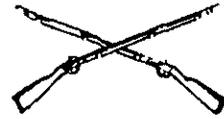




Commandant's NOTE



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Chief of Infantry

In my note in the September-October 1984 issue of *INFANTRY*, I talked about one of the most exciting training challenges facing the TRADOC community — that of training our new light infantry force. Now I want to bring you up to date on the most recent light infantry happenings.

As most infantrymen know by now, our new light infantry units are unique in their organization, equipment, and training. They are "maneuver-based" rather than "firepower-based" units. In other words, by avoiding an enemy's reconnaissance, security, and engagement areas, they strike him when and where he least expects it. Light infantry operations are masked and take full advantage of darkness, limited visibility, foul weather, and restrictive terrain. Employing special tactics and "how to" techniques that emphasize stealth, light infantry uses the indirect approach to strike the enemy where his combat power is weakest and where we can concentrate ours.

Field Circular 7-15, Light Infantry Squad and Platoon Operations and ARTEP, Field Circular 7-14, Light Infantry Company Operations and ARTEP, and Field Circular 7-13, Light Infantry Battalion and Brigade Operations and ARTEP, describe the new tactics and techniques light infantry units use to accomplish their missions. Here, I would re-emphasize the fact that while the missions light infantry units will be called on to conduct are the same ones all infantry units conduct (deliberate attack, defend in sector, etc.) the tactics and techniques employed are entirely different. These units are not just lighter infantry doing the same things the same way. For light infantry units, therefore, we have developed "how to" techniques with names such as "stalking attack," "baited attack," "seamless web," and "elastic defense."

We did not develop these names — these techniques — simply because we had developed a new type of infantry. In reality, light infantry and its corresponding tactics are as old as the foot soldier himself. We have solid historical precedents for implementing those tactics that allow us to use the indirect approach to destroy the enemy or to break his will to fight. In many cases what we are doing isn't new, it's just a "re-bluing" of the old. It is important, however, that infantrymen recognize the difference in tactics and techniques, and the descriptive new terms help to emphasize that difference.

Light infantry is capable of deploying rapidly anywhere in the world to assist in defusing situations before hostilities can break out. Some infantrymen argue, however, that because of their smaller size light infantry units lack combat power and mobility

infantry units fight where their relative combat power and mobility is greater than the enemy's. Light infantry fights other light infantry anywhere, anytime. Light infantry units using maneuver (fire and movement) on close terrain close with and destroy enemy forces, including mechanized and armor opponents. With these considerations in mind, we can say that our new light infantry is a powerful force on the low-intensity battlefield and that it has significant utility on the mid-intensity battlefield as well. But all must recognize that if employed in the open against a heavy armored force, it will have difficulty executing the mission successfully.

Almost daily, new and exciting changes are taking place in our light infantry force. The platoon, company, and battalion circulars mentioned above are in the field.

The Light Leaders Course, conducted by the Ranger Department, is teaching light infantry leaders what to do, how to do it, and how to teach it. Thus far the leaders from seven battalions have graduated from the course, and we now expect to conduct at least 18 classes during Fiscal Year 1986.

Perhaps the most exciting thing that is now taking place is the light infantry certification process. The 7th Infantry Division is providing input from the field through squad, platoon, company, and battalion ARTEPs. This process will determine whether the light infantry division organization, doctrine, and equipment meet the need to accomplish light infantry missions in the manner we intended. The Infantry School is sending subject matter experts to observe the process. Based on the certification results, and if these show that such action is necessary, the School will improve the light infantry organization, doctrine, and institutional training to prepare the light infantry divisions to carry out their assigned combat missions.

As I have said on other occasions, in today's Army there are several infantries — and light infantry is one of them — but there is only one overall Infantry. The light infantry's basic combat mission is the same one all other infantry units have: to get to the battlefield and close with the enemy by fire and movement to destroy or capture him, or to repel his attack by fire, close combat, and counterattack.

But because the manner in which our light infantry units will carry out their mission is so different, we have developed a new training strategy for them. And in that training strategy the main thrust of our continuing effort is quite clear — to build highly proficient units made up of leaders and soldiers who are physically and mentally tough, units that are oriented toward low- to mid-intensity conflicts, and units that have the capability