

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## SNOW-FIRING DRAGONS

Dear Sir,

I would like to offer some tips that Dragon gunners should find useful during winter operations. These ideas developed while I was assigned as a Dragon (antitank) platoon commander and battalion anti-mech officer with the First Marine Division.

It is important for Dragon gunners on skis or on snowshoes to know how to prepare a good quick Dragon position. First, each Dragon A-gunner should carry with him an extra snowshoe to use under the forward bipod of the Dragon. This snowshoe distributes the weight that is normally placed on the forward bipod and keeps it from sinking into the snow.

When a Dragon gunner on skis is preparing to fire, he should kneel on his skis, placing the forward bipod on the extra snowshoe (Figure 1). If the

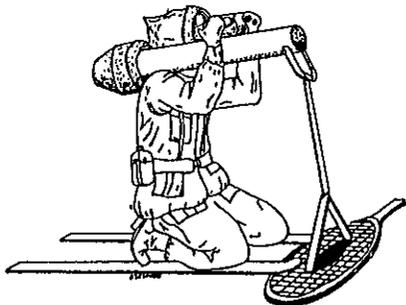


Figure 1

gunner must align himself downhill, he should slow to a stop by using the snowplow maneuver. Then, with the skis at a straight V, he should kneel in the position shown. The snowshoe in front should also help retard forward movement. On especially steep slopes, however, this position is im-

practical if the gunner is directly aligned downhill.

Gunners on snowshoes should get into position in the same way, except that steep slopes should not affect them as much. Bear-paw snowshoes are the most comfortable for Dragon gunners (Figure 2).



Figure 2

U.S. doctrine does not cover these ski and snowshoe firing positions and neither do the Dragon schools. All Dragon schools should at least show them to new gunners.

With increased NATO interest in winter operations, such positions should increase unit efficiency in anti-armor operations in the snow.

DAVID W. SZELOWSKI  
1st Lt, USMCR  
Oceanside, California

## AGGRESSIVE PATROLS

Dear Sir,

This letter is a plea for commanders at all levels to reassess their use of combat patrols and raids.

It has come to my attention during nine rotations as commander of the

First Motorized Rifle Battalion at the National Training Center that aggressive reconnaissance patrols, combat patrols, and raids are not used enough by the mechanized and armored battalions that rotate through the NTC.

First of all, reconnaissance patrols must be used as an intrinsic part of the intelligence system within the battalion. The quality of decisions and plans is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of the information used to formulate the decision or plan.

Therefore, each unit must make the most of its intelligence system by using all of its assets. These include, among others, ground surveillance radars, PSIDs (patrol seismic intrusion detectors), Air Force reconnaissance units, scout helicopters, POW interrogations, LPs/OPs, and ground reconnaissance patrols.

Once information has been gathered, it must be analyzed to determine whether the unit's scheme of maneuver needs to be changed. It is a basic theorem in the offense to attack known enemy weaknesses. If the situation dictates that a commander attack an enemy's strength instead, then he must create a weakness by neutralizing that strength. He can do that with artillery, smoke, by-passing, or even a combat reconnaissance patrol or raid.

The opposing forces (OPFOR) motorized rifle regiment at the NTC frequently uses night raids during its operations against the Blue Force — the battalions being trained. These combat patrols are designed as special operations to seize critical terrain and destroy key Blue Force anti-tank assets before the regiment's main attack. The results have been remarkably successful.

With as few as 20 well trained

soldiers armed with RPG-7s, man-packed suitcase Sagers, and small arms, the OPFOR has destroyed entire tank-heavy teams. These raids are based on detailed reconnaissance and stealth and on the Blue Force's confusion and lack of security during the wee hours of the morning.

These combat patrols organize themselves into tank hunter-killer teams of three or four men each. These teams strike several different tanks and TOWs simultaneously. After killing the vehicles, they withdraw to an objective rally point to consolidate and reorganize for further missions with the main body.

It is not uncommon for these patrols to clear wire and minefield obstacles during limited visibility so that the regiment's main attack at dawn can be unimpeded. Other missions for these offensive patrols have ranged from attacking battalion command posts and trains to placing smoke pots at key choke points or engagement areas to neutralize the Blue Force's fields of fire.

Commanders at all levels must multiply their combat power by using offensive patrols before large scale offensive operations. This is an excellent opportunity to build teamwork within the squads, and the

patrols will ultimately save lives and weapon systems when the main force attacks.

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CPT, Infantry  
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### CHOOSING NEW RIFLE

Dear Sir,

I read Captain Noyes B. Livingston's article, "Tomorrow's Rifle," in INFANTRY's November-December 1982 issue (page 13). Although I applaud his analysis, I would suggest some additional factors to be considered in choosing a new rifle: The environment in which it will be used and the training that will be involved.

