

Bayonet Artillery in Operation Just Cause

by Colonel Joseph E. DeFrancisco

Nimrod Dancer in Panama paved the way for the 7th Infantry Division (Light), or 7ID(L), Fort Ord, California, successes in Operation Just Cause. [See the article "Nimrod Dancer Artillery: Fire Support in Low-Intensity Conflict" by Colonel DeFrancisco and Major Robert J. Reese, April 1990.] Experiences from that May 1989 emergency deployment and the knowledge gained from the follow-on sustainment operations sensitized the entire Division to the nuances of low-intensity conflict (LIC) in Panama. When operations short of war suddenly turned hot in December, the Division was ready.

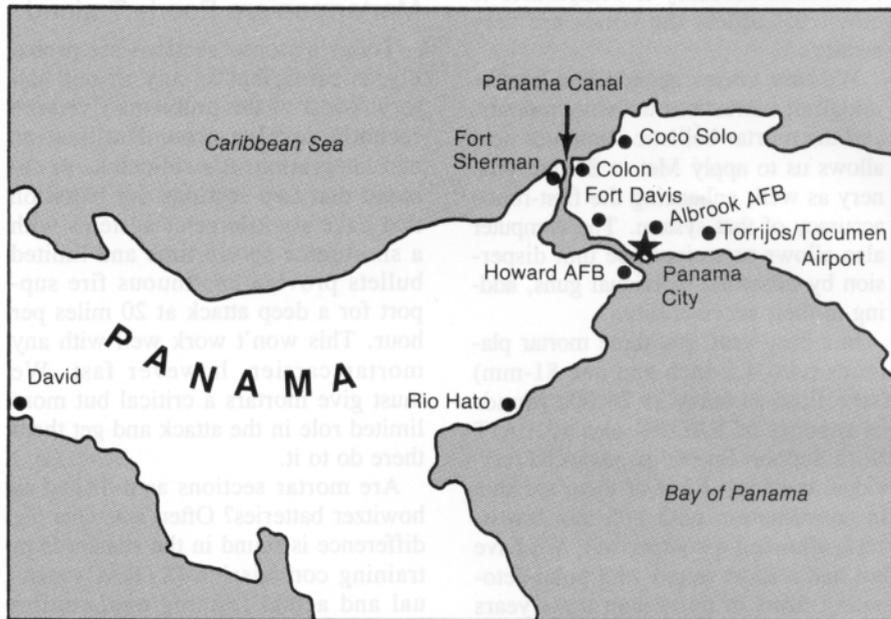
This article examines the role of the 7th Division's Bayonet Artillery in Just Cause. It isn't, however, a definitive examination of that operation or the 7ID(L)'s participation in it.

Forces in Place

October 1989 saw a changing of the guard in Task Force (TF) Atlantic. The 7ID(L) 3d Infantry Brigade relieved the original Nimrod Dancer unit—the Division's 9th Infantry Regiment. The 3d Brigade's direct support (DS) battalion, 7th Battalion, 15th Field Artillery (7-15 FA), provided a brigade fire support section (FSS), which is the artillery part of the brigade fire support element (FSE); the fire support structure for the single committed infantry battalion; a Q36 radar section; and one firing battery.

The fresh forces took full advantage of the lessons learned by and programs and procedures of their predecessors. Then they set out to develop their in-country training programs and refine their roles in the various contingency plans.

The 7-15 FA Battalion Commander frequently visited Panama to ensure TF Atlantic fire support was on track.



The Area of Operations for Just Cause—Panama, December 1989

He also provided a FSS for the Division's Aviation Brigade headquarters that commanded and controlled TF Aviation during Just Cause.

The long-recognized requirement for a fire support structure for aviation surfaced again in Panama. Since this requirement hasn't been resourced, the structure had to come out of existing assets. With the 7-15 FA in Panama, the tasking fell to them. Not only did the Battalion Commander fill it, but he also personally ensured the ad hoc section was integrated with the other FSEs in-country.

By the 20 December D-Day, in-place artillery assets were positioned and trained to execute their fire support roles.

Forces Deployed

Within 16 hours of notification, the first planeload of 7ID light fighters lifted off from Travis Air Force Base, California, en route to Torrijos/Tocumen International Airport in Panama.

This lead element included the Division tactical command post (DTAC) and Division Ready Brigade 1 (DRB1), specifically tailored for the mission. A five-man FSS headed by the Division assistant fire support coordinator (AFSCOORD) flew in with the DTAC.

