

DRAFT

FMFM-2

**Light Infantry**



September 2008

Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Marine Corps

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*"My message to the troops of General Marshall's in training for this type of warfare is to go back to the tactics of the French and Indian days. This is not meant facetiously. Study their tactics and fit in our modern weapons, and you have a solution. I refer to the tactics and leadership of the days of Roger's Rangers".*

General (USMC) Alexander A. Vandegrift, 1943.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This document provides further discussion on the concepts stated in Annex B of *FMFM 1A Fourth Generation War* and the existing Light Infantry manual (dated 25 Oct 07) with regard to light infantry (LI). *FMFM 1A* established the need to take prompt measures to counter the high quality LI that current and future enemies are likely to deploy; these measures can only be put into practice by opposing those threats with the worst enemy that light forces may face, other light forces. For that reason, and since *Fourth Generation War* enemies cannot be effectively countered by regular, “heavy” forces, the Marine Corps must transform its doctrine, training, and organization toward the LI model. The intention of this project is to provide a detailed description of the nature, organization, training and operations of LI that allows Marines not only to correct conceptual misconceptions about LI but also to plan for the necessary transformation. To facilitate understanding, this document has been organized into three chapters. The first provides details on the concepts of LI, while the second develops the LI concept according to the six warfighting functions. The third chapter will provide useful hints to orient the transformation toward LI.

Approved for use by all units of the K.u.K. armed forces.

Monteccucoli,  
Hofkriegsrath  
Pola, July 2008

## CHAPTER 1: DEFINING LIGHT INFANTRY

### 1. An Historical Approach to the Light Infantry Concept

Due to different meanings of the word “light,” the Light Infantry (LI) concept has been understood in diverse ways around the world. These interpretations can be grouped into two different points of view. The present American concept of Light Infantry is related to “weight,” specifically regarding equipment. On the other hand, Europeans understand *light* as agility or *operational versatility*. They see light infantry as a flexible force capable of operating in austere conditions with few logistical requirements, providing the commander a force ideally suited to complement heavier elements of the army.

An analysis of the historical evolution of light infantry will enable the reader to understand its complex and sometimes subtle characteristics. The distinction between regular or line infantry (RI) and LI goes back to ancient Greece. At that time, RI was the phalanx, a linear formation that based its success on the execution of well-rehearsed techniques and procedures by hundreds of *hoplites* and the *shock power* of their spears. Their tactics consisted of evolutions performed by the phalanx as a whole, in which each warrior contributed to group survivability by adhering to carefully executed individual drills.

In contrast, classic LI did not fight in linear or other fixed formations, nor adhere to any type of prescribed methods. Its usual mission was to provide flank protection to the phalanx. Widely dispersed throughout a large area, its soldiers lacked the bronze armor the hoplites wore. LI survivability was based on speed and the use of bows, slings and light hand-thrown weapons. LI tactics consisted mainly of individual actions or barely coordinated group maneuvers, like executing a move forward or withdrawing. The Romans applied the same concept to their legions, using light auxiliary troops to support the RI cohorts.

The Spanish *Tercios* of the 16th and 17th centuries signaled the return of infantry’s dominance. The development of light infantry in Europe followed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The French *Chasseurs*, the Prussian *Jaegers*, and the Austrian *Grenz* regiments followed the old Greek concept: in contrast to the rigid maneuvers of the RI, the light units were agile, fast and able to adapt their tactics to the terrain and the situation. The LI was employed in a decentralized manner to protect the flanks of larger forces, executing raids and ambushes in restricted terrain and avoiding frontal fights with the enemy. When it was wisely employed, LI prevailed over the enemy’s RI, thanks to its adaptability and reliance on creative tactics other than drill. These capabilities were achieved by selecting high-quality troops to serve in LI ranks, usually those familiar with hard life as hunters or foresters.

In spite of the proven utility of LI, it was not developed as permanent formations in Europe. LI only prospered during wartime and was usually dissolved when the conflict ended. Nevertheless, the catastrophic defeat in 1755 in Pennsylvania of the British forces under General Edward Braddock’s command by a small French LI force that employed ambush tactics and took advantage of terrain, agility, and loose formations convinced England to create *Roger’s Rangers* and the *Royal American Regiment*, both of which became famous LI units.

LI definitively reappeared in Europe during the peninsular campaign of Wellington at the beginning of the 19th century. The LI stopped being just an “undisciplined group of irregulars” and became professionally trained units, able to maneuver in a fast and organized way. Between 1790 and 1815, light forces proliferated, even evolving into light artillery and cavalry units. They also assumed a more significant role on the battlefield. Like their Greek predecessors, the European light infantrymen covered RI’s advance or withdrawals and harassed the enemy by executing ambushes deep in their rear.

The appearance of the breech-loading rifle and machine gun contributed to the evolution of RI tactics to resemble those of LI. To reduce the effectiveness of these new weapons, RI developed lighter equipment and more flexible formations. However, true LI retained advantages agility, operational versatility, capability to live off the land, and decentralized command and control. The *Boers*, the *Jaeger* battalions, mountain units and *Sturmtruppen* of the German army of World War I, General Wingate’s *Chindits* and parachutist units from the Israeli Defense Forces and the British army are examples of the continuation of true light infantry.

## 2. The LI concept

As previously indicated, the appearance of semi-automatic and automatic weapons narrowed the apparent differences between LI and RI. However, the essential difference between RI and LI relied on an intangible factor: the mentality of light infantrymen.

