

INFANTRY LETTERS



ANTIARMOR WEAPONS

I noticed an error in Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. Oliver's article "Antiarmor," in your March-April 1984 issue, pages 20-21. The weapon identified as the German *Armbrust* is, in fact, the French *Strim*, and vice versa.

It might also be useful for your readers to know that the AC 300 Jupiter, developed by the French manufacturer Europac (*Societe Europeenne d'Armement Anti Char*) is not, as of now, in the French Army inventory.

GERARD BRUNE
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PLATOON "Y" DEFENSE

I recently read Platoon Sergeant David J. Robbins's "Platoon 'Y' Defense" in *INFANTRY* (January-February 1984, page 39) and have a few comments.

While the need for a 360-degree defense may require a formation that does not give maximum firepower in any one direction, if the direction of approach of the attacker can be determined in advance such a formation is not the best.

The proposed formation does give the firepower of two squads in any direction, but only two — it cannot bring the firepower of the full platoon to bear in any one direction. But this may be the price of achieving all-round protection, and the "Y" formation does seem superior to the older "circular" formation used for 360-degree defense.

I do question the positions given to a few of the weapons. If the APCs are

given the third position (I presume, to minimize the distance the troops have to go to and from the track), the vehicle will probably be positioned with its front toward the "front" of the position, exposing its rear to attack from another direction. Of course, in that case, the APC can move, but one of the strengths of the "Y" is that positions do not have to be changed regardless of direction of attack.

Also, the proposed placement of the machineguns gives no final protective fire line (FPL). A possible variation would be to place the machinegun in the second or third position, from which it could fire an FPL across the front of the adjacent squad. Each machinegun would have two FPLs, which would require a decision as to which one to fire. In most cases, however, it would be obvious, and in case of doubt the platoon leader could designate one of the two directions as the principal one.

Additionally, the third squad's machinegun could provide fire support with indirect fire, if used on a tripod with the traversing and elevating mechanism. Although this method seems to have fallen out of favor, it is still valid. In the second or third position the machinegun would be better placed to do this than at the end of the fifth position.

The APC could be placed toward the compass heading of the squad (positioned to use whatever ground cover was available for its sides, or dug in if time allowed), with the principal direction of fire of its heavy

We welcome letters from our readers and print as many of them as we can. We can't use them all, though, and sometimes the ones we do use have been around for a while before we find room for them. But keep writing on topics of interest to our readers, and we'll do our best to get your letters in, sooner or later.

machinegun on that heading.

If there were a rifle position out beyond the APC, it could protect the track against enemy infantry, and it could be closer to the APC than 30 meters. The heavy machinegun would fire over the rifle position in that case. Of course, it could cover any approach toward the center of the Y as well, if its principal direction was clear. It could even cover approaches along the axis of one of the other legs of the Y and could do this better than the light machinegun because of its greater range.

Despite these seemingly critical comments, I believe the "Y" defense is an excellent idea that deserves serious consideration.

A. MARK RATNER
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ANOTHER VIEW OF "Y"

I am writing in regard to Platoon Sergeant David Robbins's article, "Platoon 'Y' Defense," in your January-February 1984 issue.

It is easy to understand Sergeant Robbins's misguided belief in the "Y"-shaped defense, because when we read the first paragraph we discover that he doesn't understand how to apply the principles of security, economy, and concentration to the defense.

He goes so far as to suggest that the requirement to establish a 360-degree defense can be best met by using a "Y" position that places the squads in three separate linear positions with only one flank of each making contact with the others.

In few instances will we know exactly which direction the enemy will attack from. Once we can ascertain where he will place his main effort,

we concentrate our forces (and resources) in that area while simultaneously using smaller forces to contain lesser attacking elements and to maintain security in those areas of the position not under attack.

It would be an exceptional situation in which a platoon would be required to repel an attack, say, along the long axis of a squad position; a third or even half of the platoon would take no part in the battle until the enemy was ready to assault their portion of the battle position.