As a rapid deployment force, the 7ID(L) uses readiness cycles with certain units prepared for deployment. The unit in the "Mission Cycle" is the Division's DRB1—in this case, the 2d Infantry Brigade. The DRB1 began deploying from Fort Ord on D-1, 19 December 1989.

DRB1 Artillery

The 6-8 FA was part of DRB1. While certain mission contingencies argued for deploying a full DS battalion as part of DRB1, available sorties dictated otherwise. After intensive coordination with the 2d Brigade staff, the Battalion Commander tailored a package that met the combat requirements but stayed within his allocated airframes. His package con-

sisted of 18 howitzers, a Q36 radar section and all available fire support teams (FISTs).

Among his many innovations, he placed each firing battery commander in a position and azimuth determining system (PADS) vehicle, thus eliminating three high-mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV) spaces while ensuring survey was available to all elements in the upcoming dispersed operation. (The modified table of organization and equipment, or MTOE, for a light DS battalion includes only two PADS. The third came from the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery of the Division Artillery.)

DRB2 Artillery

No sooner had DRB1 deployed to Panama than DRB2 (the 9th Regiment still at Fort Ord) was alerted for movement. By that time, the tactical situation and desire to minimize collateral damage obviated the need for additional artillery delivery or command and control assets. Nonetheless, the 2-8 FA Commander accompanied the complete brigade fire support structure that deployed with the 9th Regiment.

The 2-8 FA Battalion Commander had deployed on Nimrod Dancer in May and had spent five months in Panama working closely with the Regiment and its commander. Together they had gained tremendous knowledge of Panama and the complexities of LIC in that country. It came as no surprise when the Regimental Commander asked for his FSCoord, even though none of the Battalion's howitzers was deploying.

7th Artillery

By D+3, there were more than 500 Bayonet Artillerymen in Panama. They represented all three DS battalions and the Headquarters and Headquarters Battery of the Division Artillery. They manned four six-gun firing batteries, two Q36 radar sections, the fire support structures for two infantry brigades and the TF Atlantic headquarters plus one of its battalions and FSSs for the Aviation Brigade headquarters and the Division headquarters. As the experience of Nimrod Dancer had foretold, artillerymen would undertake many nonstandard missions.



A 7th Infantry Division Artillery howitzer is emplaced after an air assault operation in Just Cause.



A 7-15 FA Firebase at Fort Sherman



B/2-8 FA's Firebase "Bulldog" at Fort Davis



The 2-8 FA's radar section gets ready for an airmobile operation.



Security Forces. Infantry and some 6-8 FA FIST Redlegs cover a building being cleared.



Some of the 2-8 FA moves from Fort Sherman to Coco Solo.



Soldiers of the 6-8 FA displace through downtown Panama City.



FIST soldiers of the 6-8 FA prepare to search a building in downtown Panama City.

Operations

The 7ID(L) in-place forces participated fully in D-Day, H-Hour operations. By 20 December, TF Atlantic included not only a 7ID(L) infantry battalion, but also one from the 82d Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Forces in Place

The 3d Brigade fire support officer (FSO) accompanied the Brigade

Commander everywhere during the first three days of Just Cause. He had the means to call on all available fire support in country; however, the limited threat, restrictive rules of engagement and the overwhelming success of the initial short, violent attacks limited its use.

Nonetheless, 7ID(L) fire supporters contributed to the early TF Atlantic battles in a number of ways, especially at Colon and Coco Solo. The FIST soldiers accompanied and fought as

infantrymen, maintained contact with delivery units and controlled supporting Air Force OA37 and AC130 aircraft in the Colon area. Even though the aircraft delivered very little live ordnance, their deterrent effect and ability to locate enemy positions were significant.

Bravo Battery, 7-15 FA, provided artillery support for TF Atlantic. Following the Nimrod Dancer pattern the Battery operated in two platoons—one at Fort Sherman and the other at Fort Davis. The Sherman platoon fired illumination in support of the early attacks, while the Davis platoon moved by road to Colon where its 18-round direct-fire mission helped quell resistance in that city. Having demonstrated its capabilities, the Battery's follow-on value was primarily its psychological impact on the opposition, deterring further resistance.

TF Aviation also played a key role in the early fighting. The Division's Aviation Brigade Commander controlled one of his battalions, two aviation battalions from other units and several other aviation assets. An FSO from 7-15 FA participated in several planning sessions with the Brigade, both in Panama and at Fort Ord.

By D-Day, he was familiar with the contingency plans and was efficient as a member of the Brigade staff. Working from the TF headquarters, the FSO coordinated all fire support—mostly Air Force assets—for the aviation combat missions flown in the opening days of Just Cause.

