

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## SEPARATE QUESTIONS

Dear Sir,

I have followed the recent articles on the possible change in military sidearms and now see the article on the M16 rifle (INFANTRY, September-October 1981, Page 22), which will probably reopen the M16 controversy. I feel compelled to point out that most if not all of the noise being generated on these subjects results from mixing two separate questions without identifying that they are separate. This confuses an already difficult issue.

Are we discussing weapons or ammunition? Many people object to the 5.56mm round used by the M16. Would they be happy with an AR10? Many others feel the M16 is an "inaccurate, unreliable piece of junk." Would they be happier with an FN-FAL? A mini-14? A Galil? The question of 5.56mm versus 7.62mm is separate from the question of accuracy and reliability.

Regarding ammunition, the point usually addressed is "knock-down power" (called "stopping power" in handgun discussions) and "lethality," when comparing the 5.56mm to the 7.62mm, or the 9mm parabellum to the .45.

It is unfortunate that these terms are never defined. Lethality is a measure of the seriousness of the likely injury, while stopping power is a measure of the probability that an antagonist will be immediately put out of action, regardless of the final result. Whether he dies or is up again in ten minutes does not matter to this measure. (A club has good stopping power.)

Most INFANTRY readers are probably aware that the .45 is accepted as having significantly greater stopping power than the 9mm, while

lethality studies show that the 9mm is equal or superior. (*Defensive Handgun Effectiveness*, by C.E. Peters, c1977, is probably the best book available on the subject.)

Obviously, we would like a round with both good stopping power and high lethality. But in the real world, trade-offs are usually necessary.

Without going into great detail, I believe it has been shown (both analytically and in actual experience) that the 5.56mm round has excellent lethality but leaves something to be desired in stopping power, and that the 7.62mm has slightly inferior lethality (although not enough less to worry about) but far superior stopping power. Similarly, the 9mm has lethality equal or superior to that of the .45, but much less stopping power.

We can argue about the best mix of lethality, stopping power, long range ballistic accuracy, penetration, and light weight, but let us at least understand what we are arguing about.

By the way, in all of the articles and letters I've seen on this subject recently, a discussion of penetration was lacking. With modern materials, it is realistic to expect body armor to become common on the future battlefield. Even now, a three- or four-pound Kevlar vest will stop both a 9mm and a .45 round. As armor gets better, even rifles may need penetrator rounds by the end of this decade.

Regarding the question of the M16 rifle, while it is not my favorite (I prefer the mini-14) the advantages Mister Osborne discussed in his arti-

We welcome letters to the Editor on any subject that has been treated in our magazine as well as on issues of general interest to our readers. All letters are subject to editing and possible abridgment.

cle are real. The M16 has proved adequate over many years in many parts of the world. While we should look for a better light assault rifle, it does not serve the Army to keep repeating like a litany that "the M16 is a piece of junk." It can only decrease the confidence of the troops in their equipment and of the public in the Army. In the long run, it's counter-productive.

ABRAM MARK RATNER  
CPT, USAR  
Orange, New Jersey

## APCs OF THE PAST

Dear Sir,

Even though I am retired, I have followed your articles on the IFV and especially enjoyed the one in the July-August 1981 issue ("The Future IFV," by Clifford D. Bradley, page 21), because it really came to grips with some points.

I must, however, take exception to some statements about the vehicles, because I had extensive training with the M75 and the M59 in Germany and with the M59 at Fort Hood, Texas.

The author states that the M75 had a top speed of 43 mph, but it was not uncommon in Germany for the 75 to hit 60 mph or more. That 360-horsepower aircraft motor and accompanying transmission were something. The M75 had a lot of power. There was no way the M59 could keep up with it. The M75 could keep up with the M48 easily, and we trained a lot with M48s at Wildflecken. When the snow flew, off came the track pads, and with grouzers only, even the M48s couldn't stay with us.

The main problem with the M75 was that it was nose-heavy. A tail-

heavy tank could "float" over a small obstacle, where we would have to slow down and head into it if we did not want to stand on our nose. I have a scar on my head from bouncing off the overhead.

The article says that the M59 would top out at 32 mph. It might if it was new, if its motors were perfectly tuned, and if it had a tail wind. That monster was underpowered and should have had an automotive engineer for each vehicle to maintain it.

