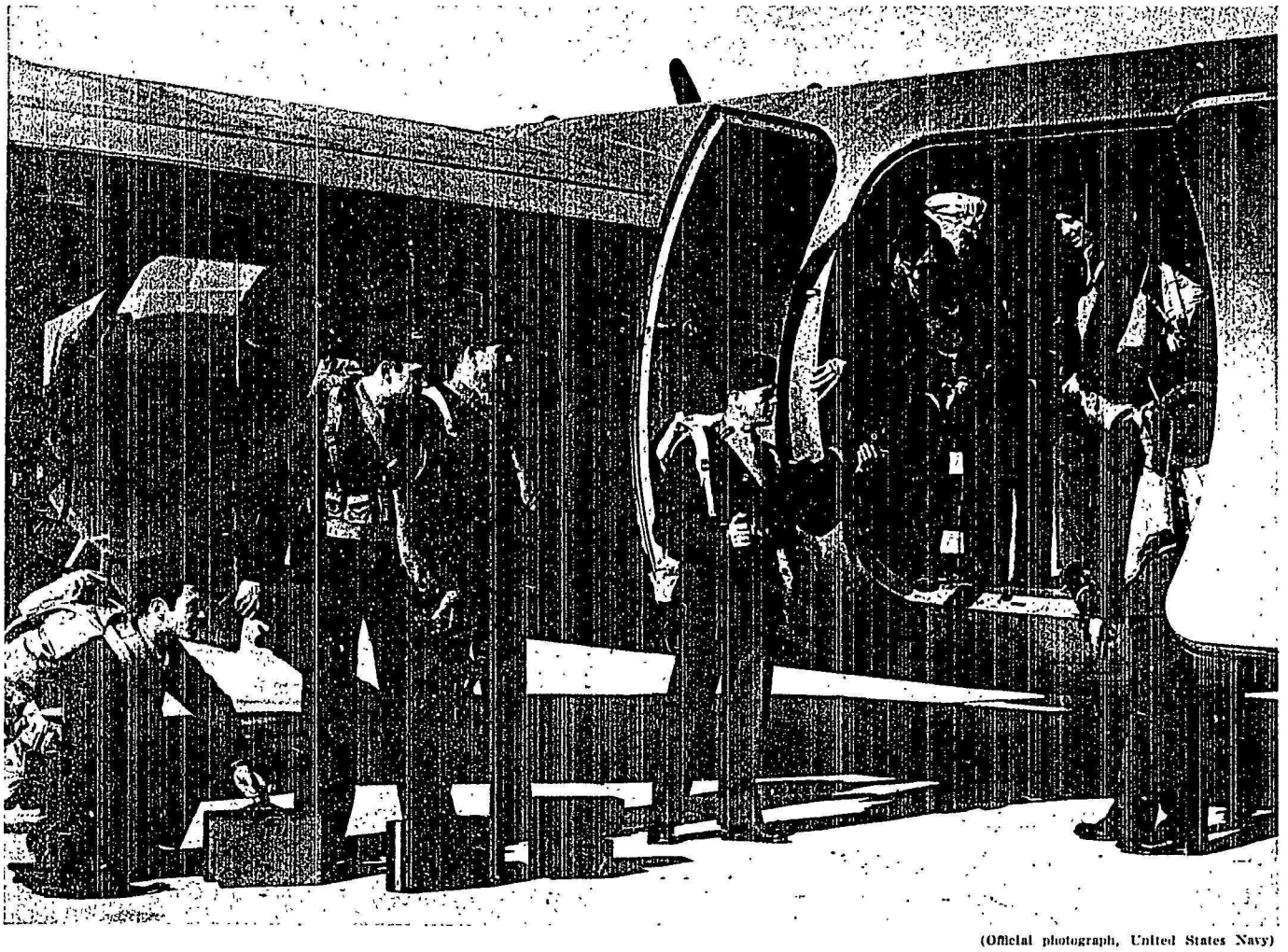


(Official photograph, United States Navy)

Marine Corps Units, with their supplies and equipment, are transported in these transport planes.

Command Post Procedure

By Major Robert E. Cushman, Jr., U.S.M.C.

