

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## MORE STRONG FEELINGS

I read with interest Lieutenant Colonel Henry G. Gole's article "A Personal Reflection on Leadership," which appeared in the September-October 1983 issue of *INFANTRY* (page 12). I, too, hold a number of deep emotional beliefs about what it means to be a soldier and I, too, have strong feelings about *our* Army. But I was distressed to find that one of my fellow officers sees our Army's leadership as "plastic," and that he has in his mental processes confused the ideas of management and leadership.

Unlike my contemporary, I believe that the quality of *our* Army and its leadership has never been higher. Having recently commanded a combat ready Infantry battalion in a combat ready brigade and division, I am proud of and confident in our soldiers and our leadership.

In my career I have been assigned to instructor duties that involved teaching modern management techniques, and I have served in duty positions that required the use of management skills. I know that the effectiveness of our management has been improved by modern techniques; I also know we have a long way to go.

While I view with concern those officers who use the issues of efficiency and effectiveness for their own professional gains, I can neither accept Colonel Gole's view of the serious defects in our Army nor believe in the failure of all of its leadership. I, too, lament that there are leaders who fail to set the example and fail to care for their men. But, please, let us not blame individual human frailties on modern management, and let us not try to impeach the Army or the nation for the

wrongs of a few.

Our Army is a large, complex, modern fighting machine. The functional and administrative parts of this machine require more management than leadership, and its operational parts demand mostly leadership with some management.

Colonel Gole has aired his disdain for his fellow officers, displayed his learned letters and, unfortunately, demonstrated his own confusion.

JOHN R. CORSON  
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## COTTONBALERS

Catching up on some back issues of *INFANTRY*, I came across Major Daniel Raymond's "A Cottonbaler" (January-February 1982, page 10), written in praise of the 7th Infantry Regiment. When I joined the 7th Infantry in 1944 on the Anzio beachhead as a 19-year-old replacement rifleman, I, too, felt the pride he expressed in being part of a unit that goes back to Andrew Jackson and the Battle of New Orleans.

But as I read his roll call of the distinguished history of the Cottonbalers, I was amazed to discover that he has us crossing the Channel and fighting through the hedgerows, presumably in Normandy. In fact, after the capture of Rome (4-5 June 1944), we joined the Seventh Army, spent two months training near Naples, landed on the French Riviera on 15 August, advanced rapidly to the

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.

Vosges Mountains, participated in the capture of Strasbourg (November 1944), and then fought a tough winter campaign in the Colmar Pocket (January-February 1945), for which the Third Division (of which the 7th Infantry was a part) received the French *croix de guerre*. After that it was on to Germany!

I left the U.S. Army in 1946 and reorganizations since may have added new elements to the pedigree of the 7th Infantry Regiment. I will appreciate an editor's note to set either me or the record straight.

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: As far as we can determine, Dr. Reitan is right.*

## VARY TOC LAYOUT

I read with interest the related articles on headquarters company operations in your May-June 1983 issue ["The HHC Commander," by Captain Walter J. Sutterlin (page 9), and "The Headquarters Commandant," by Captain Kim Stenson (page 10).] Captain Sutterlin's biographical sketch caught my eye because I served as communications officer in HHC, 3d Battalion, 16th Infantry, before it became 3d Battalion, 6th Infantry — his company. That was 30-odd years ago.

Captain Stenson's piece struck me for a different reason — the TOC sketch and the words that went along with it. From 1975 until 1981 I served as an Army civilian R&D manager in the Camouflage Laboratory here at the U.S. Army Mobility Equipment Research and Development Com-

mand. My task, in a broad sense, was to help make it easier for tactical units to avoid detection by hostile reconnaissance. One thing that has come out clearly from research in avoiding detection is the necessity to avoid repetition, or sameness, in tactical dispositions.

I have no objection to including a sketch in a manual or an SOP, but the words that go with it should say, first, that it is only a sample, and second, that variation of arrangement from move to move is one key to survival. Captain Stenson, in failing to make this point, is inviting the cross hairs of a hostile sight to visit the bull's-eye of his "double perimeter."

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#### HEADQUARTERS COMMANDANT

I read with interest Captain Kim Stenson's article, "The Headquarters Commandant," (INFANTRY, May-June 1983, page 10). I observe a mechanized infantry TOC in operation for two weeks of every month at the National Training Center, and his statement "Army doctrine on the subject . . . is sadly lacking" was right on the mark.

Two of the points made in the article have proved to be common problems for our task forces. First, movement by echelon is seldom executed properly, if at all. Each echelon must be autonomous if continuity of operations is to be achieved. Second, a dismount point is seldom enforced. Frequently, an outstanding position and good camouflage are wasted because a parking lot is allowed to form near the TOC entrance.

