

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## SUPPORT PLATOON LEADER

Reference the article "Support Platoon Leader," by Captains Robin P. Swan and James P. Moye (March-April 1983, p. 36), I disagree with some of the functions they attribute to the support platoon leader in the field, and presumably in combat.

I am the S-4 of the first M1 Abrams battalion in Europe, the 3d Battalion, 64th Armor. Our experience on REFORGER '82 showed us that the support platoon leader has his hands full and cannot supervise a logistical operations center and coordinate with higher headquarters while trying to support effectively.

Under Division 86, the support platoon's increase in vehicles and people will require the platoon leader's full attention and he will not have time to worry about anything but his platoon. In fact, he will probably find himself constantly on the road leading vehicles forward to logistical release points or rearward to resupply points. He will always need to know the status of his vehicle loads. His main concern, therefore, will be preventing empty support trucks.

The organizational structure of the HHC in a maneuver battalion under Division 86 gives new functions to some of the old characters in the logistical play. The HHC commander is now the most likely person to operate the field trains. Most of his company is there to begin with, while the battalion motor officer and the support platoon leader will spend less and less time near the trains. The HHC commander becomes a key in the logistical system as an important back-up to the S-4, who coordinates all logistical support from the battalion logistical operations center, an M577A1, in the combat trains. The S-4 directs the support platoon from

there and passes vital information to the HHC commander and the BMO. To facilitate support, unit trains should be used whenever the situation permits.

In our battalion the speed and increased consumption of the M1 tank have forced us to rethink our traditional support concepts. The Bradley will force the same process upon the Infantry community. Together we can learn, improve, and finally solve the remaining support puzzles that we face in this transitional decade.

GARY W. LONG  
CPT, Armor

## TOMORROW'S RIFLE

Mr. James E. Larsen (INFANTRY, March-April 1983, page 51) brought up an important point when he reminded INFANTRY's readers that the environment in which a rifle will be used should help determine the way it is designed. Although my article "Tomorrow's Rifle" was aimed primarily at how a rifle should fit the soldier using it, my argument was that his rifle must be made to fit him in combat, not on a firing range or at a test facility.

Mr. Larsen is correct when he states that our next rifle needs intensive human engineering, but I disagree with him on the reason for this, and I am dissatisfied with the designs that generally result from it. A rifle's most important job is to serve the rifleman faithfully by functioning when the conditions are insuf-

ferable and the situation desperate.

I may be biased in favor of the traditional rifles, but I do not believe that the advanced ergonomic designs appearing today are really made for the hands of the men who must fight with them. A rifle cannot be selected for battle because of shotgroup size, weight savings, or cost effectiveness alone, nor can it be chosen because it represents the state of the art.

In fact, the older weapon styles are not necessarily too long or otherwise ill suited for any of the forms of fighting that soldiers must do. There is a significant difference, for example, between the way a police SWAT team works and the way an infantry squad fights. The stylish Bull Pup rifle that is handy in the former role would be a handicap in the latter.

I also disagree with Mr. Larsen's belief that an infantry rifle should be designed to facilitate marksmanship training, save money, or fit special situations. Expeditious or economical training must not become so important that it distorts our view of the real world, compromises our readiness, or mutilates our equipment. Weapons must be designed to function in combat under the worst possible conditions, not to make training easier to administer or to accomplish.

We would be better able to avoid confusing priorities like this if we remembered how military decisions are supposed to be made. In facing any given threat, strategy, resources, theater conditions and the principles of war are supposed to influence the choice of doctrine and operational techniques, which in turn should determine the weapons and tactics to be used. Only after these factors have been considered can a service figure its budget, develop equipment, and organize units and training programs.

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.

This process cannot be reversed simply because it is convenient politically, financially, or bureaucratically.

To best prepare for combat, an army should be organized, administered, equipped, supplied, trained, and led as if it were at war every day. Although the military services are often accused by their critics of preparing for the last war, they are usually not even that fortunate; many of their peacetime activities have nothing to do with war at all. This is the case when weapons are designed for any purpose or reason other than fighting.

Marksmanship training must not be cut or slighted to save time or money. Whether we know it, or like it, we already have an established standard on what the rifleman is supposed to do with his weapon. His criterion performance test is his weapon qualification, and it gives us a fair idea of what we are paying and training for. If another type of target performance were established, it might be necessary for us to increase the time devoted to marksmanship training instead of decreasing it.

Transportation, too, is a poor reason to compromise the design of a rifle, and a rifle is the poorest weapon to fire from an armored fighting vehicle. We would be better served if we quit trying to let each passenger shoot ineffectually at the same time and replaced individual firing ports with a couple of flexible M249 machine gun positions on both hull sides. The infantryman's private battle hinges largely on the quality of his weapon when he is alone on the ground. This is where he expects and deserves the best rifle we can give him.

Mr. Larsen is not far off target when he calls burst control a band-aid solution to the extent that it is a simple fix, but burst control is not meant to compensate for poor weapon design or poor marksmanship training. It is merely a mechanical device that helps reduce ammunition waste that is caused by unnecessary and uncontrolled full automatic fire. A burst control mechanism does not make a soldier a better shot by keeping the

weapon pointed at the target, but it does eliminate many of the rounds that are fired harmlessly over and away from it.