The light infantryman characterizes himself by his mental resourcefulness and physical toughness. Light infantry's inborn self-reliance (the reason they were chosen to join Light Infantry units), reinforced by hard training, convinces them that they are able to overcome the most difficult situations that combat could present. Light infantrymen do not feel defeated when surrounded, isolated or confronted by superior forces. They are able to perform their duties for long periods of time without any type of comfort or logistical support, obtaining what they need from the land or the enemy. They are neither physically nor psychologically tied to the rear by the necessity to maintain open lines of communication. This attitude of self-confidence provides LI a great psychological advantage over its enemies. Thanks to its decentralized command philosophy, LI operates at a high tempo. An unpredictable ambush mentality and reluctance to follow a specified method is the essence of LI.

This ambush mentality generates other secondary, but distinctive, characteristics. Among them are the ability and speed with which LI adapts to the terrain in which it operates. Far from resisting adverse environmental conditions, LI exploits them by turning terrain roughness to its advantage, using the terrain as a shield, a weapon and a source of supplies at the same time. As a result, LI has an incomparable superiority in those terrains that restrict RI operations (especially mechanized and armored forces), usually allowing it to face and defeat larger and better equipped enemy forces. This gives LI a distinctive operational versatility, being able to operate alone in restricted terrain or in a symbiotic relationship with line units.

Light infantry easily adapts itself to all types of operations, and faces the natural evolution of war with no need to modify substantially the way it operates. This characteristic determines that LI is the only type of force able successfully to counter the challenge imposed by the current transition toward the Fourth Generation of War.

Although other specific characteristics of LI will be addressed in detail later, it is easy to see that the historically appropriate meaning for the term "light" is not related to the American notion of *weight*, but to the European notion of agility or operational versatility.

## **CHAPTER 2: LIGHT INFANTRY AND WARFIGHTING**

### **1. Command and Control (C2)**

Because LI operations rely heavily on the harmonized actions of separate elements, they require both commanders and subordinates who are able to perform their duties in a highly decentralized environment. This is all the more true when LI operates in restrictive terrain, where C2 must be focused more toward command than control. Command requires the wide use of mission-type orders, in which the commander's intent provides guidance that enables subordinates to exercise initiative and make decisions in the absence of detailed orders. Light infantry C2 relies on top-down vision, low-level planning, and decentralized decision-making. This allows timely and effective response of light units to the changing and chaotic situations that are usually faced in combat, enabling them to maintain a faster tempo than the enemy.

Light infantry's decentralized C2 is not feasible without quality leaders at all levels, especially at the lower levels. It is necessary to compensate for the lack of experience and immaturity of young leaders by providing superior education. These men generally have greater responsibilities and face more extreme exigencies than their counterparts in RI. The pressure that decentralized command puts on them is increased by the pressures that their own men add, men with whom the leaders enjoy a high degree of confidence and familiarity (certainly higher than that experienced within RI units). The leaders share the same shortages and hardships with their subordinates and they lead their units from the front, for which reason LI units usually suffer a greater number of casualties at the higher command levels than experienced by the RI.

It is important to emphasize that LI chains of command are flatter than those of RI. In addition, LI usually operates at the company level; the battalion commander is a supporting arms and logistical facilitator, while company commanders and platoon leaders decide and execute.

Some examples of commanders who best represent the essence of LI are David Stirling, the creator of the Special Air Service; General Kurt Student, leader of the German airborne forces during World War II; Lieutenant Colonel von Lettow-Vorbeck, commander of the forces in German East Africa; and Major T.E. Lawrence, better known as "Lawrence of Arabia."

### **2. Selection and Training of the Light Infantryman**

#### **2.1. Selection**

The personnel who serve in RI units do not necessarily have the qualities required to be light infantrymen. In spite of the fact that many candidates who do not match the LI profile at the time they join the armed forces can improve their aptitude after a proper education and training process, most of them will never make it unless they possess certain qualities innately. Selecting light infantryment requires putting candidates through a demanding process that ensures that they have the necessary innate qualities to match the desired profile. The following are the most important aptitudes for which candidates must be tested by psychologists:

1. To be mature beyond his age. This is particularly necessary when a candidate's age is close to the lower limit.
2. To be able to perform physically demanding activities under unfavorable conditions, such as extreme fatigue and psychological pressure.
3. To have a high critical thinking ability.

4. To demonstrate high sense of responsibility in the execution of entrusted tasks.
5. To possess a high level of initiative and the ability to adapt and improvise when facing unexpected situations.
6. To demonstrate above-average ability for integrative thinking.
7. To demonstrate willingness to make decisions in the face of uncertainty.
8. To demonstrate a highly positive disposition for selflessness and teamwork.

## 2.2. Training

LI training looks forward to building units whose personnel are able to operate in small, often separated, units, in a decentralized environment and under unfavorable conditions of terrain, weather and friendly and/or enemy situations for long periods of time. This requires all personnel to undergo the same training, regardless of rank or years of service. The top priority must be developing a LI mindset. To reach this objective, training must be heavily oriented toward free-play field exercises, performed in the most austere conditions possible; this demands great imagination from the unit's training officer, who has to be able to set a balance between creating a good learning environment and strict absence of any kind of comfort for the troops. This extremely austere training environment will not only develop the LI mindset, it will also help build the unit cohesion that characterizes LI units and reflects in the deep sense of belonging that grows through the ranks.

