

Notes on the organization of the United States Parachute Infantry Battalion 1942 to 1945

A www.bayonetstrength.uk PDF

1st draft uploaded January 2020

Contents

	Page
Introduction	3
Overview	4
Evolution of the US Parachute Battalion (chart)	6
The elements of the Battalion	7
Annex A - Communication equipment Notes	19
Annex B - Ammunition allocation Notes	20
Sources and acknowledgements	21

Introduction

This piece marks the start of the second round of studies of various US Army unit organizations of the Second World War.

Having begun these studies with the standard Infantry Battalion, there is always a dilemma when trying to apply the same criteria to other unit types. This is because no matter how specialised they may appear to be, the framework of a typical Infantry Battalion is almost always discernible in their organization, and they will in large part use the same weapons and equipment that have already been covered.

This then will be the first of a 'Notes on' series, which will seek to avoid repetition of matters already detailed in the main United States Infantry Battalion pages, and instead focus on the differences found in specialised unit organization.

A quick note on spelling; while I am British I have gone with the appropriate US spellings in this piece, such as defense, armor and center.

This document then gives an outline of the development of the Battalion, before looking at its component subunits in more detail. Complete descriptions of the various US Parachute Infantry Battalions discussed here are available in PDF files accessible from the below linked area of the site.

[United States Army organization during the Second World War](#)

This is the next step in replacing my defunct www.bayonetstrength.150m.com site, which had wandered around the internet since about 2000. This new attempt represents the content and detail I would have very much liked to have been able to include from the outset, but has taken a great deal more time, effort and of course expense to pull together than I ever imagined.

Looking back at this subject for the first time in a good many years, I have been reminded just how contradictory much of the information I have gathered is. If anyone reading this actually knows some of the detail that I evidently do not, or at least has an idea of where it might be found, feel free to drop me an email. See the Home page for contact info.

I hope this proves of use to anyone interested in the subject.

Gary Kennedy

January 2020

Organization of the United States Parachute Infantry Battalion

1942 to 1945

The organizational development of the US Parachute Infantry Battalion during World War Two can be considered in three stages.

Tables of Organization issued in February 1942, which were subject to major amendment in February 1944, without though resulting in a full reissue.

Tables of Organization issued in August 1944. This was at a time when US Airborne Divisions already in Europe were awaiting their next major deployment, and there is some doubt in my mind as to whether they had an actual opportunity to adopt them.

Tables of Organization issued in December 1944, which were marked as 'T' for 'tentative'. Given their issue date coincided with the opening of the German Ardennes offensive, the 'Battle of the Bulge', it seems likely they were not put into effect until the final airborne assault of the war in March 1945.

Overview

The Battalion as detailed herein was to be found as part of a Parachute Infantry Regiment, which could be part of an Airborne Division or designated as Separate. It was common for Separate Regiments to be attached to Airborne Divisions in the European Theater.

Outline development, 1942 to 1945

In February 1942 the US Army issued its first Table of Organization for the Infantry Regiment Parachute (there had been a tentative table issued for the Infantry Battalion, Parachute a year or so earlier). The original Airborne Division organization called for a single Parachute Regiment, two Glider Infantry Regiments and supporting arms.

The Parachute Regiment consisted of a Headquarters Company, a Service Company and three Parachute Infantry Battalions. Each Battalion had a Headquarters Company and three Rifle Companies (there was no Heavy Weapons Company). Headquarters Company included one .30-cal Machine Gun Platoon (with eight M1919A4 light machine guns) and one 81-mm Mortar Platoon (with four such weapons). Each Rifle Company had three Rifle Platoons, each with a 60-mm Mortar Squad and two Rifle Squads. The Mortar Squad had a single 60-mm weapon and each Rifle Squad had an M1919A4 light machine gun. Each Rifle Platoon also had a further two M1919A4s designated as being 'for optional use as directed'. The Browning Automatic Rifle did not feature on this original Table of Organization.

In February 1944, a long list of amendments was issued for the 1942 Parachute Infantry Regiment tables. These did not result in any major personnel changes to the Parachute Battalion, but did alter individual weapons as will be examined later.

