

Commandant's Note

BG LARRY BURRIS



Maintaining focus and awareness of the state of our formations is critical in the life of a professional Soldier. As threats increase and evolve in our world, we must ensure we are paying attention and ready to transition as required. Throughout history, our nation's military leaders learned to plan accordingly and allocate resources and equipment against contingencies when we anticipate enemy action before it becomes a reality. We cannot wait for an adversary to reveal its capabilities or intent. Once an international boundary is compromised, an invading force initiates movement or missiles launch, the stakes rise beyond the level of simply "saber-rattling" or rhetoric, and it is now time for those who have prepared rightly to act. Our ability to examine our assumptions and adjust our plan of action remains one of our military's greatest strengths, giving us an advantage over our most significant pacing threats. In this issue of *Infantry*, we look at how Soldiers here at Fort Benning are currently training to engage enemy threats with accurate rifle marksmanship techniques and close-quarter, hand-to-hand combatives in order to prepare them for the rigors of combat.

Throughout history, snipers played a critical role in creating dilemmas for opposing commanders and their formations on the battlefield with their ability to deliver long-range precision fires and collect essential information from the battlefield. These trained personnel also play a part in the psychology of warfare by demoralizing and striking fear into the hearts of enemy combatants with their unpredictable timing and ability to operate undetected. One only needs to look at how many Russian general officers have been killed by Ukrainian snipers since the start of the war in Ukraine. Ultimately, the sniper provides commanders with the ability to effectively deliver precise direct and indirect fires while providing timely intelligence on the composition and disposition of enemy forces, overall improving the situational awareness and understanding of a unit's leadership.

Four articles within this issue of *Infantry* provide a short history of the Army Sniper and the U.S. Army Sniper Course and discuss the employment and relevance of this uniquely skilled position, the need for an advanced sniper course, and factors that have impacted the retention of the elite marksman in the Army. Unfortunately, many units struggle with effective task organization and employment of these assets by using these specially trained, armed, and resourced Soldiers to fill competing requirements and personnel shortages. These articles offer the reader thoughts to consider concerning maximizing the effectiveness of this specialized and lethal capability while not inadvertently diminishing the perception of the sniper as a combat multiplier.

Also, for your consideration of the current events ongoing in Ukraine is an article by Dr. Lester W. Grau and Dr. Charles K. Bartles describing the sniper team organization within the Russian motorized rifle platoon (sniper) of the Russian breakthrough tactical group (BrTG). The BrTG divides the teams into four sniper pairs. One of the teams is tasked primarily with observation and target designation. The remaining three teams are prepared to engage and destroy targets from 1,000 to 1,800 meters with the 7.62 SVD sniper rifle and the heavier 12.7 ASVKM sniper rifle. However, further examination of the organization and the weaponry of the BrTG in the article reveals the Russians' capability and intent to flood the battlespace with even more diverse firepower, one of those being a sniper team from the motorized rifle platoon being task organized with the fire support subgroup.

This edition of *Infantry* also addresses how the training environment is displaying renewed vitality as we resume reforging the Warrior Spirit after 18 months of adjusted training brought on by the COVID pandemic. The tempo of activity here at the Infantry School is approaching something closer to normalcy as we continue to execute the demanding training that yields the tough and battle-ready Soldiers that defend our nation and its citizens. We are once again emphasizing the extensive training of Soldiers in the skills of close-quarter combat with increased hours of combatives and the re-introduction of the Bayonet Assault Course. This training has proven its importance throughout history by its effectiveness against our nation's enemies. Whether in the urban terrain of Iraq, the mountains of Afghanistan, the jungles of Vietnam, or over the "last hundred yards" across the countryside of France, our Soldiers will do what is necessary to close with and destroy the enemy.

Reforging the Warrior Ethos and Spirit through physically demanding and intense hand-to-hand training is an excellent place to refocus training efforts because it works. CSM Stuart Sword Sr. is a subject matter expert on combatives, and he and his co-authors drafted an article in this issue of *Infantry* describing where we came from, where we are today, where we need to be, and how we are going to get there. We must always be prepared to take the fight to the enemy by training as we fight, enhancing our lethality and combat readiness.

A third article I want to highlight examines the intricacies of trust and how it supports the stability of



the interpersonal relations that drive and sustain the civilian and military components we embrace as an Army. In "Trust: A New Formulation of a Fundamental Principle," Chaplain (MAJ) Jared L. Vineyard addresses how our subordinates, peers, and colleagues rely upon each of us as leaders because they know that they can count on us to demonstrate the Army's values, support the Army team, and contribute to the success of their efforts. In their eyes, our conduct reflects our character, and our character is the foundation of mutual trust. These two elements of the leadership equation are the cornerstone of our profession and credibility. This article defines the fundamental leadership principle of trust from the ground up. Over time much has been said about the extent to which character contributes to trust. This article has brought the subject to life in a way we can incorporate it into a discussion with our subordinates as we attempt to develop them as they prepare to one day grasp the reins of responsibility that will make them better leaders.

This issue of *Infantry* alone offers 16 articles on widely diverse subjects, from sustaining the armored force to using mortars on the modern battlefield, and a look back into history at the art and science of mission command. As you scan the contents for the first one that catches your attention, remember these authors are Soldiers and leaders like you and me from our formations. These subject matter experts put forth the time and effort to share the knowledge of what they have learned with the greater Infantry community. I encourage you to join *Infantry's* broad fellowship of authors by writing and submitting an article or column sharing your knowledge learned from an experience or providing insight into a topic you feel the greater Infantry community could benefit from. As always, we welcome your questions, comments, and submissions on how we can continue to get better at providing you with information that is relevant and applicable.

I am the Infantry! Follow me!

USASC Celebrates 35th Anniversary

A Short History of Army Snipers and the U.S. Army Sniper Course

DAVID SCOTT STIEGHAN

The U.S. Army Infantry School's Sniper Course commemorates 35 years of operation this year. Gathering divisional courses from other posts, a permanent sniper qualification course resumed at Fort Benning, GA, in 1987 for the first time since the Vietnam War. During the 2022 International Sniper Competition in April at Fort Benning, hundreds of current and former snipers from the U.S. Army, other American military and law enforcement agencies, and invited foreign competitors attended the dedication of Camp Powell at

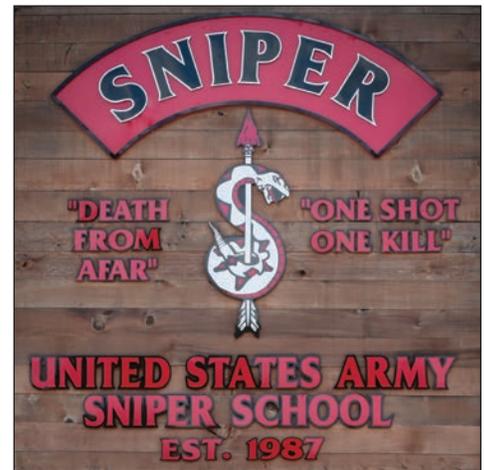


Photo by Markeith Horace

Harmony Church. Considered the founder of the modern Army sniping program, MAJ Willis Powell founded and led the 9th Infantry Division Sniping School in Vietnam in 1968 and returned to establish a similar course at Fort Benning. The Infantry School inactivated the course at Fort Benning following the Vietnam War, but a few divisions maintained their own courses until the Army consolidated them all at Harmony Church in 1987 as the U.S. Army Sniper Course (USASC).



Photo by Alexander Gago

Leaders from 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment and members of the Powell family unveil a plaque formally memorializing Camp Powell at Fort Benning, GA, on 2 April 2022.