I disagree, however, with several points. Captain Stenson recommends a TOC site "two to five kilometers behind the battalion's front lines." FM 71-2 specifies "two or three terrain features behind the leading company team" in an attack and farther in the defense. There is no advantage in communications at two kilometers

that offset the security offered at seven to ten kilometers. Of course, this interval is terrain dependent, and at Fort Irwin these doctrinal distances tend to be stretched, but even in rolling European terrain, two to five kilometers is too close.

Rear area security is regularly tested at the NTC. Concertina wire, even at Captain Stenson's recommended 35 meters, provides no defense against an RPG-7 or even a hand grenade. In reality, it becomes merely an administrative aid to control foot traffic. Similarly, TOC passes provide no real security since an enemy is not likely to ask for one; they become an unnecessary administrative burden and a waste of manpower. In fact, the entire concept of an "inner perimeter" is questionable. Even if a unit has the luxury of enough soldiers to man this perimeter 24 hours a day, and most don't, the soldiers can be more profitably employed on the "outer" perimeter, or in my opinion the only legitimate one.

Finally, the concept of using a rifle squad from one of the companies contradicts FM 71-2, which calls for the main CP personnel in the TOC security role. TOC security must be accomplished without sacrificing the combat power of the units.

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#### CLEARANCE BEFORE PUBLICATION

Commendations on your informative article "Writing for Publication" in your September-October 1983 issue (page 20). The article did an excellent job of outlining the mechanics of professional writing.

At the same time, though, it would have been good to include a reminder of clearance requirements as prescribed in Chapter 4 of AR 360-5, Change 1. The Army encourages professional writing, but review and clearance are applicable for certain

writings. Anyone preparing to write for publication, therefore, should be familiar with the regulation. The easiest way for a writer to do this is to contact his local Public Affairs Office.

Again, "Writing for Publication" helped to encourage soldiers to try their hand at professional writing, a most important initiative in the development and exchange of thought among members of the military profession.

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of Public Affairs  
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#### DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE

My compliments to Captain Barry E. Willey on his excellent article "Where's the Commander?" [July-August 1983, page 7.] He is quite right to emphasize that careful thought and experience are necessary for a commander to place himself "where he can best control his unit." The statement of the requirement is deceptively simple; the execution of the task is much more difficult.

In addition to his main thesis, Captain Willey makes passing reference to two very critical points that I would like to reinforce. The first of these is that the commander must trust and use his subordinate leaders instead of barging in to take over for them. This allows the subordinate to perform his mission while the commander remains free to do his own job. (Notice that this does not preclude checking. Proper checking could have resulted in the early detection of the problem in the "navigation error" situation.)

The second point is that leaders also get sleepy — and therefore ineffective. The "three days without a wink of sleep" FTX is just bad training. Leaders at all levels need to pace themselves and their units so they can function over extended periods of time. The commander must train his

unit and his subordinates well enough so that he can trust them to continue to function while he grabs some sleep.

Being professional requires the development of excellence in many different areas. Study, thought, and experience are required. By sharing his "war stories" with us in a thoughtful way, Captain Willey has contributed to the growth of our professionalism. I encourage him and others to continue the process through the formal and informal sharing of ideas and experiences.

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### **ADVICE TO OFFICER CANDIDATES**

In May 1960, as a National Guardsman, I was welcomed to the Infantry Officer Candidate School headquarters at Fort Benning, Georgia. Almost three months later, two weeks short of completing the course, I elected to take a medical disqualification. In short, I quit! And although civilian life has been good to me, I've regretted it ever since — especially lately when I have seen my contemporaries retire as officers.

My heart has always been with the military services. I am writing this, therefore, in the hope that others may learn from my mistakes.

The medical problem, though legitimate, was not my only problem. First, although I had had three years in the active Marine Corps during the Korean conflict with 18 months overseas and a two-year stint in the 85th Special Infantry Marine Reserves, plus three years in the Michigan Army National Guard as an Infantry noncommissioned officer, I went to OCS with the attitude that it would be a piece of cake.

The physical training was not difficult. And as a 27-year-old I aced all the weapons training and shot third with the M-1 Garand (high expert) in the entire Student Battalion. I served in all command positions with ease

and with distinction as student executive officer.

But my attitude was bad. For example, when the so-called "best man in the outfit" walked off the drill field and then off the post because a Tactical Officer in a fit of pique screamed that he wouldn't serve in combat with the Candidate, my sympathies were with the Candidate. After all, I thought, he had been a combat wounded soldier in Korea and just wouldn't take the deriding from a non-combat captain.

In another incident, I was reprimanded for breaking a vow of silence on the map reading course. (I warned a fellow Candidate to watch his step because I had spotted a large black snake stretched across a two-track road in the swamp. But this was near the river where critters of that ilk were common, and I should have kept quiet.) But I took the reprimand as a personal affront and started to get homesick.