Forces Deployed

The 2d Brigade Task Force (DRB1) began landing at Torrijos/Tocumen International Airport early on 20 December. For several days, they helped the US Rangers, who had captured the facility, with local security. Except for a two-gun airmobile raid (aborted because of a hot landing zone), all the 6-8 FA's howitzers remained laid and ready to fire until they moved west by night convoy.

After releasing Charlie Battery to the 9th Regiment, which had deployed to Panama City and was under the operational control (OPCON) of the 82d Airborne Division, the rest of the 6-8 FA closed on Howard Air Force Base. From there they split again. Bravo Battery accompanied 5-21 Infantry (IN) in a C130 aircraft

deployment to David in the far western reaches of Panama.

Bravo Battery, 6-8 FA, and the 5-21 IN were the nucleus of the 2d Brigade team that had done extremely well during a Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) rotation just two months before. The understanding and mutual respect gained in the JRTC experience paid dividends throughout Just Cause. Meanwhile, the 6-8 FA's truncated headquarters and Alpha Battery moved with elements of the 2d Brigade to Rio Hato.

7th Artillery

By 26 December, the Division Artillery assets were spread over a wide area of Panama. Bravo Battery, 7-15 FA, supported TF Atlantic at the Caribbean end of the Canal. Charlie Battery, 6-8 FA, was in Panama City supporting the 9th Regiment. Bravo Battery, 6-8 FA, at David and Alpha Battery, 6-8 FA, at Rio Hato both supported dispersed elements of the 2d Brigade. One Q36 radar was in the vicinity of Panama City (under the operational control of Joint Task Force, or JTF, South), the other at Rio Hato. The FSSs and FISTs were with their supported infantry formations.

Pacification and Stability Operations

Already the lessons of Nimrod-Dancer were ringing true. In the absence of the need for firepower, artillerymen were called upon to perform other important tasks. The professionalism, discipline and flexibility of our young soldiers and junior leaders allowed them to execute critical non-artillery missions, which were major contributors to success in the low-intensity conflict.

Search and Secure. Shortly after arriving at Rio Hato, the 2d Brigade Commander moved his headquarters and the bulk of his remaining infantry forces to David. There they joined the 5-21 IN and Bravo Battery, 6-8 FA, and began their mission to search and secure the multitude of towns and military installations in the far western region of Panama.

The enormous tasks of operating the Brigade logistics base at Rio Hato and pacifying the four surrounding provinces and six major towns fell to the 6-8 FA Battalion Commander. To

do the job, he had part of his own headquarters, his Alpha Battery, elements of two rifle companies and an engineer platoon.

Pacification included searching for and accepting the surrender of former Panamanian Defense Force soldiers and weapons, providing security for US forces and Panamanian civilians, maintaining law and order and turning over local government and police responsibilities to the legitimate Panamanian officials. One of the six towns under his control was the responsibility of the Alpha Battery Commander. Another was under an infantry battalion FSO who had temporary command of an infantry platoon to help carry out his mission.

Without question, the Brigade Commander and his DS Battalion Commander had developed mutual trust and confidence and operational familiarity during their 18 months of coincident command. Through a series of exercises (including two JRTC rotations) the Brigade Commander had come to recognize and rely on the flexibility his DS battalion offered. Once in combat, he didn't hesitate to give the 6-8 FA tough, non-artillery missions. The 6-8 FA Battalion Commander and his soldiers responded with high-quality unit and individual performances.

S5. Much the same held true in the other areas of operation. In TF Atlantic, fire supporters were heavily involved in the pacification of Colon.

After participating in the initial fighting, a battalion FSO became the de facto S5 for his supported infantry battalion. He set up his battalion FSS in the Colon fire station. From there, he established liaison with important city agencies, offered referrals for humanitarian services and participated in gathering intelligence and collecting weapons.

CPs and Infantry Searches. Other responsibilities included security operations at Forts Sherman and Davis and Coco Solo. In the 9th Regiment area of operations, 2-8 FA fire supporters did everything from establishing alternate battalion and company command posts (CPs) and guarding key government facilities to participating in nerve-racking building-by-building and room-by-room searches with their infantry counterparts in Panama City.

Return to Fort Ord

As pacification projects progressed rapidly with negligible resistance, the requirement for deployed artillery assets declined further. Since the opening fire fights, cannon delivery assets had been used only in isolated show-of-force missions such as live fire into unoccupied areas in the western provinces and a display of combat power in a threatening direct-fire mode at roadblocks and in built-up areas.