On 1st August 1944 a new Table of Organization was issued for the Parachute Infantry Regiment. This increased the overall strength of the Battalion but made only detail changes to its structure, while firepower, at least in terms of mortars and machine guns, remained unaltered.

In December 1944 came what would prove to be the final wartime Table of Organization for the Parachute Infantry Regiment. For the Battalions, there were some changes to Headquarters Company personnel, but the level of support weapons remained as before. The significant impact came in the Rifle Platoons, which each received a third Rifle Squad. Each Squad was now authorized one M1919A4 or A6 light machine gun, and for the first time, a Browning Automatic Rifle as an optional weapon.

The particular difficulty in any examination of the US Parachute Battalion is that units in the field amended their organization to meet circumstances, and with over a dozen Parachute Infantry Regiments seeing overseas service, that offers a lot of scope for potential changes. Finding details of those changes is a lot more problematic than simply chronicling the evolving official organization. Still, a few examples have been recorded and are including in the following descriptions.

Overleaf is a chart that outlines the development of the US Parachute Infantry Battalion from 1942 to 1945.

Evolution of the United States Parachute Infantry Battalion, 1942 to 1945

Detail	1942 (February)	1944 (February)	1944 (August)	1944 (December)
i). Personnel				
Officers	35	35	27	36
Warrant officers	0	0	1	1
Enlisted Men	495	495	555	669
Total, all ranks	530	530	583	706
ii). Transport				
Handcarts	0	0	8	8
iii). Weapons				
Pistols, .45-cal	505	2	2	2
Submachine guns, .45-cal	45	18	18	18
Carbines	101	170	310	148
Rifles, M1	325	358	271	556
Rifles, M1C	0	0	9	9
Rifles, M1903	15	0	0	0
Browning Automatic Rifles	0	0	0	27
Light machine guns, M1914A4	44	44	44	35
60-mm mortars	9	9	9	9
81-mm mortars	4	4	4	4
M7 rifle grenade launchers	0	...	64	85
2.36-in antitank rocket launchers	0	21	21	21

Notes

1. Change No.1 of 31st July 1942 reduced the number of M1 rifles to 307 and increased that of M1903 rifles to 33. This followed the issue of one M1903 to each Rifle Squad for use with the M1 rifle grenade launcher.
2. No figure found for the number of M7 rifle grenade launchers authorized under the February 1944 table of equipment. Presumably the scale was at least the same as had been used for the M1903 rifle and M1 grenade launchers that were replaced.

The elements of the Battalion, 1942 to 1945

Below follows a more detailed examination of the Companies, Platoons and Sections within the Battalion.

Battalion Headquarters (1942 to 1945)

This mirrored the Headquarters of the standard Infantry Battalion, with a Staff of four officers until summer of 1944. These consisted of the Battalion commander (Lieutenant colonel), Executive officer (Major), and two more officers, each tasked with several roles. A Captain undertook both S-2 (Intelligence) and S-3 (operations and training) duties, with a First Lieutenant acting as both Adjutant and S-1 (responsible for Personnel matters).

Under the August 1944 Tables of Organization, another First Lieutenant was added as the unit S-4 (Supply officer) along with a Warrant Officer, who took over the roles of Adjutant and S-1. This allowed the First Lieutenant previously performing these duties to become the Battalion Intelligence officer, S-2, leaving the Captain to concentrate on his S-3 role of operations and training.

Headquarters Company (1942 to 1945)

In 1942 Headquarters Company was composed of the following elements;

Headquarters Platoon
Light Machine Gun Platoon
81-mm Mortar Platoon

***Headquarters Platoon* (1942 to 1945)**

This subunit perhaps underwent the greatest number of reorganizations during the short development history of the Battalion. It initially consisted of four Sections;

Company Headquarters
Staff Section
Mess Section
Communication Section

From August 1944 this was changed to;

Battalion Headquarters Section
Mess Section
Supply Section
Communication Section

Under the August 1944 reorganization Company Headquarters was removed from Headquarters Platoon. Finally, in December 1944, the Mess Section was deleted, as the cooks and Mess NCOs were dispersed out to each Company Headquarters

The original 1942 Company Headquarters was small, with the Communications officer, Mess officer, First Sergeant, three orderlies and three Basics. When Company Headquarters was removed from Headquarters Platoon it added a second Communications officer and an Executive, plus those roles found in the normal Rifle Company, including a Supply Sergeant, clerk, bugler, armorer and an increased number of Basics. Latterly these were joined by a Mess Sergeant and cooks with the deletion of the Mess Section.

