

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## INFANTRY UNLIMITED

Dear Sir,

It is absolutely amazing that our journal considered the article "Keep It Light" of sufficient merit to qualify as a feature. This article represents the worst thinking of our branch; furthermore, it is incorrect and inconsistent.

ARTEP 71-2, which governs all training for the mounted combined arms team, includes all of the traditional light infantry tasks. These tasks are required training for mechanized infantry squads, platoons, companies, and battalions.

Air assault infantry is still one of our lightest infantry formations, and the article ties these troopers to their assault ships as it does mechanized troopers to their fighting vehicles. It fails to recognize the flexibility and dual threat represented by these infantrymen.

Infantrymen, whatever their battalion of assignment, are not limited to or confined by their primary "type." We are all deployable with or without all of our equipment. We can strike mounted, dismounted, from the sky, or from the sea. We should be proficient enough in our art to realize that, train at it, and also expect it from our adversaries.

CARL F. ERNST  
LTC, Infantry  
5th Infantry Division (Mechanized)

## LIKE BAYONET, STILL AROUND

Dear Sir,

Since the Infantry School has now gone back to bayonet training, I thought you might be interested in knowing what happened to the young

private first class who was pictured on your front cover 24 years ago running the bayonet course in Bamberg, Germany, in competition for the EIB (January-March issue, 1959).

That young PFC is now an old command sergeant major in the 24th Infantry Division and now an artilleryman (by chance, not by choice). But I still believe in the spirit of the bayonet, and I still read INFANTRY.

LEE S. RODRIGUEZ  
CSM, USA



*EDITOR'S NOTE: Here's that cover again, Sergeant Major. We were pleased to hear that you're still around and still a reader of INFANTRY, even if you are an artilleryman now.*

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.

## WINTER TRAINING TASKS

Dear Sir,

Reference my article "Winter Training" in the November-December 1982 issue of INFANTRY (page 29), I have a detailed training and evaluation outline, complete with references, that I will be glad to share with anyone who wants one. It applies specifically to dismounted infantry but can be adapted to apply to any type of unit.

My address is 205th Infantry Brigade (Sep), Building 507, Fort Snelling, MN 55111; AUTOVON 825-5135/5136.

RICHARD A. DIXON  
LTC, Infantry  
Command Advisor

## QUEEN'S CROWN SPARKLES

Dear Sir,

I would like to underscore the message of the fine article "The Future of the Infantry" (INFANTRY, September-October 1982, page 19). I would also like to add that, as the "legacy for the infantry of tomorrow" unfolds, so will the final history of our successes in future battles.

I am convinced that our military leaders understand and fully appreciate the need for highly trained and motivated, well equipped, and expertly led infantry soldiers. No technological breakthrough in the past has been able to diminish the infantry's role; in fact, just the opposite has occurred. Nor is there any technology in the foreseeable future that will reduce the need for expert infantry.

As the superpowers' weapons of mass destruction remain in checkmate and as many futuristic and ex-

pensive innovations fall prey to inexpensive but highly destructive, hand held infantry weapons, the infantry will still be the one that ultimately settles any confrontation.

These are exciting times for the infantry. The Queen of Battle's crown has never sparkled more brilliantly.

JAMES R. CARLSON  
LTC, IN  
2d Battalion, 4th Infantry

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## THEY'RE STILL INFANTRYMEN

Dear Sir,

Captain Kenneth A. Siegel's article "Which Comes First?" in the September-October 1982 issue of *INFANTRY* left me with an uneasy feeling for several reasons. The first was the idea that an infantry unit should voluntarily abandon training for its real mission and then rationalize it by assuming another mission entirely. The other things that disturbed me were the various forces apparently originating at higher levels that might have led to that decision.

