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Artillery Divisions

MAJOR WILLIAM F. CATHRAE, *Field Artillery*

IT is generally admitted that the non-divisional artillery units "did their bit," and perhaps even a bit more, during the recent war. It is now generally admitted, also, that these units encountered more than their share of administrative grief because of a loose administrative control above the battalion level. Several boards of officers have made complete studies of the subject and have submitted recommendations ranging from the retention of the present setup of separate units to the organization of our non-divisional artillery units into divisions patterned after infantry divisions and composed of combined arms and services. Now is the time for us to look into our deficiencies and to take remedial action before the hard-learned lessons of the recent war are lost in the archives of our Service Schools.

Why is there the need to revise a system which performed so well during the war? The reason is that while the organization of the artillery *did* work tactically, it was administratively unsatisfactory. With the experience we have gained, we should now be able to eliminate some of our administrative difficulties and still retain our proven tactical ability.

To understand our problem better we should trace the history of our artillery since the end of World War I. During the years of peace, the infantry and the artillery grew further and further apart. The undesirable features of this were recognized by both infantry and artillery officers, and this realization led to the combat team formation, with the divisional artillery working hand-in-glove with the infantry. During the maneuvers of 1940 and 41 the combat team formation was thought to be the answer to all problems of tactical employment of the supported and supporting arms. The combat team was controlled administratively by the division headquarters staff. This headquarters was in very close touch with the combat teams and the tactical administrative control was a direct chain of command.

In the employment of his troops the corps commander was concerned primarily with his infantry divisions which were, as we have seen, composed of combat teams. The corps artillery (one field artillery brigade organic to each corps as authorized prior to 1943) was thought to have a very small place in our modern army of combat teams—each combat team being a self-sufficient, hard-hitting unit within itself. The tactical employment of the artillery was changed somewhat when the division artillery commander found that he was unable to mass the fires of his divisional artillery onto such particularly lucrative targets as presented themselves. This did not change the administrative control of the artillery. Division headquarters was still very much in control of the divisional artillery, so all through the war the divisional artillery was supervised by a direct chain of command both tactically and administratively.

The corps artillery did not fare quite so well. The artillery brigade organic to each corps was supposed to be a tactical unit only, but when the brigade entered into combat it became necessary for the commander to assume the administrative, as well as the tactical control of its field artillery regiments. As the war in North Africa progressed, we realized that more and more artillery was needed to counter tank attacks and to provide sufficient counterbattery fire. Additional artillery units were attached to the brigade, and the brigade was able to handle these additional units with little difficulty. With the brigade and regimental organization we were able to provide a large degree of flexibility in the employment of the artillery and at the same time retain administrative control of its units.

Later in the war (October 1943), we went "all-out" for the organization of our non-divisional artillery into separate battalions, separate group headquarters and separate brigade headquarters; these headquarters were for tactical control only. The units were assigned to the various armies as needed and,

in turn, attached to the various corps within the army. The reason for forming all of these separate units was to allow a greater flexibility in the employment of our artillery. Under this organization we could attach a number of artillery battalions to a headquarters, the amount and caliber depending upon the mission to be accomplished. Flexibility is a very desirable asset, but at present there is a lack of administrative organization and control.

We were blessed that our tactical employment *did* work out very satisfactorily, but administratively the problem is still with us—and it is still unsatisfactory. Twenty or more separate artillery battalions dealing directly with the army quartermaster, the adjutant general, the G-1 and the other staff officers of the army headquarters adds a tremendous amount of administrative chaff to an otherwise well-organized headquarters. Furthermore, the battalions were uncontrolled and unsupervised administratively, which was detrimental to both the army and the battalions, particularly the latter.

The War Department realized this situation and WD Circular 439, 14 November 1944, was a step towards closing the large administrative gap that existed between the non-divisional artillery and their army headquarters. The circular stated that whenever practicable, continuity of command would be encouraged by "the retention of assignment of battalions to groups." This acknowledged the fact that the separate battalions were alone in the world, and at first glance it appeared that the regimental system was being restored. This was not the case, as there was no permanent assignment of battalions to groups. In practice, tactical considerations were paramount and the battalions were shifted from group to group. The changing of battalions every week or so did not permit stable administration by a group headquarters. So the war ended with the separate artillery battalion still floundering around in the morass of multitudinous administrative details with very little supervision, control or help from anyone.

A board of officers made the following re-

port of the administrative operations of separate field artillery units shortly after the cessation of hostilities of World War II.

"Lack of an administrative headquarters had a deleterious effect on morale, supply and personnel in general. For this reason there should be some administrative headquarters to look after these separate units. Not all of the artillery occasionally under corps control can be permanently assigned to a corps, but there is a need for a permanent administrative and tactical organization to operate and administer all artillery battalions with corps not organically assigned to divisions."