General

In searching through the various professional texts on this subject, it became apparent that no concise and complete procedure with full and detailed information had been compiled. Doctrine, general rules, and principles were laid down in a number of books, but no answer could be found to many problems which arose in practice. This article, therefore, is a compilation of the information found in the field manuals shown in the bibliography below and learned from lessons of trial and error in the field.

This treatment of the subject will necessarily be limited in scope, since there is a command post for each headquarters and different tactical situations for each. We will deal with the battalion command post in a fast moving attack. If the command post functions properly in this situation, it will operate more easily in any other, except withdrawal. One other point to be borne in mind is that this procedure has not been tested in combat; however, it has been tried in field exercises and only minor changes should have to be made when the test of battle is met.

Establishment

The command post, or CP, is the nerve center of the battalion. As such it contains the headquarters and all the agencies of signal communication. It must operate continuously. With these considerations in mind, we can pick the ideal site for the CP. The axis of signal communication is prescribed beforehand by the higher commander in most cases, a frequent exception being landing operations. This is done by naming from front to rear the successive locations of the battalion CP.

These locations are determining points and are usually easily located landmarks. The site for the CP should be close enough to the designated location to be easily found, yet far enough away not to suffer from artillery fire directed at the landmark (about 200 yards). It should be well forward to avoid early displacement, (300-500 yards in rear of the front line troops), close to a good observation post, under cover and concealment, protected by natural obstacles from mechanized attack, accessible both as to distance and terrain to routes of communication to higher and subordinate units. It is obvious that seldom will these ideal conditions be obtained. Priority should then be given to cover and concealment, as the other factors can be made to fit if necessary. Concealment from air observation, and cover from air attack are vital.

Having selected the site, let us consider now the arrangement of the CP. This is the responsibility of the adjutant, acting in close cooperation with the communication officer. The message center is located where it can be easily found by incoming messengers without interference to other installations. The messenger station is within calling distance of the message center. The radio station should be within 200 yards of the message center in an area affording space for the antenna and freedom from interference. The switchboard is installed so as to be convenient to incoming wire circuits. Two telephones are installed—one in the CP for the use of the commander and his staff, the other in the observation post, or OP, which is forward of the CP on high ground from which it can command a view of the battlefield. If the situation is extremely fast moving, the switchboard may be eliminated and the two phones hooked directly to the regimental wire as a party line.

All elements of the command post are well separated to avoid destruction of more than one by a single bomb or shell burst. The transportation necessary for the command post should be kept concealed in a location such that if detected it would not reveal the location of the command post. If a panel display, dropping ground, and pick up field is to be used, it should be on fairly level ground, of an open nature, within 200 yards of the radio station. It may be impossible to combine the pick up field with the other two because of the long free approach necessary for this operation (at least 300 yards). The various staff sections are placed within convenient distance of the commander's phone, but dispersed for safety.

Operation

In taking up the operation of the command post, we will consider signal communication first. This is divided into three branches; wire, radio and visual, and message center. The technical problems are well covered in FM 24-5, and we will merely mention a few points here which are most frequently misunderstood.

There is a tendency to use the radio too much. Staff officers are prone to use the handphone personally and carry on conversations over it. It must be remembered that messages in the clear may be sent over the radio only on the authority of the commanding officer, in writing. This precludes much use of radio between the CP and the companies, since in a fast moving attack there is no time to encode messages and the companies do not have decoders available. It will be found also that interference and other factors make it impossible to maintain contact with the small portable sets. Then, too, use of the radio will bring artillery fire down upon the command post and will give the enemy important information on the distribution and location of our front line units, through his direction finders. Maximum use of the radio should be made on the march, in pursuit, and for air-ground communication. In the use of wire, only that between the CP and the OP is laid by the battalion in the attack. It was found during field exercises to be highly advantageous to have the following organization at the OP: Observers from the intelligence section as designated by Bn-2, two linemen with a reel of wire for instant shifting of the OP forward, and a visual signalman. The commander and his runner will also usually be at the OP. The OP, in addition, was used as an advance message center. For urgent mesages, the runners came to the OP and phoned their messages in to the CP. The wire was utilized, too, to guide runners from the assault companies back to the CP. Visual signalling is not used to the limit of its capabilities. At least two men from each platoon should be trained in this job. The extremely important task of sending information from front to rear is enormously simplified by this means in many cases. A good signalling station can often be found behind a crest from which messages can be semaphored to the OP, thence relayed by phone to the CP. In some types of terrain the messages can profitably be relayed back to the CP by visual. Aldis lights (blinker tubes) may also be used, although the procurement and training of personnel is more difficult in this case.