Training must also include a rigorous professional military education (PME) program to develop the intellectual side of the LI. A good PME program will focus on enhancing critical and integrative thinking capabilities, encouraging initiative, and developing the required professional judgment to support LI leaders' decentralized decision-making. Hard training in the field must yield to classrooms only when specific military history, wargaming, or tactical decision-making games absolutely require indoor training. Since LI bases most of its survivability on local populace's support, the study of the language, customs, and culture of the countries in which LI may be employed should be another aspect included in PME programs.

In addition, correctly designed physical training (PT) constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of LI's preparation for combat. The ability to conduct long, fast, demanding foot marches between engagements is a trademark of LI. Units such as the German *Jaegers* or Julius Caesar's legions were used to conducting forty or fifty-mile daily foot marches, carrying their gear and fighting, for several weeks before taking a rest, usually for just two days a month. If mindset is

LI's main weapon, its legs are real combat multipliers. However, foot marches are not the only concern of LI's PT, which should also integrate other skills that light infantrymen must show in the field, such as land navigation, combat first aid, close combat, etc. Those in charge of PT must push the troops to their limits, then face them with the last and most demanding activity, which may encompass some kind of tactical problem-solving that requires creativity and teamwork.

Another characteristic of LI training is the development of mastery in arms throughout all the ranks. All light infantrymen must be able to employ and maintain all of their units' weapons effectively, to include the crew served ones. Training should also ensure proficiency in enemy weapons' handling and the ability to drive all kind of vehicles.

The pillars of LI training that have been detailed above, all of them intended to strengthen mind, spirit and body, are supported by the development of a wide array of specialized individual combat skills that provide light infantrymen the capability to execute many tasks without depending on attachments or supporting arms while they are operating isolated from friendly forces. These skills include superb fieldcraft and camouflage, the ability to construct and breach simple obstacles, employ explosives, survive in all type of restrictive terrain, call for and control fires and operate all organic equipment. The isolation of LI also requires their men to be trained to execute psychological operations and collect and process information, especially from human sources. Although the training emphasizes individual skills, LI training also aims to develop small units that are able to conduct decentralized but coordinated squad and platoon operations which can be integrated at the company level (and occasionally at the battalion level, if

only for brief periods). The capability to remain dispersed, attack reunited and then immediately disperse again, complemented by the ability to perform tasks under low-visibility conditions, constitutes the best force protection for light infantry.

### 3. Light infantry operations

#### 3.1 Fundamentals

Light Infantry fills a unique battlefield role unmatched by regular infantry and complimented by heavier mechanized forces. Offensively and defensively LI is equally capable if employed in restrictive terrain where it can take advantage of the strengths of its specialized skill sets. These strengths include but are not limited to stealth, flexibility, self-sufficiency, maneuverability, and an ambush mentality. Just as the strengths of Light Infantry heavily influence their effective employment, their limitations should also be considered. These weaknesses are usually relative to regular infantry or mechanized forces and include small size, lack of firepower, slow speed in open terrain, potential for isolation, and difficulty of resupply and casualty evacuation.

Light infantry operations are offensive in character, even during the execution of defensive operations. This aggressive nature and the skillful employment of tactical deception are means by which LI overcomes the limitations caused by its organic fire support shortages and its usual isolation from friendly main land-supply routes. LI tactics follow the principles of maneuver warfare, attacking by infiltration and defending by ambush. It uses ambushes on the offensive as well, by ambushing withdrawing or reinforcing enemy units. Light infantry applies an ambush mentality to both planning and execution. A good way to understand the nature of LI operations is to think of LI as similar to those elements that are usually designated to act as “aggressors” or “enemies” during friendly training exercises. Generally short of means to execute their operations in “textbook” fashion, they overcome their weakness by deceiving, stalking, infiltrating, dispersing, looking for vulnerabilities, ambushing and raiding. They often prove highly effective against larger “blue” forces.

Light infantry can execute a wide variety of operations in many types of environments. Offensive options include not only ground operations but also air assault and amphibious operations. Because of its special aptitude to operate in restrictive terrain, LI is effective in fighting insurgencies in urban areas, jungles, or mountains. Although the LI concept is far from the technological approach the USMC has followed in defining so-called “distributed operations,” LI offers not only a cheaper and more “human-factor balanced” solution to that challenge, but also one that has been successfully proven throughout history.

Limitations of LI are associated with its limited organic transportation and fire support capabilities. Therefore, LI is considered at a disadvantage when facing RI or mechanized units in open terrain or when obliged to conduct defensive operations from fixed positions.

The *Execution* (phase “E” of the PDEA cycle)<sup>1</sup> of LI operations follows a sub-cycle that can be divided into four steps: dispersion, orientation, concentration, and action (DOCA). *Dispersion* provides LI with its main tool for survivability. Units remain hidden, taking advantage of the terrain, utilizing camouflage and superb fieldcraft to evade detection. *Orientation* includes the execution of shaping actions to enable the later concentration of the main effort in order to strike at the enemy’s center of gravity (CG) through some critical vulnerability (CV). This step also requires an aggressive use of reconnaissance elements to identify the enemy vulnerabilities that are going to be exploited in order to hit the CG. The *Concentration* step allows LI to transform the small combat power of multiple, isolated elements into one or more powerful thrusts. The *Action* is led by reconnaissance elements, which draw the main effort and available supporting fires towards the CG. Finally, a new and rapid dispersion ends the sub-cycle, facilitating the breaking of contact and rendering enemy counteraction ineffective.

LI offensive tactics use infiltration as the preferred form of maneuver, because it allows light forces to surprise the enemy and engage him at short distances. The LI can exploit its small arms’ capabilities while denying the enemy

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<sup>1</sup> This acronym stands for Planning, Decision, Execution and Assessment.

effective employment of his superior firepower. LI “hugs” the enemy and forces him to fight at short distances on its terms. The penetration is only employed when the enemy does not offer clear weak points to the LI and when it becomes necessary to create openings in order to reach the enemy’s CV.

