

Fire Support

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The third in a series

THE FIRE SUPPORT CONCEPT, ORGANIZATION AND weapons of the M Tables represent a significant evolutionary step forward toward the full realization of the Marine Corps' modern amphibious doctrine. With the weapons, communications and other equipment available today, and within the next few years, the M Tables provide the fire support required by Marine infantry on a modern amphibious battlefield. To meet the foreseen fire support needs of this period, the M Tables have provided a fire support system which emphasizes versatility and speed of response to the infantry's fire support needs.

The greatest changes in organization and tactical employment in the fire support system are found in the artillery. The artillery is now organized to fight as task-organized battery and battalion sized groupments of varying calibers and types of weapons instead of in rigid T/O-battalion organizations. As a result, the battery, rather than the battalion, has become the basic fire support unit. While the battalion, as a T/O command organization, has been retained in the artillery regiment, it has been eliminated in Force artillery. The battalion organization was retained in the regiment because of the necessity for intimately relating the artillery organization to that of the infantry its supports.

Every battery in both the regiment and Force artillery is now capable of operating independently of a battalion or group headquarters. It has the means to provide its own observation, communications, prepare its own firing data and provide its own supply and organizational maintenance. Batteries

are further sub-divided into platoons which can also prepare their own firing data and have varying degrees of self-sufficiency in other areas.

In the artillery regiment the Close Support Battery has 8 heavy mortars (105mm or 120mm) divided into 2 platoons of 4 mortars each. Each platoon has a platoon fire direction center (FDC). The battery commander and his fire direction officer (FDO) establish the battery FDC at the infantry battalion CP. The 4 forward observer sections in the battery operate with the battalion's rifle companies. This organization of the Close Support Battery

The Battalion Headquarters Battery is now tactical (and administrative) only.

enables it to engage simultaneously 2 targets in different sectors of the infantry battalion's front. It can also provide continuous fire support to the infantry, even while displacing, through its ability to leap frog its platoons.

Locating the battery CP and FDC at the infantry battalion CP insures that there is the highest possible degree of integration of infantry and artillery plans, operations, intelligence and communications. By establishing continuous command liaison between the infantry and artillery, it eliminates the need for an artillery liaison officer and party at the infantry CP. The artillery battery FDC provides the ideal location

for the infantry battalion fire support co-ordination center (FSCC). This will facilitate the collection and exchange of target information and provide a higher and more intimate degree of fire support co-ordination than ever before.

Task organization of supporting artillery can now start right at the Close Support Battery level. Newly developed gunnery and fire direction techniques, which have made the new battery organization possible, enable another platoon of any kind or caliber of artillery to be attached to the battery.

The Battalion Headquarters Battery is now tactical (and administrative) only. It no longer provides any maintenance or supply support to the Close Support Batteries. Its FDC is established within the infantry regimental CP to provide the same close and intimate working relationship at the regiment-battalion level that is achieved at the battalion-battery level. The battalion FDC no longer prepares firing data for its batteries as it has done in the past.

Its fire direction responsibilities are now tactical in nature, similar to what we have been accustomed to only at artillery regimental level in the past. The battalion exercises fire direction over its organic and attached batteries through the maneuver and massing of their fires and the assignment of targets. It plans close and general support fires to support the regiment as a whole in accordance with the regimental commander's tactical plan. It is responsible for countermortar intelligence and operations.

The Close Support Battalion CO coordinates and controls the emplacement of all artillery units under his command to insure that the artillery deployment is

always in accordance with the infantry regimental commander's tactical plan.

Now that the battalion FDC is no longer involved in the preparation of firing data, it may easily control the fires of additional reinforcing or attached batteries from regiment or Force artillery. It may exercise fire direction over as many as 6 batteries of any kind or caliber. This permits us, for the first time, to have truly task-organized artillery fire support at the infantry regimental level.