In another incident when a fellow Candidate fainted in ranks from the 95-degree heat and I adjusted my rifle sling to put the piece over my shoulder and help him, it seemed like the entire chain of command came down on me. Still another time, I deliberately stepped on an Airborne Tactical Officer's spit-shined boots just to see if he would back up his yelling with physical action. Another reprimand. And extra duty was the order of the day for me.

My letters home were filled with dislike for the petty discipline. (Sometimes I thought a swift kick would have been more military and more mature.)

Looking back, it seems that I may have expected special favors for having served my time on active duty when our ranks were riddled with "draft dodgers," mostly just out of college, who chose the Guard or Reserve rather than go on active duty. And I think the daily harassments wore on me and my wife and two children until a job as an insurance investigator back in Muskegon, Michigan, began to look mighty appealing.

Soon we were spending more and more time in the swamps on maneuvers and I had some allergies that caused minor wheezing upon heavy exertion. My Tactical Officer advised me to hang in there, saying that there were many jobs other than Infantry jobs in the Army Guard. But with only exam week and check-out week remaining, I made the decision to quit.

The relief of leaving OCS was tempered with a healthy dose of shame when I saw my class double timing to a lecture with another Candidate in my place as Platoon Commander. I was on my way off post at the time with the other sick, lame, and lazy. I was not to be an officer.

I feel pride still at having attended the course, but I wish my motivation to complete it had been higher. The military in general and the Army in particular gave me many opportunities, including a chance at OCS, but I blew it.

So my advice to present-day Candidates is, if you want to be an officer, hang in there and do what you have to do. Don't quit!

**JOHN A. JOHNSON, JR.**  
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### **BITTERSWEET**

The recent news of the improved M16 rifle was bittersweet. No doubt the improvements in accuracy, lethality, range, and durability, while long overdue, will be welcomed by Infantrymen in particular. But the Army's plan to replace our current rifles through attrition is not such good news, and it fails to capitalize on the improvements to the weapon at the level where they would provide a significant increase in effectiveness and be the most appreciated — in the rifle squad.

Since most of the Army's rifles are primarily self-defense weapons, it would be both impractical and unnecessary for us to follow the Marine Corps' lead and replace all our rifles at once. This is not the case, however, in

the infantry, where the predominant weapon system remains the rifleman. Correspondingly, we owe him the very best rifle we can provide.

It does not seem impractical, therefore, to suggest that at the first opportunity we scrub the Army budget to find the money to equip our Infantry battalions, Special Forces units, and Infantry Training Brigades with the improved M16.

I further recommend that this become a force modernization issue with the Chief of Infantry.

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### MORTAR PLATOON LEADER

The proper employment of a mortar platoon requires a high level of knowledge and experience on the part of its leaders. The problem is that neither the platoon sergeant nor the platoon leader stays around long enough to make the kind of contribution they should be able to make.

A sergeant first class mortarman is a highly trained and qualified technician who has either attended the Infantry Mortar Platoon Course or the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer

IIC Course — in some cases, both. He has a vast knowledge of and a background in the techniques of employing a mortar platoon. Over the years he has devoted many hours to training and preparing his platoon for the ever-changing situations they may encounter in combat.

The platoon leader, when he takes over the mortar platoon, has attended IOBC and maybe the Mortar Platoon Course. But in most cases his tactical training has been oriented toward making him a rifle platoon leader. Although the mortar platoon's mission is to support the rifle platoons, its tactical employment is, of necessity, different, because its weapons and its soldiers' individual skills are different. As a result, when a lieutenant is given responsibility for a mortar platoon he usually comes into it with only limited knowledge of the equipment, operational procedures, and tactical employment of this type of platoon. It takes time for him to learn these things, but all too soon he usually moves on to other jobs in the battalion.

The platoon sergeant, too, moves on. He is promoted — either to master sergeant for assignment to a staff position or, in some cases, to first sergeant for assignment to take over a company. Either way, he is lost to the mor-

tar platoon. Some will argue that his knowledge and experience are still there in the battalion to be drawn upon at any time. But he will have to make the same commitment to his new job that he made to his mortar platoon, and this will leave him little time to help the mortar platoon.

So why not keep the IIC40 in the platoon after he becomes a master sergeant? Quite a few first sergeants and master sergeants have said they would have liked to stay on but that it would not have been good for their careers.

There is a solution, though. If we created a warrant officer slot in the mortar platoon, we could offer these master sergeants the option of staying on as mortar platoon leaders. This way, we could keep an expert in the mortar platoon, an individual who would require very little job training. All he would need would be perhaps a short course related to the responsibilities of a warrant officer.

There is only a little difference between a warrant officer's pay and a master sergeant's pay, and the quality of such a person at platoon level would offset this difference.

This is not meant to imply that a noncommissioned officer can do a better job of leading a mortar platoon than an infantry lieutenant, but he is