Burst control also encourages the soldier to reaim his rifle for a more effective second shot if he needs it. A high cyclic rate may produce steadier



three- to five-round fire with burst control, but that is not the primary problem. Burst control allows better fire control at any cyclic rate and prevents an assault rifle from being improperly used as a 30-round shotgun.

It is important to recall, before we covet foreign rifles, that Americans like to fight differently from many of our friends and potential foes. Although we may not always succeed, we prefer to pin our enemies by opening fire as soon as possible at long range and then to destroy them with

other fires that spare our own soldiers' lives. The Soviets and their allies have no such humanitarian plans. They are going to try to get as close as they can in a hurry to any of our units that they cannot bypass. In the AirLand battle we will have to beat them a long way off, and the Infantry must do its share with accurate sustained rifle fire from the start.

I appreciate Mr. Larsen's comments and criticism. Thoughtful contributions such as his, expressed through articles and letters to INFANTRY, will improve our soldiers' capabilities and their chances in combat. To help accomplish this, we need to give our infantrymen the best rifle possible. This may be our last opportunity.

NOYES B. LIVINGSTON III  
CPT, Infantry  
Texas Army National Guard  
Houston, Texas

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#### SAYS IT ALL

Congratulations on the fine article "Building Morale Through PT," by Captain David H. Petraeus, in the March-April 1983 issue (page 11). It says it all on PT programs.

DONALD C. FISCHER  
LTC, Ordnance Corps  
Worms, Germany

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#### TACTICS, NOT SPYING

Since the revelations of the Ultra secret, there seems to be a tendency to downplay the tactical lessons to be learned from World War II.

It is clear that Allied clandestine operations sped the favorable conclusion of hostilities, but these operations did not bring the final victory. The war was won by men who fought, men who provided materiel in abundance, men who created new technology, and by other men who employed the men, materiel, and technology on the battlefields of the world.

World War I had taught the Army the need for organizing and planning to take full advantage of America's massive industrial capacity. The interwar years had seen the establishment of the Industrial War College, which provided training to military leaders in order to change peacetime industries to wartime production. In addition, the War Plans Office had developed the Rainbow war plans to provide guidance for a multi-front war against the several combinations of probable adversaries.

Finally, the United States had produced some truly original military thinkers between the wars who had their effect during World War II. These included LeJeune (amphibious warfare) and Mitchell (airpower and strategic bombing). The United States also produced men who were masters of some new techniques of warfare: Nimitz and Halsey (naval air power); Patton (tank and mechanized combined arms warfare); MacArthur (island hopping amphibious warfare); and Taylor, Ridgway, and Gavin (airborne warfare).

Victory for the Allies came from efforts and successes in many fields. Any attempt to find easy, simplistic reasons for the victory in World War II does a disservice to those who

struggled in that conflict and also to those who can now learn from those who struggled.

JAMES W. WESTBROOKE  
Major, Infantry  
Charleston, South Carolina



S.L.A. MARSHALL

I am writing a master's thesis on the effect that BG S.L.A. Marshall had on U.S. Army training and doctrine, with special emphasis on the period 1946-66.

I desperately need the testimony of anyone who served during this period, including junior officers and NCOs, who felt General Marshall's impact, whether in school, through reading his books or articles, or through personal contact. Confidentiality will be honored, if desired.

Also, anyone who feels that

General Marshall's influence has been overrated may state their cases, as my hope is to be as objective as possible.