The fires of attached or reinforcing batteries may be controlled at the battalion level or, when the situation so dictates, platoons or batteries may be attached to Close Support Batteries. The ability to task-organize all kinds and types of artillery at the Close Support Battalion level, in conjunction with the high order of mobility of the artillery, enables the artillery to provide the supported infantry commander whatever type or kind of fire support he needs at any given moment on the battlefield.

Because continuous command liaison is now established between the infantry regiment and its Close Support Battalion, the need for artillery liaison officers and liaison party at the infantry regiment is eliminated. Again, the artillery battalion FDC provides the ideal location for establishing the infantry regimental FSCC.

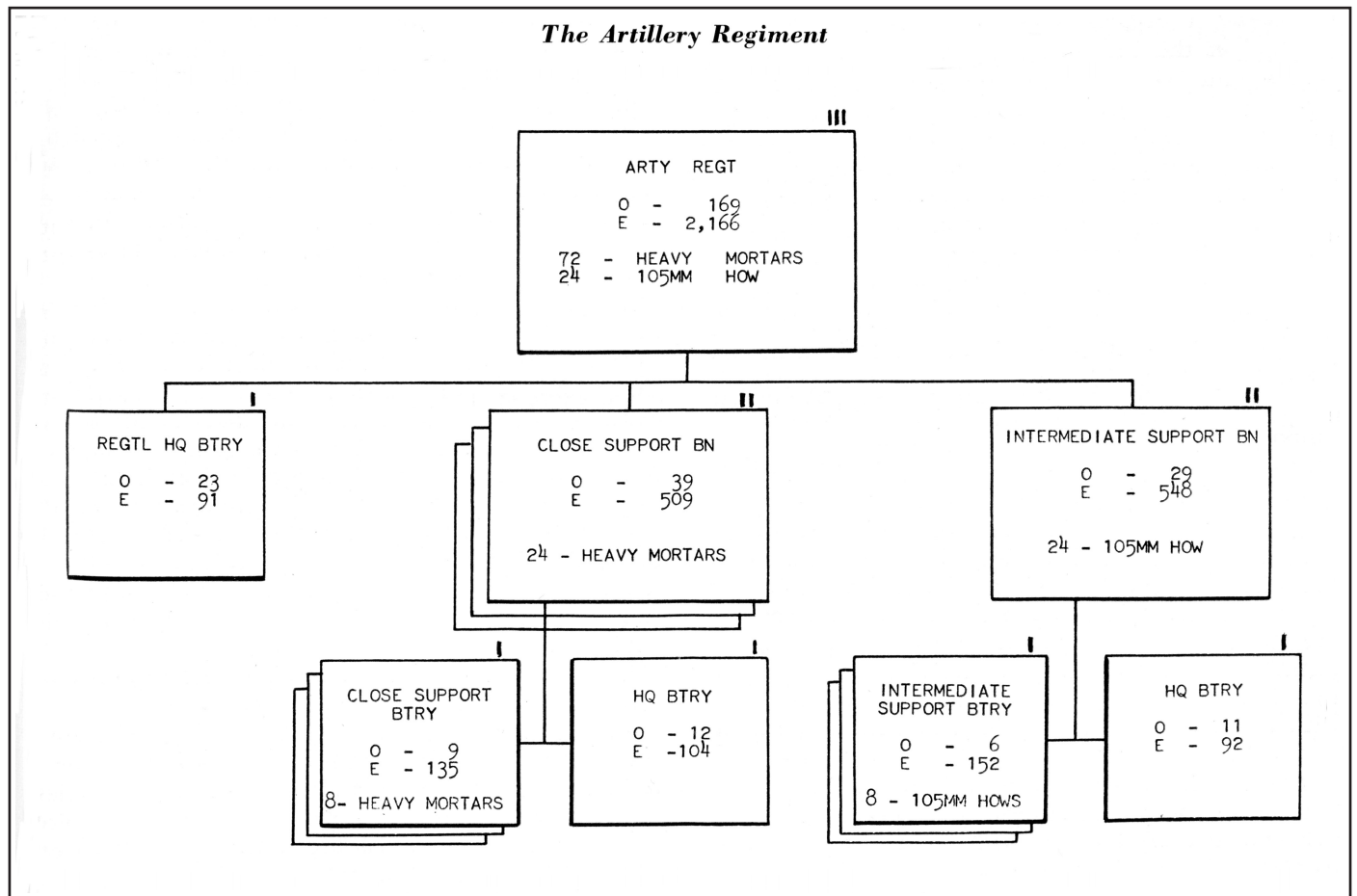
The Intermediate Support Battalion, with its three 105mm howitzer batteries, is organized similarly to the Close Support Battalion. The battalion may be employed as a unit to provide general support or reinforcing type fires to the division as a whole. When the situation so dictates, platoons or batteries of the battalion may be attached to Close Support Battalions. When not attached, batteries would normally have a mission of reinforcing the fires of one or more Close Support Battalions. Through the decentralization of data preparation from the battalion to the battery level, we are able to attach batteries of Force artillery to the Intermediate Support