## *DEFENSE*

LI tactics for defensive operations are based on a scheme of maneuver that prevents the enemy from being able to determine the exact location of the defense’s front, flank, or rear areas. The LI commander assigns responsibility sectors to each of his subordinates, areas where they plan and execute successive, independent ambushes on advancing enemy formations. The “baited ambush” is a common technique, where a unit will feign retreat or even rout to draw enemy units into a new ambush. Defenses run parallel to, not across, enemy thrust lines. Light infantry often focuses its efforts against follow-on enemy units rather than spearheads. When threatened, LI units break contact and move to alternate positions, setting up a new array of interconnected ambushes. LI never fights a defensive battle from fixed positions or strongpoints. A good LI defensive position is one that surprises the enemy from a short distance, but at the same time enables the defender to move fast and under cover to a new position unknown to the enemy.

Since LI lives mostly off the land, its success depends heavily on the support of the local population. This dependence on local support means that LI operations always consider the need to avoid a negative impact on the inhabitants and the local economy, as well as the rigorous observance of local customs and culture. Winning hearts and minds in favor of LI’s cause suggests that the most habitual attachments to LI units will consist of psychological operations teams, civil affairs specialists, interpreters and local militia units.

### 3.2 Light infantry operations against light forces

There is no worse enemy for LI than other light forces. Since both forces will remain dispersed and use similar tactics, engagements will usually occur between small-sized units. During deliberate or meeting engagements friendly light forces should stay focused on the enemy CG rather than on enemy maneuver elements. Friendly LI will employ deception and aggressive reconnaissance to force the enemy to concentrate his forces prematurely, thus making him vulnerable to long-range supporting arms. LI vulnerabilities will be reduced while LI holds the initiative through the execution of continuous offensives, forcing the enemy light units to defend. Keeping the enemy in a defensive posture will pose a burden on his weak logistics and will make it easier to locate and destroy his elements.

### 3.3 Light infantry operations against line or regular infantry

LI is vulnerable to RI’s firepower and motorized mobility when fighting in open terrain. LI will therefore try to draw RI into restrictive terrain, where LI is not only able to compensate for its limited organic mobility and fire support but will gain the psychological advantage that comes from having the RI lose their usual comforts (gear, communications, vehicles, protection, logistics, and centralized control). This psychological advantage constitutes the number one combat power multiplier that will usually allow LI to face a superior number of RI with a high chance of success. LI will be able to face RI in unrestricted terrain only when conventional forces are similar in their limitations or after reinforcement. Usually, employing light infantry in open terrain should be avoided.

When facing conventional forces, LI must focus its offensive operations on objectives that, once destroyed, will deprive the enemy of those logistic and C2 means that are almost indispensable to him (more because of cultural than operational reasons). RI’s or mechanized forces’ firepower must not be underestimated by LI, no matter how well trained or proficient the light forces are in exploiting terrain. LI requires invisibility for its survival and attains this objective by avoiding fixed positions and moving constantly.

### 3.4 Light infantry operating with regular or line forces

LI can reduce its limitations in open terrain by means of the aggregation of RI elements or its complete integration into a heavy, mechanized force. LI constitutes a welcome addition to heavy forces. In these cases LI can be employed in suitable tasks: screening flanks in restrictive terrain, operating independently forward as advance or covering forces, or multiplying the number of units operating in restrictive terrain. Even when LI and RI operate independently, it will be wise to employ RI or LI to set the necessary conditions for the other's success.

## 4. Organization and Equipment

LI fights under the concept of task organization. This means that although light forces have a basic administrative organization, they do not rely on fixed structures during battle and are willing to adapt their task organization as many times as needed in order to meet the requirements for success. Throughout history LI has adopted a great variety of organizations, but the common denominator was a much more "flat" structure than that usually employed by line units. These "flat" organizations use fewer command elements to control the same number of maneuver units. Although experience indicates that it is not wise to put more than four elements under a single command, LI operations will rarely be executed by elements larger than the company; if LI forces are employed as battalions or brigades, their concentration will be brief enough to avoid the enemy's response. LI command levels above company level will usually focus their efforts on administration, logistic support, intelligence, developing relationships with the local population, and planning at the operational or strategic level in order to provide guidance to their subordinate units. Platoons and companies assume the responsibility of planning and executing tactical operations, in accordance with their commander's intent.

Command elements of LI units are small, rarely surpassing a ten-man team at the battalion level or the commander, first sergeant and a radio operator at the company level. LI units lack organic transportation, relying mostly on their feet for movement but sometimes using simple means of transport such as bicycles (as the Japanese LI moved during the conquest of Malaysia) and skis. On other occasions LI units can call for the support of trucks, helicopters, or airplanes from higher echelons, or commandeer vehicles locally (paying for their use).

The organic logistic elements are designed mainly to care for and evacuate combat casualties and to deal with air-delivered supplies, mainly ammunition and explosives. Supporting fires at the battalion level include portable anti-tank missiles, light mortars and medium machine guns. The situation may create a need to reinforce light units to accomplish a certain mission, but the light infantryman will usually bring to battle what he is able to carry. Companies are usually organized into a command element, three to four platoons, a weapons platoon, and a logistic element. Some organizational models that integrated supporting weapons into rifle platoons, like the German *Stosstruppen* of World War I, proved to be very effective, although other experienced organizations have preferred to keep all crew-served weapons in independent platoons in order to facilitate their training and task organization changes during combat. The logistic element of the company is usually a group of soldiers that not only takes care of supply distribution and casualty evacuation, but also can provide immediate replacements to the maneuver elements.