The Staff Section of 1942 occupied a similar place to the Battalion Headquarters Section of the standard Infantry Battalion, and included an Operations Sergeant, topographical draughtsman and a clerk. In August 1944 the Section became the Battalion Headquarters Section, and among others added an Intelligence Sergeant and eight scout observers.

The Mess Section initially concentrated all the Battalion's cooks and their helpers under two Mess Sergeants. This was the only element of the Battalion that did not have to be parachute qualified. Under the December 1944 rewrite of the Table of Organization, the cooks and cook's helpers were allocated out to each Company Headquarters, each of which also gained a Mess Sergeant.

The Supply Section was added from August 1944, consisting of just a Sergeant and a dozen ammunition handlers.

Communication Section (1942 to 1945)

A constant in Headquarters Platoon was the Communication Section. This was actually of similar size and strength to the Communication Platoon of the Infantry Battalion proper, but within the Parachute Battalion was referred to as a Section.

Initially there was a Lieutenant, assisted by a Staff Sergeant as Section leader, with two Sergeants responsible for Radio and Message Center duties respectively, and a Corporal for Wire communications. The Radio and Visual personnel consisted of eight radio operators, plus two 'pigeoneers' who doubled as visual signallers. The Message Center personnel were two clerks and four messengers, and the Wire just two linemen.

In August 1944 the Section was reinforced, with radio operators increasing to ten and linemen to four; a switchboard operator and a radio repairman were also added, and a pigeon handler deleted. Several NCOs also received a bump up in rank. For a brief commentary on the equipment of the Communication Section, see Annex A.

Light Machine Gun Platoon (1942 to 1945)

In terms of fire support, the Parachute Battalion was reliant on the same family of weapons available to all branches of the US military.

The Light Machine Gun Platoon was equipped throughout the war with the Browning, initially the M1919A4, which was latterly displaced by the M1919A6. Despite being classified as a light machine gun, the M1919A4 weighed in at an impressive 45lbs, when combined with its tripod mounting. The M1919A6 was an attempt to lessen the weight burden without diluting firepower: a shoulder stock was added, which combined with a bipod at the very end of the barrel allowed the tripod mounting to be dispensed with. Ironically the M1919A6 weighted slightly more than the A4, coming in at 32.5lbs, though this was largely offset by the ability to operate the weapon without the tripod. Even so, an M2 mounting was retained for each M1919A6 in the Light Machine Gun Platoon.

In terms of organization, the Platoon consisted of a small Headquarters and two Sections. Headquarters was originally two Officers, a Platoon Sergeant and two messengers, while from August 1944 the second officer was deleted and a Corporal was added for ranging duties. Each Section had an NCO leader and four Squads, with a single LMG per Squad for a total of eight in the Platoon. The Squad was initially just four men strong, before being increased to five during 1944.

81-mm Mortar Platoon (1942 to 1945)

This used the standard M1 mortar, weighing 136lbs when fully assembled. The Mortar Platoon was organized as a Headquarters and two Sections, each of a leader and two Squads, with one 81-mm mortar per Squad, making four in the Battalion.

Platoon Headquarters was broadly the same as for the LMG Platoon, though throughout it included a Corporal for instrumentation. The second officer was retained until the December 1944 tables of organization were issued. The Mortar Squad began as an NCO, gunner, assistant and four ammunition bearers, with the latter being increased to six from August 1944. Also appearing at this time (on the Tables of Organization) was a handcart, with one per Mortar Squad.

The Rifle Company (1942 to 1945)

This section has proven hard for me to complete, though not for once because of a lack of primary sources on the subject. Rather it is because so much of the contemporary information is at odds with now popular perceptions of how US parachute units were structured and armed.

The officially authorized organization of the Parachute Rifle Company was first laid down in a 'Tentative' table published in March 1941. This called for a Company Headquarters and three Rifle Platoons, with each Platoon having a Headquarters, a 60-mm Mortar Squad and only two Rifle Squads, the latter issued with M1919A4 light machine guns. Unlike the standard Rifle Company there was no Weapons Platoon and no place for the Browning Automatic Rifle. This same outline was reflected in subsequent reorganizations of the Rifle Company until 1945.