We now come to one of the most important points in the operation of the command post—the message center and the messengers. The message center is responsible for the receipt, transmission, and delivery of all messages, except: Local messages within the staff, incoming messages by special messenger, and messages handled by postal service. With a properly functioning message center, a staff officer needs only to write out his message in duplicate and send it to the message center via the adjutant. Incoming messages, by other than scheduled messengers, go direct to the addressee. (Scheduled runners might be used by regiment, but a battalion command post would deal practically entirely with special messengers.) Messengers are of two classes: those sent to the CP by subordinate units (one from each company upon the development of the company), and those organically included in the message center section of Headquarters Company. All should be trained together, an important point often overlooked. The two classes of messengers are not pooled in operation, however. Those sent from the companies are used to run messages to their unit. Those belonging to the message center proper are used to run messages to higher or adjacent units and for work within the headquarters. All messengers should be instructed by the message center chief

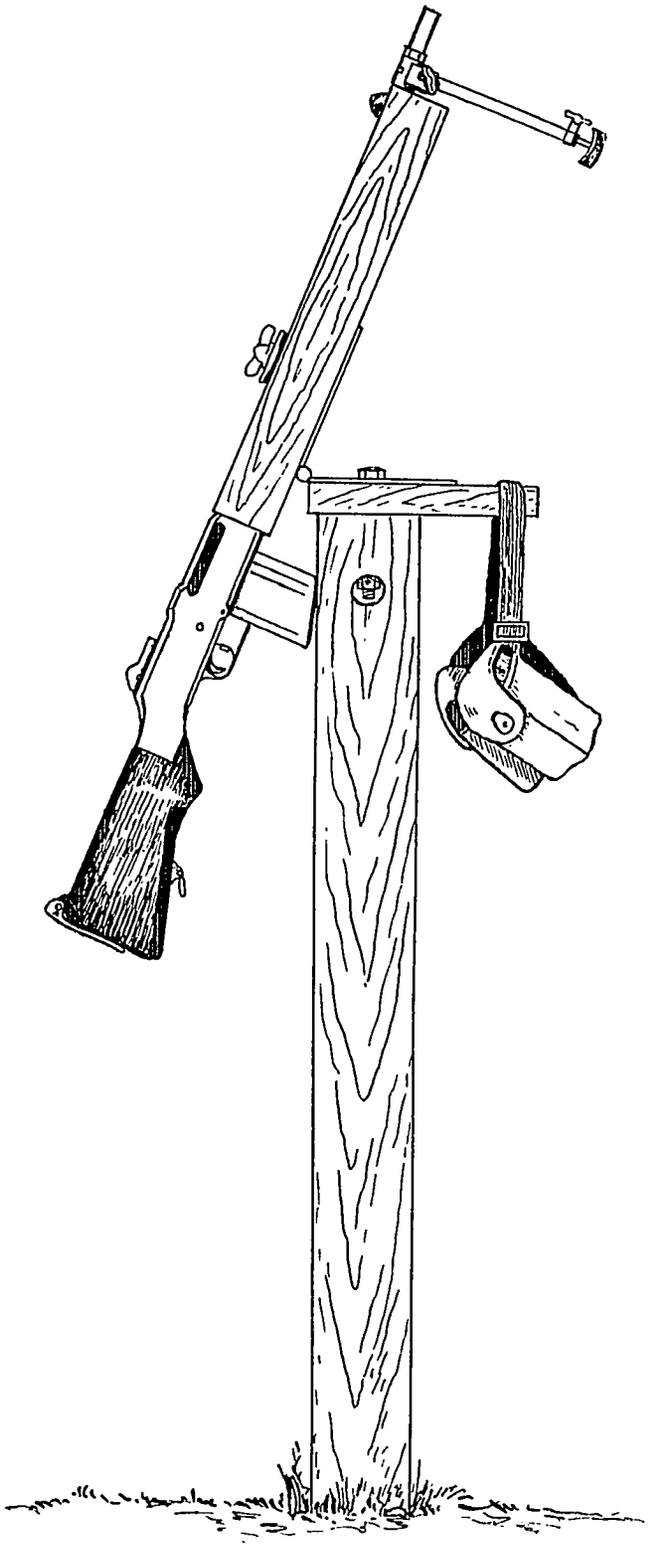
(*Continued on page 57*)

AN ANTIAIRCRAFT MOUNT

(*Continued from page* 21)

this may assist rapid traversing, but the piece can be easily pointed without it.

