

Commandant's Note



Mastering the Core Competencies

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Perhaps the most significant value of *Infantry* lies in the diversity of the topics available to the reader, and this issue is no exception. Although “Mastering Core Competencies” introduces the theme of our journal, over fifteen articles address aspects of our profession. Some are more readily tempting to those serving within the Profession of Arms than are others, but each offers its own insights and perspectives. Within this issue, four articles address the aspects of the Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB). Of note, in the lead article, “The Credential of a Professional Infantry Soldier,” CSM (Retired) Robert K. Fortenberry offers a comprehensive review of the EIB’s purpose, criteria, procedures, and impact in what can easily serve as a primer and source document on the process of earning the award.

Once Infantry Soldiers prove that they have mastered the basics, they must remain ready to deploy in response to any global threat. This includes one of the harshest climates on our planet, the Arctic. In his article, “Sustaining the Warfighter in the Arctic,” CPT Christopher Mawn offers thoughts and considerations on tactics, techniques, and procedures, as well as planning for operations in this incredibly harsh and unforgiving environment. This piece provides an excellent introduction for those contemplating assignments within the Arctic Circle and an insightful perspective as one written from a logistician’s point of view. Russian renewed interest and increased activities in this environment demand our utmost attention to the North, given the brutal conditions and security vulnerabilities under the Northern Lights. A short read, but one that will be time well spent.

Challenges faced by a country and its response to them define the operational environment at a time of conflict. Our great nation has evolved and succeeded in facing an increasingly uncertain array of threats that challenge our beliefs and seek to weaken the ties that bind us together as Americans. As mentioned previously, this threat has recently assumed a new image represented by the blatant aggression of Russia seen daily following the 24 February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. It would be ignorant, however, for us to believe that this display of violence will stop there and to not learn from actions of the past.

As we examine the subject of core competencies, we can see that the attributes we revere in the Profession of Arms are evolutionary by nature. Organizations learn what works in times of war and institutionalize the tactics, techniques, and procedures that proved most successful. Considering certain Ukrainian military successes against Russian invaders, it is also well worth the time and effort to review the enemy’s core competencies. An insightful article by Dr. Lester W. Grau and Dr. Charles K. Bartles in this issue of *Infantry* addresses “The Russian Army and

Maneuver Defense.” The authors describe the Russian keys to success against adversaries, from Napoleon in 1812 to the aggressive delaying and defensive operations against German units throughout and beyond World War II. Grau and Bartles discuss the extensive Soviet grasp of our own doctrinal and tactical literature. Likely, the current Russian Federation is doing the same, analyzing our current doctrine, all of which is readily available on the internet. The importance of studying your adversaries is the exact reason why the Infantry School is beginning to implement the identification of Chinese and Russian weapons systems and vehicles across multiple programs of instruction (POIs). The earlier we start training our Soldiers to fight a specific enemy, the better prepared we will be as an Army.

Leader training and development remains at the forefront of what we do at the United States Army Infantry School. The NCOs and officers here are taught to maximize every opportunity and repetition while in training to reinforce the core competencies of the Infantry Soldier. Leaders then return to the force and pass on their knowledge and experience gained to those they lead, inspiring the confidence needed to fight in the complex battlefield of tomorrow. We all must ensure that we execute the “routine things routinely” by mastering the core competencies of our craft. By doing so, our Infantry formations will be better equipped to succeed in large-scale combat operations when called.

One force, one fight! Follow me!