Under the February 1942 Tables of Organization, the Rifle Squad consisted of a Sergeant, a Corporal and ten men. Of the latter, seven were riflemen and the remaining three acted as gunner, assistant gunner and ammunition bearer for the Squad's light machine gun. The 60-mm Mortar Squad was commanded by a Sergeant, overseeing a gunner, assistant gunner and three ammunition bearers.

Platoon Headquarters unusually included two officers, a First Lieutenant as the Platoon commander and a Second Lieutenant as Assistant Platoon commander. There was also a Platoon Sergeant and two messengers. Completing the Headquarters personnel was a Corporal, for radio, code and signal duties, and a radio operator. Total strength of the Platoon was two officers and 35 enlisted men.

The Platoon could generate a substantial amount of firepower. Each officer was to be armed with a carbine, and the Platoon Sergeant, Mortar Squad Sergeant and each Rifle Squad Corporal was to carry a .45-cal submachine gun; aside from the two machine gunners, all other personnel were authorized the M1 rifle.

There were two areas where parachute and standard infantry armament differed. Every man in the Parachute Infantry Battalion (excepting the Mess Section) was authorized a pistol, primarily the M1911A1, though some opted for a model of their own choice. Also, a special variant of the M1 carbine was produced for use by airborne units, the M1A1, which replaced the wooden stock with one made of tubular metal struts. The stock could be rotated forward to lie flat against the side of the weapon, so reducing overall length from around 35 inches to 25. An improved M1A3 version used a more robust construction for the stock, which now folded directly underneath the fore grip of the carbine.

In terms of support weapons, each Rifle Squad was issued with an M1919A4 light machine gun, with two more allocated per Rifle Platoon for 'optional use as directed'. From July 1942, one M1 rifle per Rifle Squad was to be replaced by an M1903 rifle, fitted with grenade launcher to enable use of the M9 antitank rifle grenade. Finally there was the single 60-mm mortar of the Mortar Squad.

Company Headquarters was quite small, and consisted mostly of command and communications personnel. As normal for US Army units, the Company commander was a Captain, with a First Lieutenant as second in command and a First Sergeant as the senior NCO. There were two Sergeants, responsible for communication and intelligence duties respectively, three messengers and three radio operators. Finally there were five riflemen intended to replace casualties in the Platoons.

Amendments of February 1944

Multiple amendments were made to the Airborne Division Tables of Organization in February 1944, but perhaps surprisingly these resulted in only minor changes.

Within the Rifle Company, the focus was largely on changing personal weapons. Firstly, the allowance of a pistol for each parachutist was rescinded. Secondly,

submachine guns were withdrawn from their previous holders, with a pool of six such weapons now held by Company Headquarters. Carbines were issued to machine gunners and mortar crewmen, replacing their previous pistols and rifles.

The issue of M7 rifle grenade launchers is not detailed in the amendments. Given later developments (see below) I would suggest this was likely to be two M7 launchers per Rifle Squad. The 2.36-inch antitank rocket launcher was now shown for the first time, with one for each Rifle Platoon and one for Company Headquarters.

August 1944 - further reorganization

In August 1944 the full set of Tables of Organization, as applicable to units of the Airborne Division, were reissued. These now incorporated the Table of Equipment, which had previously been a separate document to that detailing organization.

The Parachute Rifle Company outlined in the August table showed some differences from the earlier issuances. Company Headquarters was increased in strength, adding a Supply Sergeant and a Clerk, and a bugler and armorer, though reducing the number of messengers and radio operators. 11 Basics were also placed on the strength of the Headquarters, instead of the five spare riflemen.

In the Rifle Platoons, the post of second in command was deleted, as too was the signal Corporal, with a Platoon Guide Sergeant added. The Rifle Squads remained as before, though the Sergeant and Corporal were promoted to Staff Sergeant and Sergeant respectively. Weapons were also amended, with all three crewmen of the light machine gun adopting carbines, as too did all six men of the 60-mm Mortar Squad. For the first time there was also mention of a sniper rifle, with one being listed under Platoon Headquarters; this does not mean it could not have been carried by one of the men in the Rifle Squads.

