

# FORUM & FEATURES



## KEEP IT LIGHT

MAJOR JOHN P. GRITZ

What good is an army that can't get to a war on time, has too much equipment that needs too much fuel when it does get there, and acts more like a target than an attacker on the battlefield?

Unfortunately, that's the kind of Army we are fielding today. It consists primarily of armor and mechanized infantry units. Its light infantry divisions either have lost one brigade each or have been scheduled for complete deactivation. Our one airborne division is the best we have in terms of strategic mobility, but our planners seem to have developed the other forces as if our Canadian and Mexican borders were threatened: These units might stop a lightning armor thrust into Colorado or Texas, but they would strain our sea and air bridges to Southwest Asia or Central Europe. In the end, they probably wouldn't get there in time to win a war, much less deter one.

It's time we de-emphasized exotic and expensive tanks\* and infantry fighting vehicles and concentrated instead on fielding a leaner army, one composed of more deployable, flexible, efficient, and survivable light infantry units.

In quick-response situations, light infantry — even the fairly heavy units we have now — can effectively use air and all other forms of transportation as well, including trains, buses, boats, mules, and foot power, to get its troops into battle without delay. Our armor and mechanized infantry forces, on the other hand, must rely on pre-positioned stocks for their European combat power, or else be prepared for a long delay in getting their soldiers and vehicles together at ports and airheads — provided, of course, that the vehicles ever get there at all.

Light infantry can be employed in practically any environment. Bad weather and darkness are aids to the footsoldier. When his air assault contingents are grounded by darkness, and his mechanized friends are mired in snow or mud, he can still fight — on the plains and woods of Europe, on the deserts of the Middle East, or in jungles, cities, and mountains.

Light infantry units are less dependent on equipment and fuel than other types of units. Relying only on shoe leather to carry them, they are less hindered by the surprises of war.

Mechanized units require too many soldiers and too much equipment just to support their vehicles. Ask a mechanized infantryman where he spends most of his time, and he'll probably reply, "At the motor pool." And the same fuel problems that keep him locked in a garrison motor pool in peacetime will stop him and eventually put him on foot when he goes to war.

Light infantry has the added advantages of being more flexible and adaptable, and better able to augment its resources by living off the land and the enemy's spoils. Most important, well-trained and well-employed light infantry units can survive on the battlefield better than mechanized divisions can with all of their armored vehicles.

Shoulder-fired antiarmor and air defense weapons have completely changed the infantryman's combat power in relation to armor and air power. Since the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, for example, the volley fires of massed infantry antitank weapons have considerably reduced the advantages previously held by armor columns.

In terms of being seen, identified as

a threat, and engaged on the battlefield, light infantry units have a definite advantage over armor and mechanized forces. They can dig in. They can hide. They can move quietly at night. In many ways, they are more mobile on foot at three miles per hour than their mechanized counterparts are in their vehicles. Foot troops make better use of the terrain, leave a smaller electronic or visual signature, are not bound to lines of communication, and are the most capable at effecting surprise.

Ironically, light infantry can be organized, equipped, and trained for a fraction of the price of mechanized forces. Discounting the cost of the soldiers' pay, food, and ammunition, the purchase price of one new Bradley fighting vehicle — about 1.5 million dollars — could provide six or seven light infantry battalions with enough money to cover their operations and maintenance for a year.

It's time, therefore, for us to shift our budget priorities and doctrine to a more formidable infantry force

structure that is prepared to get to war fast and fight on our own terms.



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# Selfless Leadership

LIEUTENANT COLONEL R. L. SLOANE

When I started my military career a number of years ago, one of the first things I learned was that the most important aspect of military service had as its core the old adage that the mission and the men come first. I believed it then; I believe it even more now.

Unfortunately, too many of the Army's leaders today seem to have forgotten that, although the mission must come first, it is only slightly more important than the men. These leaders seem to be willing to sacrifice their men needlessly for the mission, especially when the accomplishment of the mission is linked in their minds with their own personal advancement.

Modern technology and the various management theories that have been applied to the Army have helped engender this idea that the men are expendable. The equipment and systems that have been developed

tend to promote the dehumanization of soldiers — the men have become mere commodities, a part of the equipment or the system. And because most of the management theories focus on the need for the people to support the organization in attaining a certain goal, they fail to recognize the corresponding obligations the organization has to its people.

The Army's leaders too often become so enmeshed in the details, in the micro-management of their own actions, that they lose sight of their overriding goal. Slowly, then, over a period of time, it becomes easy for them to compromise their inherent personal values for those of "the system." Their programs and budgets then become more important than their people, and accomplishment begins to outweigh human concerns. This is what convinces many outsiders that the Army's leaders do not really care for their soldiers, that they

lack the necessary moral courage to stand up for their men, and that they have mortgaged their integrity by deluding themselves as to their real goals.

It is quite evident then that one of the Army's major internal problems is the increasing selfishness of its leaders. But this is only a symptom; what we need to do is look at some of the underlying causes.

First, leaders need to be able to assess where they stand and what they can expect their future to be, but the individual leader finds it difficult to get the information he needs to make this assessment. Some of the recent changes the Army has made in performance assessment and career progression may prove beneficial in the long run, but they are not enough in themselves to bring about changes in the basic motivations of its leaders.

The Army also needs a far less narrow and less subjective system of