Battalion to give weight and depth to its fires. The battalion can control the fires of up to 6 batteries.

The artillery Regimental Headquarters Battery is again tactical only, the same as the new infantry Regimental Headquarters Company. It provides no maintenance or supply support function to its battalions. Its fire direction function remains tactical in nature as in the past. However, because of the newly gained ability to create and dissolve artillery task organizations of both regimental and Force artillery batteries within the regiment, the regimental FDC will now have a much larger concern than in the past with the frequent maneuver and assignment of missions to artillery units in the division area.

On a modern battlefield of rapidly changing situations, regiment must constantly insure that the deployment of the available artillery meets the fire support needs of each infantry commander and the division as a whole. The counter-battery mission, which was formerly a

The Artillery Regiment



Force artillery responsibility, will now become a regimental responsibility and be one of the major fire direction and intelligence tasks of the regiment.

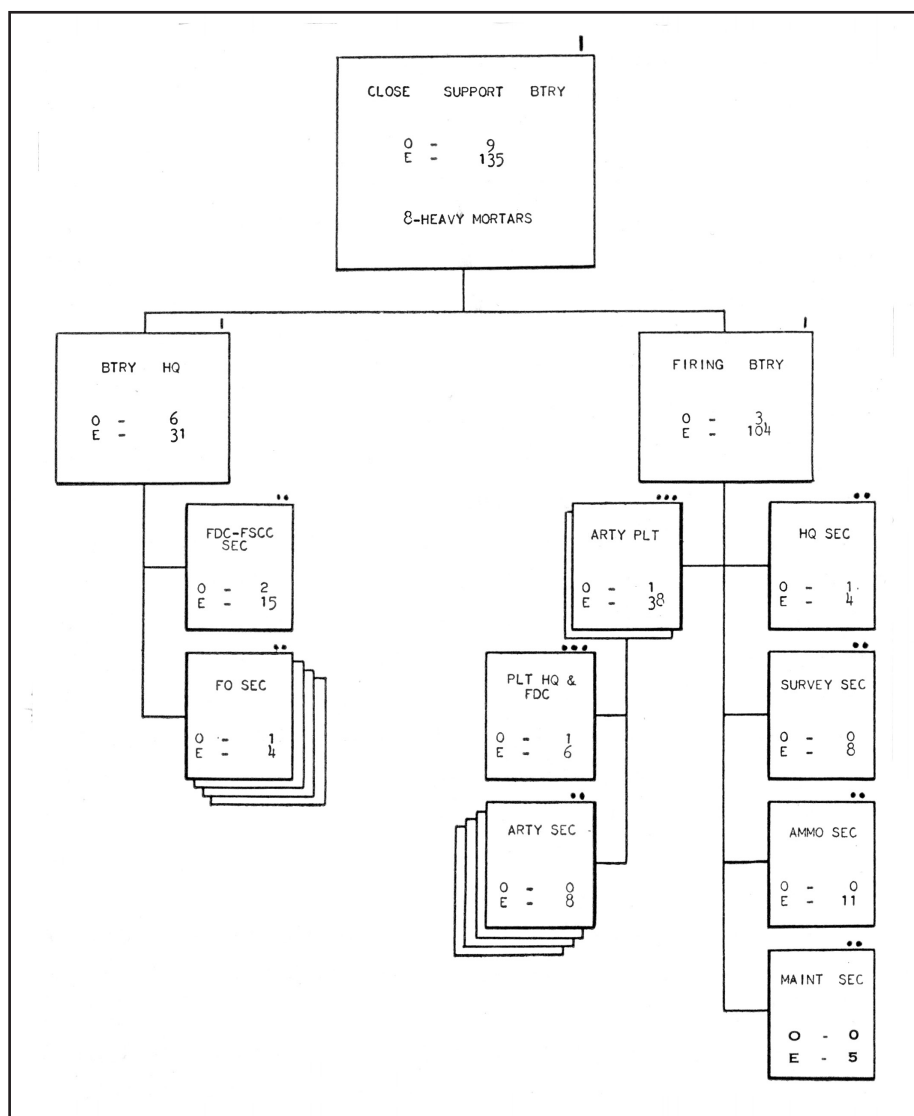
The regimental FDC is capable of controlling and maneuvering the fires of attached Force artillery batteries or groups which are not further assigned to its battalions.