Equipment provided to LI can be extensive, technologically advanced, and / or flexible enough to fit the demands of the wide spectrum of operations that LI needs to cover. Nevertheless, light units are organized and equipped according to the mission and will leave behind all issued gear that is not required to accomplish the mission. Historically, technological improvements have not influenced LI operations significantly. However, on several occasions technology has compensated for LI weaknesses or allowed it to operate on a scale or level previously considered unthinkable. A good example is the role air supply and communications had in the *Chindit* forces' victory in WWII or the effectiveness of helicopter support for the British LI operations in Borneo. Technology must adapt to LI operational style and not the other way around.

Individual equipment must be as light as possible since LI tactics depend on its capability to move fast over long distances on its feet. Light infantrymen provide protection for themselves by concealment rather than using ballistic vests and helmets. This does not mean light units are never to be provided with protective equipment and other gear designed to provide comfort for the troops in the field. Rather, it means that company commanders should evaluate the need for each item before crossing the line of departure.

## **5. Intelligence**

Intelligence used by LI mostly comes from the aggressive employment of reconnaissance elements. This activity is fundamental to ensure LI survivability. Continuous patrolling also allows LI to detect enemy vulnerabilities or concentration of forces in order to measure the success of friendly deception plans and to orient LI elements toward the enemy CG. Although LI may employ advanced technologies and assets to collect information, such as unmanned aerial vehicles, data and imagery transmission, sensors, etc., LI will exploit the available human sources to the maximum extent (settlers, authorities, police, or any inhabitants of the areas of operations). Although technology can provide some types of information, the most reliable and productive intelligence sources are human beings. Given the decentralized nature of LI operations, it is necessary to develop an effective intelligence analysis capability at the company level. This capability can usually be found or developed from among the company's own personnel, beginning with the company commander.

## **6. Fire Support and Combat Self-Sustaining**

LI's firepower comes from the use of its light arms at short distances, usually in an ambush. Unlike RI, LI does not depend on indirect fire weapons or aviation support to destroy the enemy, but on deception, speed, and surprise. This conception of fire support does not mean that available indirect fires and aviation are not going to be used. On the contrary, LI always plans for the integration of all available fires with its maneuver. But it does not depend upon any fires but its own.

Because of the importance of gaining and retaining the local population's support, avoiding collateral damage is always a fundamental factor in planning and execution of LI operations. Whether calling in fires or using its own weapons, LI generally prefers a smaller volume of more carefully directed fires.

Air support from helicopters and cargo airplanes is also very important for LI success, both from logistical and operational points of view. In certain cases, close air support is the only external fire support available for LI. However, aviation's tendency to cause major collateral damage means it must be employed with great care. In addition, combat engineer support is of great importance for LI given the restrictive characteristics of the terrain in which it operates. Creating obstacles to the movement of enemy mechanized or motorized forces is often key to LI's tactical success and survival. Nevertheless, the lack of organic vehicles will reduce the magnitude of engineering work because men moving on their feet can cross most obstacles. When LI operates with RI in open terrain, or in those cases where engineers' requirements are extensive, engineer elements can be attached to LI forces.

## **7. Light Infantry Logistics**

Although light units have small organic logistic elements down to the battalion and company levels in order to handle supplies that may be occasionally pushed down, LI refuses to depend physically or mentally on its lines of communications. Light infantry is self-sustaining. Under the operational reality of isolation and self-sufficiency, LI's main logistic functions are health services, supply, transportation, and maintenance. During planning, LI

commanders structure logistics support efforts through the designation and employment of some specific logistics control measures: supply points, contact points, casualty collection points, drop zones and landing zones, especially for high priority casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) and critical Class V supplies.

LI supplements the supply of all classes through the exploitation of available local resources. This includes obtaining what is needed from the area of operations (AO) or capturing them from the enemy. Obtaining it from the AO may include direct purchase of supplies from the population, which would require LI Commanders to have enough cash to sustain their units. In spite of the exploitation of available air or ground logistic support, LI logistics support philosophy sees local acquisition of necessary transport for heavy loads as a viable and frequent option. Transport acquisition may involve not only rental, purchase or capture of military and civilian vehicles of any kind, but also the possibility of contracting porters from the civilian populace. An example of the improvisation abilities of LI units to provide their own transportation is the employment of elephants by the Chindits to carry heavy loads or to clear drop zones for supplies. Although one can argue about the light character of the 82nd Airborne Division, this unit confiscated and employed civilian vehicles to support their operations during the invasion of Grenada. However, initiatives that comprises a “forced” acquisition (steal, confiscate, etc.) should generally be discouraged, since these actions will generate a negative response from the local population, upon which the LI depend for survival. On the contrary, the use of cash not only avoids alienating the population, it also creates a dependency of locals on friendly forces that will encourage support from the population.

CASEVAC and obtaining replacements are two of the weakest sides of LI logistics, which has a high dependence on air support for priority CASEVAC. In order to counter casualty treatment limitations, LI units have stronger medical organizations at the battalion and company that provide greater treatment and transport capabilities for the wounded. Logistics elements also provide immediate replacements to maneuver elements, allowing LI units to absorb casualties better and to continue their mission. LI’s refusal to depend on fixed logistics does not mean that it is not going to exploit favorable logistic situations, such as being able to get some CL I supplies through a ground convoy or some tons of ammunition landed in a secured drop zone. However, LI must consider that support as secondary and expect that normal LI operations will not allow the Logistics Combat Element (LCE) or the Air Combat Element (ACE) to push supplies without putting light forces under high risk of being located by the enemy.

