

# The Need for an Infantry Technician

1SG CHRISTIAN H. NOONEY

In the complex environment we find ourselves in today, it is imperative that commanders at the battalion level and higher receive the best and most up-to-date counsel, free of bias such as “in my last unit” or “back when I was an instructor.” The creation of an Infantry Technician (IT), akin to the infantry weapons officer or “gunner” program in the U.S. Marine Corps, can improve infantry formations through increased lethality and training proficiency.

The history of our Army is rooted in the formation and role of the Infantry. Since 1775, any decisive and total victory has been won with the work of 19-to-22-year-old Americans who served in the final 400 meters of diplomacy. As technology and equipment advanced, the field has employed countless pieces of equipment actively used in the inventory across companies and battalions today. A young team leader could be expected to direct not only the employment but also the maintenance and training of five direct and indirect fire weapons systems, three unique weapon-mounted optics, three different types of night-vision devices, and three different communications platforms ranging from high frequency (HF) to the Army Tactical Communications System (ATACS). While there are associated publications to help a team leader manage the maintenance, training, and employment of these systems, no single person or role brings everything together — this is where the IT will prevail.

NCOs have had varied levels of success with training and managing their formations because their leadership style is heavily influenced by their experience and the current directives of their sitting commanders at the company and battalion levels. We often rely heavily on NCOs who previously served as instructors at the Ranger Course or other various weapons courses, only to be caught flat-footed when they conduct a permanent change of station (PCS) or we discover what was taught in the schoolhouse five years ago is no longer part of doctrine.

ITs would ensure that battalion commanders and command sergeants major (CSMs) have the most up-to-date technical and tactical information. They can network across the force to develop best practices and establish a culture of continuity, reducing the learning curve for units and Soldiers during PCS season. This network would be invaluable for enlisted and officer Infantrymen alike returning to operational assignments after time away from the field.

In conflict, this technical expert can counsel the staff and commander on integrating enablers, support assets, and attachments to ensure that commanders can synchronize their efforts and get the maximum battlefield effects. During training and deployment preparation, the IT will oversee gunnery and live-fire exercise progression as well as weapons density, increasing overall safety and lethality. The unit would see improved kinetic and non-kinetic effects on the enemy, improved survivability of Soldiers, and additional time between initial contact and culmination.

Battalion commanders often find themselves at the confluence of several lines of effort, with access to enablers and support that rival what most NATO members see at their brigade and division levels. Unfortunately, these commanders may have also spent years between being in command of an operational unit with several staff and broadening assignments. The CSM of the unit is often expected to be the person who can bridge this gap, with much less time between their time as a first sergeant and as a CSM. However, the CSM's counsel is also limited by their experience and ability to speak the same language as their commander.

The IT would reduce the learning curve of the commander and provide stability to the formation during transitioning leadership. The IT would ideally be placed as a staff primary from the battalion level to corps,

with the bulk of assignments being in U.S. Army Forces Command units and the remainder being in the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command to train and develop subsequent cohorts. Similar to the 131A (Field Artillery Technician) warrant officer, the IT would ensure training and development are anchored in doctrine and provide commanders an in-house expert, who has not only the formal training but also the network to go back to codify best practices across the field. As the conflict in Ukraine has shown, the modern battlefield is quickly changing, and those standing victorious will be the ones who can not only just adapt but enact change faster than their adversary.

**1SG Christian Nooney** currently serves as the first sergeant for A Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Security Forces Assistance Brigade at Fort Moore, GA. He previously served in operational roles at all ranks in 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division as well as the 82nd Airborne Division. 1SG Nooney has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Southern New Hampshire University and is currently working towards a Master of Business Administration.