Were the problems of our non-divisional artillery different from those of other countries? No. We find that similar problems existed in the German Army. The army artillery officer was charged with the administration and guidance of the army artillery units. The Germans found, very early in the war, that the continual changing of attachment of the artillery within the army created many difficulties, "and in comparison with the divisional artillery, the army artillery units were neglected in an increasingly irresponsible manner." Artillery divisions, of combined arms, were formed in the fall of 1943. These units were to be used by the higher troop commanders as a strongpoint weapon in the attack and in the defense. Figure 1 shows the organization of the German 18th Artillery Division. These artillery divisions were dissolved in the fall of 1944, but the principles of a rigid tactical and administrative control were retained in the formation of army artillery brigades, later called *Volks Artillerie Korps*.

The Russian Army had, and used, not only artillery divisions but also separate artillery brigades. These were employed throughout the entire course of the war. There was a continuous chain of artillery command from the highest echelon to the artillery battalions. It afforded the Russians a close control, both operationally and administratively, which proved very effective in their army.

By taking this quick glance at the artillery organization of the Russians and the

Germans we can see that there are certain problems common to all non-divisional artillery units, whether in our army or in the army of another nation.

The formation of permanent groups or regiments, of mixed calibers, is entirely feasible. There is no doubt that through proper training we can have the same flexibility as we now have in our present group organization. We had this flexibility in the few ar-

and the battalion must change its SOP each time it is attached to a different group. This proved quite a problem when the battalions were shifted to a different group headquarters every week or so.

Now, if we do have permanent groups or regiments then we must provide these groups with an immediate higher headquarters. Army is still too high a level for the groups to deal with directly. Therefore, there should

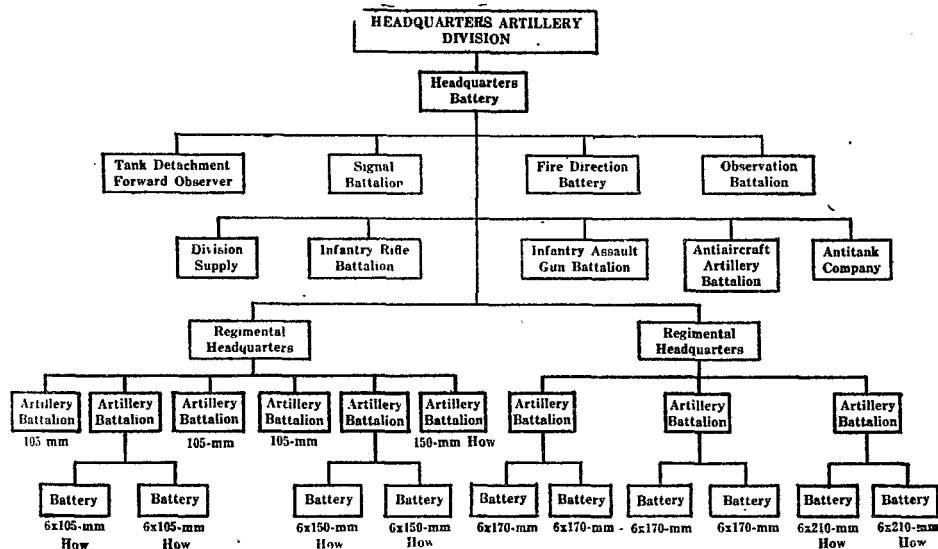


Figure 1.

tillery regiments that were committed to combat during this war. Organizing a permanent group would be the first step in solving our problem; there would be no loss of flexibility; the morale of the separate units would be improved, as there would be a higher headquarters immediately interested in the battalions and their many problems of operations, administration and supply; and there would be a standardization of the group procedure, or SOP, with which each battalion would be familiar. As it is now, each group headquarters has a different SOP

be some permanent artillery command on the corps level. The present corps artillery headquarters, supplemented by additional personnel to handle the administration and supply of the artillery, would give the artillery commander the necessary control over the artillery with the corps. This organization should have artillery units permanently assigned to it. The commanding officer of this organization should be an artillery officer of sufficient rank and experience as to be capable of advising the corps commander on the employment of the artillery,

of controlling the employment of the artillery, and of furnishing artillery intelligence on which the corps commander can base his estimate of the enemy's capabilities and thus form his own plan. The rank should be that of major general; this would be commensurate with the dual position that he would hold, as a commander and also as the artillery staff officer.

The greatest difficulty is to determine the

was recommended after a very careful study had been made.

Should additional infantry divisions be attached to the corps, then additional artillery would be required. To provide this artillery there should be a similar organization with the army which would be available to support the various corps as it was needed.