Maintenance requirements are difficult to satisfy with LI organic elements. Even though light forces’ equipment does not require transportation for large amounts of spare parts or for repair or recovery, exposure to bad weather and continuous operations will result in faster deterioration than equipment used by RI. That fast deterioration will require light units’ logistics elements to be able to handle simple repairs on organic equipment identified as *critical* for the continuity of the operations.

## **8. Force Protection**

As was pointed out several times throughout this field manual, LI survivability will be achieved primarily through dispersion, concealment and meticulous deception plans. These measures will prevent the enemy from effectively concentrating his superior numbers and firepower on the light infantry. LI is particularly vulnerable to nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) attacks, since its limited organic transportation (mostly reduced to soldiers’ backpacks) only allows these units to carry basic protective gear, such as masks and individual decontamination kits. Indications and warnings about enemy employment of weapons of massed destruction become a permanent commander’s critical information requirement (CCIR). Positive confirmation of this CCIR would require overloading light infantrymen with heavy protective gear that would adversely affect LI’s main source of protection, its mobility. In the case of an NBC alert, LI units would be provided the minimum equipment required to treat their casualties, conduct individual decontamination and move quickly out of the contaminated area toward a deliberate decontamination site established by line forces.

## **CHAPTER 3: BECOMING LIGHT INFANTRY**

### **1. The USMC Must Adopt the LI Model**

Other than in the Revolutionary War, the LI concept has been misunderstood throughout the American armed forces. The USMC has walked far away from LI concept, in spite of claiming to be ‘THE’ light force. However, challenges posed by Fourth Generation War (4GW) makes the LI model the one toward which the USMC must reorient its selection, organization, and training policies. There are five reasons for this statement. First, the LI mindset offers Marines the necessary character and creativity to face the complex, ambiguous battlefield that Fourth Generation forces have created. Second, LI tactics are a combat multiplier that allow the USMC to face and defeat significantly superior numbers of enemy forces (including regular, light or insurgent). Third, reduction of organic transportation and logistical requirements will reduce the vulnerability that convoy operations and heavy dependence on open lines of communications place on the USMC forces. Fourth, most 4GW forces are light infantry, and defeating them requires superior light infantry. Finally, LI operational independence from supporting fires will provide greater flexibility to MAGTF operations.

The USMC’s disconnection from the LI concept is mostly the result of the lack of a training program that develops the LI mindset. Although some training and education programs have been successfully implemented within the USMC (especially those related to developing aggressive, confident leaders), four main factors prevent US Marines from being able to exercise that profile under any situation or in any environment. First, lower command levels lack the necessary maturity to face the challenge that the current battlefield poses to leadership. Second, US Marines’ heavy dependence on logistics ties them to their lines of communications and makes their tactics slow and predictable. Third, Marines’ reliance on technology focuses their C2 on control rather than on command. Finally, the USMC’s approach to the solution of operational problems relies more on the *science* (procedures, checklists, etc.) than on the *art* of war.

#### **1.1 Fourth Generation War’s (4GW) challenge to leadership**

4GW presents complex, non-linear situations to USMC lower level leaders which require decision-making capabilities that may be acquired only after years of aggressive and systematic PME. During the Cold War, it was feasible to train a good platoon leader in a relative short period of time. Facing 4GW, it takes only a short time for a Marine to reach the ranks where he will lead small but powerful units (squad, platoon, and company), but a short time does not permit the development of the understanding he needs to make decisions in a complex, non-linear environment. Some factors that influence the profile of those candidates who join the USMC actually add time demands later, such as the reduction of the standards for recruiting for Iraq, or American society’s increasing dependence on technology and comfort at the expense of physical fitness and character.

#### **1.2 Dependence on technology and logistics**

From Vietnam to the present, the USMC has evolved toward a model for heavy conventional forces. This evolution has reached a point where United States Navy ships that serve in amphibious ready groups and maritime prepositioning squadrons see their structures threatened by the increasing size and weight of Marine assets. The emphasis of training plans on convoyed, motorized, and mechanized operations is a clear example of this evolution toward a heavy conventional force. This reliance on trucks and armor requires a massive logistics infrastructure of spare parts and fuel that oblige Marines to divert most of their combat power from destroying the enemy to securing their own logistics. Convoys provide excellent targets for light, irregular enemy forces. Although technology and heavy equipment provide protection, information, and speed of movement, they also limit Marines’ responsiveness

and situational awareness. Commanders are pushed by higher echelon requirements to sit in their Combat Operations Centers and attempt to control through virtual interfaces rather than being present in the front line; embarked troops react to ambushes rather than being dispersed to chase the enemy; transitions are conducted at extremely low tempo as soon a threat is detected in the proximity of the main supply routes.

### 1.3 Reliance on the *science* of war

While USMC doctrine establishes decentralization as the base concept for Marine command philosophy, most recently fielded developments have been designed to control. Small unit leaders find themselves tied to computers, radios, and chat systems to command their units instead of leading by example. Higher echelon information requirements add more distractions. The creative mind yields to “tactics, techniques, and procedures” that are translated into checklists, which approach the solutions to ambiguous and mutating problems with formulas.

## 2. Walking the Road to the LI Model

### 2.1 Personnel selection and units’ organization

The transformation process may be executed in two phases. In the first phase, all active duty personnel should be tested in order to determine individual aptitude to serve in light units. The same test should be given to all new recruits.