The equipment portion of the table shows a total of 12 M7 rifle grenade launchers, with no allocation specified. As suggested above I would presume this allowed for two per Rifle Squad. There were still four Bazookas for the Company, and two unallocated light machine guns per Rifle Platoon.

1945 and the final reorganization

At the end of 1944 a third series of Tables of Organization were issued for the US Airborne Division. These, at long last, attempted to address some of the long held complaints of the airborne forces, in that their units were too slight in terms of manpower and firepower for prolonged combat operations. The original argument had been that Airborne Divisions were not to be used for extended periods in the frontline, and were constructed for shock action, which required them to be highly mobile. The reality however was that once Airborne Divisions were committed, they were kept in the line for months, rather than being withdrawn after a matter of days.

The revised tables were issued on what would be an important date for the US Army in World War Two, namely 16th December 1944. There was no real opportunity for units to reorganize on them before their next major operation, in March 1945.

Under the December 1944 table, the Rifle Company was increased from its previous 130 all ranks to 176. Company Headquarters was largely as under the August 1944 revisions, the main change being the addition of a Mess Sergeant and five cooks, previously counted on the strength of Battalion Headquarters Platoon.

In the Rifle Platoon there were more changes, most important being the addition of a third Rifle Squad. Each Squad was now authorized a single light machine gun (which could be either the M1919A4 or the M1919A6) and also a Browning Automatic Rifle. This latter weapon was noted as being 'for optional use as directed'. The practice of the Platoon having a second in command was reinstated, and with this change the Rifle Platoon now stood at 2 officers and 47 enlisted men.

The number of carbines was reduced, with these being intended only for the two officers, and the gunners and assistant gunners of the mortar and light machine guns. All other men in the Platoon were to carry M1 rifles, one of which could be replaced by the M1C sniper variant.

Company Headquarters retained a pool of six submachine guns, and the Company had four antitank rocket launchers as before. The number of M7 rifle grenade launchers was increased from 12 to 22, with no indication as to their distribution. I would suggest this allowed for one per Rifle Platoon Headquarters and two per Rifle Squad, leaving one for the Company Headquarters Communication Sergeant.

Points of debate

Anyone who has spent their time and effort in researching US Parachute units may well now be shaking their head in disagreement. Below then are what I would consider to be the primary points of debate.

Weapons

The first point is likely to concern individual weapons. For as long as I can recall, the popular image of a World War Two US paratrooper is of a soldier armed with either a carbine or a Thompson submachine gun. Carbines certainly feature prominently in the official Tables of Organization, though their presence within Rifle Squads and Platoons is largely limited to officers and those men serving mortars and light machine guns. We know from first-hand accounts that both submachine guns and carbines saw use at the Squad level, the difficulty is in establishing just how many M1 rifles they were likely to supplant.

That leads on to the next point. From early 1942 onwards, the armament of the standard US Rifle Squad (which is examined in the [Organization of the US Infantry Battalion](#) piece) consisted of one Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), ten M1 rifles and

one M1903 rifle, the latter to launch rifle grenades. This was based on the belief that the riflemen should collectively generate the greater volume of the Squad's firepower, rather than it being concentrated in a single light machine gun.

As a result, every man not armed with an M1 rifle was less able to contribute towards the firefight. However, the Parachute Rifle Squad was different, in that it was supplied with a light machine gun, though some may argue that the M1919 was anything but light. Regardless, the Squad had a belt-fed weapon that was capable of sustained automatic fire, at least within the confines of an air cooled design. Even so, the question of the BAR and its use by Parachute units continually presents itself.

Personal accounts show that the BAR was used by at least some Parachute units during the campaign in Europe, and before they showed up on the December 1944 Table of Organization. Again what is difficult to ascertain is the extent of this usage, and whether it was in replacement of, or in addition to, the authorized M1919.