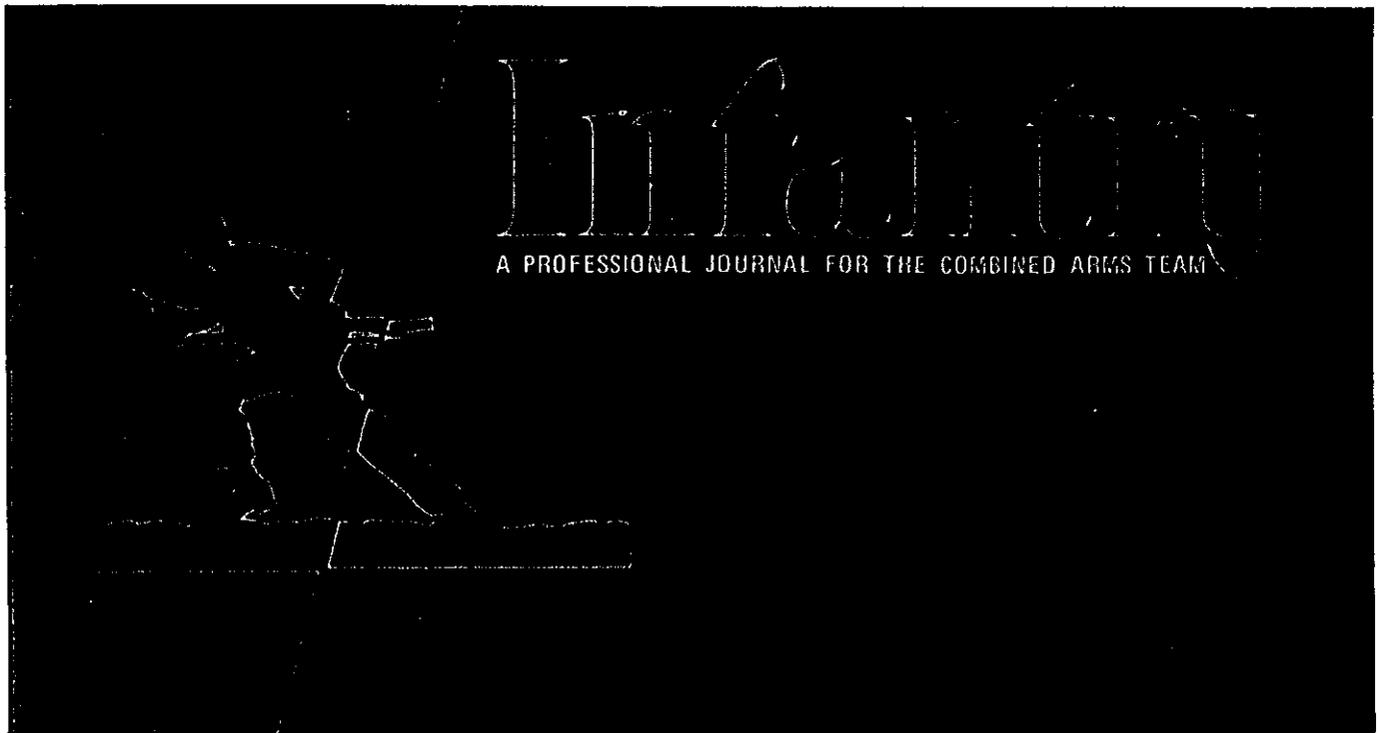
The infantryman's "elbow room" is shrinking and will continue to do so. Fighting vehicles, helicopters, trenches, and urban terrain require the use of shorter weapons.

As to training, M16 ammunition is almost 25 cents a round, range space is shrinking, and time schedules are crowded. The mobilization program of instruction allows only 39 hours for marksmanship. The future rifle, therefore, needs an intensive human

engineering effort so that additional training is kept to a minimum. And such an effort can save money because even if a new rifle costs twice as much as the M16, if it cuts training by 50 percent it could save 50 million dollars in the next ten years.

The Army is now spending millions on rifle training and plans to spend additional tens of millions on new ranges and devices. Yet in all that effort no one has established what the target performance should be — what the rifleman is supposed to do with the weapon. Until that objective is defined, we simply lack an effective criterion performance test, and we will have no idea what all those millions will provide. Once that has been defined, we can effectively design training courses, devices, and ranges whose overall effect will give us the combat "winability" we want.

Actually, the only point I disagree with the author on is the desirability of a burst control. Burst control is a band-aid attempt to compensate for poor weapon design and poor marksmanship training. The arms folks continue to believe that if they can somehow turn a rifle into a shotgun (sorry, a close assault weapon, or CAW) with burst devices, multiple projectiles, or darts, Private Johnny



will magically become a better shot. But as the Marine Corps' tests on the M16A2 showed, the burst control device caused a 40 percent weapon failure rate in one test. And, as some tests by Heckler and Koch showed, the weapon would have to cycle 2,000 rounds per minute for a burst control to be effective.

In short, the rifle of the future may be here now in the form of the new British Enfield. It and similar designs, it is claimed, reduce training, raise accuracy, and "fit" the modern mobile and urban environment. These claims may or may not be true, but don't you agree that we should test them?

**JAMES E. LARSEN**  
Hampton, Virginia

**DIFFERENT READING**

Dear Sir,

I read Mr. Robert P. Kingsbury's letter in *INFANTRY* (September-October 1982, page 48), and it is amazing that you can read from a book whatever you want to. (Just look at the number of churches

preaching from the same Bible.)

In my copy of The Surgeon General's book *Wound Ballistics*, I read the following:

- "The 9mm Parabellum was probably the most efficient military pistol cartridge in the world." (Page 56.)



- On the .45 pistol: "Not as efficient under all conditions as could be desired in a self-defense weapon..." (Page 139.)

- "The Japanese and German side-arms with muzzle velocities of plus or minus 1100 f/s were much more effective as antipersonnel weapons than the .45 cal weapon." (Page 140.)

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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.

**PIVOTAL ROLE**

Dear Sir,

The article "Squad Training" by Major David J. Ozolek (November-December 1982, page 16) is dead on target in stressing the importance of squad training and the pivotal role of the squad leader.

The key to making squad training work is to make sure the young squad leaders are technically proficient in the subject matter at hand. The commander must set aside leader training time to make sure that high standards are maintained. The benefits of this approach in terms of improved leadership, improved leader proficiency, and improved unit cohesion are tremendous. And don't be surprised if the company ends up with an improved and more effective chain of command as an added bonus.

It is then up to the commander and the first sergeant to reinforce squad integrity at every opportunity, from range firing schedules to police call, and to hold the squad leader responsible for his unit's performance.

**LOUIS J. SPERL III**  
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