Concentration of fire to turn back an enemy assault on one of the legs is not practical because, taking into account the confusion of battle and the proximity of the squad positions, friendly personnel would probably be in as much danger from friendly fire as from the assaulting troops. Using the "Y" position, it would be next to impossible to support another squad by fire under conditions of limited visibility.

There are some other disadvantages of the "Y" position: The squad positions can be easily isolated and the platoon defeated in detail, and the position is inflexible — it is not easily adapted for light infantry and cannot be used by units above the platoon as there is no secure area for combat service support elements.

Sergeant Robbins stresses the need for 360-degree defense, yet he envisions platoons in "Y" positions spaced 1,000 meters apart and on line to form a company battle position. Such a position can be quickly bypassed or defeated in detail with one platoon after another being isolated and destroyed.

I hope these criticisms will be useful to Sergeant Robbins and to the readers of *INFANTRY*.

DARRYL LEDBETTER
CPL
Schofield Barracks, Hawaii

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

This is in response to William Befort's letter on a replacement for

the bayonet (May-June 1984, page 49).

On behalf of the Infantry officers assigned to the Army Training Board, I accept Mr. Befort's challenge. Three of us will face him with bayonets, while he uses his bayonet replacement — a special sealed magazine of 10 rounds.

We have a special rifle for him — one with a ruptured cartridge case stuck in the chamber and a broken extractor.

VERNON HUMPHREY
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PURPOSES OF BAYONET

The detractors of the bayonet again miss the point, as does William Befort with his clever observation in *INFANTRY*'s letters section (May-June 1984, page 49).

I was a Marine Rifleman in 1954-56 and our bayonet instructor made it clear that the true purpose of the bayonet is the assault when your last round runs out and you find yourself on top of someone with no time to reload. Then it's shoot him if you can or stick 'im if you have to to save your life — that and nothing more.

Despite the fact that we were trained in classic bayonet fighting, no Hollywood-style steel-on-steel combat was seriously envisioned, nor were we burdened with any Spirit of the Bayonet nonsense.

Let's keep the bayonet, but let's keep it in perspective.

WARD WRIGHT
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SQUAD BATTLE DRILL

I am very concerned about the training of the individual infantry soldier in the squad battle drill. I do not believe that it is being taught to its fullest extent.

On a recent training exercise in which I was squad leader, we were en route to our objective on a movement to contact when we were hit by a frontal enemy ambush. The reaction time of the squad was so slow that if it had been the real thing, half of them would have ended up as casualties. And a lack of training in squad battle drill was to blame.

What is battle drill? It is, as we have come to define it, the immediate action taken by a squad or a platoon to return fire and deploy against an enemy.

The organization of a rifle squad into two fire teams gives the squad leader two elements with which to provide fire and maneuver. Alpha team might be the maneuver element, with Bravo team being the support element, but their roles might change during the conduct of any action. For example, if the maneuver element is unable (because of enemy action or terrain) to close in on and destroy the enemy, the roles of the teams are reversed. The organization of two teams within a squad is flexible and allows for any change that a situation may call for. When the terrain offers good firing positions and more firepower is needed in the support element, the squad leader can borrow the extra firepower from the other team. Such a change takes time to accomplish, however, and the switch will result in a loss of precision for the smaller team.

The fire support element plays an important part in squad battle drill. It assists the maneuver element in its advance toward the enemy positions by engaging all known or suspected enemy targets. This firing continues until masked by the maneuver element. While aggressive in its action, it delivers constant fire on the enemy on the move. When the maneuver element masks its fires, the support element moves forward to help in consolidation.

The mission of the maneuver element is to close with and destroy or capture the enemy. The soldiers advance by using the available cover and concealment, adjusting their move-

ment according to the terrain. With proper fire support, they can move to within hand grenade throwing distance of the enemy.

We need to spend more time conducting such battle drills. (FM 7-10 covers all aspects of the squad battle drill.)

ROBERT A. LINTHICUM
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TACTICS IN IOAC

In the first eight to ten years of an Infantry officer's career, attending the Infantry Officer Advanced Course (IOAC) should be an important step toward increasing his ability to command a company in a tactical environment. This course is the first time the Infantry School has the officer for a protracted period (six and a half months) for the purpose of military education. Unfortunately, though, this time is not being used to its full potential.