Details of the mount are shown both in the full-view and detailed sketches. As can be seen, it consists of a fitted sleeve, within which the rifle is locked by a hasp and wing-nut, hinged to a rotating-block which, in turn, moves about a pintle (⅜" bolt) inset into a timber stanchion or post. The sleeve is fitted to receive the forearm, and is notched to permit free circulation from the gas-escape ports. It will be noted that neither the hasp nor the locking-nut obstructs the sighting-axis of the weapon.



Within a defense battalion, mounts of this type can readily be constructed for every automatic rifle, without appreciably increasing the unit's bulk of equipment, and, although tests have not been made, it would appear entirely possible to improvise such mounts for shipboard-use so that landing-force automatic rifles could add to the volume of fire against diving attack, particularly in the case of converted merchantmen, or auxiliaries whose defensive installations are not so formidable as those of combatant vessels.

COMMAND POST PROCEDURE

(*Continued from page* 19)

in the routes to all headquarters involved, however, in order that each may be used for any purpose in case of emergency.

The staff sections must also function in the CP. The duties and responsibilities of each are set forth in FM 101-5, nevertheless, it would be well to stress a few points. Bn-1, assisted by the sergeant major, keeps the unit journal. He should have cognizance of each message, incoming as well as outgoing. Normally this is done by routing the outgoing messages through him except in cases of emergency. In the latter instance, Bn-1 should be informed by the writer so that he may consult the message center files for the needed information. Incoming messages should be given to Bn-1 by the addressee, who receives and reads it, for logging in the unit journal and for staff distribution. In the receipt of phone messages, the person taking the call is responsible for its inclusion in the journal. Bn-1's post should be near the message center. Intelligence and operations (the 2 and 3 sections) work in close cooperation and near each other. Between them they keep the situation and operations map, separate or combined, as desired by the commander. From them the commander, or Bn-X, his representative, obtains the information needed for the periodic reports required by regiment. Bn-4 will not normally operate in the CP. He should, however, ap-

pear at least once a day to determine what the commander desires in the way of supplies and ammunition to be brought up during the night, and at other times when sent for.

The liaison officer performs an important task—the connection between units to promote cooperation and coordination of effort by personal contact. Of the two liaison officers alloted a battalion, one is sent to regiment and the other my be used as a relief for the first, or for liaison with any subordinate or adjacent unit. A liaison officer must be experienced in staff work and have the confidence of both commanding officers under whom he operates. A sound knowledge of tactics is a prerequisite, and training in the duties of a liaison officer must be acquired before taking the field for combat. These duties, like those of other staff officers, will be found in FM 101-5. One of the most important of these is the transmission of operations orders. In time of stress and urgent haste, only the most fragmentary orders may have to be relayed, and developed through his intimate knowledge of the entire situation, by the liaison officer. The British, as well as our own Army, is using this method quite extensively.

Reports and paper work required of the staff during the attack will be few but important. The most important is the situation and operations map, kept up to date and as correct as possible from the data contained in the incoming combat reports and messages of the assault companies. Then comes the rendering of the reports on the situation as called for by regiment. A combat report certainly will be required every hour, and a periodic report may be called for at specified intervals. The unit journal, which forms the permanent record of events occurring at the headquarters, must be kept by Bn-1. All of these reports should be made under the general supervision of the executive officer. The forms and a description of their use may be found in FM 101-5 and Marine Corps Schools' pamphlets on Intelligence, and Staff Functions.

