT INFANTRY

AN INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

BY

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ABSTRACT

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The light infantry division remains a contentious force development issue to this day. Concerns have been raised over the potential return to a "hollow army" by creating a new force design with no subsequent increase in Army end strength, sustainability of light forces on the battlefield and general war fighting capabilities. Yet the light divisions were created to better balance a force structure that was unbalanced in heavy forces that did not allow flexibility of response options to the National Command Authorities (NCA). The light division, in fact, allowed a more flexible response option by tailoring a force that was truly strategically mobile and combat capable. This paper addresses the force structure requirement for the light infantry division by exploring political rationale, strategic mobility capability, warfighting potential and the overall requirement of the Army to support national strategy with a corresponding military force structure.

ON LIGHT INFANTRY

In the Army at large, the question of feasibility of light infantry divisions remains a contentious issue. Concerns range from the creation of too many forces with an Army fixed end strength thereby contributing to a "hollow army", lack of light infantry armor-killing systems, sustainability of the force or light infantry utility in todays world. Almost every senior leader speaking at the Army War College during 1986-1987 has been asked about the light infantry issue and even during a visit to US Senate Armed Service Committee staffers the question of light infantry and US military strategy arose.

The fact that the issue remains contentious is a concern because an effective Army must generate consensus. That does not mean there cannot be disagreements but we must agree on our general direction. I believe with an objective look at history and current national and military

strategy, the requirement for a light infantry force becomes obvious.

NATIONAL STRATEGY

One of the fundamental precepts of US national policy is to deter war. Our military posture is postulated on civilian leaders guidance which emphasizes the deterrence of war but,if war occurs, to terminate it in a successful and favorable way.

The Army is required to support a national policy which requires great diversity of highly trained forces. Concurrently the requirement exists to move these forces rapidly in the attempt to deter an escalation of conflict. As the Joint Chiefs have repeatedly stated, "The basic military strategy of the United States is the deterrence of war which requires a credible deterrent across the full spectrum of conflict."1

In today's world the ability to react to a crisis situation rapidly may forestall or prevent a greater escalation. Further, military strategy must support national strategy. We cannot escape the reality of the Clausewitzian axiom that states,

> "War is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means."2

The requirement to support the greater national strategy may cause the Army to deploy forces from Grenada-type operations to Korea to the battlefield of Europe. The spectrum of conflict is large and our total force capability must be balanced to meet the threat. President Reagan has stated,

> "Deterring foreign threats to our vital interests and those of our allies and friends requires a full range of defense capabilities including...the ability to deploy forces rapidly anywhere in the world"3

STRATEGIC MOBILITY

American military strategy is based on a capability to deter aggression before it reaches an escalatory phase. Rational justification of military action is that of persuading an opponent to change his mind before the combat forces are inextricably linked. In his seminal work on strategic mobility Neville Brown stated,

> "It would be far preferable to contain or

> deter diversionary or retaliatory probes at their inception with the appropriate amount of non nuclear power. The desirablitity of being able to do this, if the need arises, strengthens the case for having strong, strategically mobile, conventional forces."4

Brown further postulates that "Strategic mobility may yet prove to be the latest and last of the so-called principles of war."

We remain truly an insular nation. To execute our global obligations we must get to the spot of trouble by an overocean or overland move. The initial problem is our being able to get to trouble spots early to deter any military action from growing into a larger conflict. As a result, strategic mobility of our forces is essential. William H. Taft, Deputy Secretary of Defense stated,

> "Mobility is especially critical in the world of today...when Secretary Weinberger addresses the mobility of our fighting forces, he often

mentions that waging war requires the ability to move, shoot and communicate. And he stresses that the order to these three requirements is not accidental...the ability to move-to deploy forces and equipment - is first on the list."5

We remain resource limited in the terms of strategic lift available to deploy masses of forces to danger areas. The Army has attempted to solve this problem in the support of national objectives. To support the national policy of being both sufficiently mobile and combat effective over the spectrum of conflict we have "balanced" our forces based on national need. One of those elements created for strategic military balance is the Army's light infantry division.