There is no doubt that IOAC does an adequate job of preparing an officer to serve on a battalion staff and of educating a future company commander in many of his administrative duties. But it simply does not do justice to small-unit tactics, which should be the main subject of a combat leader's advanced course. Actual company battle tactics receive only lip service, and if captains and lieutenants do not really understand small-unit tactics, it does little good to have them plan battalion level operations.

Although a large number of hours in the course — most of them, in fact — are devoted to tactical operations, the system through which the subject is taught allows little room for the development of initiative in tactical thinking.

The tactical situations presented in class are prefaced by in-depth reviews of the students' advance reading assignments, METT-T analyses, and up to three possible courses of action. This is accomplished through numerous maps and viewgraphs, which places the burden of classroom work

on the instructor, not the student.

In a typical four-hour block of tactics instruction, the first two hours normally consist of lecture, and in the third hour the students are presented with a map (normally the Bad Hersfeld area of Germany) and a hypothetical scenario that seldom changes between operations. In the scenario there is habitually a three-to-one or one-to-three numbers advantage, and the higher "commander's guidance" severely limits the student commander as to the options available. Scenarios in which the student's force is able to flank or envelop the enemy do not exist. Frontal assaults, despite what FM 100-5 (Operations) tells us, are the rule. Then the student analyzes the situation and writes paragraph three of a five-paragraph field order. Finally, in the last hour, "table groups" present their solutions on a "VGT map."

If the student's thinking (as restricted by the commander's guidance) is the least bit unorthodox, the instructor makes him aware of Infantry School doctrine, labeling him "too audacious." (One wonders how George S. Patton or "Stonewall" Jackson would have fared in IOAC.)

There are, of course, a few interludes throughout IOAC in which students actually "wargame" a plan of action they have been required to develop, but too few. And much of the real training value of these interludes is lost because too much time is given to planning (and writing another operations order) and too little to actually wargaming the operation. Besides, neither the students nor the instructors have much experience in executing or "playing" the game itself.

These, then, are the major criticisms — from our own experience in IOAC and from our conversations with many other IOAC students. But criticism is easy, especially for those of us who work in a system that tends to criticize everything it does or fails to do. It does little good to criticize, however, if we offer no suggestions for remedy.

Many suggestions for improving the tactics portion of IOAC have

been proposed, most of which would require a great deal of money and a complete change in the program of instruction. But there is a simple answer that would yield satisfactory results and a more tactically aware company commander — an answer that would involve only two major alterations in the course. The first change would be to adopt a basic doctrine advocated by General S.L.A. Marshall — that Infantry leaders should be taught *how* to think, not *what* to think. The second would be to incorporate military history and wargaming into the tactics instruction throughout the course.

These changes could be interrelated: Emphasizing history throughout would help train combat leaders how to think. (For officers who have had no actual combat experience, history is the only available window through which they can see some of the problems they may face in a future war.) If the students are to attain the ability to reason tactically under pressure, they should know the historical precedents of such things as the development of the basic forms of maneuver and how technology has altered these forms. They should also know the differences in small-unit force structure throughout the world, the principles of war and their pertinence in conducting combat operations, and the development of current tactical doctrine.

Each tactical concept presented in class should be prefaced by a short student presentation of a historical precedent, assigned perhaps at the beginning of the course. Delay operations, for example, could be prefaced by a short analysis of the Soviet Army's delay during "Barbarossa," followed by the techniques the Germans used against the Soviets from 1943 to 1945. Besides establishing the importance of history to tactics, such a program would also help assess an officer's ability to research, evaluate, write and orally present a topic paper.

The emphasis in the tactics instruction should be on the development of tactical thought, audacity, and independence of action. This does not mean a combat leader must be trained

to act independently of his commander's guidance, but he should develop the ability to do, without question, whatever is required as *he* is experiencing the situation.