While these missions and the very presence of cannon throughout the country had the desired deterrent impact on Noriega loyalists, the presence of artillery was deemed incongruous with the emerging pacification efforts. Moreover, there was a drive to begin the redeployment of heavy equipment and troops in keeping with the reduced threat. For these reasons, the 7ID(L) leadership reduced the artillery support to one two-howitzer platoon per committed brigade.

Forces in Place. In keeping with the Nimrod Dancer model, Bravo Battery, 7-15 FA, had been conducting split-battery operations since its arrival in Panama in November. With some key additions from the 6-8 FA, it transformed itself from two three-gun platoons into three two-gun platoons. The Battery headquarters and one platoon stayed with TF Atlantic, one platoon moved to Panama City to support the 9th Regiment and the third platoon convoyed to Rio Hato to meet the 2d Brigade as they withdrew from the western reaches of Panama.

Forces Redeployed. Meanwhile, the 6-8 FA Commander consolidated his batteries at Howard Air Force Base and began redeployment preparations. By D+19, all of 6-8 FA's howitzers were at Fort Ord.

Other than the Nimrod Dancer sustainment forces of the 7-15 FA, the only Bayonet Artillerymen remaining in Panama were those in the various FSSs and FISTs with their respective maneuver formations. By early February, all Bayonet Artillerymen had returned to Fort Ord.

Decentralized Command and Control

From its headquarters at Albrook Air Force Base, Panama, the Divi-

sion exercised command and control (C²) over its widely dispersed elements. Under direct Division control were TF Atlantic, TF Semper Fi and the Division's 2d Brigade. The Division also monitored closely the activities of its 9th Regiment (OPCON to the 82d Division) and TF Aviation, which was built around the Division Aviation Brigade but responded directly to JTF South.

Communications

Excellent communications coupled with the command group's constantly visiting troop units greatly enhanced C². The Division received and interpreted directives from JTF South then rapidly transmitted implementing orders to its subordinate units. Feedback came quickly over secure communications and, as in many cases, through face-to-face meetings with commanders. Still, because of the nature of operations, C² was greatly decentralized.

Artillery

Decentralization was especially true in the case of the Field Artillery. While the delivery units supporting the Division's maneuver elements had a tactical mission of direct support, they were in essence attached to those maneuver units. The 7-15 FA elements had been in Panama before hostilities, attached to the 3d Brigade as part of TF Atlantic. The 6-8 FA elements had deployed as part of DRB1 (2d Brigade), by definition a task force that includes an attached DS battalion. Also, the 2-8 FA elements deployed as part of DRB2 (9th Regiment).

The D+2 decision to curtail the deployment of artillery delivery and C² elements precluded the deployment of the Division Artillery TAC as well as 2-8 FA's howitzers. The decision meant that artillery units would remain attached to their supported maneuver units.

The senior artilleryman at the Division headquarters, either the Division FSCOORD or the ASFCOORD, provided oversight of artillery units and advice on fire support issues. Given the nature of the enemy indirect-fire threat, the scope of combat and follow-on operations, the restrictive rules of engagement, the requirement to preclude collateral damage and the



A Bayonet Artilleryman lays his M102 howitzer, preparing to fire in Just Cause.

limited duration of the operation, this decision was correct.

LIC Lessons

Experiences in Just Cause validated important conclusions drawn from Nimrod Dancer. The 7ID(L)'s ability to efficiently project combat power validated the light infantry division's viability as a rapid deployment force.

Light divisions increase the options available to National Command Authorities and allow them to respond to threats with the appropriate mix of forces necessary to execute national policy. In the case of Just Cause, execution of national policy required quick, decisive action followed by stability operations designed to support a democratic government, deter aggression against it and protect American lives and property.

METL

The 7ID(L)'s ability to respond effectively to these missions is a product of its implementation of Army-wide training policies. The battle-focus concept articulated in *FM 25-100 Training the Force* is a way of life in the Division. In the Division Artillery, as throughout the Division, mission-essential task list (METL) development is the subject of many

officer and NCO professional development sessions. The ongoing process is subject to refinement, as happened when the 2-8 FA incorporated LIC operations into its METL, based on Nimrod Dancer experiences.

Building a METL-based training program then habitually training as combined-arms teams ensured combat readiness. Participation in battle command training programs (BCTPs) and JRTC rotations reinforced the combined-arms approach and built strong, flexible teams throughout the Division.

Artillery contributions to the various Division teams fall *roughly* into two METL tasks: delivery of fires and fire support coordination.

Fires. Previously discussed mission, enemy, terrain, troops and time available (METT-T) conditions restricted our delivery of fires. But, the role of cannons was significant. In effect, they contributed to the implementation of the national military strategy of deterrence at the tactical level.