The regimental CP provides a suitable location for an alternate division CP. The regimental commander may establish his FDC at either the division CP or his own CP, depending on the wishes of the division commander and the tactical and communications situation at any given time. When the artillery regimental FDC is established at the division CP, the same intimate working relationship between regiment and division is established as we have at the battery-battalion and battalion-regimental level.

In this case, the artillery FDC provides the ideal location for the division FSCC. When this situation prevails, the Regimental Headquarters Battery T/O provides for a small alternate FDC-FSCC section which remains at the artillery CP to work with the assistant division commander and division staff members at the alternate division CP. If the regimental FDC is established at the artillery CP, this alternate FDC-FSCC group will be located at the division CP to provide the nucleus for the division FSCC.

The artillery regiment now has 96 tubes as opposed to 72 tubes in the L Tables, regiment. This, in large part, numerically offsets the loss of 36 4.2-inch mortar tubes from the 3 infantry regiments. The net result should be an increase rather than a decrease in the fire support available to the infantry as a result of the many advantages gained through the new organization, tactics and techniques of the artillery regiment.

The replacement of the 105mm howitzer with the 105mm mortar or 120mm mortar in the Close Support Battalion, and of the 155mm howitzer with the 105mm howitzer Intermediate Support Battalion, has resulted in a loss of range and destructive capability in the regiment. This sacrifice had to be made if the artillery of the division was to be able to embark, land and fight



The close support battery. All other batteries follow the same organizational principle, with appropriate changes for differing missions, weapons, etc.

with the division's infantry in a modern amphibious assault.

This deficiency can be overcome largely through the new ability to task organize longer range, heavier caliber force artillery batteries with the artillery regiment whenever the situation permits. This course of action appears feasible for the years just ahead. The development of a greatly improved close support weapon over the present heavy mortars will also do much to rectify this deficiency. The prospects for the early development of such a weapon appear promising at the present.

Radio and radio-relay have become the primary means of communication

within the regiment. The only tactical wire net remaining is that in the Close Support Battery. This net interconnects the forward observers and battery and platoon FDCs. Designated channels on the division to infantry regiment radio relay circuits are reserved for use between the regiment and the Close Support Battalions. Additional channels on the infantry-regiment-to-infantry-battalion circuits are reserved for use between the Close Support Battalion and its batteries. Separate radio relay circuits are established between the regiment and the Intermediate Support Battalion and between the regimental CP and the division CP.