To develop the ability to take this kind of decisive action, an officer must receive tactical training and must participate in small-group discussions using scaled terrain models such as those used in the DUNN-KEMPF and CAMMS simulations. This would allow the student and the group instructor to "see the battlefield," would reduce inane arguments concerning the placement of units or weapons, and would foster the creative use and discussion of terrain and tactics.

All the students in the class could thus become involved in executing the operation by using a "What now, Captain?" technique, under the control of the instructor. Thus, specifics instead of generalities in tactical execution would become the norm, and the emphasis would be on tactical thought where it belongs, instead of on the mechanics of writing a five-paragraph field order.

Another way to improve the students' tactical thinking would be to have Allied students and exchange instructors teach IOAC students the tactical adaptations and doctrine of *their* armies, not ours. This would

give the students first-hand experience in conducting tactical operations in various geographic locations and insight into the thinking, the capabilities, and the operational expertise of Allied forces. (Using Allied officers to teach U.S. tactical doctrine to U.S. combat leaders, as is now being done, is a misuse of a valuable source of military experience and ideas.)

If changes such as these were made in the course, how would they affect the testing program? Testing, to thoroughly evaluate a student's tactical ability, should be conducted in two phases: Phase one should be an objective, written test of the student's knowledge of the historical and doctrinal precepts taught during the course. Phase two should then present a tactical situation that requires the student to analyze the situation and prepare a complete five-paragraph field order. Each student should then brief his order to his peers and his group instructor on a terrain model. In this way he could be evaluated and graded on the plan's completeness and its tactical feasibility; its application of doctrine and principles of war; and the student's ability to present a clear oral operations briefing.

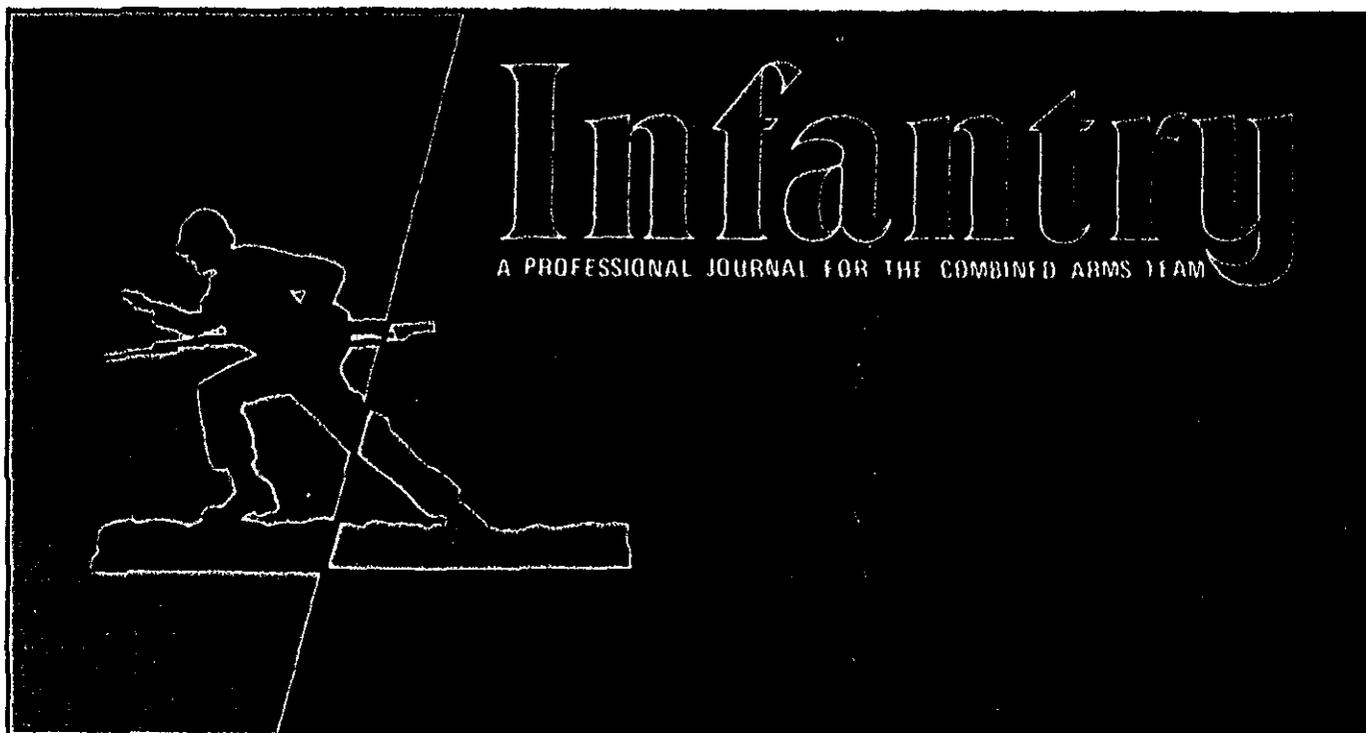
Students would thus be able to clarify any misunderstandings of their orders (the same as they do as

