

INFANTRY LETTERS



CORRECTIONS — MARNE MANEUVER

Although I was pleased to see my article "Marne Maneuver Training" in print [INFANTRY, November-December 1983, page 34], I was bothered by the amount of editing done and by errors in Figure 1, which detracted from the explanation of the "move-set" drill employed with the company V and platoon wedge formations. Please correct and reprint the illustration.

In addition, your omission of the word "second" from line 8, column 3, page 34 further obscures rather than clarifies the explanation. That line should read "RED; SET, OUT. The second point element..."

Incidentally, the company V is sometimes used employing the traveling or traveling overwatch technique

as well as the bounding overwatch technique explained in conjunction with the move-set drill.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Our sincere apologies to Colonel Morgan for these errors. Figure 1, as corrected, is shown here, and the paragraph in question should read as follows:

The first point element reports, "SIX, THIS IS RED: MOVE, OUT," then moves, establishes its bound position, and reports, "SIX, THIS IS RED; SET, OUT." The second point element moves automatically when the first element reports SET. Then the second reports, "SIX, THIS IS

WHITE; MOVE, OUT," establishes its bound position, and reports, "SIX, THIS IS WHITE; SET, OUT." Then, rhythmically, the first element reports and moves automatically when the second element reports "SET," and so on. The apex element keys its advance and automatically displaces on the advance of the point element.

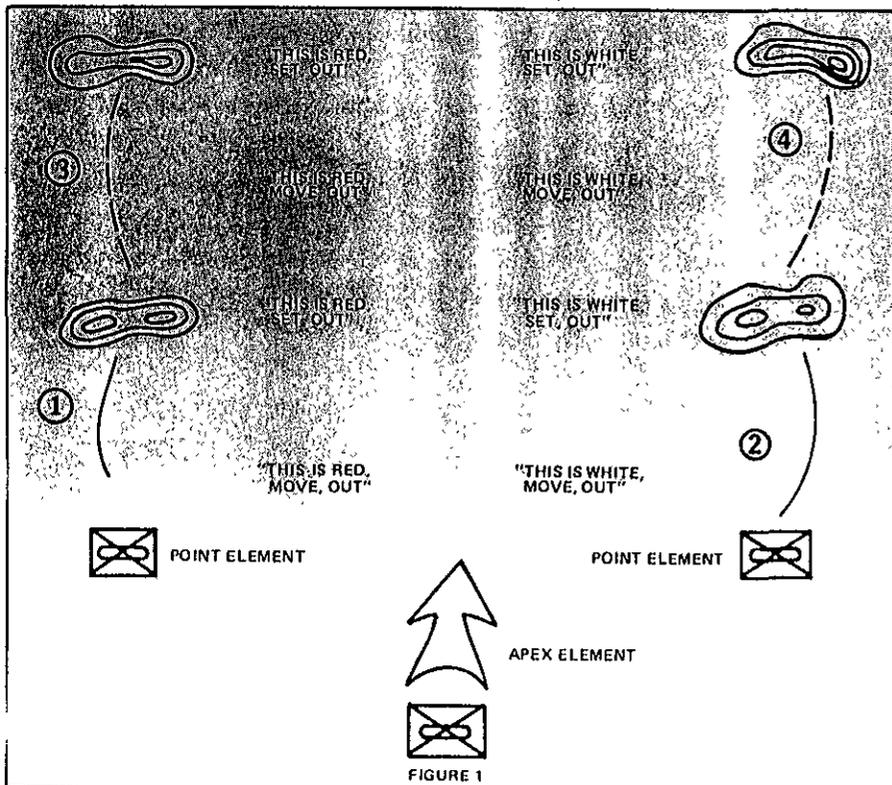
As for the amount of editing done on Colonel Morgan's article, we did no more than we normally do to meet INFANTRY's editorial standards. We certainly never intentionally change an author's meaning.

GRAPHIC FIRING TABLE

Here at the Mortar Division, Weapons, Gunnery and Maintenance Department of the Infantry School, we read with interest the article "FDC Techniques," by Lieutenant Stephen Perkins, in the November-December 1983 issue of INFANTRY (page 13).

Lieutenant Perkins makes several good points in his article. Time is indeed a critical factor on the modern battlefield, and any shortcut that can safely reduce computation time in an FDC will ultimately save lives. Also, the Army does need a better means of obtaining firing data for 81mm and 60mm mortars. But his solution, the graphic firing table (GFT), although workable, is not really worthwhile for adoption Army-wide for the following reasons:

First, the GFT Lieutenant Perkins describes is very similar to the printed range arm that was tested here in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This tool was rejected because the FDC computer needs the versatility of the firing table in all situations, especially when a high angle of fire is needed (as in mountain or urban terrain).