As for keeping up with tanks, forget it, especially cross country and uphill. But there was a trick that both the M59 and the M75 could do, but the M75 did it better: If the grade got a little too steep, they could back up a hill.

The article also forgets the experiments in Korea in which they took the turrets off and all the ammunition racks out of old M4 Shermans. I didn't ride in them but had many friends who did. They told me that with all that weight removed those old Shermans were really fast. They could carry a squad plus supplies and were used mainly to supply OPLRs and outposts. They attracted artillery fire, of course, but with their speed and with the soldiers wearing flak jackets and steel helmets they weren't too dangerous.

I like the idea of the stretched M113, because it is too small as it is. The M59 was fairly big inside but when it was combat loaded it could still get awfully crowded. We needed clips on the roof to hold the machinegun, its tripod, and the rocket launcher, as well as racks under the seats to hold the rifle ammunition and the .50 caliber ammunition boxes.

I agree we need firing ports, but there must be adequate vision. Might we not be starting a Maginot Line complex where a rifleman will be reluctant to dismount and just want to fire from the inside? To adequately support armor and his own vehicle, the infantryman must dismount, especially in close terrain. Those tanks are dead ducks without enough

infantry support from close-in attack, and dismounted is the only way the infantry can supply it.

APCs also need a quick, reliable refueling system. Refueling with Jerry cans with at most two or three men is hell, because the fuel is seldom close to the road. When the men get through, they're all soaked with fuel and completely whipped and ready to torch that metal monster.

I notice in your Infantry News section that the Soviets' new 5.45mm rifle uses hollow point ammunition. That constitutes a dum-dum as defined by the Geneva Convention. Are we the only Army that tries to abide by those outmoded rules, rules that we never sanctioned by formally signing the treaty?

One last thing — the *Panzerfaust* made one helluva antivehicular booby trap.

LEO A. APPLING JR.  
MSG (Ret)  
Odem, Texas

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### NBC CONTAMINATION

Dear Sir,

In the July-August 1981 issue of *INFANTRY* (page 2), Major General David Grange addressed the need for breakout operations training. In particular, he stated that "a unit may become isolated and encircled because ... the enemy's use of NBC weapons either destroys or contaminates areas, thereby denying or blocking the unit's planned routes of displacement and communication."

An area that is contaminated by the use of NBC weapons is not necessarily denied to us by that contamination, but particular care must be taken in crossing that area. This is the reason one of the current ARTEP tasks for the Mechanized Infantry Tank Task Force is to cross or bypass a contaminated area. FM 21-40, NBC Defense, states on page 7-5: "In an exploitation, units are likely to be forced to cross a chemically contaminated area." FM 71-1, The Tank

and Mechanized Infantry Company Team, on page 1-13 states: "The force that can live in this environment (NBC) and still move, use terrain and overwatch, suppress and concentrate superior force, will defeat the side that cannot."

The U.S. Army will not always have the luxury of bypassing NBC contamination, and we must recognize that fact. There may well be times when the tactical advantages obtained by attacking an enemy's flank or rear through a contaminated area far outweighs the risk. Indeed, the unexpected use of such an area can create surprise, which is a decided advantage. Only the tactical commander can decide this. But we must train to cross these areas routinely to provide our commanders an opportunity to use all of the battlefield.

TIMOTHY B. SAVAGE  
CPT, Chemical Corps  
Fort Rucker, Alabama

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### MASTER GUNNER PROGRAM

Dear Sir,

I would like to offer a few ideas for infantrymen to consider and discuss.

I strongly believe the Infantry needs a master gunner program just as we have in the Armor branch. The Infantry master gunner would be a school trained antitank weapons trainer and would be assigned to TOE positions at all levels — company, battalion, brigade, and division.

Suggesting a master gunner program does not imply that the Infantry can't train its people. It is just the most effective and efficient way to stay on top of the mission of tank killing.

The master gunner would not take away any responsibility for training from the squad or platoon leaders, or the responsibility for setting guidelines and standards away from the commander. He would be the commander's trained advisor, just as the maintenance NCO or warrant officer is the advisor on maintenance.