Changes in Rifle Company organization

Another area of debate concerns the overall organization of the Rifle Company. From early 1941 until the end of 1944 the Parachute Rifle Company was officially based on a Company Headquarters and three Rifle Platoons, each of a Headquarters, a 60-mm Mortar Squad and two Rifle Squads. The use of just two Rifle Squads per Platoon was at variance with the format used by most other Rifle Platoons in US Infantry units, which tended to contain at least three Squads. This allowed the Platoon commander to operate with two Squads forward and one in support, or alternatively a single Squad leading with two back, ready to reinforce success of outflank resistance. Limiting the Parachute Rifle Platoon to only two Rifle Squads meant the leader's tactical flexibility was curtailed by comparison.

Having picked away at the subject for far more years than I care to admit, the general consensus seems to be that some Platoons did field three Rifle Squads, but on trying to establish where they obtained the necessary personnel from, silence normally reigns. If a Parachute Infantry Regiment wanted to add a third Rifle Squad to each of its 27 Rifle Platoons it would require 324 more personnel than its Table of Organization strength, all of whom would have to be qualified parachutists. Multiply that by just five or six Regiments, and you need close to 2000 additional men.

There is one contemporary description of a Parachute Rifle Company operating with three Squads per Rifle Platoon, which was pointed out to me many years ago by John Thatcher. In this instance, the change was effected not necessarily by finding new personnel but rather by reducing the size of the Rifle Squad.

“At this time our Battalions were composed of a Headquarters Company and three Rifle Companies. Each Rifle Company was composed of a weapons section, headquarters section, three platoons of three nine-man rifle squads, and a platoon headquarters. This organization of the rifle company, while not official, was very

satisfactory, preserved tactical unity in airborne operations, and was flexible and ideally suited for ground combat”.

The source is a post-war report by an officer of Company ‘H’ of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and refers to the unit’s participation during Operation Market Garden in September 1944. The full document is available here (page 14 refers);

[DonovanPapers/wwii/STUP2/G-L/KappelCarlW%20CPT.pdf](https://www.donovanpapers.com/wwii/STUP2/G-L/KappelCarlW%20CPT.pdf)

This is, of course, only one example, though the text implies that it extended to a full Regiment rather than the single Company examined.

In the same series of reports comes one from an officer of Company ‘B’ of the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and describes changes made to the unit’s organization in preparation for Operation Varsity in March 1945.

“Meanwhile reinforcements were being received and assigned to the company...These reinforcements were utilised to form an extra squad in each of the rifle platoons, authorized by TO&E 71, 16 December 1944, and to replace personnel lost as casualties in the Ardennes campaign. The addition of the Rifle Squad to each platoon posed new problems of reequipping for combat in that the entire loading procedure for personnel and equipment had to be revamped.

“Each of the three rifle platoons was composed of three rifle squads and a 60mm mortar squad with a platoon headquarters in which there were two officer platoon leaders. The rifle squads contained a light machine gun team, an automatic rifle team, and a rifle grenadier”.

[DonovanPapers/wwii/STUP2/M-R/MarrJohnW%20CPT.pdf](https://www.donovanpapers.com/wwii/STUP2/M-R/MarrJohnW%20CPT.pdf)

Regrettably the copying of this above document has gone somewhat awry, and the last line of most pages is either missed entirely or cut in half (as has happened for the last sentence in the final paragraph above).

The reorganization described above would suggest that 507th were conforming to the authorized two Rifle Squad format until early 1945, while 508th had modified their organization by September 1944 at least. There is one other description that precedes both these reports, and for those with an interest in the history of US Airborne forces the author is likely to be familiar;

[DonovanPapers/wwii/STUP2/S-Z/SpeirsRonald%20CPT.pdf](https://www.donovanpapers.com/wwii/STUP2/S-Z/SpeirsRonald%20CPT.pdf)

Page 12 has a chart giving the strength of a Rifle Platoon of Company ‘D’, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, as of 6th June 1944, and matches almost exactly with that given under the February 1942 Table of Organization, the sole difference being the omission of a radio corporal.

Another aspect of Rifle Company reorganization has already been touched on in the description of Company 'H' of 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment reproduced above. This refers to the formation of a Company level Weapons Section, logically by withdrawing the 60-mm Mortar Squad from each Platoon and forming it into a composite subunit. This may have been unique to the Company, or indeed the Regiment detailed, and there is no indication as to whether the three Mortar Squads were altered in terms of personnel.

The following then is a brief summary of the changes in organization of the Parachute Rifle Platoon.