The decision to create the light division was based on a comprehensive war theory review encompassing recent history, experience and analysis on the use of military force. 6 The realization was that credible forces do not necessarily have to be heavy forces. With the constantly changing nature of the world with its volatile consequences, especially in the contested third world, there came the recognized need for highly trained, rapidly deployable, manuever forces. It remained essential to recognize

the geo-strategic value of rapid power projection, combined with limited strategic lift forces available, while maximizing the capacity of those same forces.

The Army had become increasingly heavy in the late 1970's concentrating the bulk of its combat power in heavy formations while decreasing its capability to fight effectively across the broad spectrum of conflict. Concurrently, the paucity of strategic lift continued to grow. The move to heavy forces was a partial reaction to what the Army saw as the agony of Vietnam with its unstated conviction of "never again". The Army consciously appeared to be moving away from belief in the concept of limited war and flexible response. The Army heavied up its force structure at the expense of lighter infantry formations. The 1st Cavalry Division became armor rather than air assault, the 4th Infantry from straight infantry to mechanized , the 9th Infantry Division from straight infantry to motorized and the 24th Infantry Division from infantry to mechanized. The need for heavy divisions in the force structure is undeniable based on the threat potential from Soviet forces. However, the Army was moving to a position of being only able to fight effectively at one end of the conflict spectrum. It was a move that ignored history and the continuing clash of wills and arms in the world at large. It also ignored the issue of strategic

mobility of assigned forces.

A key element in effective power projection is strategically mobile forces - an area where light infantry has a vital role. We must constantly remind ourselves that conflict may arise in places other than Europe where the obvious requirement for heavy forces exists. All of our conflicts since World War II were conflicts where dismounted infantry forces dominated. Further, in the most recent combat operation, Grenada, the rapid Army combat power buildup by air eliminated any potential of outside intervention to threaten our forces.

MOBILITY TRIAD

American strategic mobility is balanced on a triad of airlift, sealift and prepositioning of stocks. Together they form the essential mobility capability for US force projection. Airlift allows rapid and flexible mobility yet is constrained by weight restrictions. The current Air Force inventory of 267 C141B's and 77 C5A/B's allow a limited support role in a major conflict and potentially a major role in a minor conflict. Sea forces will carry the bulk of mobility requirements in a major theater and one where time is not critical.

The Navy has done a great deal since the early 1980's in developing sealift

capability. The new, fast SL-7's (TAKR) have a great cargo capacity. Virtually able to carry a heavy divisions slice of equipment in a roll on - roll off role they will transit the ocean using their 32 knot speed, without the need for convoy protection. Yet, despite their speed it will still take an SL-7, once loaded, 5 days to cross the Atlantic to Europe. Still, the heart of the Army's stateside heavy combat power will be deployed by sea to areas of conflict.

Prepositioning has allowed the Army to place land based equipment and supplies in storage awaiting the personnel to man it. POMCUS in Europe has decreased required support times. Prepositioned ships in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean help the Services prepare for a more rapid ramp up of combat power yet the requirement for linking the forces to the floating equipment remains. The heavy forces remaining in CONUS, with the exception of POMCUSed REFORGER units, will deploy by sea.

Most important, the majority of continued support to an overseas theater will be by sea lines of communications. Fully 70% of reinforcements and supplies to Europe in the event of hostilities will be moved by sea.

The most rapid means of immediate combat buildup remains by air. The

capability to put forces, even small forces, on the ground rapidly is an essential part of crisis diplomacy. In his article on "Power Projection, Risk and the Light Force", Col. Peter J. Boylan noted that an,

> "...early response, before issues have surfaced and positions hardened, is likely to have a singular inhibiting effect upon the potential adversary and may tend to paralyze his initiative and restrict or narrow his counteroptions...It does, however, require a high level of strategic mobility. Further, the application of even a very small force early in a crisis can have an effect far out of proportion to its size and may well outweigh the considerations bearing on the choice of inserting a heavier force later."7