The second reason concerns the new ammunition being fielded, which could make a GFT a hazard. An FDC that used a GFT showing charges and elevations for the HE M374A2 round might make serious errors if the guns were firing HE M374A3 ammunition instead. Naturally, this would mean that the FDC would have to carry different GFTs for each type and model of round — more paper to misplace.

Finally, the M-23 mortar ballistic computer is replacing the M16 plotting board and the graphical firing fan (GFF) as the primary means of fire control in the mortar platoons. The M-23 is programmed for all the current mortar ammunition for the 60mm, 81mm, and 107mm mortars, and would make the proposed GFT obsolete overnight.

This new technology, combined with other proposed combat developments and our mortar expertise, will ensure that Infantry mortar platoons achieve the higher standards envisioned by Lieutenant Perkins.

MARK E MERCER
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HEROES

I have just finished reading the Infantry in Action section of the latest edition of INFANTRY magazine and am trying now to organize and control my thoughts relating to the action described. [See "Heroes Born of Battle," November-December 1983, page 28.]

I was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 12th Cavalry when we air-assaulted into Hoa Hoi on 2 October 1966. The time was much closer to 0915 than 1005 as stated in the official version, the company having been diverted while enroute to establish a road block and a POW holding area on QL 1 at the Phu Ly Bridge. One of the unusual aspects of this was that a "lift" was scheduled for the whole company at one time.

It is gratifying to see in print the names of some very courageous

members of our unit, two of whom I knew personally. There were others, too, who were seriously wounded during the action and contributed much, but they were apparently omitted from the official version.

I do not know whether the Infantry School has access to a French documentary film entitled "The Anderson Platoon," but if it does, anyone who views it will find an almost scene-by-scene sequence of events on those two fateful days.

Although I do not know where the rest of the surviving members of Company B are today, I hope they are able to read this article and realize that our efforts have not gone unsung. We never questioned whether it was right or wrong, we just did our job, as soldiers and as members of the Airborne Infantry.

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REFLECTIONS ON FORT BENNING

My first visit to Fort Benning had come in the summer of 1967, Infantry orientation week for the West Point Class of 1969. The war in Vietnam was picking up, and the various branches were competing for the Best of the Line, as the class called itself. My second visit had come in 1969, the war in full bloom then, and the Infantry officers of the Class of '69 were on their way with a stopoff at Ranger, Airborne, and the Basic Course. By my third visit in 1974, for the Advanced Course this time, the numbers of the Best of the Line had been decreased through deaths, wounds, resignations, and branch transfers. So transpired three visits and three good exposures to the heart of the Army, the Home of the Infantry, the soul of the nation's defense.

But my eyes had been young and eager then, and too immersed in the times to really see Fort Benning. My thoughts had been too preoccupied

with the "next post," the next event, to appreciate the meaning of the historic military fort astride the Chatahoochee. It took a fourth visit, in October 1983, to put the post in perspective, to see its place in our Army, and its meaning to our country.

Perhaps it was the coincidence of the short, two-week visit, with the tragedy of mass Marine casualties in Beirut, and with the combined forces invasion of Grenada. But whatever it was, the snapshots of people and places at the old post came into focus at last: Fort Benning — no backwater post this — but the heart and soul of an American people, bursting with pride, and determined to be free.

The post's manicured lawns and neatly trimmed trees indicate the order and discipline that exist in their midst. Soldiers, trim and fit, call a vibrant cadence as they run in neat formations to their classes. The majestic 200-foot airborne towers rise silently above their surroundings, beckoning men to adventure and danger, daring them to raise both their bodies and their spirits to new heights. Infantry Hall — Building 4 — stands solid as a fortress as it instructs its young officers, officers-to-be, and noncommissioned officers in a regimen of tactical doctrine and professional commitment.

"Listen," it says, "I will teach you how to fight. I will show you the way forward when you are tired and frightened. I will pass on to you what others before you have learned in trials of fire, and I will send you forth to lead others at the cutting edge of the defense of America."

And in the distance, at Sand Hill and Harmony Church, the youth of America assemble; they will be led by those passing through Infantry Hall. They arrive with their long hair and their frightened looks, and they are shorn of both their locks and their preconceived notions of what the Army is. They come in awe, but they leave in dignity, ready to serve, eager to do well in service to their country, their Army, their leaders.

