

Commandant's Note

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PREPARING THE MANEUVER FORCE FOR FUTURE ARMED CONFLICT

Today, the U.S. Army faces challenges on a level comparable to those we faced in the post-Vietnam era; reduced size, budgetary uncertainty complicated by Service-level competition for reset dollars, meeting our NATO commitments, and domestic priorities all demand that senior leaders in the U.S. Army find ever more creative and cost-effective ways to accomplish the mission. Failure to do so is simply not an option. During those uncertain times, the Army remained committed to training and maintaining a force capable of meeting its commitments at home and abroad. Our future success will depend to a large extent on training and retaining adaptive, innovative leaders, and in this Commandant's Note, my last as Chief of Infantry, I want to highlight some of the initiatives that the U.S. Army Infantry School, partnered with the U.S. Army Armor School, is continuing to implement to ensure that the Army can field a maneuver force that deploys rapidly, strikes hard, and returns to home station to train for the next mission.

Fort Benning, Ga., is the home to more high-risk training than any other installation, and trains 35 percent of all new Soldiers in the Army and all Infantry and Armor lieutenants, captains, and NCOs. Rangers, Snipers, Airborne students, Army reconnaissance and Cavalry leader courses, and others train day and night for the missions that await them around the globe. On a typical day more than 12,000 Soldiers are undergoing training in some of the 157 courses that both Branch Schools offer. More than 85,000 Soldiers and other service members train safely to standard every year.

The global war on terrorism presented challenges that forced us to examine how we train in light of the complex cultures, customs, and environments of Iraq and Afghanistan, and we adapted our training methods accordingly. This does not imply, however, that we will continue to train with a focus solely on Afghanistan. Many nations unfriendly to the U.S. have learned from the past 12 years; they have varying capabilities that we as a nation could face in the near future. We must continue to develop doctrine that enables us to understand and fight unified land operations and its two components of combined arms maneuver and wide area security. Additionally, we must continue to improve our situational and cultural awareness, understanding of the roles of non-state terrorism, and gain the ability to effectively assess the intentions, resourcefulness, values, and commitment of an enemy that will operate in close proximity to the people and government services. Other aspects of today's operations include the acclimatization of Soldiers operating at high altitudes; the challenges of airborne assault or helicopter insertion, resupply, and extraction; artillery employment and reduction of civilian casualties by positively identifying the enemy; and the criticality of operations security measures needed for increased coalition warfare. Future combat operations will also see more emphasis on how an enemy attempts to or is likely to seek ways to offset materiel, tactical,

or doctrinal advantages of our Army, requiring us to continue our own capabilities development.

The lessons of Infantry operating over extended distances in increasingly complex environments is continuing to receive attention with an eye to reducing the load carried by the Soldier without impairing maneuverability or survivability. The great physical demands on Soldiers in combat have led us to increase the rigor of resident courses within the Infantry School. We will be increasing the physical training requirements in the Officer Candidate School, and demolition and combatives training are once again part of the Ranger School curriculum. The Henry Caro NCO Academy will include increased field training, and the Bradley Master Gunner course will require students to undergo prerequisite training at home station prior to arrival to the institutional course. As the U.S. Army Sniper School (USASS) ties the Adaptive Soldier/Leader Training and Education (ASLTE) initiative into its program of instruction, the tenets of Army Situational Awareness Training (ASAT) will be presented during Week 1 and reinforced throughout the course. ASAT will also be included in the 17-week Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course (IBOLC). Further changes to USASS include the use of instructor experiences to enhance relevancy, a field craft culmination evaluation, and a 48-hour field training exercise in which IBOLC students assist in planning, USASS cadre evaluate students' sniper tactics, and ASAT cadre evaluate critical-thinking skills. The Pathfinder course will increase its operational rigor by focusing on the Pathfinder in the field and mission requirements of Pathfinder operations to increase larger unit operations in both the offense and defense.

Fort Benning has established a concept that will improve the quality of instruction and provide incentives for officers and NCOs to further develop individual skills that will be useful throughout their future career assignments and after they transition to civilian life. Other initiatives under way will enhance leaders' understanding of combined arms training. Commanders across Fort Benning continue the practice of integrating capabilities from across the installation to facilitate multi-echelon leader development. The Army's business is warfighting. Emphasis on training, leader development, and doctrine and combat developments at the Infantry School will ensure that our Army can seize the initiative and remain the decisive force on future battlefields.

One force, one fight! Follow me!

