



# YET ANOTHER THREAT: *ADAPTING TO GREATER CHALLENGES*

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Our Nation and her Army have remained the hope and assurance of the free world for most of our history largely because of the principles and values we hold to be important, and because we have the means and commitment to fight for them. Today this is more important than ever, as we dedicate our time and assets to training the smart, fast, lethal, and precise leaders to meet today's new threats to our and our allies' global interests. Our Secretary of the Army recognizes the dangers posed by threats such as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and has recently included developing capabilities to counter them as one of his four priorities. In this Commandant's Note, I want to outline the diversity and extent of the current threat and review a number of the articles in this issue of *Infantry* to enhance our Soldiers' and leaders' proficiency in an uncertain and dangerous world.

Today, we and our allies have a common cause: the neutralization of an implacable enemy whose actions and disregard for even the most basic rules of land warfare set him apart from virtually any enemy we have fought since World War II. The carnage the Japanese unleashed in China beginning in 1937 killed 300,000 soldiers and civilians in Nanking alone. Pol Pot's radical social reform process by the Khmer Rouge massacred half the population of Cambodia, and now we see ISIS engaged in its own tactics and new depths of atrocity as it insinuates itself into ever newer territories in the Middle East, on the periphery of the Mediterranean, into Africa, and across Syria and Iraq. Areas of interest for ISIS include those areas currently under attack by the Islamic State, control zones in which it enforces and defends its authority, and support zones in which it operates freely without maintaining a permanent presence. The latter zones provide logistical support to ISIS because they are often in a state of abject terror, having seen ISIS' rampages in other areas. This reliance upon terror to control a population is not new: Genghis Khan employed it with success in becoming the dominant military force of the 13th century. ISIS achieved its greatest visibility in early 2014 when it drove Iraqi forces from key cities as it advanced westward across Iraq. As of March 2015, the Islamic State already controlled an area larger than the United Kingdom, and the asymmetric nature of the State and its penchant for operating in proximity to dense civilian populations contraindicated bombing without detailed intelligence and risk assessment. So how do we deal with this enemy?

One way is by inculcating in our Soldiers the detailed, precise foreign language skills they will need to grasp and react to snatches of conversation they hear in the marketplace, in interaction with counterparts, and by reading written materials and listening to recordings of native speakers. Learning a foreign language is a huge commitment, but one's passive understanding increases exponentially with every conversation and day that passes. We cannot rely solely upon interpreters and translators. The Army must be able to field a language-capable joint force. We

are already making progress toward this goal by instruction at the service academies; through foreign language programs at universities offering ROTC; with resident instruction at the Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center; at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School; or with any of the language programs that are now available. Language proficiency is but one way we must look to the future. Our future will not be defined solely by past victories, for our adversaries have already assessed them to determine why we won, and they have evolved the tactics, techniques, and procedures to offset our advantage. As in the past, we must maintain a technological edge over the enemy even as he pursues the same goal. Guerillas in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, or somewhere else may not have the technology to develop a directed energy weapon, but there are those who will produce one for them and teach them how to use it. And they can learn; they have. We cannot forget that at least for the present ISIS' greatest source of weapons remains the United States; the amount of small arms, ammunition, and other materiel captured from Iraqi units during the 2014 offensive could last them for a long time.

The ISIS forces we know about may not be the only potential enemy. For at least the past year, elements of two Chechen guerilla units have reportedly been supporting rebel elements in Syria, and their numbers are growing. These are the same uncompromising fighters who not only fought Russian units to a standstill in Chechnya but also took the war to Russia herself by infiltrating bands into Moscow to attack civilian targets. They took 916 hostages in a Moscow theater in 2002 and over 1,100 students in the Beslan School in 2004. Rescue attempts led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians. These Chechens will go wherever there is a fight and they are as comfortable operating in rubble cities as they are in the forests and mountains of their homeland. We must field equally tough, resilient Soldiers and leaders to defeat such an enemy if the need arises, and one place to begin is with Ranger School.

I invite your attention to an article that addresses the timely topic of preparing Soldiers for the rigors of Ranger School. Graduation rates for FY 2014 and 2015 have been 39.7 and 36.3 percent respectively, and the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade (ARTB) Commander, COL David Fivecoat, has directed an exhaustive study of the reasons students fail and what Soldiers and units can do to raise success rates. First among these is the Ranger Physical Assessment (RPA) which consists of four events: 49 push-ups in two minutes, 59 sit-ups in two minutes, a 5-mile run in 40 minutes, and six chin-ups. Other events include completing a 12-mile road march within three hours and passing a land navigation test that requires a student to locate four out of five points in five hours starting at night and transitioning to daylight. This article explains in detail why students fail in each event, how to prepare them to succeed, and describes how ARTB can assist units in setting up pre-Ranger courses, what resources are available, and how units can request assistance.

An indispensable element of our ability to deter or destroy a threat is lethality. This factor includes both the capability to deliver precise, effective fire on a target and the willingness to engage that target. Until and unless we have demonstrated both, we have not established our credibility as a fighting force. For the Infantryman, basic rifle marksmanship (BRM) is fundamental to his ability to close with and destroy the enemy. File footage of most inexperienced combatants will reveal that they are shooting high. While our Soldiers are taught about the effectiveness of grazing fire, not all armies learn this, and the sight of masses of foreign soldiers firing up into the air is not uncommon. An article in this issue of *Infantry* addresses a progressive approach to BRM that begins with teaching the fundamentals — the how and why we learn to shoot — in which trainees learn the science behind marksmanship, ballistics, and weapons maintenance, among other things. Tasked with conducting ROTC Cadet Summer Training (CST), the author's cadre attended the 75th Ranger Regiment's Marksmanship Instructor Course and the Asymmetric Warfare Group's CST Basic Rifle Marksmanship Instructor's Course to learn from the ground up. The article addresses the four basic safety rules that once learned are instilled in the students, it covers in detail the five fundamentals of marksmanship, and it is exactly what our leaders and Soldiers need to be reading at this time when experience has shown that in the close urban fight the first shot is the decisive one. Every platoon sergeant and platoon leader and company commander and first sergeant should have a copy of this concise, how-to-train publication in his rucksack or SOP.

I encourage you to share your thoughts on these and other ways to enable us to move fast, strike hard and decisively, and return home to train for the next fight.

One Force, One Fight! Follow me!