The second phase should encompass the reorganization of the Corps and reorientation of training according to the LI model. LI units could be gradually organized by grouping all the personnel that matched the desired profile into the same battalions. Those Marines who did not match all or part of the LI profile would be grouped in regular battalions consistent with the previous RI model. Light infantry training for all infantry units would not only build up the new LI battalions, it would also allow many Marines serving in RI units to develop the necessary skills to match the LI profile. Retirement or evolution toward the desired profile of those Marines serving in RI units will ensure the gradual transformation of all infantry units into the LI model. All new recruits with an aptitude for service in light units should be given the infantry MOS. Staffs should also be reduced. The effectiveness obtained by German divisions during World War II is a good example of the unnecessary overstaffing of Marine staffs: while they lacked the C3I technologies and equipment actually available in the USMC, German division staffs usually had fewer than twelve officers (including the commander).

### 2.2 Training to develop the LI mindset

Since the LI mentality is what best characterizes this model, transformation should start by establishing training and education policies that support the development of a strong LI mindset across all ranks of the USMC.

The first action should encourage the elimination of all unnecessary comforts. Exercises must be conducted in those terrains that impose the greatest challenge for the participants and should often coincide with adverse weather conditions. Troops should not be provided the proper gear or sufficient supplies to accomplish their mission. Instead, the situation should allow Marines to get what they need by means of good interaction with the “civilian population” or by capturing it from the “enemy.” Self-confidence, aggressiveness, and the ability to improvise so developed will set the base for a LI mentality.

The zero-defects mentality is one of the worst enemies of the LI mindset and should be promptly eradicated. Even though it is condemned by current USMC doctrine, the zero- defects mentality remains widespread. Its elimination

must become a crusade for higher echelons or the transformation will fail. Operating under a decentralized philosophy will require initiative, character, and professional judgment as the basis of effective decision-making, and this will not be achieved if young leaders are afraid to act. All educational and training activities, with the exception of some specific PME, must be executed in the field. The need to develop a strong identification of light forces with the terrain will demand imagination on the part of the leaders who design exercises and related classes. Communications equipment should be used only on those occasions when training focuses on calling for fires and controlling supporting artillery and aviation or requesting a medical evacuation. Less high tech, alternate communication methods must be encouraged. In this way, Marines will get used to acting in face of uncertainty and making decisions in accordance with their commander's intent.

Skills development in the use of gear and equipment must be exhaustive, including adaptation of equipment to roles for which it was not originally designed. Training should include use of foreign weapons likely to be captured.

Finally, transformation into LI requires the development of demanding physical training (PT) programs. Achieving three hundred points on the physical fitness test does not guarantee that the individual possesses the type of physical strength needed to sustain them on the battlefield. Other than performing daily medium-demand physical activities, it would be preferable to execute one prolonged session of demanding PT every two days including activities focused on the execution of combat techniques which require teamwork. Complementing this training with competition between small organic small units is an excellent incentive that ensures all personnel will push themselves to their limits.

## 2.3 Equipment and technology

Equipment and technologies that offer comfort and facilitate mission accomplishment will be welcomed by the light community. However, the criterion that must be followed through development and issuance of this gear must not threaten LI's foot mobility and decentralized command philosophy. LI Marines must be used to carrying the minimum equipment necessary to accomplish the mission. This philosophy must be enforced "top-down." Lower command levels must not have to deal with more C2 equipment than they need to *command* their unit. When pushing gear down, higher levels should consider the cost to the users. Each system requires care and maintenance and will also reduce the time that leaders have available to command their units from the front. A couple of multi-channel radios, satellite communications, pyrotechnics, and not more than two laptops with C2 systems are enough to deal with the command challenges of the LI battalion and company. The greater the number of systems that are issued to the lower levels, the greater the bureaucracy that will be generated, creating a "snow ball" effect that will bury the LI leader's ability to command his unit. The need to reconfigure LI organizations to fight conventional forces necessitates keeping USMC currently fielded equipment and heavy weapons. Consequently, medium mortars, heavy machine guns, vehicles and mounted missile systems should be kept on LI units' tables of equipment, but normally left behind as useful backup tools to overcome LI's limitations when needed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The organization, training and equipment model that made the USMC one of the most lethal and effective conventional forces of the world and enabled it to dominate the battlefield in the transition period between Second and Third Generation War now prevents US Marines from successfully facing emerging Fourth Generation War threats. The scientific-technological approach that the USMC has taken to provide a solution for Fourth Generation War's challenge has exacerbated the problem.

In contrast, the LI model makes it possible to maintain the necessary capabilities to dominate the spectrum of conventional operations and to defeat the emerging threats as well. The adoption of this model is not a simple process; however, it not only provides a cheaper solution, it also allows the USMC to put into practice most of the concepts that are already included in its fundamental doctrine and others still being developed as "distributed operations."

## ***APPENDIX: Light Infantry In Action***

What differentiates Light Infantry from its motorized counterpart? Advances in tactics and technologies have created a battlefield where casual observation might make it difficult to see the difference. The following key subjects highlight the tactical differences between Light Infantry and regular infantry: offense, defense, terrain, logistics, and firepower.