The pulse of Fort Benning is vibrant. The air is filled with excitement, anticipation, pride, and energy.

The instructors are sharp; they look and talk like professionals. The roar of the aircraft engines at Lawson Field excites the imagination. An occasional Ranger makes his appearance at the post proper, a reminder of the Ranger Camp where hard men are turned into even harder men, ready to fight anywhere, anytime. The post is alive with effort — studying, running, jumping — thousands of men and women trying to be a little better, a little smarter, a little more committed.

Look into their eyes, America, and reflect on the well-being of the nation. The hard years of Vietnam and its aftermath are behind us. Another generation of Americans has arrived — bigger, stronger, prouder, more ready to serve. The flag flew at half staff in October 1983; the bodies of our servicemen were coming home from Beirut and Grenada. The eyes of the recruits, the sergeants, the lieutenants, and the captains were sad, but they also sent a message of resolution. They said: We want to serve, to do our share, to take our chances.

Fort Benning has persevered. It continues to do its job. It molds bodies and it molds minds. For that it can take much credit. But it is given a wonderful raw material with which to work — America's youth, no longer on a binge of hedonism, but a youth in

search of itself in the traditional values that have marked America's greatness — courage, commitment, selflessness, and dignity.

Like a rock, Fort Benning has withstood the wave of self-condemnation that permeated our society in the 1970s. Here and there, perhaps, a piece was chipped away. (My own eyes were saddened by the absence of a Vietnam section in the Infantry Museum, which stands within earshot of where so many of my peers were trained for their final battle in that Infantry war.) But in the main, the Home of the Infantry remains untouched. Serenely, it has waited for America's youth to come home, home to their identity as Americans, proud, free, and courageous.

The mission of the Infantry is to close with and destroy the enemy. But the Home of the Infantry, Fort Benning, does not stand for death. It stands for life, a life of freedom and dignity, a life enriched by the greatest government the world has ever known. For Fort Benning exists to preserve that government and the great nation that has fostered it.

Go to Fort Benning and be reassured that America will prosper. Sense its history, its pride, and its purpose. But most of all, look at its people. They are America's youth, the best of

our nation, the hope of our future. Look at them and know our greatness. In them, and in their successors, we shall always be free.

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LTC, Infantry
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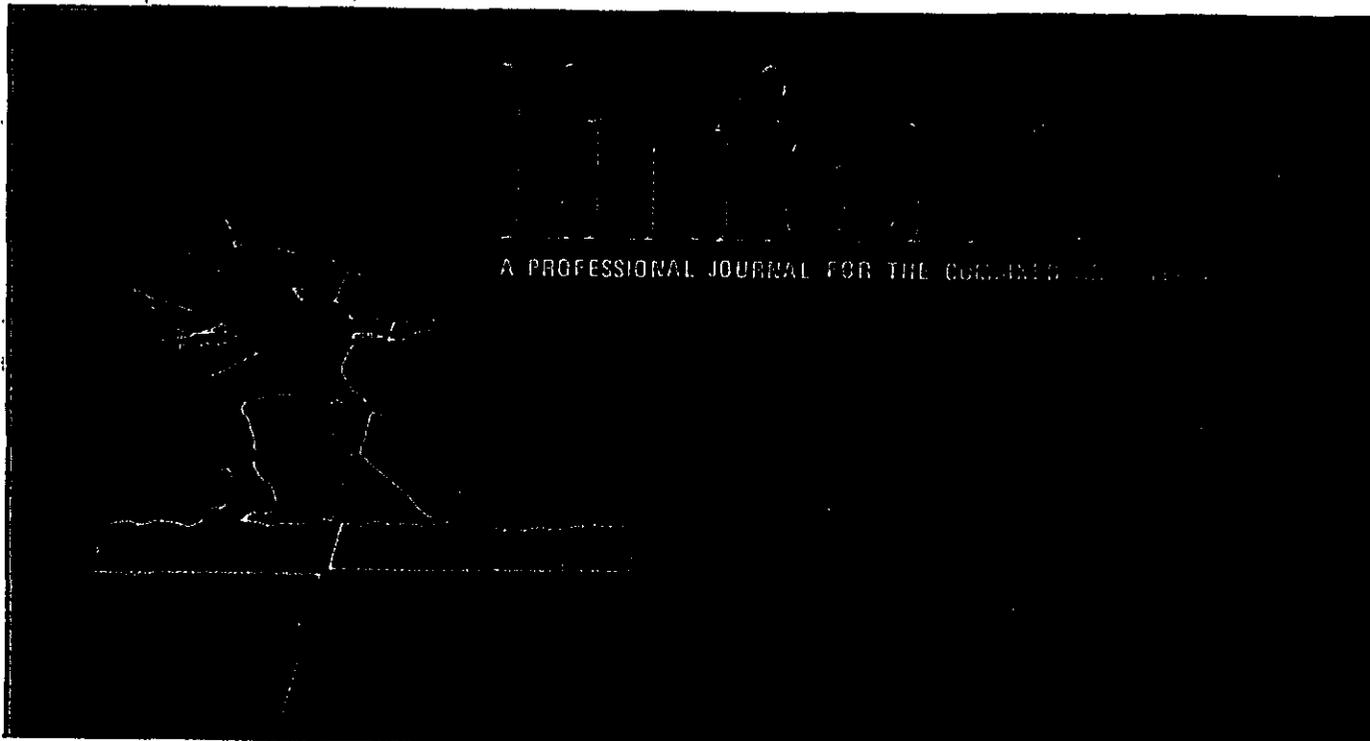
COMPANY XO