The light infantry division is configured to deploy more rapidly than any other Army Division. As a comparison of our three most rapidly deployable divisions, using the MTOE equipped Division Ready Brigade (DRB) as a

baseline it requires 166 C141B sorties to move the DRB of the 7th Infantry Division (Light), 268 C141B sorties to move the DRB of the 82d Airborne Division and 380 sorties to deploy the DRB of the 101st Airborne Divsion. It must be noted that each of these Divisions are unique and a comparison is somewhat akin to comparing apples and oranges given the 82d's forced entry capability and the 101st's air assault capability. However, the key note is strategic deployability and the light division can move faster with less sorties because it is configured to do exactly that. In actuality, the 82d and 101st are not light divisions. Given their infantry battalions organic equipment, to include heavy anti-armor systems, those battalions more accurately fit the range of "standard" infantry.

WAR FIGHTING

The second, and sometimes forgotten, part of the defense guidance is, if deterrence fails, the capability to defeat an armed aggressor must exist. Light forces war fighting capability on a modern battlefield has been a contentious area. However, a brief look at history is not only informative but illustrative. Light forces can and do impact on a modern mechanized battlefield.

During World War II, following the Normandy invasion, allied forces in

Operation COBRA attempted a breakout from the expanded Normandy beachead. During this allied breakout the German forces in France attempted a massive counterattack to reestablish their lines across the Normandy shoulder and destroy the American breakout forces.
Five German Panzer and SS Divisions formed the counter attack. The Germans struck towards the French town of Mortain and hit the 30th Infantry Division of MG Leland S. Hobbs. Only Hobb's Division stood between von Kluge's Panzers and the sea. The 2d Battalion of the 120th Infantry Regiment took the brunt of the German attack and for 6 days the infantry battalion held to its positions. Their brilliant defense blunted the Panzer drive and allowed a major triumph for the allies. For its dogged defense, what General Omar Bradley called "one of the epochal struggles of the war", the battalion was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation. Bradley commented,

> "In his reckless attack toward Avranches through the 30th Division at Mortain, the enemy challanged us to a decision, the most decisive of our French campaign. It was to cost the enemy an Army and gain us France."8

During the Battle of the Bulge, noted for its numerous gallant small unit actions, the offensive fight at Cheneux, Belgium by the 1st Battalion, 504th Infantry of the 82d Airborne Division stands out. Facing SS LTC Joachim Piper's Panzer Kampfgruppe on 20 December 1944 two companies of the 1st Battalion attacked Peiper's light flak battalion and elements of his 2d Panzer Grenedier Regiment. In an offensive action that earned the battalion a Presidential Unit Citation they seized Cheneux from the Germans forcing Peiper to withdraw across his only bridgehead across the Ambleve River. Peiper left behind "14 flak wagons, a battery of SP 105mm assault guns, 6 half tracks, a few trucks and other vehicles and mounds of dead SS PanzerGrenediers."9

Some of the most fierce and deadly warring of the last three decades has been in the middle east region. The Arab-Israeli Wars stand out in their lethality and use of modern weapons. The great tank battles of the 1967 and 1973 wars on the southern Israeli front are examples on the lethality of modern warfare. Yet, it is sometimes forgotten that the northern Israeli front facing Syria had its share of critical battles in both of the wars.

The Golan heights, prior to 1967, allowed the Syrian Army a commanding position overlooking the northern Israeli Huleh valley, the Sea of Gaililee

and the entire northern "finger" of Israel to the Lebanese border. Over the 19 years from the Israeli War of Independence to 1967, the Syrians had converted the area of the Golan heights into a deep defensive zone, with bunkers, tank and gun emplacements which were sited along the heights overlooking the ceasefire line with Israel. The Syrians manned the defensive zone with three divisional groups in addition to the strike force of the Syrian Army which were comprised of two armor and two mechanized brigades. The Syrians occupied dominating terrain in force. At the beginning of the 1967 war the Israeli's were forced to look first at the war in the Sinai,its most critical zone of action. Only after the Egyptians had collapsed in the Sinai and the Jordanians had been ejected from the West Bank did the Israeli Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan, order the Israeli's to attack the Syrians on the Golan. The attack was to be led by dismounted infantry. Chaim Herzog, Israel's leading military commentator wrote about the battle to seize the key Syrian position of Tel Fakher to allow the breakout of Israeli armor.