Infantry small-unit commanders). They would also become aware of any mistakes or shortcomings in their testing immediately instead of waiting for a computer-generated grade slip to come out and then arguing a misconception weeks later. Although such testing would require more time than is now allotted, it would yield a much truer evaluation of a student's actual understanding and use of tactics.

Tactics are as varied and personalized as fingerprints, but unlike fingerprints, they are constantly being altered. This individuality in tactical thought is based on the human brain, which has been called the only computer-like system that could withstand the complexities of the modern battlefield, and must be nurtured and developed so that our combat leaders do not become automatons on the battlefield.

Certainly, a great many U.S. Infantry captains are quite competent in small unit tactics, but the Infantry School is not presently developing those who are not. The U.S. Infantryman deserves superior company commanders and IOAC must do its part to see that he gets them.

MICHAEL PHIPPS
F.R. HAYSE
CPTs, Infantry



CONGRATULATIONS

Please add this letter to the stack of letters congratulating Major Vernon W. Humphrey on his series, "Winning at the NTC." I hope you will consider extending this series.

Major Humphrey's observations and teaching points can reach those of us who are not in a unit scheduled for training at the NTC, those who are not tactical operations observers or controllers at the NTC, and those who are in the Reserve and the National Guard. We need to learn from others' mistakes if we cannot be there ourselves.

His straightforward style explains the lessons learned, and I feel the extension of his comments can only strengthen our Infantry and your magazine.

W. MICHAEL GRIGGS
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BLAZE

Among my mementos of Army years, I found this blaze. (At least that's what they were called in 1949-50.) When I got it I was assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 14th

Infantry Regiment at *Camp Carson*, Colorado. We had volunteered for ski training and were issued the blaze to wear over our 5th Army patches during Exercise Sweetbriar in Canada and Alaska from January to March 1950. The 4th Infantry Regiment in Alaska were the aggressors for the exercise, and the other friendly forces were the 1st Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and the Canadian Royal 22e Regiment.

We spent about three months maneuvering from Whitehorse,



Canada, to Northway, Alaska, in an exercise that some people thought we couldn't do. Our ski instructors were Finns who had fought the Russians in the Russo-Finnish War, and they knew what to do in the Arctic.

If any of your readers recognize this blaze and have any more information about it, I would appreciate hearing from them.

KENNETH C. DUMLER
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PHILIPPINES REMEMBERED

On 20 October 1944, U.S. troops landed on Leyte Island in the Philippines. One of the four divisions participating was the 24th Infantry Division. In remembrance of that landing 40 years ago and of those who took part, the 24th Infantry Division Association will operate a Special Event Station, K4TF, from Merritt Island, Florida.

The Association will offer a special commemorative certificate to any amateur station making two-way contact with K4TF during the 24-hour GMT period of 20 October. Operations will take place about 10kHz inside the general portion of each amateur band. Bands to be used will be dependent upon propagation conditions. Certificates will also be available to short wave listeners who submit correct reports of reception.

To obtain a certificate, anyone who is interested should submit a QSL card and a large (9x12-inch) stamped self-addressed envelope to K4TF, 1630 Venus Street, Merritt Island, FL 32953. A smaller envelope will do if you don't mind having your certificate folded.

WILLIAM C. WILLMOT

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