In the November-December 1969 issue of INFANTRY Magazine, you published an article that dealt with the company executive officer. I have kept that article for all these years, for it has been the only one I have found during my career that clearly states *what an XO is supposed to do*.

Would it be possible for you to print the article once again for the "newer" generation of company grade officers? Time and tactics have changed, but the roles of the XO as given in this article have remained the same.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The article Colonel Sommer refers to is indeed an ex-



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cellent one; and we would like to be able to reprint it as he suggests. But we do not believe that reprinting an old article at this time would make the best use of the space in the magazine.

The original is still available, of course — most military libraries have *INFANTRY* on file — and we highly recommend it: "The Company XO," by Lieutenant Colonel John R. Galvin, November-December 1969, page 34.

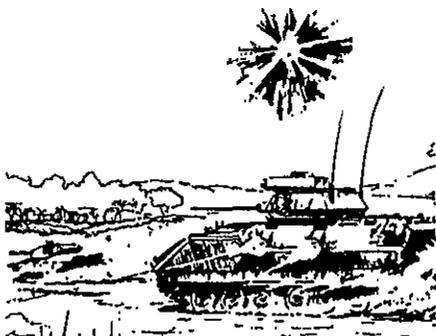
MILES DRAGON

As a Dragon gunnery instructor, I was very interested to read Major Curtis L. Devan's article on Dragon training in the September-October 1983 issue of *INFANTRY* (page 33). While I agree with him completely on the shortcomings of both the Launch Effects Trainer (LET) and the MILES Dragon, the article does contain a technical error that might cause confusion.

The article states that the MILES Dragon's probability of kill against a tank is only 76 percent, given a one-shot hit. But this is true only of the MILES tank detector system. The probability of kill is different for each type of target system. If the MILES

Dragon is fired at an M113, for instance, the probability of kill is increased to 98 percent, and against a man-worn detector system harness it is 100 percent.

This is true because the hit-kill probability is determined by the target's on-board computer, not by the Dragon transmitter, as stated in the article. The hit-kill probability is programmed into the computer (variously known as the control con-



sole or the loader's control assembly) according to formulas developed at Aberdeen Proving Ground. The computer "reads" all incoming laser signals and differentiates between the types of weapons being fired at it. Thus, a Viper has only a 48 percent chance of killing a tank with one shot, and an M16 rifle has no chance at all. (See TC 25-6, Tactical Engagement

Simulation Training with MILES, Table 1-1.)

A unit can conduct successful tracking and engagement training exercises by attaching the man-worn harness to its M151s, APCs, or other available vehicles to act as uncooperative moving targets. This obviates the need for the cumbersome infra-red target devices and training console the LET requires, not to mention the batteries, grenade-launching ammunition, and the LET itself. While the MILES Dragon is not intended to replace the LET, it can allow units to train when the LET is not available or when resources are scarce.

It must be kept in mind that the MILES Dragon was designed as a tactical engagement simulation device, not as a gunnery trainer. Trainers in the field, however, have pressed it into service to help fill the gaps in gunnery training left by the field handling trainer and the LET.

Future generations of MILES equipment will indeed meet the requirements outlined by Major Devan and add even more flexibility to this exciting training system.

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