Today's leader is expected to achieve a given mission through the best use of the resources he has —

time, money, materiel, and personnel. Any increases in money and materiel are pretty much beyond his control. This leaves the higher-echelon commander with only the variables of troops and time with which to facilitate the missions of their subordinates. If these should prove inadequate, then a change of mission must be considered that will take the real situation into account.

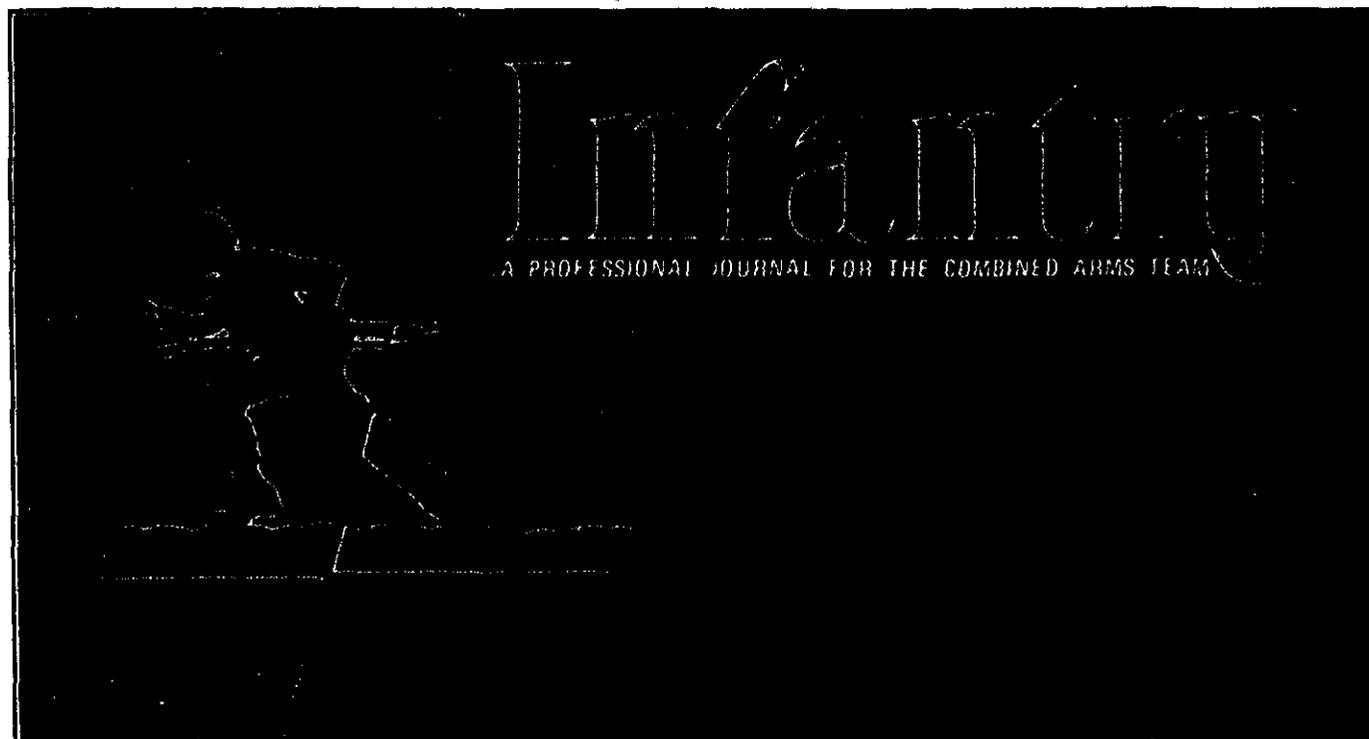
This problem must be particularly acute in such Reserve Component units as Captain Siegel's, because their training time is strictly regulated and their manning levels are very much a matter of chance. For these reasons, Siegel cannot be faulted for the analytical way in which he approached his mission. Once it had been determined that the unit did not have the time to train well on all of its missions, then a small number of missions had to be selected at the expense of the others. Obviously, these missions had to be carefully selected to allow the unit to achieve the most combat readiness and at the same time to prevent any glaring weaknesses from developing. At this point the unit's higher headquarters, knowing that the list of tasks was too long for the unit to handle, might have stepped in to provide a set of priori-

ties for its training.