The master gunner would manage

training resources — ammunition, training devices, ranges, time, and people. He would supervise the training of the unit's trainers and supervise the turret mechanics and armorers. With guidance from the commander, he would formulate the plans for gunnery — qualification, monthly sustainment, or integration into field training.

In the mechanized infantry company and battalion, the master gunner would be the commander's track commander or gunner on the APC or IFV. The master gunner should also be on the TOEs of non-mechanized infantry units with a combat position of operations sergeant.

A thought on unit armorers is that the job should be a special skill position, not the position of a 76Y. My experience has been that the best armorers are not 76Ys but 11Bs. I recommend we establish an armorer's school in which an ASI would be awarded. Normally, the armorer's MOS would be that of the predominant MOS of the company and, therefore, the individual would be familiar with the unit's weapons and their importance to the unit's ability to perform its mission.

I have not worked with the IFV and I know a lot of smart guys have, but I can't believe the firing port weapon can suppress out to ranges of 250 to

300 meters. I see that the task is in the draft field manual for IFV gunnery, and I see ranges being built at Grafenwohr for that task. I hope we aren't wasting time and money. I do have one idea for an additional use for these firing port weapons: When my battalion went through training at the German Infantry School, I felt we could have used the short automatic rifle with the assault teams clearing houses in "Bonmland" or clearing trenches in the forest-fighting phase.

Finally, I believe we need to put more emphasis on CP and TOC training. The subject may not be as exciting as maneuver, but command and control won't happen if we don't conduct training on how to do it.

SCOTT ADAMS  
CPT, Infantry  
8th Infantry Division

### BOOTS AND HANDGUNS

Dear Sir,

I would like to join the discussion that has been in progress for the past several issues in your Letters section on the new boots and on the selection of a handgun.

For the past 12 years, I have worn a boot with a Vibram sole that is identical to that on the Army's new boot.

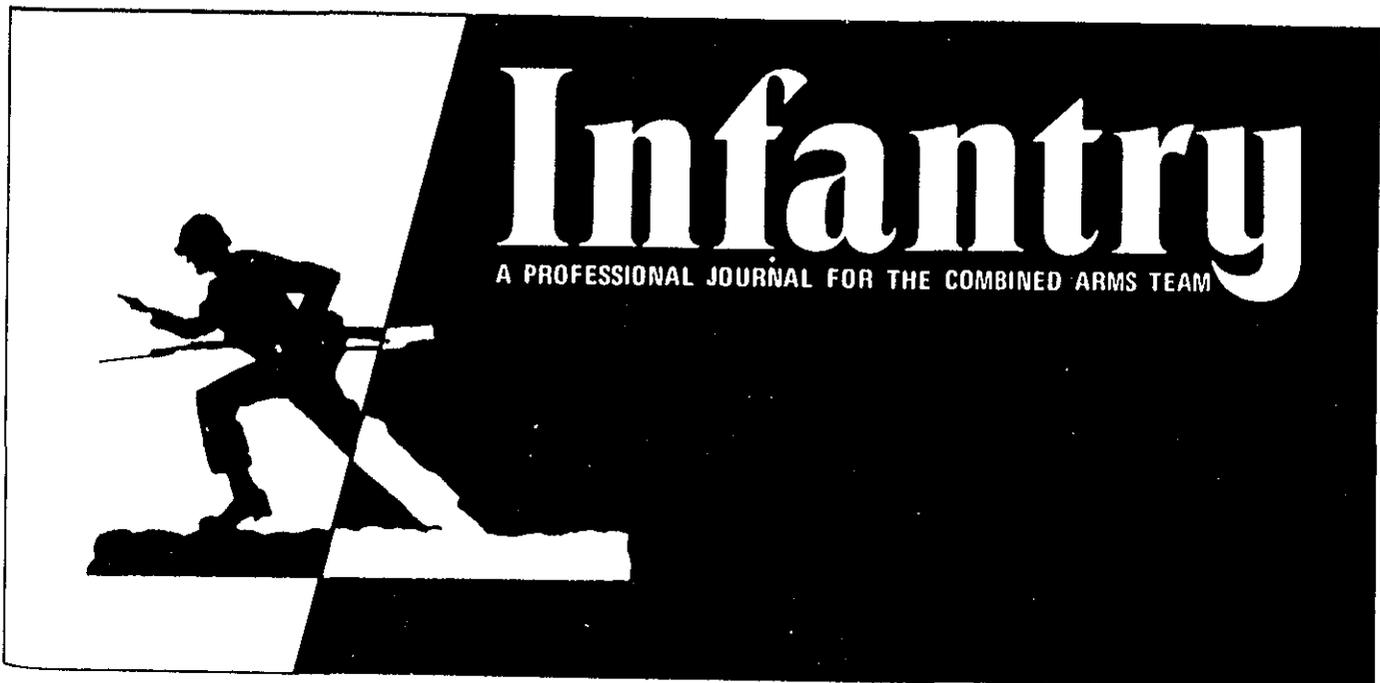
When it is clean the sole gives good traction on a variety of surfaces, but it picks up everything, and when it is clogged it is no better than a plain smooth sole.