> "The Tel Fakher position was surrounded by three double-apron, barbed wire fences and several minefields, it was criss-crossed with trenches, machine-gun and anti-tank positions

and dug-outs. It was cleared only after fierce hand to hand fighting...Tel Fakher had been taken by units of the Golani Brigade in one of the fiercest battles ever waged by the crack infantry force."10

It was only after the key Syrian positions were seized by dismounted infantry assault were Israeli armor and mechanized forces able to pass through the escarpment and seize the heights overlooking the Damascus plain. The key Syrian positions on the Golan had been taken by well led and well trained dismounted infantry forces.

The point of these brief historical examples is simply that well trained and led light type forces are fully capable of fighting and winning on a modern battlefield given advantages of terrain and intelligent leadership and not necessarily firepower.

THE FUTURE

The question of warfighting carries on to today. One of the questions on light infantry remains where will they be employed. A small war scenario in Central or South America appears as the most obvious area of

employment. The terrain and potential threat within the region are well suited for response by rapid employment of light infantry units. By being in America's "backyard", support and reinforcement requirements become quickly simplified. Korea also remains as a viable area for use of light infantry. While it is undeniable that the threat from North Korea has become increasingly more modernized, the need for dismounted infantry in the rugged Korean peninsula remains essential. As was demonstrated during the Korean War, the tortuous geography of Korea allowed light dismounted infantry of all combatant nations to operate effectively. Logistical support of forces in both of the above theaters would be simplified by relatively easy control of the adjacent sea waters by the Navy. The Middle East continues as a potential deployment area and it is in this theater that the ability to strategically move forces rapidly remains critical. The region remains exceptionally well suited for mechanized and armor formations. However, there is an important role for strategically mobile, light infantry formations. It has been demonstrated historically that dismounted, lightly armed infantry can play a role in desert warfare. More importantly, it is in the volatile Middle East where rapidly deployable forces play an essential role in American deterrence policy. As long as rapid force projection remains an essential element of American foreign policy, rapidly deployable forces remain essential - a role in which light

infantry divisions excel. Finally, there is a role in Europe as the maintenance of freedom in Europe remains closely tied to our vital interests. As Europe appears to be the most contentious of the employment theaters a few words are necessary.

Light forces are not the force of choice in Europe. Yet many commanders who have command experience in Europe with heavy forces have stated a need for light forces in the European environment. In his article, "Light Infantry Integration in Central Europe", BG Downing commented,

> "There is definitely a role for light infantry forces on the central European battlefield. Light infantry units are not intended to be substitutes for heavy forces, nor are they considered to be 'war winners' solely by their introduction into the theater...but...light infantry units...will be a useful augmentation, enhancing the capabilities of both heavy and light formations with emphasis on freeing heavy units for decisive engagement."[11]

Further, current NATO land force tactical doctrine as published in Allied Tactical Publication (ATP) 35A, a document which provides "...a common doctrine for (European) land operations", outlines some key requirements for use of dismounted infantry. In forested areas "a larger proportion of dismounted troops than normal are required in the defence as well as the attack". As in forests, "Dismounted infantry can move almost anywhere in the mountains...only infantry can seize and hold the vital high ground which dominates approaches". In built up areas, "Infantry will normally fight dismounted in small groups, reinforced by engineers and armor."12 In all of the areas noted, the key mobility is that of the foot soldier. He can dominate the European terrain of the forest, mountain and city.

However, it must again be stated that light infantry forces were not created to be the dominant role players in Europe. They were created to more adequately address an imbalance of forces. It allowed the Army to support a national policy of being able to fight successfully in areas other than Europe. General E. C. Meyer, while Chief of Staff, Army, noted in 1980 that,

"The most demanding challenge con-

> fronting the US Military in the decade of the 1980's is to develop and demonstrate the capability to successfully meet threats to vital US interests outside Europe, without compromising the decisive theater in central Europe."13

The Army created a divisional force that had both strategic application and a superb capability as exceptional dismounted infantryman. It finally needs to be understood that the light division is not a "lightened division" but is a "light" division. There is a difference. A "lightened" division is one tailored from the top down and is essentially one that has assets removed from it temporarily in order to lighten it up. As an example, tailoring an airborne infantry battalion of the 82d Airborne Division by not taking integral parts of the battalion is "lightening" the battalion. Using that type criteria it is fully possible to "lighten" a Bradley battalion in order to deploy more rapidly than an airborne battalion. A light division builds from the bottom up. Nothing is removed in order for them to deploy faster in less airframes. They are an austere organization specifically trained to fight in the formations as they currently exist.

