

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## DESERT TOW FIRING

Dear Sir,

Recent operations at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, indicate that TOW missile gunners who have been trained in temperate climates have problems when they are introduced to the extremes of the desert. The vast expanses of flat terrain and the mirage effect caused by intense heat rising from the desert floor combine to pose a difficult target acquisition problem. If a few simple desert gunnery techniques are used, however, the TOW can be employed in the desert as effectively as in other climatic conditions.

To reduce the mirage effect and eliminate any glare caused by direct sunlight, it is important for the TOW to be on higher terrain firing downward at a target. This gives the target a solid background and allows the gunner to get a true sight picture. It is not enough for the TOW to be just off the ground, mounted on a vehicle.

The TOW range card is critical in the desert, but because of the vast distances with few identifiable terrain features, a simple range card cannot be constructed just by using a map. Once it selects its primary and alternate firing positions, the crew must sight the weapon and walk the directions of fire, just as the machinegun crews walk their final protective fire lines. Known range marks must be made at 1,500 meters and at 500-meter intervals past 3,000 meters. This will keep the gunners from firing at a target that they can see at up to 8,000 meters but cannot hit at more than 3,000 meters. This will also help ensure a first round hit and will not compromise a firing position or waste a missile.

These techniques will improve the weapon's accuracy and the crew's ability to acquire a target. The techniques are also applicable to other

optically-sighted ground weapons such as the Dragon and a tank's main gun.

WALTER E. WRIGHT  
CPT, Infantry  
Fort Irwin, California

## BATTALION OFFICER SCHOOL

Dear Sir,

I read with great interest Captain Walter A. Schrepel's article, "Battalion Officer School," in the January-February 1982 issue of *INFANTRY* (page 34). His idea has great potential and if such a school is planned, monitored, and executed well by the battalion commander, the executive officer, or the S-3, the units would earn high dividends in terms of junior leader or officer development and job satisfaction.

But a key element in junior officer development, which Captain Schrepel barely touches on in the last paragraph of his article, is timely, frequent, and meaningful counselling. Many company and battalion commanders — raters and senior raters — seem to overlook this responsibility with a resultant decrease in junior officer development, job satisfaction, and trust in and respect for their superiors.

Today's Army encourages regular counselling and feedback, and we insist that soldiers be counselled by their team or squad leader, and the squad leader by his platoon leader. But who counsels the platoon leader? Unfortunately, the meaningful counselling of junior officers seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

If more company and battalion commanders took the time and saw it as their duty (which it really is) to counsel their junior officers and assist them in their professional development, they would have more cohesive

and effective units, in addition to more proficient and confident junior officers.

In a unit where junior officers are counselled regularly, and in which a battalion officer school is instituted, there is no doubt in my mind that the result will be a highly-proficient, productive, motivated unit in which all officers willingly work together and altruistically lead their soldiers in accomplishing any mission or goal.

HAROLD E. RAUGH, JR.  
CPT, Infantry  
Fort Benning, Georgia

## SERIOUS DOUBTS

Dear Sir,

I would like to make several comments about Lieutenant Mitchell E. Toryanski's article entitled "The Five-Degree Method" (January-February 1982, page 32).

First, I appreciate the fact that until the Army fields a laser range finder a soldier needs a way to determine distances on the battlefield. But I have serious doubts about the advisability of having someone casually strolling around the battlefield to determine how far away the enemy is from his position.

Even if the hand-held laser range finder is not forthcoming soon, we still have many ways to determine distances on the battlefield. Among these are the range finders on the M60 and M1 tanks and the methods of intersection and polar coordinates, which are basic map reading skills.

The most effective way to make sure our soldiers can estimate distances is through training. If we, the officers and noncommissioned officers, make our soldiers practice estimating distances during training, they will become quite good at it.

Let's not get into the business of cre-

ating unnecessary casualties by teaching methods that provide more exposure time than is required to perform the mission.

