



USA: Rifle Platoons Evolve, Innovation Becomes Tactical and Routine

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Today's **rifle platoons** do not engage only “when they see the enemy,” but often when they are detected or when they detect: **a low-flying drone, a thermal trace, a radio emission, a disturbance in the spectrum**. For this reason, the armed forces are shifting capabilities previously reserved for specialist units (aerial reconnaissance, surveillance, electronic warfare) **increasingly lower, down to the platoon and company level**. Two stories illustrate this well: the 2nd Marine Regiment, which during a Combat Readiness Evaluation (October 23–November 7, 2025) **experiments with sUAS and tools to operate in the electromagnetic environment**; and the U.S. Army, which **brings electronic warfare into the backpack** with the TLS-BCT Manpack, giving units the freedom to **invent new uses in the field**.

From “External Support” to the Platoon: Organic Technology to Maneuver

In the Marines, the point is not “having drones,” but **making them part of the way rifle platoons move**: small UAS used to **screen routes, observe before entering, reduce uncertainty** before maneuvering. In the Army, the same logic applies to the spectrum: the TLS-Manpack is designed to give **rifle platoons** the ability to **detect signals, locate them, and (in some configurations) jam them**. In both cases, innovation **descends to a lower level**: it does not remain in the hands of a few specialists or large platforms but becomes **tactical and routine**.

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The Implicit Enemy is the Same: Drones and Signals as the Battlefield

The use of sUAS responds to a simple reality: the threat can be hidden, mobile, and above all, can **strike before being seen**. Live video and thermal observation allow **rifle platoons** to **identify possible enemy positions** and choose safer times and directions. The TLS-Manpack responds to the same scenario, but in the electromagnetic domain: many drones and systems depend on radio links, and the ability to discover “**who is transmitting**” and **from where** can turn into **immediate protection** or an opportunity for neutralization for units moving on foot.

Modular and Adaptable: Tools that Change Shape with the Mission

These technologies are not designed as “a single object” that always works the same way. Lightweight drones are **portable, quickly deployable, integrable** into the work of **rifle platoons** during patrols and infiltrations; they become a sensor that turns on and off according to the rhythm of the maneuver. The TLS-Manpack is conceived as a **reconfigurable kit**: it can vary in weight, autonomy, and functions, and this very flexibility has driven units to **experiment with creative solutions**, such as using elevated platforms to increase coverage. The key word is **adaptation**, not rigid standardization.

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Training as a Laboratory: Experimenting in Realistic Conditions and Iterating

The strongest point of contact is the method. The Marines' evaluation is not just an exam, but a testing ground where it is verified what happens when **new technologies truly enter the operational procedures of rifle platoons**. In the Army, the approach is similar: delivering capabilities to operational units, observing how they are used, collecting feedback, and **quickly updating tactics and software**. In an environment where countermeasures evolve in weeks, it is not enough to introduce a system: it is necessary to build **a continuous cycle of learning and updating**.

The Hidden Friction: Weight, Energy, and Signature Management

Every advantage comes with a cost. In the Marines, it is clear: more technology means **heavier loads**, greater fatigue, and above all, more difficulty in **remaining undetected**. For **rifle platoons**, technology can increase the signature (electromagnetic, thermal, visual) and make it more complex to maintain stealth. In the case of the TLS-Manpack, the issue of **size-weight-energy** is structural: the system must be light and manageable enough to stay at the tactical edge without breaking mobility. The future is not just about adding devices, but learning to **manage their side effects**.

The Fundamentals Remain, but Decisions Change: More Autonomy to Small Commanders

Both in the Marines and the Army, leaders insist on a principle: technology **does not replace the fundamentals**. "Shoot, move, communicate" remains the base. But around that base, everything changes: the speed at which information arrives increases, the probability of operating with **degraded communications** increases, and the need to **make decisions in seconds** increases. For this reason, the value of **decentralized decision-making** grows: in **rifle platoons**, teams and subordinate commanders must be able to act even when the network does not hold, using sensors and tools as **multipliers**, not as crutches.