Displacement

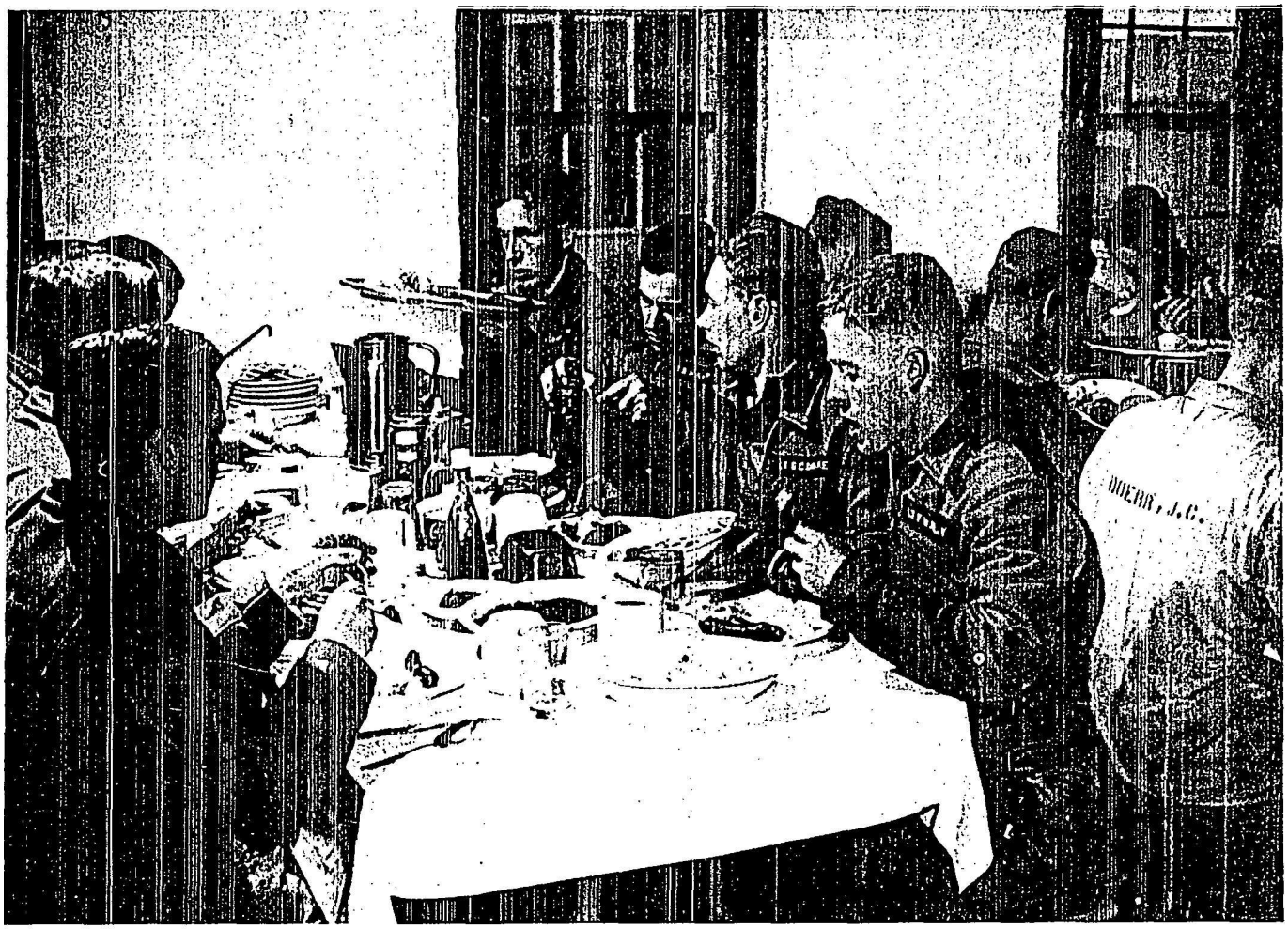
Displacing the command post forward is a difficult and delicate operation and requires good team work and practice. It should be done if possible when the attack has paused on a phase line for reorganization. The decision to shift the command post rests with the commander. He indicates the location on the axis of signal communication, given to him in orders by the higher commander in most cases, for the new CP. Its new location is near a point named on the axis. Points on the battalion axis will be between 500 and 1,500 yards apart in an attack. The forward echelon of the communication platoon, consisting of one non-commissioned officer and one messenger from the message center section, two linemen with switchboard, one telephone orderly with phone, and an advance wire laying detail (if this detail is not already forward) is sent out to the new location of the CP immediately upon receipt of the order to move. Bn-1 and the communication officer then go forward (passing the above detail on their way) and pick the exact spot, issuing the necessary instructions to the forward echelon of the communication platoon upon the latter's arrival at the new CP. When the installations are complete, the communication officer notifies the staff officer in charge at the old CP (either Bn-3 or Bn-X) and, when ordered, opens signal communications at the new site and closes them at the old. The communication chief then brings the second echelon of the communication platoon to the new CP, leaving a guide at the old to direct any messengers to the new location. All units are notified of the change in CP. Those of the staff who were left at the old CP now move forward. Since, in an attack, the commander is usually at the OP, either Bn-X or Bn-3 must stay at the old CP during the shift to make decisions in accordance with the policy of the commander, to supervise the functioning of the skeleton staff of the old CP, and to keep in touch with the commander and with subordinate units. It will be noted in the above discussion that the advance wire laying detail may already be forward. This is the group at the OP. By this means the commander may shift his OP independently of the CP, or it can be done at the same time if he so desires. On many occasions it will be possible to put the new CP in defilade behind the crest which was the site of the OP, and in this manner use a great deal of wire which has already been laid.