JOHN M. DIXON  
MAJ, Field Artillery  
Fort Knox, Kentucky

## MORE MILITARY HISTORY

Dear Sir,

In an officer's basic and continuing education, he is subjected to a constant flow of information, ranging from things that are nice for him to know to things that are necessary for his professional growth. Unfortunately, though, a void remains where military history should be.

As a member of at least the second oldest profession, the officer has available to him more than 3,000 years of recorded accounts of warfare, and he must draw upon this vast body of knowledge to be proficient in his profession — to sharpen his mind and his sword.

While few of us may feel, as General George Patton did, that we have fought our battles in an earlier time, this feeling of *deja vu* on the

battlefield is one that undoubtedly is strengthened by a heavy diet of military reading. The fact that the Romans were defeated at Cannae in 216 B.C. takes on added interest and significance when we realize that the tactics the victorious Hannibal used are still valid.

Only through a self-imposed regimen of professional reading and through the addition of important texts to his personal library, can he who would wage war learn about it.

Although the principles of war may appear dry at first, they take on shape and flesh as additional readings elaborate upon and bear witness to their continuing validity in warfare. Certain specific texts (and the list here is by no means exhaustive) should find their way into the officer's mind and onto his bookshelf.

*The West Point Atlas of American Wars* is a must for the basic library. Its maps and explanations add to the web of learning, and for the small unit leader the works of S.L.A. Marshall are a must. They provide a vivid insight into the workings of *Men Against Fire*. A new book, *The Face of Battle*, written by an author who admits to never having seen that face, does a superb job of painting the face

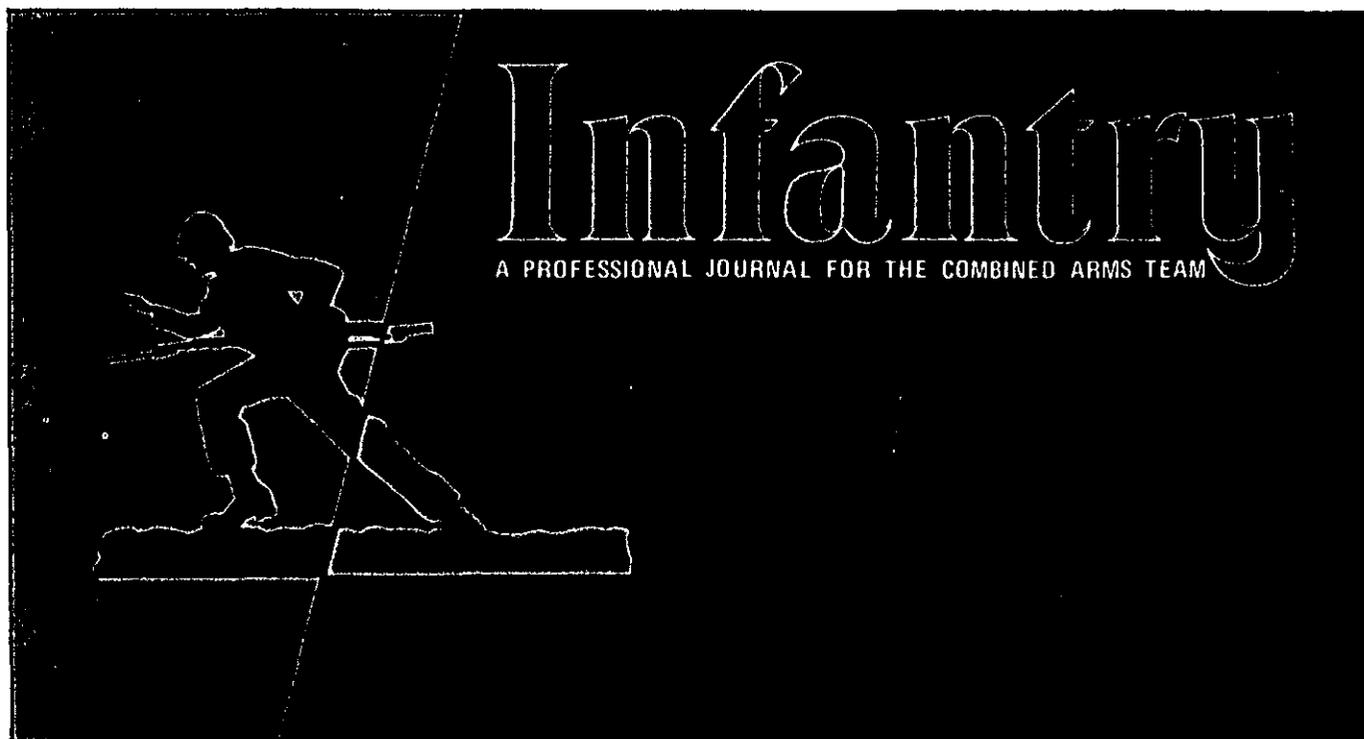
of war in three different battles.