To return to the specific topic, the unit's conclusion, apparently, was that it could conduct training in only one area to a high degree of proficiency. It then selected mounted operations so that it would be familiar with the prime mover and keep abreast of its affiliated tank units, thereby maintaining an intact combined arms team.

But this idea should not become the accepted standard, because it is based on the assumption that if an infantry unit can do only one thing well it should be mounted operations so it will be there when the tank unit needs its support.

Mechanized infantry, of course, must be considered a part of a combined arms task force. But the APC is neither more mobile nor more agile than the tank; wherever one can be employed, so can the other. In mounted combat, the tank is a powerful weapon platform with conclusive antiarmor, antimateriel, and antipersonnel capability and with good crew protection. The APC is a lightly armored, mobile manpower container with a single antimateriel-antipersonnel weapon that requires the firer to be exposed while the target is generally dug in. Thus, for the mounted



role, APCs have relatively little value, and if this were to be their real mission, we would be better off to scrap them all and use the money to buy a few more tanks.

Accordingly, the combined arms team tries to make the most of the complementary strengths of its components. Armored vehicles, both tanks and APCs, are vulnerable to fire from close-in concealed positions; they have limited visibility under suppressive fires and even less in inclement weather; they are themselves highly visible; and they are unable to assault through rugged terrain or vegetation. But the APC carries eight or ten stout fellows (the poor bloody infantry, up until now just along for the ride) who are in their element in precisely these conditions — murky, rugged, close combat. The infantry commander who dismounts a squad at this critical point in the battle to deal with RPG-7s in spiderholes and announces to the tank commander that actually, old boy, his men are not trained to do this sort of thing — grunt work and all that — should not be surprised if the tanker moves out and abandons him to his deserved fate.

My contention is reinforced by an article in the same issue of INFAN-

TRY entitled "The Future of the Infantry." It emphasizes that even in the era of jetpacks and rayguns, the mission of the infantry will still be to close with and destroy the enemy, anywhere, any time. Tanks cannot patrol, man OPs, dig trenches, conduct ambushes in swamps and jungles, clear tunnels, or do any of the other myriad infantry tasks, and neither can APCs. And nobody should expect a Special Forces team to come dropping in to perform these routine missions. Far from being remote contingencies to be performed only if a track is disabled, these dismounted missions are the bread and butter jobs of an infantry unit.

A ride to the battlefield can always be arranged. Several times, as an artillery XO and later as a commander, I have used my vehicles to get reinforcing infantry to the front lines. The APC is simply a commuter vehicle to get the infantry to its place of business, which is exactly the point at which the tank element's usefulness begins to diminish. To concentrate on the intricacies of a subway schedule and thereby fail to arrive at a job site in the civilian world would not impress an employer. And neither will an expert APC-riding squad that cannot perform its ground mission im-

press its tank counterpart.

There can be no question as to "which comes first." Mounted dragoon, APC Mech Man or Imperial Startrooper, these men are first, last, and always Infantrymen.

DOUGLAS M. BROWN  
CPT, FA  
Schofield Barracks, Hawaii

**PLEA FOR PICTURES**

Dear Sir,

As post librarian at Wildflecken in West Germany, I am pursuing historical research concerning the post and would appreciate hearing from anyone who has pictures of the post or any other materials of historical interest. I am particularly interested in the period after World War II (15th Infantry Regiment) and in the 1950s and 1960s.

These pictures can be sent to me for duplication and return, or I will pay any costs for copies sent to me, including postage.

My address is: U.S. Army Library, Wildflecken Training Area, APO New York 09026.

BARBARA H. OSLIZLY

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