

Commandant's Note

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Modernizing for Large-Scale Combat Operations

Over the past two decades, the United States has enjoyed technological superiority against adversaries while focusing on counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare in the Middle East. However, during this time, potential threats sought to advance their technological and tactical capabilities to challenge us in the future. The theme of this issue, Modernizing for Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO), is relevant and based on world events — very timely. As this edition of *Infantry* goes to print, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has entered its fifth week. Sadly, we have seen through ample media coverage the incredible devastation Russia's military operations have wreaked on Ukraine's infrastructure and civilian population. This tragedy enables us to study, in real-time, using a likely peer threat, what LSCO may look like in the future. Modernizing for LSCO has several implications for organizing, training, and thinking about future operations.

It is impossible to predict with precision what the next fight looks like; however, some factors will likely lead to failure if neglected. The first is that the U.S. Army must always look to improve its ability to conduct operations through a combined arms approach. Applying combined arms begins with the Infantry understanding how other branches operate. In this edition, CPT Daniel Vorsky provides a great article to enhance the Infantry Soldier's knowledge of working with aviation units.

We must also remind ourselves that the high-intensity nature of LSCO requires the effective employment of both direct and indirect fires, kinetic and non-kinetic, to support dismounted Infantry Soldiers. Early observations of the situation in Ukraine show that Russian forces may lack the ability to synchronize fires and maneuver. The U.S. Army must continue advancing our systems, organization, and doctrine to ensure that we do not face similar setbacks in future operations. We must think about the best ways to organize and distribute these critical capabilities within our formations. In this issue, CPT Sam Wiggins and LTC Alexi Franklin provide an excellent starting point for this discussion with

their article "Increasing Indirect Fire Capability in the Light Infantry Battalion." Additionally, we must understand how potential enemies will employ their fires. Readers should pay special attention to the article by Dr. Lester W. Grau and Dr. Charles K. Bartles. They provide a well-timed analysis of how the Russians use their upgraded mortar systems on the battlefield.

A third guidepost we can apply is that LSCO will require Soldiers to have a different mindset than COIN. The COIN fight that our Army grew accustomed to over the past two decades prioritized population-based objectives. Engagements with the enemy occurred sporadically and mostly at the platoon level. We must adapt our training so that our Soldiers become familiarized with the environment they will face in high-intensity LSCO. One principle is that LSCO means we will be fighting intense wars of maneuver focused on terrain and threat-based objectives. Such fights will occur at all echelons from the team to division levels while fighting as a joint force. This mindset starts with the "soldierization process" during initial military training. In this edition, officers from 2-58 Infantry Battalion of the 198th Brigade at Fort Benning provide an article discussing how Infantry One Station Unit Training (OSUT) is modernizing for LSCO.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine teaches us that LSCO in the future will be intense, brutal, and demanding. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates famously said, "When it comes to predicting the nature and location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never once gotten it right." Of course, Secretary Gates is right — we cannot predict with certainty against who, where, or when the next fight will occur. However, failing to train and employ combined arms, losing our proficiency regarding fire and maneuver, and evading the mindset needed for LSCO will undoubtedly lead to future failures. Ultimately, the Infantry Soldier, whose mission is to close with and destroy the enemy, will pay that price.