In addition to the definitions already given, it may be said that the CP is the post of the forward echelon of the Headquarters Company. The division between forward and rear echelon should be made a matter of standing operating procedure. In general, the supply section is to the rear while the intelligence and operations sections together with the communication platoon and the intelligence section are forward. However, all of the personnel listed as being forward are not in the CP as their duties take them elsewhere in the forward one. (OP personnel for instance.) The headquarters detachment is divided so that Bn-3 and Bn-1 will each have a clerk; the other members of the office force are sent to the rear to aid in the preparation of routine reports and paper work.

The division might be made as follows, using Tables of Organization figures: (It should be noted that some of the men in the intelligence section and communication platoon, and eight men from the medical section will not actually be in the CP but out on duty in the forward zone.)

Forward		*Rear*	
CO	1	Bn-4	1
Bn-X	1	Cooks	2
Bn-1	1	Drivers	4
Bn-2	1	Clerk	1
Bn-3	1	Hq Co Hq	14
Comm Off	1	Supply sect	6
Liaison Off (1 sent to regt)	2	Med sect (Aid sta & litter bearers)	12
Sgt Maj	1		
Sgt clerk	1		
Cpl clerk	1		
Other duty	2		
Int sect (4 at OP, at least 2 with assault cos.)	12		
Comm plat (Attached to cos.)	40		
Med sect	8		

(The number of people actually at the CP will be about 50. No person not essential to its operation should be



"Down on the Jo and Side-Arms" means in Leatherneck slang, "Please pass the Coffee, Milk and Sugar."

allowed anywhere near it—this applies particularly to the support company and to the mortar platoon who will often set up right near the CP if not instructed to keep away.)

In addition to the above division, the forward echelon must itself be divided in order that the command post may operate on a 24-hour basis. This requires the separation of the forward echelon into two groups or teams. The staff and the communication facilities are divided in this fashion. In the staff, the composition of the two teams is decided by the commander, but in general one team is composed of Bn-X and Bn-2, while the other consists of Bn-1 and Bn-3. The two clerks in the forward echelon should each be prepared to operate as directed or required, watch on and watch off. Bn-4 must function mostly at night, hence he is not included in either of the teams. It is apparent from the foregoing that each staff officer must be completely informed as to the situation at all times. To effect this he must continually consult the situation and operations map and the unit journal.

Now a paragraph on special training of some of the personnel. First, as already mentioned, at least two men in each platoon should be trained in visual signalling. Next come the messengers, the primary means of intro-battalion signal communication. Those who report from the companies are usually woefully ignorant of their duties, and it is these men whom we must train. A man who can find his way from the sergeant major's office to regimental headquarters in the barracks is not necessarily a good runner in the field. Messengers for field duty should receive their instruction with those messengers who operate with the message center section, and their studies should include map reading, scouting and patrolling, use of the compass, transmission of messages, oral and written, and observation and reporting of troop movements. In the staff sections, there should be a clerk especially trained in writing operations orders and mak-

ing overlays to work with Bn-3, and a clerk trained in making entries in the unit journal for duty with Bn-1. Then each clerk should be trained in the duties of the other so that they can stand watches. If these clerks can learn shorthand it will prove invaluable. It will be noted that none of these duties correspond with those performed in the barracks, hence special training is necessary for these personnel. It will likewise be found that it is greatly helpful to prepare mimeographed forms for the various reports required before going into the field. Work difficult to perform in combat is thus cut down immensely.