Light Infantry fills a unique battlefield role different from regular infantry and complimented by heavier mechanized forces. Light Infantry is equally capable offensively and defensively if employed in suitable terrain within the strengths of its specialized skill sets. These strengths include but are not limited to stealth, flexibility, self-sufficiency, maneuverability (in restrictive terrain), and initiative-based tactics. Just as the strengths of Light Infantry heavily influence its effective employment, its limitations should be equally considered. These weaknesses are usually relative to motorized infantry or mechanized forces and include small size, lack of fire power, slow speed in open country if not augmented, potential for isolation, difficulty to resupply and inability to control open terrain.

### **Offense**

Offensively, Light Infantry best complements mechanized forces by operating in a manner that mechanized forces are unsuited for. Light Infantry can help reduce friendly gaps and provide commanders with a force ideally suited for infiltration, ambushing, counter-reconnaissance and night operations. In contrast, regular infantry are usually dependant on mechanized forces for fire support and transportation.

Infiltration tactics employed by Light Infantry enhance their lethality and mitigate their relative lack of firepower. By infiltrating, Light Infantry units can bypass defensive positions designed to stop larger forces and position themselves behind the strength of the enemy to attack physically weak but important objectives, such as headquarters, artillery positions, and supply columns. A Light Infantry unit may disperse to avoid detection around a hostile defensive position. By the use of stealth and disciplined individual and small unit movement techniques the Light Infantry can be stronger than its small numbers might suggest. The force can also mass in the rear of the enemy's main defensive position to block or ambush his withdrawal. The supporting friendly force should protect the Light Infantry from isolation and encirclement.

Two key elements in the Light Infantry repertoire are ambushes and night attacks. Ambushes allow the Light Infantry to attack a larger force. To avoid pursuit and detection after the ambush, dispersing the force in ways similar to the methods used to infiltrate enemy held territory can prevent destruction of the Light Infantry unit. A night attack can provide the concealment needed to protect a Light Infantry unit in the enemy's rear area. By being relatively lightly armed during a night attack, the Light Infantry attacker has fewer geometry of fires considerations, allowing for greater flexibility to attack more objectives closer together. An ambush or a night attack conducted in conjunction with a limited-objective attack on the enemy's main defensive front by a regular or mechanized force has a greater potential of causing alarm, fear, and panic in the enemy as they are attacked not only in their front but also in their rear. An added benefit of these methods is that the forces needed to achieve the desired result are fairly small, allowing the higher commander to mass combat power elsewhere without leaving himself weak within the Light Infantry force's area of operations.

What is the difference between the tactics of a Light Infantry force and a regular infantry force? Regular infantry tactics often rely on finding or creating a gap to allow follow-on elements to push through to attack the enemy's rear area. Light Infantry also seeks the gaps but instead of holding them for follow-on forces, it moves through them undetected to establish ambushes in the enemy's rear. Regular infantry conduct envelopments and flanking attacks which also strike at the enemy's rear area, but the key difference with Light Infantry methods is that the Light Infantry force is already positioned behind the main defenses before those main defenses are attacked.

<b>Light Infantry</b>	<b>Line Infantry</b>
Exploit gaps by infiltration	Create, maintain, or enlarge gaps by combat power
Attack reinforcements or withdraws	Attack main defense
Employ only organic weapons to minimize logistical requirements	Rely on supporting arms to achieve fire power advantage
Stealth and individual / unit movement discipline facilitate maneuver	Fires and vehicles facilitate maneuver
Self-sustaining	MSR / LOC necessary to sustain force
Relative autonomy facilitates decentralized decision making	Complexity and task organization leads to centralized control
Self sufficiency and flexibility allow for rapid transition to defense	Logistic requirements slow transition to offense

Table A-1: Comparison of Light Infantry and Line Infantry

## Defense

On defense as on offense, Light Infantry must maintain a degree of autonomy on the battlefield. Autonomy allows Light Infantry to maximize its flexibility and fluid tactical nature. In the defense, autonomy enables Light Infantry to rapidly transition to offensive action, move to find the enemy, or lure the enemy into ambushes. In contrast, regular infantry in the defense is given a defined space to work in and is often tied in physically or by fires to adjacent units. This situation subordinates units to higher orders rather than situations and disables small unit initiative.

In concert with other forces, Light Infantry can enhance a defense by fulfilling specific tasks associated with its skill sets. One possible use is to employ Light Infantry well forward of a defensive position in order to eliminate the enemy's reconnaissance capability. This will critically limit the enemy's ability to mass against the defense since he will not be able to locate gaps. Another example of Light Infantry complementing a heavier force in the defense is to use Light Infantry to control restrictive terrain adjacent to open terrain that is controlled by the heavier force. Light Infantry, with a small force, can operate within this restrictive terrain and protect the heavier force, allowing a greater concentration of combat power with the heavier force. Regular infantry, not used to operating independently, would need a much larger force to accomplish the same results, thus taking power away from the heavier force.

Since Light Infantry may operate outside the range of artillery support, it will often have to rely on aviation-delivered fires for non-organic fire support. Aviation is vulnerable to weather and can not be counted on for continuous coverage. This, and the understanding that Light Infantry will likely be far from friendly units, presents the problem of isolation and encirclement. Since breaking through an encirclement is like infiltrating enemy positions, these situations should not be seen as overly threatening.

<b>Light Infantry</b>	<b>Line Infantry</b>
Defends to lure the enemy into an unfavorable course of action	Defends to hold ground
Uses maneuver to control terrain	Coordinates supporting arms and organic weapons to “cover” every inch of ground by fire
Willingness to be surrounded	Defeated if cut off or surrounded
Can be used as a measure of economy to mass power elsewhere	Demands extensive fire support
Appears offensive at the tactical level even when defending	Defense constrained by logistical support

Table A-2: Comparison between LI and RI in offense and defense

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