Parachute Rifle Platoon, under Table of Organization 7-37 - February 1942

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	Carbine	SMG	LMG	60-mm mortar
Platoon Headquarters							
First Lieutenant	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
Second Lieutenant	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
Platoon Sergeant	1	1	-	-	1	-	-
Messenger	2	2	2	-	-	-	-
Corporal (signal & codes)	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Radio operator	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Total, Headquarters	7	7	4	2	1	2*	-
60-mm Mortar Squad							
Sergeant	1	1	-	-	1	-	-
Gunner	1	1	1	-	-	-	1
Assistant gunner	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Ammunition bearer	3	3	3	-	-	-	-
Total, Mortar Squad	6	6	5	-	1	-	1
Two Rifle Squads, each							
Sergeant	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Corporal	1	1	-	-	1	-	-
Light machine gunner	1	1	-	-	-	1	-
Assistant gunner	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Ammunition bearer	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Rifleman	7	7	7	-	-	-	-
Total, Rifle Squad	12	12	10	-	1	1	-
Total, Platoon	37	37	29	2	4	4	1

Notes

1. The two light machine guns shown under Platoon Headquarters were described as 'for optional use as directed'.
2. All rifles to be the M1, .30-cal. Under Change No.1 of 31st July 1942, one M1 rifle per Rifle Squad was replaced by an M1903 equipped with M1 rifle grenade launcher.

**Parachute Rifle Platoon, under Table of Organization 7-37 - February 1942,
incorporating amendments of Change No.2 of February 1944**

Personnel	No.	Rifle	Carbine	LMG	60-mm mortar
Platoon Headquarters					
First Lieutenant	1	-	1	-	-
Second Lieutenant	1	-	1	-	-
Platoon Sergeant	1	1	-	-	-
Messenger	2	2	-	-	-
Corporal (signal & codes)	1	1	-	-	-
Radio operator	1	1	-	-	-
Total, Headquarters	7	5	2	2*	-
60-mm Mortar Squad					
Sergeant	1	1	-	-	-
Gunner	1	-	1	-	1
Assistant gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Ammunition bearer	3	3	-	-	-
Total, Mortar Squad	6	4	2	-	1
Two Rifle Squads, each					
Sergeant	1	1	-	-	-
Corporal	1	1	-	-	-
Light machine gunner	1	-	1	1	-
Assistant gunner	1	1	-	-	-
Ammunition bearer	1	1	-	-	-
Rifleman	7	7	-	-	-
Total, Rifle Squad	12	11	1	1	-
Total, Platoon	37	31	6	4	1

Notes

1. The two light machine guns shown under Platoon Headquarters were described as 'for optional use as directed'.
2. One launcher, rocket, anti-tank, authorized per Rifle Platoon for issue as required

Parachute Rifle Platoon, under Table of Organization 7-37 - August 1944

Personnel	No.	Rifle	Carbine	LMG	60-mm mortar
Platoon Headquarters					
First Lieutenant	1	-	1	-	-
Platoon Sergeant	1	1	-	-	-
Platoon Guide	1	-	1	-	-
Messenger	2	2	-	-	-
Radio operator	1	1	-	-	-
Total, Headquarters	6	4	2	-	-
60-mm Mortar Squad					
Sergeant	1	-	1	-	-
Gunner	1	-	1	-	1
Assistant gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Ammunition bearer	3	-	3	-	-
Total, Mortar Squad	6	-	6	-	1
Two Rifle Squads, each					
Staff Sergeant	1	1	-	-	-
Sergeant	1	1	-	-	-
Light machine gunner	1	-	1	2*	-
Assistant gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Ammunition bearer	1	-	1	-	-
Rifleman	7	7	-	-	-
Total, Rifle Squad	12	9	3	2	-
Total, Platoon	36	22	14	4	1

Notes

1. The second light machine gun per Rifle Squad was described as 'for optional use as directed'.
2. One M1C Rifle (sniper) authorized per Rifle Platoon for issue as required.
3. One launcher, rocket, anti-tank, authorized per Rifle Platoon for issue as required.