Prompt, effective close air support is an indispensable element of our new amphibious doctrine. Accordingly, the M Tables have improved our capability to employ close air support as an element of the division's fire support system. The addition of a second forward air controller (FAC) to each battalion tactical air control party (TACP) has greatly increased our ability to provide close air support to infantry battalions. Proper deployment of these two FACs, in conjunction with the ability to use the battalion air liaison officer as a controller when necessary, will enable the battalion to be able to use close air support more quickly and frequently than in the past.

Our ability to provide all-weather close air support to the division has also been increased by the addition of a third Air Support Radar Team (ASRT) to the Marine Air Support Squadron. Operating under the control of the Direct Air Support Center (DASC) these teams will ensure that the division, even though fighting on very broad fronts, will have adequate close air support under all conditions of visibility. The addition of this third ASRT is of especial significance in connection with the division's ability to obtain the precise delivery of air delivered atomic munitions at all times.

The use of atomic munitions in the preparation of the objective area, combined with a reduced necessity to assault a fortified beach, will reduce the requirement for gunfire support from World War II standards. Much deeper initial penetrations and deeper beachheads will limit the ability of naval gunfire to support the assault and seizure of many objectives. The wider dispersal of ships off-shore, as a passive defense measure against atomic attack, also limits the amount of gunfire support available. As a result of these factors, infantry battalions will often be beyond the range of gunfire support, or not always have gunfire support ships available.

Therefore, the infantry battalion no longer has its own organic shore fire control party (SFCP). Each Close Support Battalion now has 2 SFCPs and a Naval Gunfire Liaison Team in the Headquarters Battery. Each SFCP

has a spotting team and a liaison team. When the infantry regiment the battalion is supporting is able to use naval gunfire, SFCP are attached to batteries in support of battalions that are able to use naval gunfire. If an additional team should be needed, it may be obtained from one of the Close Support Battalions not using its parties. When the SFCP are not being used to conduct gunfire they may be used as additional forward observer teams with patrols or outposts or to man artillery OPs.

The naval gunfire liaison team which remains at the artillery battalion FDC to work in the infantry regimental FSCC does not contain a naval gunfire liaison officer, but only the necessary naval gunfire communications personnel. The training and experience of the Close Support Battalion CO and his staff will provide the necessary degree of competence to properly advise the infantry regimental commander on the use of naval gunfire support. The fact that the SFCP is an organic part of the artillery battalion in training and fight-

... the infantry battalion no longer has its own organic shore fire control party (SFCP) ...

ing will result in everyone concerned having a much better understanding of the capabilities, limitations, use and techniques of each of these two fire support arms and result in a more efficient and better co-ordinated use of them on the battlefield. At division level, a division naval gunfire officer remains a member of the division special staff. Naval gunfire radar beacon teams are still located in the division Communication Company.

The modern doctrine for amphibious operations and tactical atomic warfare has rendered obsolete much of our past organization and doctrine for the employment of Force (Corps) artillery type units. This has resulted from the wide and deep deployment

of both friendly and enemy forces, the new high order of mobility of the Marine division, the rapid tempo and fluidity of combat, the need to operate more intimately with division artillery and the requirement for readily available atomic fire support. These factors have dictated that Force artillery have a much higher degree of mobility, a greater degree of organizational flexibility and an inherent ability to work intimately with the various elements of the artillery regiment.