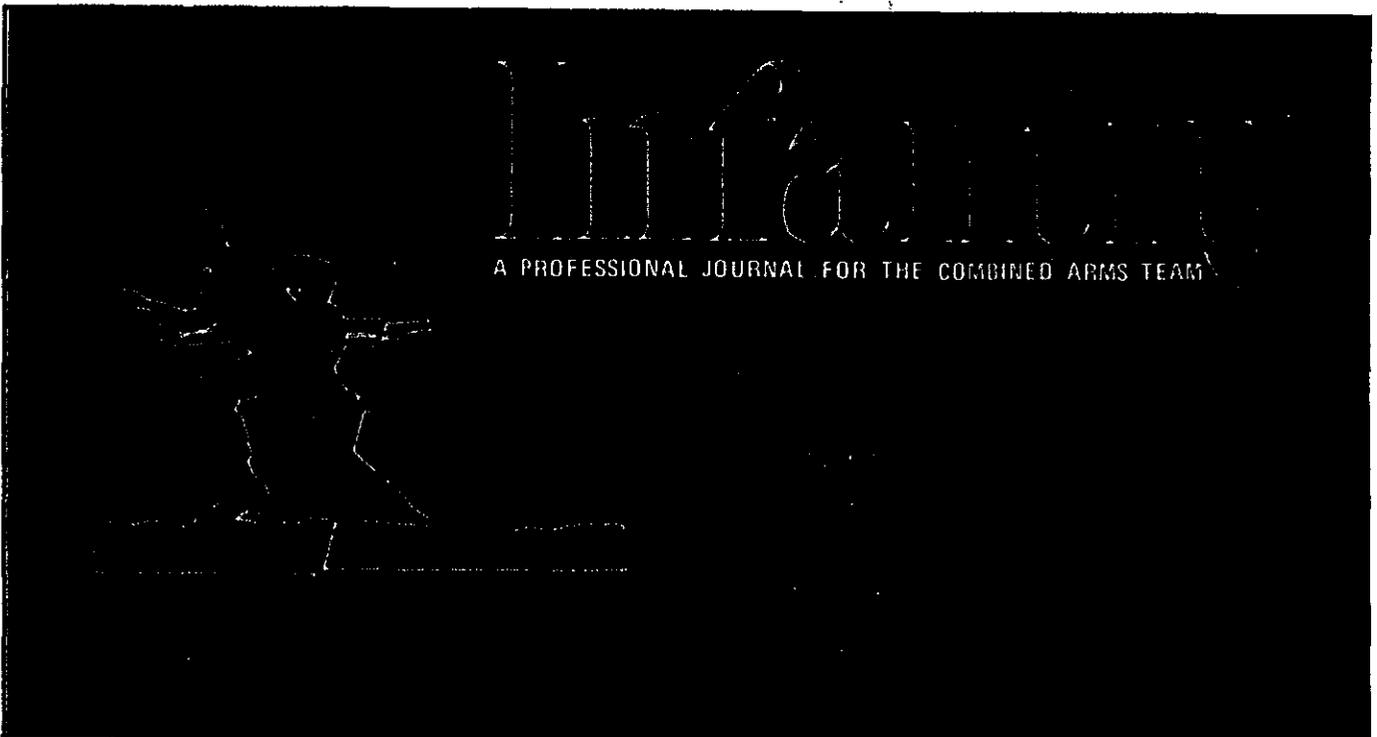
Your magazine is the best professional journal for all leaders that I have seen (and in my research I have seen many, including British and Canadian ones). Keep up the outstanding work. Though not Infantry myself, I find much to "chew on" in your magazine.

Anyone with information to offer may write to me at 2214 Engle, Dallas, Texas 75224.

F.D.G. WILLIAMS  
CPT, Armor

### COMPLAINT

As a subscriber I appreciate your fine magazine, but I do have one complaint: You constantly harp on the same themes: self-discipline, courage, teamwork, loyalty, honesty. Haven't you heard that these values are outdated? When I mention these same themes to my friends at Boston University, I get stares. "You think like a white, upper class, suburban, 80-year-old man!" I am sternly told. Unfortunately, because my roots are



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in Brooklyn, New York, and now live in urban Cambridge, they think I must be a social climber.

Seriously, therefore, I thank you for sticking to the values that keep civilization going. You are in a minority, of course. But the military has always been viewed with contempt from the masses of intellectuals buzzing around political points.

When I was in high school and the looney liberals were spitting out nonsense about "the military-industrial complex," I didn't understand why you in the military were basically silent. But I held onto my beliefs anyway. And now I think I do understand. I think it was partly because of the liberal media slant and partly, perhaps, because you were keeping with the tradition of "don't complain." (A good soldier doesn't complain, doesn't explain why he is doing what he is doing, because courage, loyalty, and duty don't need to be broken down into intellectual or philosophical defenses.)

Fortunately, I did some outside reading in high school about military affairs — about how the Roman army dug in even after the Roman society had decayed and fought the Vandals bravely under Marcus Aurelius, their commander, who pic-

tured his backbreaking life as "the spider chasing the fly." He probably thought the task was hopeless but he pushed on and did the best he could, getting no support from the civic sector, which he was sweating blood to protect.

Military affairs, perhaps the key points to history, are woefully neglected in high school and college, and it's a disgrace. I'm in the process of filling in the gaps in my reading, and your reading lists and book reviews are a great help.

Again, thanks for putting together a professional magazine in a professional format.

GARY CURTIS  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

**BODY ARMOR**

I am compiling a book on the use of personal body armor in the 20th Century and wish to include accounts by veterans illustrating both the efficacy and the problems of wearing "flak jackets" in combat. I wish to hear from veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars and, hopefully, of World War II as well, who served in any branch of the armed forces and

had experience in the use of body armor in action, including aviators and helicopter crews.

My address is 4 Tate Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 2SY, England.

SIMON DUNSTAN

**SYMPOSIUM**

The U.S. Army Operational Test and Evaluation Agency is sponsoring the twenty-second annual Army Operations Research Symposium at Fort Lee, Virginia, on 4 and 5 October 1983.

The theme of the symposium is "Integration of Modeling and Simulation with Testing to Efficiently Resource the Acquisition Process." The papers presented will reflect thoughts on methodology, application of current or formative techniques, problem areas, and conceptual techniques to improve the acquisition process.

Anyone who would like additional information should write to Commander, U.S. Army OTEA, ATTN: CSTE-STD (AORS), 5600 Columbia Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041, or call (202) 756-2416/2446, or AUTOVON 289-2416/2446.

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# Infantry

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE ARMY

**INFANTRY MAGAZINE**  
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