Defense of the Command Board

Our next topic is one only mentioned in the most general terms in the professional texts—defense of the command post. In a fast moving attack, which is the situation we are considering, the proximity of the assault units and their forward movement give protection against infantry attack. Men must be on the alert against hostile infiltraters, however. Danger from air and mechanized units is ever present. It might be desirable to provide in the Tables of Organization a command post anti-aircraft and anti-tank platoon, however, we do not have one, hence must make other provisions. The battalion anti-tank platoon of the weapons company is assigned the mission of frontal anti-tank security and its weapons must be maintained in as close proximity to the attacking echelon as possible; it does not, therefore, protect the CP except indirectly. This indirect protection should be given consideration, however, in the tactical employment of the AT platoon. It is felt that the battalion command post is too close to the front lines to offer a suitable separate objective for mechanized attack, other than incidental to some other mission, but security can never be relaxed. The new anti-tank rifle may prove an answer to the problem posed here. The CP is most vulnerable to attack from the air. Security is obtained first by cover and concealment, second by the fire of automatic weapons. Cover should include the construction of slit trenches by all personnel. Installations in Libya have been reported attacked as often as thirteen times in one day from the air without a casualty when each man is dug in. Passive protection is thus very important. Active protection can best be provided under our present organization by posting a couple of reserve machine guns, or BAR's, around the CP. The few men listed as "other duty" in headquarters company must be taught to man these weapons. It is imperative that sentries and well recognized alarms for each type of attack are specified within the headquarters unit so that all may disperse and take cover in slit trenches in case of attack, and the active defense alerted. In short, there should be definite provisions made within the CP for its defense, even though it may be regarded as quite secure by reason of the assault troops around it, and even though most of the personnel of the CP are armed with rifles. Small determined groups of men have infiltrated and disrupted command posts many times in this war. We must not allow this to happen to us.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this monograph may be used as a sort of standing operating procedure for those units who have yet to take the field. By using this procedure, many mistakes and disruptions can be avoided and any changes found necessary will be minor and can be made easily. The command post must function properly and smoothly as it is the nerve center of any operation. Team work and practice are the keynotes in attaining the ideal. When the command post fails to function, the battalion is blinded, and errors become cumulative as they go on to each higher headquarters. With a properly operating command post, a coordinated and aggressive attack is possible; without one, only confusion and unintegrated individual efforts result.

Bibliography: FM 7-5, 7-25, 7-40, 26-5, 100-5, 100-10 101-5; MCS Pamphlets—Intelligence Staff Functions.

THE FUTURE OF THE DEFENSE BATTALION

(*Continued from page* 15)

poses of rotation with the two divisional battalions. The divisional battalions would take part in all FMF maneuvers carrying out the tactical roles that have been previously outlined, and the additional battalion, acting as a feeder, would garrison some designated training-center.

The idea of a base-defense artillery training-center is one which demands attention. Anyone who has seen considerable service in base-defense units knows the confusion and turmoil which follows the arrival of a draft of recruits. While the same condition obtains in any military organization in such circumstances, it is particularly marked in a defense battalion because of the highly technical nature of its materiel. Which are the potential strereo-readers and instrument-operators? How to explain an M4 director to 8th-grade graduates? When will the reshuffled loading-crews be able to shoot without jumping ten feet into the air at the first discharge? Can we make this ex-ribbon clerk a tractor-driver? And so on. Preliminary sifting (including proper classification-tests to determine the intelligent, the mechanically apt and the optically gifted), followed by intensive basic training in the weapons and materiel of base-defense artillery would enable defense battalions to take the field and defense-forces to hold their positions with much higher efficiency. For the officers of the Base Defense Weapons Class at Marine Corps Schools, such a training-center would be a Godsend as Hilton Head has often been when defense battalions have been in occupancy, for it would enable the future officers of base-defense artillery to see a complete battalion in operation, and to learn first hand, not only the technique of employment of the battalion and of all weapons, but the most efficient training-methods as well. For this proposed center, one to whom Hilton Head furnished his first practical schooling in base-defense artillery may be pardoned for suggesting that island as ideal, with its facilities for a healthful and comfortable camp (rattlesnakes and all) and its remote beaches for all types of artillery-firing.

In summary, the future of the defense battalion, as such, would appear to lie in its evolution into a more