This Vibram sole was never intended to be an all-purpose sole; it was intended to replace leather or hobnail soles on climbing boots. The problem with the standard Vibram sole is that the lugs are too small and too closely spaced. Thus, anything that gets in between the lugs tends to stay there. The U.S. manufacturer of Vibram soles has a slightly different version, called the *Securite*, which eliminates most of the clogging problems.

And just because a boot has a leather lining does not mean it will not need breaking in; leather that is so soft that it conforms to the shape of the foot upon first wearing is so soft that it will rapidly stretch out of shape. I've found that in such boots, the soles tend to outlast the uppers.

I agree that a steel-shanked boot is preferable to one without a shank, and in a well-designed boot the weight increases should be negligible.

My final comment on the new boot is that it is not very new. Civilian boot manufacturers have been making identical boots for years. The designers at Natick have maintained their record of being about twenty years behind the times. They have ig-



nored the revolution in boot design that has followed the great expansion in backpacking and mountaineering. The boots being offered by the more progressive makers are a far cry from the "new" G.I. boot.

As for the other controversy, I am totally opposed to the adoption of a 9mm service pistol, chiefly because it has been shown to be less effective than the .45.

Those who point to the FN-Browning M1935 "High Power" as John Browning's endorsement of the 9mm Parabellum might be interested in knowing that Browning originally designed the High Power for a 9.8mm/.40 caliber cartridge. He was no fool, though. He eventually settled for the 9mm round because the European military "experts" wanted it.

In 1910, Colt's salesmen had gone around Europe with a 9.8mm version of the pistol that was to become the M1911. They found that the "experts" were not interested; they wanted to go with such powerhouses

as the .30 Luger and the .32 ACP. But just because our friends screw up is no reason for us to do so.

I would have hated to be Sergeant Alvin York if he had had to stop those seven Germans with a 9mm instead of a .45. Most people don't know it, but York was charged at close range by the Germans who had waited until he had to reload his rifle. Seven men, seven shots. That's good enough for me.

ROY L. WILSON, JR.  
Harlem, Georgia

**MPs ARE SOLDIERS FIRST**

Dear Sir,

I am writing in hopes of informing all infantry soldiers that Military Policemen are soldiers first and MPs second.

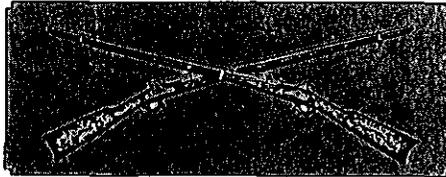
At the U.S. Army Military Police School we realize the importance of the combat support role of the MP.

The trend in recruiting is changing from law enforcement to the combat role. We know that "when push comes to shove" our role in rear area protection, battlefield movement control, and prisoner of war handling will be increased. Our skill qualification testing has shifted from "ticket writing" to perimeter security, patrolling, fire and maneuver, squad and platoon tactics and a lot of other "grunt" subjects.

We are proud to see this change. NCOs are enrolling in 11B correspondence courses to improve their soldierly skills. And this 33-year-old soldier-MP recently completed basic airborne training.

We, the soldiers serving as military policemen, want you infantrymen to know we are of the troops and for the troops and that we appreciate the job you are doing.

RICK DUNLAP  
SFC, USA  
Fort McClellan, Alabama



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