THE LIGHT FIGHTER

To this end, a specific "mind set" is created for the leaders of the light division to further develop the fighting spirit of the common soldier of the division. It is not unlike the mental conditioning the Israeli's use during their Armor Corps rite of passage at Masada or the five day Ranger Indoctrination Program of the Ranger Regiment or even the esprit generated by attendance at airborne school before a young trooper is assigned to an airborne unit. The light division has created their own rite of passage by creating a five day program for all soldiers. It emphasizes esprit and fundamental field craft of an infantry soldier. The division has further created a 21 day light leaders course to develop and hone the leaders from Company to Team. Further, the light division has a mandatory 17 day combat leaders course for soldiers holding E5 or E6 postions within the division. Designed to enhance patrolling and leadership skills, it is an integral part of the process to ensure the light infantryman know their trade. Further, the emphasis on assigning a high number of Ranger qualified officers and NCO's creates a critical leadership edge in the combat leaders of the division. The unit is organized light, trains like light infantry and has again reinforced the fact that infantry is the master of difficult and close terrain.

In the final analysis, the light division remains a leader intensive fighting

organization. Its importance cannot be understated. In Changing an Army, a reflective study and oral history on the military career of General William DePuy, he comments,

> "Given any set of weapons at any particular time, the battle will be more affected by the difference in leadership and troop performance between the two armies than it will be by difference between weapons." 14

The criticality of superb leadership of men in warfare is echoed through history Earlier, the renowned military historian, SLA Marshall, in his classic, Men Against Fire, wrote,

> "Victory...can only be won after the battle has been delivered into the hands of men who move in imminent danger of death. I think that we in the United States need to consider well that point, for we have made a habit of believing that national security lies at the end of a production line." 15

ANTI-ARMOR SYSTEMS

Unfortunately, there is one area that the light division needs improvement. It lacks an improved medium anti-armor system. Enemy forces to be faced, even in the third world, would probably be supported by some type of armor system. Even in Grenada, Soviet made BTR-60's made a short lived appearance.

The light divisions infantry battalions have only 4 TOW and 18 Dragon systems. On a comparable level, an infantry battalion in the 82d Airborne Division has 18 TOW and 31 Dragon systems organic to the battalion. While the TOW is an acknowledged long range armor killer, what is vitally need is an effective medium man portable anti-armor system. Lack of this capability is the single major deficiency of the light division.

The requirement for a new medium anti-armor system is undeniable. The current Chief of Infantry and Commandant of the Infantry School, MG E. Burba, has stated, "Replacing the Dragon has been our (Infantry's) first priority, because it allows the infantry to conduct its roles on the battlefield whether it is light infantry or heavy."16 The planned advanced anti-tank weapon system - medium (AAWS-M) is designed to replace the aging Dragon anti-tank missile. The attempt to replace the Dragon,

however, has been ongoing since 1978. Despite the increasing defense budgets in the early 1980's the Army's senior leadership appeared to forget about developing a better medium anti-armor system. Very limited RDTE dollars were budgeted for the medium program and the only program that was funded, the "Rattler", was eliminated as a result of senior leadership decisions to put the money elsewhere.17 It was not until 1985 that funds were programmed, and actually budgeted. for research and developemnt of an advanced medium anti-armor system. Since 1985 the budget for the system has continued to grow but funding for it has come late in the overall defense buildup. As such, budget dollars will remain tight while the critical requirement still exists. As MG Burba additionally stated, "AAWS-M will be the light infantry commanders primary anti-tank capability."18 Potentially, light fighters are being put in harm's way without the modern anti-armor weaponry they deserve to have. Great emphasis should be applied by the senior leadership of the Army to ensure an effective system is created and rapidly fielded to the forces in the field.