Parachute Rifle Platoon, under Table of Organization 7-37T - December 1944

Personnel	No.	Rifle	Carbine	LMG	Automatic Rifle	60-mm mortar
Platoon Headquarters						
First Lieutenant	1	-	1	-	-	-
Second Lieutenant	1	-	1	-	-	-
Platoon Sergeant	1	1	-	-	-	-
Platoon Guide	1	1	-	-	-	-
Messenger	2	2	-	-	-	-
Radio operator	1	1	-	-	-	-
Total, Headquarters	7	5	2	-	-	-
60-mm Mortar Squad						
Sergeant	1	1	-	-	-	-
Gunner	1	-	1	-	-	1
Assistant gunner	1	-	1	-	-	-
Ammunition bearer	3	3	-	-	-	-
Total, Mortar Squad	6	4	2	-	-	1
Three Rifle Squads, each						
Staff Sergeant	1	1	-	-	-	-
Sergeant	1	1	-	-	-	-
Light machine gunner	1	-	1	1	-	-
Assistant gunner	1	-	1	-	-	-
Ammunition bearer	1	1	-	-	-	-
Rifleman	7	7	-	-	-	-
Total, Rifle Squad	12	10	2	1	1	-
Total, Platoon	49	39	10	3	3	1

Notes

1. The Automatic Rifle per Rifle Squad was described as 'for optional use as directed'.
2. One M1C Rifle (sniper) authorized per Rifle Platoon for issue as required.
3. One launcher, rocket, anti-tank, authorized per Rifle Platoon for issue as required

Annex A - Communication equipment Notes

When it comes to the issue of communication equipment for the Parachute Infantry Battalion the earliest I have found information for is August 1944. The scales for the earlier versions of the Parachute Infantry Battalion would be given on the Tables of Equipment, which are not items I have seen. The communication equipment used in the Parachute Infantry Battalion was the same as found in other US Infantry units.

The figures below are taken from the 1st August 1944 Table of Organization and equipment and were carried over unchanged to the 16th December 1944 versions

Wire

Battalion Communication Section

1 switchboard, BD-71

1 telegraph set, TG-5

5 telephones, EE-8

14 CE-11 sets (each 1 handset and ¼ mile wire W-130-A)

5½ miles, wire, W-130-A

Rifle Company (each)

2 CE-11 sets (each 1 handset and ¼ mile wire W-130-A)

Radio

Battalion Communication Section

1 SCR-694 (pending availability the SCR-284 could be substituted)

10 SCR-300 (pending availability the SCR-511 could be substituted)

6 SCR-536

Rifle Company (each)

6 SCR-536

The SCR-694 or SCR-284 was used to maintain communication between Battalion and Regimental Headquarters, while the SCR-300 sets were for distribution to the Companies. Of the ten SCR-300 sets provided, two were considered spare. Normal provision would allow two for use by Battalion Headquarters and one for each Rifle Company Headquarters. Two of the SCR-536 sets per Rifle Company were likewise spare, and the six SCR-536 sets held by the Communication Section appear to have been a pool for allocation as required.

Annex B - Ammunition allocation Notes

The Staff Officer's Field Manual, FM 101-10 of October 1943 includes the following details on the loads of ammunition for Parachute units.

Weapon	Rounds per gun		
	<i>On individual</i>	<i>Dropped in Squad</i>	<i>Dropped in cargo containers</i>
Pistol	21	14	-
Submachine gun	-	300	690
Carbine. M1	60	60	-
Rifle, M1	-	144	144
M1919A4	-	1000	1000
60-mm mortar	-	18	36
81-mm mortar	-	18	36
2.36-in, AT	-	8	-
M9 grenade, AT	-	10	-

Sources used and Acknowledgements

Tables of Organization

7-36, Infantry Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Battalion, Parachute - 17th February 1942 (as amended by Change No.1 of 24th February 1944)

7-37, Infantry Rifle Company, Parachute - 17th February 1942 (as amended by Change No.1 of 31st July 1942 and Change No.2 of 24th February 1944)

Tables of Organization and Equipment

7-36, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Infantry Battalion, Parachute - 1st August 1944

7-37, Infantry Rifle Company, Parachute - 1st August 1944

7-36T, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Infantry Battalion, Parachute - 16th December 1944

7-37T, Infantry Rifle Company, Parachute - 16th December 1944

Many thanks to John Thatcher for providing the equipment sections for the December 1944 tables.