

Commandant's Note

COL ROBERT E. CHOPPA

INFANTRY TRAINING FOR TOMORROW'S CHALLENGES

We are a nation at war, and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future. Our enemies have shown themselves to be innovative, totally committed, and implacable in their intent to target our interests at home and abroad. We cannot afford to lose the initiative in this fight, and that means we must build upon what we have learned even as we prepare to encounter an enemy with advanced weapons systems, technological upgrades, and changes to his tactics, techniques, and procedures that he hopes will reduce the advantages we can now claim. The Commandant's Note in this issue, the last to appear in the print version of *Infantry*, will outline a few of those fundamental strengths that have long sustained our Army and which will remain relevant even as we exploit our future capabilities.

The enemy we faced in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other locations may have lacked the industrial base to develop and field his own advanced weapons and materiel, but he has been able to receive enough support from outside entities, covert state actors, and powerful non-state actors to present at least localized credible threats in the current operating environment. We can expect these sources of support to remain accessible to him as he struggles to execute the asymmetric warfare that characterizes the current conflict. He is an adaptive and determined enemy, and our most effective countermeasures to his acts of aggression are the close combat, fire, and maneuver that only a dismounted U.S. Infantry squad can deliver. The squad is the tip of the bayonet in the war on terrorism, for it is the squad that takes the fight to the enemy and grapples with him on his own turf, whether it is within diverse urban settings or on other complex terrain of the current operating environment. As our enemy seeks to further extend the battlefield into sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, or the Pacific Rim, we must be ready to meet his actions with credible, decisive force.

We recall Mao's dictum alluding to the civilian population as the water in which the guerilla must swim to survive. Our current enemy has long regarded indigenous populations as an environment to be cultivated, exploited, and — where necessary — sacrificed in the pursuance of his objectives. His willingness to exercise the latter option has cost him the willing support of populations he once dominated. Over the past decade our Army has become increasingly adept at intercultural operations that have elicited the support of the people we are striving to liberate. Situational and cultural awareness training and a diverse array of cultural awareness initiatives from language instruction to crowd sourcing techniques have enabled our Soldiers to better read the environments in which they work and gain useful intelligence on likely enemy courses of action. These efforts have also enabled us to enhance the effectiveness of advisors and the training teams we deploy to train host nation forces

who will one day assume responsibility for their own security. Successful advisors from T.E. Lawrence in Arabia during World War I to Special Forces and mobile advisory training units in Vietnam, as well as British, Australian, and other allies' teams in African and Asian trouble spots have demonstrated how threatened nations' own forces can be transformed to counter a communist or other localized threat to their stability.

Battles are fought and won by dismounted Infantry squads of technically and tactically proficient Soldiers, and the strength of our Army rests upon leaders who possess the initiative, skills, and vision to build those cohesive teams. The linchpin of this effort is clearly leader development. At the U.S. Army Infantry School (USAIS) we are implementing an array of initiatives to train leaders, one of which is the consolidation of professional military education into the 199th Infantry Brigade. This brigade has become the Leader Development Brigade of three battalions and 13 companies. The brigade will offer a collaborative, interactive program with increased skill sets and leadership strategies. NCO, lieutenant, and captain professional military education will be combined under one brigade with exercises involving students from all three disciplines, and collaboration with other Centers of Excellence will encourage interaction that will yield even greater opportunity to share combat experience.

The inclusion of the decisive action training environment into our Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course (IBOLC) scenarios will aid the development of adaptive critical thinkers, and this initiative will be augmented by training links to language, regional expertise, and cultural understanding. Even as we implement these improvements, we will continue to increase the rigor in our courses by focusing on tough, realistic, relevant threats. Earlier instruction has relied on PowerPoint presentations, and the Advanced Soldier and Leader Training and Education methodology will replace those with the seminar environment of the adult learning model which increases dialogue between the student and instructor. Finally, integration of the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness program will focus on strengthening the resilience of our leaders and family members. These proposed and ongoing initiatives will yield a quantum improvement in the readiness of the Infantry squad and the Army team that comprises Soldiers, their leaders, and our family members.

One force, one fight! Follow me!