TRAINING

Much has been written on the light division. Its creation and capabilities, good and bad, have been amply covered in most of the Army's professional

publications. However, the divisions are on the ground and now combat capabilities must be rehearsed and demonstrated. The division must be "fought" time and time again to demonstrate its capability and engender confidence in its capability to commanders at all levels. The most effective way to demonstrate war fighting capability is by exercises that run the scope of geography and opponent. Deployment exercises to include the REFORGER series and TEAM SPIRIT must be accomplised. Deployments to the National Training Center need to be continued to ensure a knowledge base between heavy and light forces is developed in depth Ft Irwin offers a unique training environment where light and heavy forces can be employed in a complimentary manner. Any soldier who has fought in the area of Debnam or Granite Passes or in the Valley of Death at Ft Irwin knows of realistic scenarios that can be developed for heavy-light forces An excellent example is an exercise that occured in September 1985

During a rotation of airborne infantry at the National Training Center an example of dismounted light infantry fighting with an armor battalion task force was effectively demonstrated. The airborne battalion was given the mission of a night attack to seize a series of mountain passes in order to pass through an armor battalion task force and to continue the attack The battalion task force, moving at night, and using as its core 3 dismounted

infantry companys, crossed a rugged set of mountains to attack elements of the 32d Motorized Rifle Regiment (OPFOR) from the rear. The envelopment allowed the seizing of Granite Pass at Ft. Irwin thereby allowing an armor task force to pass through and continue the attack. It was an excellent example of how light and heavy forces can work together on a relatively modern battlefield. The training also demonstrated the absolute need for continuing similar type exercises. During the exercise against what many call the "finest Soviet motorized rifle regiment in the free world" the lessons learned were many. Chief among these was the evident truth that the Army rarely works its heavy and light forces together in realistic exercises despite the fact that these forces are, in all liklihood, pared together in theater conplans. Both battalion level task forces learned from each other. Only by constant exercising can lessons learned be codified to further increase heavy-light capability and develop a true confidence base between both type forces. Light forces and heavy forces will fight together - they must exercise together.

Exercising light forces in the REFORGER series is an important step to acceptance by US commanders in Europe of light force utility. Light forces give US European commanders much more foxhole fighting strength and, in economy of force roles, free up more mobile forces for the conduct of manuever warfare. What has passed practically unnoticed to many

military eyes since World War II is the gradually altered nature of the very terrain over which the next war may be fought. Europe has 374 cities of 100,000 or more with the Federal Republic of Germany having one of the highest population densities in Europe. It is also worth recalling that almost 30% of the FRG is woodland. In short, open areas are rapidly shrinking in Europe. Technological advances in anti-armor weapons and urbanization will serve to enhance rather than diminish the role of infantry in land force operations. As John A. English noted in his book, On Infantry, "Traditional infantry skills lost with the advent of the APC (but happily maintained in light infantry and mountain units) will consequently regain their former importance." It is imperative that commanders at all levels understand forces at their disposal and the capabilities and limitations of each. Much as armor cannot be sent through swamps light infantry cannot be expected to survive a frontal attack by armor forces. An intelligent understanding of force capabilities is essential. Conjecture and emotionalism are not only out of place but are professionally unworthy.

A CONCLUSION

If we know anything at all about the future, we know that our nation will face further tests of its resolve, military capability and judgement in

applying or threatening force. We have no crystal ball to tell us where we will be engaged or when it will occur. Yet history and recent experience have clearly demonstrated that armies must be capable of fighting in all type of terrain against all type combatants. Balanced, flexible forces are required to support national objectives. As GEN (Ret) DePuy noted in his article on elements of a balanced fighting force, "...light infantry is a unique, indispensible element of a balanced fighting force." 19

Light infantry forces have been proven effective historically, operationally and in exercise play. To not admit their utility is to deny the obvious. Such a lack of vision can only lead to failure in service to our nation in the event of crisis.

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