In conclusion, it is obvious that since the present organization of our non-divisional

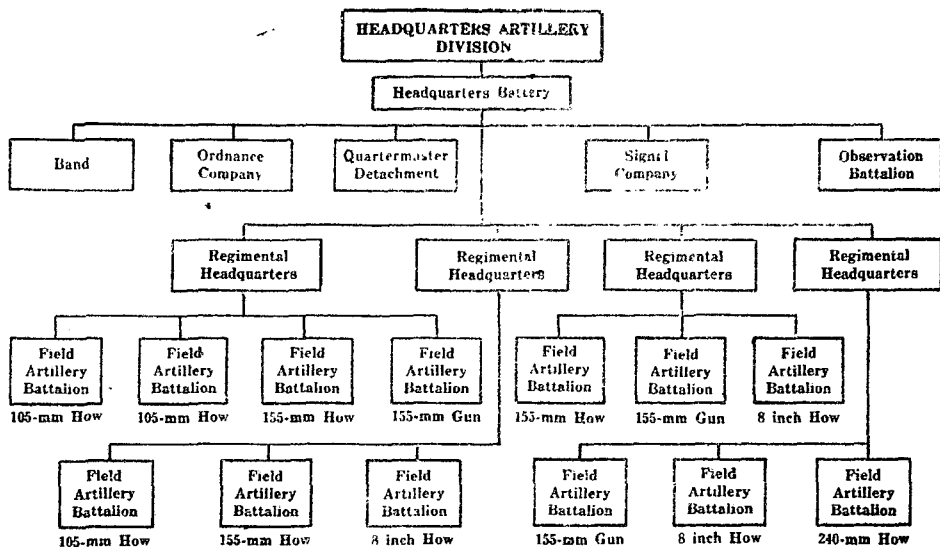


Figure 2.

amount of artillery that should be employed with a single corps. The strength of corps varied greatly from time to time, but for a basis upon which to work a corps composed of three divisions—two infantry and one armored—is being used. A study of the number of additional artillery battalions that were present with each division of a corps showed that as a minimum there should be 0.94 light battalions, 1.5 medium battalions and 1.4 heavy battalions. This was the *minimum* amount needed. Therefore, with our basic corps organization there should be an organization for the artillery with the corps. Figure 2 shows one organization that

artillery has proved unsatisfactory, there is a definite need for some permanent organization for the administration of the non-divisional artillery. The separate battalions need a parent headquarters to assume the responsibility for their welfare and to maintain a close supervision over their tactical training and operations. The permanent assignment of artillery battalions to groups or regiments under which they will normally operate covers this need, even if it should prove necessary for the battalions to be detached for a short period of time. The group or regimental headquarters would be intimate with the particular problems of the

various calibers under their command, and would be in a position to handle additional battalions should the occasion arise. Then if these groups are permanently assigned to a higher headquarters on about the corps level, that headquarters would be responsible for the tactical operations, administration, supply and welfare of the groups—and some of the trials and tribulations of the separate battalion would be eliminated. This higher headquarters would be assigned to army and attached to corps for tactical operation, similar to our infantry division. Whether this

organization is called an artillery division or by some other designation is of little consequence. The artillery division with the army would serve as a mobile pool of artillery that could be moved to the various corps as their individual needs for more artillery became apparent. With such an organization in each of our armies we would have an unbroken chain of artillery command from the army down to and including the artillery battalion. Thus we would have a better coordination of this important supporting arm.

Not only did the Nation's industrial establishment equip our Army, but it also contributed heavily to the hitting power of the other United Nations. The allocation of military lend-lease matériel to the Allied Powers exceeded a dollar value of 20 billions. A United States armored division can be fully equipped for 34 millions. The equipment of an infantry division represents a dollar expenditure of 10 millions. Translated into these terms, the dollar value of the arms alone turned over to our Allies would equip 588 armored divisions, or 2,000 infantry divisions.

To the British Empire went enough aircraft to equip four air forces the size of our Ninth as it went into action on D-day in Western Europe. At that time the Ninth was the largest air force in the world. American raw materials made possible a large percentage of Britain's own war production. But in addition fully fabricated equipment shipped to Britain in the last two years included 76,737 jeeps, 98,207 trucks, 12,431 tanks, and 1,031 pieces of heavy artillery.

The Soviet Union received thousands of tons of American raw materials to feed its own factories as well as fully fabricated equipment. In the two years covered by this report we shipped the Soviets 28,356 jeeps, 218,888 trucks, 4,177 tanks, and 252 pieces of heavy artillery. The mobility and supply of the great Red Army was further increased by American locomotives, rails, and rolling stock. Aircraft sufficient to equip two air forces the size of the Ninth were sent to the Soviets.

Almost all of the equipment used by the revitalized French Army, which had 12 fully equipped divisions in action at the time of Germany's surrender, came from the United States. The French tactical air force which largely covered the operations of this army was also American-equipped.

General of the Army George C. Marshall