For each of the many military specialties, there are basic texts that should be read and re-read: For the Intelligence officer, *The Codebreakers*; for the Armor officer, *Brazen Chariots*; for the Infantry officer, *Company Commander*; and for the PsyOps officer, *War On the Mind*. For all, there is a most interesting and provocative work entitled *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*.

I would argue that the study of military history is as well served by novels as by biography. Some of the best coverage of the Vietnam war is to be found in fiction. *The Lionheads*, *Fields of Fire*, *A Rumor of War*, *The Grunts*, and *Sand in the Wind* all effectively add to the learning experience.

Ranging farther afield, *On the Banks of the Suez* provides a masterful insight into the Israeli war machine and presents a superb picture of internal politics of the conflict and their effect upon a war that appeared for a time to be a near thing for the Israeli Defense Force.

The price that we as officers pay for not becoming deeply involved in learning about our profession is too



awesome to contemplate. The officer corps, as the orchestrators of war, cannot afford again to spin our wheels *On the Treadmill to Pearl Harbor* or to reach for *A Bridge Too Far*. History provides little space for losers.

J.F. HOLDEN-RHODES  
MAJ, USAR  
Placitas, New Mexico

**MILITARY HISTORY SYMPOSIUM**

Dear Sir,

The Department of History at the U.S. Air Force Academy will host its Tenth Military History Symposium 20-22 October 1982.

The theme of this symposium will be "The Home Front and War in the Twentieth Century." Session topics will include the task of forging national unity and mobilizing public opinion in total war; the mobilization of men, money, and materiel for total war; the social effects of war on civil liberties, civil rights, and the role of women; and the interplay between limited war and domestic politics.

For further information please write or call me at the Department of History, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado 80840; AUTOVON 259-3230, or commercial 303/572-3230.

JAMES R.W. TITUS  
MAJ, USAF  
Executive Director

**VEHICLE MARKINGS**

Dear Sir,

Two items in your September-October 1981 issue especially caught my attention.

First, Lieutenant Noyes B. Livingston's "Vehicle Markings" was most enlightening to an artilleryman. The information that a three-digit number on a Soviet armored fighting vehicle (AFV) can be used to single out commanders is valuable for the best use of terminally guided munitions such as the Copperhead and the Hellfire. Vehicles in column or line formations whose numbers are visible to a forward observer can alert him to the best targets to attack with his resources. It would also be of great

value to any AT crew in selecting the best targets in a group of AFVs. The destruction of the unit leadership at platoon and company levels puts an increased burden on the higher echelons to command and control individual sub-units.

Lieutenant Livingston's suggested vehicle marking system would be a great command and control measure for mechanized units to use, and it would reduce unnecessary radio traffic in moments of combat.

Another interesting item in that issue is the letter by William Befort in which he advocates firing LAW rounds from the M202 "Flash" quadruple 66mm incendiary rocket launcher. I mentioned the same concept for battery antiarmor defense in an article in the *Field Artillery Journal* ("Defending the Battery," May-June 1979). Needless to say, no one has acted upon that suggestion, but I hope someone will act upon Mr. Befort's idea; then maybe we can get such weapons issued to field artillery batteries also.

LARRY A. ALTERSITZ  
CPT, Field Artillery  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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