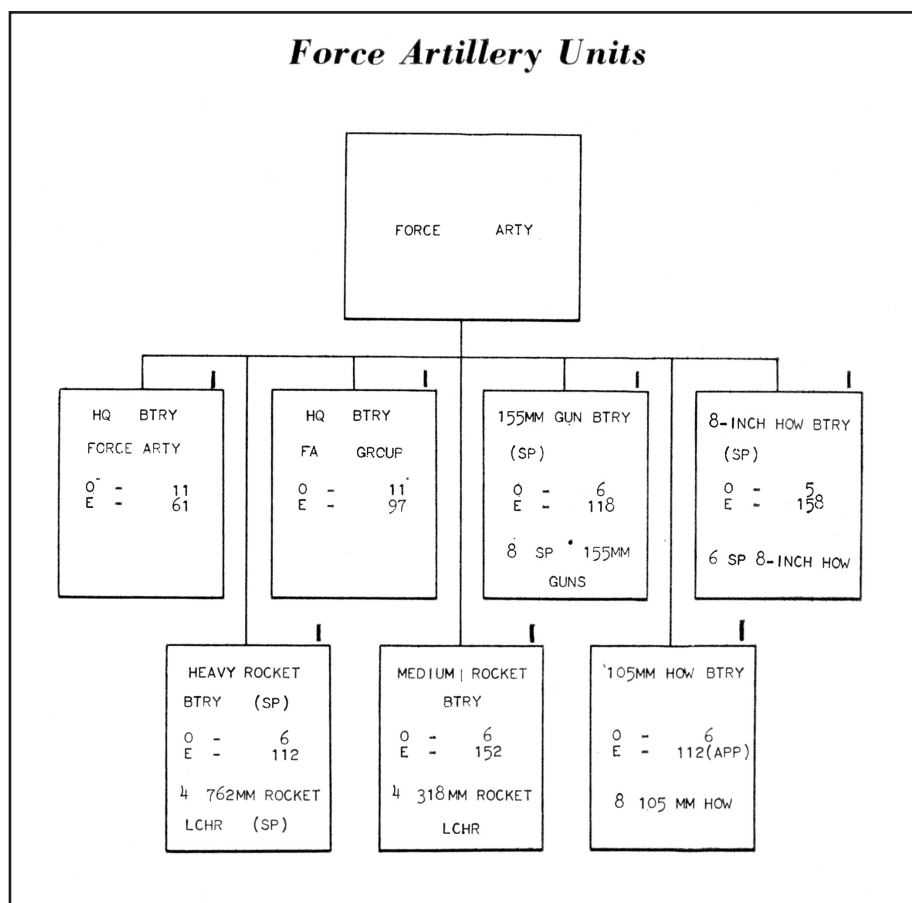
Accordingly, the battalion organization has been dropped from Force artillery. All Force artillery units are now organized as separate, independent batteries of varying calibers and types of weapons. All of these batteries are either self-propelled or helicopter transportable. All batteries are further subdivided into platoons in the same manner as the batteries of the artillery regiment. Batteries or platoons are capable of being attached to and working with the Close and Intermediate Support battalions or batteries of the artillery regiment.

Field Artillery Group Headquarters Batteries are included within the Force artillery structure to command and exercise fire direction over 2 or more Force artillery batteries having a common mission. Such groups may either operate attached to an artillery regiment, or under a Landing Force Artillery Headquarters Battery.

In an operation involving only one division and a limited amount of Force artillery, a Landing Force Artillery Headquarters Battery may not be present. The group would then be the highest echelon of Force artillery. In this case, the majority of the Force artillery would probably be attached to the artillery regiment, although some might be retained under the Force commander's control.

The Force artillery batteries are of the following types: self-propelled 155mm gun, self-propelled 8-inch howitzer, towed (helicopter transportable) 105mm howitzer, self-propelled (truck mounted) Honest John rocket and towed (helicopter transportable) Little John rocket. These various batteries provide the foreseen Force artillery requirements for mobility, range, high

Force Artillery Units



explosive neutralization and destruction capability and atomic delivery capability. Because they no longer meet specific needs for fire support, and only serve to complicate logistic support, the 155mm howitzer and 4.5-inch rocket have been dropped from the Marine Corps artillery organization.

The self-propelled 155mm gun batteries are organized into 8-gun batteries of two 4-gun platoons each. Batteries have the same general organizational structure as the division's batteries. The long range (25,000 yards) of these batteries serves in a considerable measure to alleviate the problems brought about by the loss of range in the artillery regiment's weapons. From carefully selected positions, these batteries are able to reach out and give powerful reinforcing fires to close support batteries and battalions. When moved well forward, their range enables them to reach deep into enemy territory and provide general support fires for infantry regiments or the division.