The overt presence of cannons had a distinct impact on real and potential opposition. When howitzers were incorporated into a roadblock, no one attempted to run the road block. When howitzers were laid to cover buildings designated for search, no one hindered the search. When howit-

zers fired illumination in response to sniper fire, the snipping stopped.

In LIC, the 105-mm howitzer is a major weapon. It became a symbol of US resolve and potential destructive power. It showed we meant business.

Fire Support Coordination. From the Division through platoon levels, fire support coordination was executed by habitually associated teams well-trained and seasoned on several exercises and evaluations. Given the paucity of indirect fire and the nature of pacification efforts, these teams found themselves performing several non-artillery missions. Their ability to execute these missions is a testament to their professionalism and the level of cooperation among each and its supported elements.

Combat operations in Panama again highlighted the excellence of our force, especially junior officers and NCOs. They routinely demonstrated the skills necessary in their designated specialties and the initiative to meet other challenges.

Our leader development programs in schools and units are producing disciplined, competent junior leaders. Whether conducting a live-fire raid in Colon, collecting weapons at Rio Hato or searching houses in Panama City, our junior leaders performed in the true spirit of artillerymen. They supported the scheme of maneuver by fire support or any other means dictated by the situation.

Preparation Training

In addition to the Nimrod Dancer experience, two other events played key roles in the Division's preparation for Just Cause: two JRTC rotations and two BCTP exercises.

JRTC Rotations

On the first rotation at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, the 6-8 FA pioneered the use of the Q36 radar and artillery live fire. From that time until the second JRTC rotation, the DS Battalion Commander and 2d Brigade Commander continued to forge a strong professional relationship as they refined the integration of fire support into brigade and battalion operations on several field exercises and deployments.

The second rotation in October was at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, an experimental rotation away from Fort

Chaffee. Fired illumination appeared to be the crowning achievement of their efforts as the Brigade's battalion task force earned high marks in all areas, including the integration of fire support, the use of the Q36 radar and artillery live fire.

When the call to arms came on 19 December, this strong team was DRB1. It was well-prepared.

BCTP Training

Most light infantry operations focus on brigade task force or below. In fact, 7ID(L)'s principal training vehicle, the Bold Thrust program, is patterned on the JRTC battalion task force model. Therefore, many light division artilleries spend a great deal of time training and evaluating individual battalions to prepare them to provide quality fire support for their designated maneuver brigades. But a light division also must be prepared to fight as a division.

The 7ID(L) Division BCTP exercise in September 1988 and the sustainment training that followed focused attention on this vital task. Then the I Corps BCTP in November 1989 provided senior division leaders and their staffs the opportunity to examine and sharpen these critical skills in a realistic, intense environment. The challenges were great but so were the rewards.

The members of the 7th Division staff learned to work as a team in a tactical setting and gained a better sense of their commander's style and an improved feel for dealing with higher, lower and adjacent headquarters. Division major subordinate commands (MSCs) were able to refine their understanding of their role in division-level combat operations.

A professional bonding developed throughout the Division command and staff elements. This bonding reinforced a feeling of oneness within the Division and highlighted the importance of the integration of combat, combat support and combat service support elements in division operations. BCTP had a direct and positive impact on Division operations in Panama.

Conclusion

Just Cause showed LIC operations require a wide range of combat support activities. We must consider

them and, where appropriate, make them part of our METL.

Then we must train for those tasks in combined-arms teams, building skills, mutual confidence and flexibility to meet the diverse challenges we'll face in LIC operations.



Colonel Joseph E. DeFrancisco commands the 7th Infantry Division (Light) Artillery, Fort Ord, California. He commanded three batteries and the 1st Battalion, 84th Field Artillery, 9th Infantry Division (Motorized), Fort Lewis, Washington. A graduate of the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, Colonel DeFrancisco also holds a master's degree from Rice University, Texas. He has had two tours each in Vietnam and West Germany, taught history at the US Military Academy at West Point, and was Chief of the War Plans Division, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, Washington, D.C.

History of 319 Airborne FA Regiment

The 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment (AFAR) is currently looking for the names and addresses of all who have served in the Regiment. The purpose of this is to create a data base to allow those who have contributed to the Regiment's proud history to maintain contact with the unit.

Any Redleg who served in the 319th AFAR (to include those who served with the 173d Airborne Brigade) should send his name and address to the Commander, ATTN: S1, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, Fort Bragg, North Carolina 28301-5100.

If you have questions, call the 82d Airborne Division Artillery Assistant Adjutant at (919) 432-2515/7184.

Major John J. Howard, FA
Adjutant, 319 AFAR
Fort Bragg, NC