The 8-inch howitzer batteries are organized into 3 platoons of 2 guns each. Because 8-inch howitzers very seldom fire battery-type missions, the 2-gun platoon is considered adequate for their expected normal employment. Whenever battery fire missions for 8-inch howitzers are foreseen or needed, 2 or more platoons can be brought together. Or their fires may be massed if the platoons are within range of the target. When infantry units must operate against an enemy in prepared positions, the 8-inch howitzers provide the means for powerful, accurate destructive fire to destroy enemy fortifications or field works. Their range (18,000 yards) and tremendous power enable them to give decisive reinforcement to Close Support Battalions or batteries.

The self-propelled full-track mounts of the 155 guns and 8-inch howitzers give them a battlefield mobility far greater than any heavy artillery we have had in the past. They are able to go anywhere a tank can go.

Their speed, both on the road and across country, is many times greater than that of the tractor-towed version of these weapons. They can go in and out of position in a matter of minutes, instead of hours as in the case of the towed versions. While they have the same general on-carriage traverse as do the towed weapons, in effect they have a 360-degree field of fire because of their ability to shift guns in position in a matter of minutes instead of hours. They have a further valuable additional ability to act as a direct fire assault gun in support of infantry operating against fortified positions or in built-up areas. Their vulnerability to counter-battery fire is greatly reduced as compared to the towed weapons.

All of these features add up to make them weapons of the highest order of usefulness on our modern amphibious battlefield. Batteries or platoons of 155 guns and 8-inch howitzers as appropriate, appear to be suitable normal reinforcement for the fires of close support battalions with assault regiments. Other batteries or platoons of these weapons may be attached to the Intermediate Support Battalion or employed directly under regimental control. In an operation involving two or more divisions, additional 155mm gun and 8-inch howitzer batteries would probably be held and employed at force level in task organized artillery groups.

The Honest John and Little John rocket batteries are organized as 4 launcher batteries of 2 platoons of 2 launchers each. The 2-launcher platoon is used for the same reason as in the case of the 8-inch howitzer platoon. Again, both the battery and platoon FDCs are capable of planning for and executing atomic fire missions. The Honest John, being truck mounted, has a high degree of road mobility. The Little John, being helicopter transportable, can go anywhere assault infantry and close support artillery can go. Although these weapons were designed primarily for the delivery of atomic munitions, the development of extremely effective high explosive warheads for them gives them an added

utility which will greatly increase their value.

Rocket batteries will probably be controlled at artillery regimental level and employed on division missions, except when platoons are temporary-

the artillery regiment. Until such time as other Force-level helicopter transportable artillery weapons are developed, these howitzers provide the means to reinforce the division's artillery in a situation requiring helicopter movement.

The normal method of employment of these batteries will be by attachment to Close Support or Intermediate Support battalions to increase the division's helicopter transportable fire support capability.

ily assigned to a Close Support Battalion for specific missions. In large scale operations, some rocket batteries will be retained at Force level for employment.

A limited number of separate 105mm howitzer batteries are provided in the Force artillery. These batteries are identical in organization to those found in

The normal method of employment of these batteries will be by attachment to Close Support or Intermediate Support battalions to increase the division's helicopter transportable fire support capability.

The Force artillery organization provides us an extremely powerful and varied source of fire support to meet

almost any situation encountered in the amphibious assault. Its organizational structure permits it to be rapidly and readily task organized with regimental artillery units to meet the division's fire support needs. It further permits us, for the first time, to provide appropriate Force artillery units to brigade-size landing forces.

In summary, the M Table organization of regimental and Force artillery units and of the means for the planning, control and co-ordination of artillery, naval gunfire and close air support enhance their ability to support Marine infantry in modern amphibious combat. Infantry commanders at all echelons will benefit by having a greater variety of co-ordinated fire support instantly available to meet their needs.



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