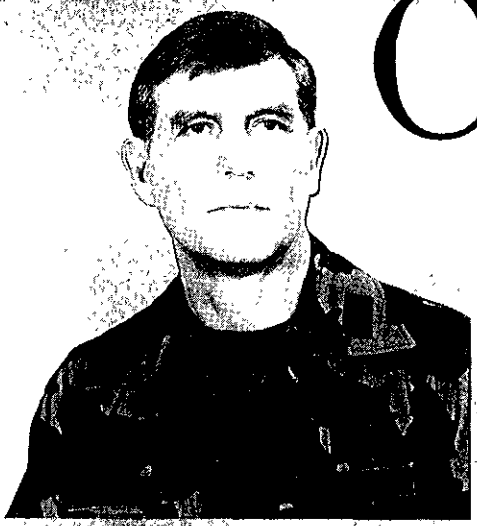

Commandant's NOTE

Major General John W. Foss
Chief of Infantry

INFANTRY SMALL ARMS AND MARKSMANSHIP TRAINING

Infantry units accomplish their missions on the battlefield through a combination of fire and maneuver. When we think of fire we often think of a high volume of fire from one of the many supporting arms of our combined arms team. But in doing this we should not forget that our infantry squads and platoons will often live or die on the basis of their ability to place their own accurate fire on the enemy.

Our Infantry heritage has been based upon the individual soldier and his small arms. These small arms now include the M16A1 rifle, soon to yield to the product-improved M16A2 rifle; the M249 squad automatic weapon (SAW); and the M60 machinegun.

These fine weapons will do us little good, however, if our infantry soldiers are not crack shots. Therefore, one of the first things we as infantry leaders must do is to emphasize marksmanship training at all levels. The Infantry School has taken several steps to ensure that our small arms marksmanship training is given the priority it deserves, both in the school and in the field.

Good marksmanship, of course, starts with a solid basic rifle marksmanship (BRM) program. At the Infantry School, we have just completed a comprehensive study of the present BRM program and are now validating an improved version of it. The new program will stress precision shooting and downrange feedback and will place more emphasis on the fundamentals of marksmanship and dry fire. To do this properly, we have set higher standards that soldiers must meet before they go on to the next firing event. For example, the new BRM program requires our soldiers to qualify at night and under NBC conditions.

We have modified the standard trainfire qualification course to include a third position—the kneeling unsupported—and have added more long-range targets (250 meters or more) to take advantage of the M16A2's capabilities.

We have also revised the advanced rifle marksmanship (ARM) training program, which is taught only to infantrymen in OSUT. We have added to this program a moving target scenario, an increased night firing requirement, and a squad firing exercise. Long range firing will be added for the current M16A1 rifle and even longer range firing will be added as more M16A2 rifles become available.

This brings me to the important subject of rifle zero. We have found that many of our soldiers do not know how to zero their rifles properly. Because they do not, many of their other firing activities amount to a waste of time and bullets, neither of which is plentiful. Admittedly, the 25-meter zero is the current method of initially obtaining a battlesight zero. It is still an expedient method. Firing at 25 meters was never meant to take the place of a standard course of fire, though, so battlesight zero must be confirmed at the longer ranges.

None of this is totally new; we understand that. But over the years, we have let down woefully in our marksmanship training and have allowed far too many of our basic marksmanship skills to atrophy. Downrange feedback, for instance, was routine when we used the old known-distance (KD) ranges. Even though many Infantrymen feel we should go back to those ranges, there are other ways to get the feedback our soldiers need—technology and our trainfire ranges can serve the same purpose. The important thing is to give each firer precise feedback on where his bullets are striking the target so that he can adjust his sights or aim as necessary.

As part of our increased emphasis on marksmanship skills, we will propose having one qualification course for most soldiers and another, more demanding course for infantrymen.

After all, infantrymen fire their weapons for a living. This latter course would be an outgrowth of our beefed-up BRM and ARM programs and would go a long way toward reinforcing the preeminence of the U.S. infantryman on the battlefield.

The revitalization of marksmanship training requires that we also develop programs to sustain the new soldier's skills when he gets to a unit. An important ingredient in unit sustainment is command emphasis and leader training. We at the Infantry School have therefore developed marksmanship training programs for our leader courses. We have included these training programs in the Infantry Officer Basic and Advanced Course curricula and eventually will add them to our Basic and Advanced NCO Courses.

This leader training includes more than just weapon qualification periods. It is designed to train our leaders in training techniques that will enable them to evaluate the marksmanship skills of a unit, develop a training program to upgrade them, and then implement the program.

As an aid to commanders, the Infantry School is also developing a master marksman program for noncommissioned officers, the goal of which will be to train experts in small arms marksmanship on a variety of infantry weapons. The highly skilled NCOs who complete this program will have come from units and will return to their battalions to help design training programs and train other NCOs to be effective marksmanship instructors.

In addition to these efforts, we have produced several aids for leaders to use in their rifle marksmanship training. Field Circular 23-11, *Unit Rifle Marksmanship Training Guide*, August 1984, is an excellent reference manual on proven methods, and every company should have a copy. (This manual will be revised.) We have also produced two TV tapes—"Teaching Rifle Marksmanship," Part 1 (Number 2E/010-071-1685-B) and Part 2 (Number 2E/010-071-1826-B)—that demonstrate the step-by-step techniques of teaching basic shooting skills. (See INFANTRY, March-April 1985, page 7.)

The good shooting skills infantrymen learn for use with their rifles will carry over to other small arms and weapons as well. The best riflemen in a unit should be identified as the automatic weapon gunners, and training on the SAW and the M60 machinegun should receive equal emphasis with the rifle in a unit's marksmanship training program. The best riflemen will probably also be the best Bradley gunners.

In the SAW, we now have the first true squad automatic rifle since the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) passed out of the inventory. The SAW has a GO/NO GO phase in its qualification exercise as did the BAR. The BAR marksmanship program consisted of two trainfire style exercises. The first was the transition course in which the firer engaged point targets at ranges of 150 to 500 yards. Area targets were presented to him at 200, 300, and 400 yards. The second exercise was a quick-fire course with targets presented to the firer at ranges of 25 to 330 yards.

Our SAW qualification program has 10-meter firing (using the standard 10-meter M60 machinegun target) as its GO/NO GO phase. The extended range portion of the program calls for bipod firing at point targets at ranges from 100 to 600 meters and at an area target at 800 meters from the firing line. The addition of the 600- and 800-meter targets, a recent change to the SAW qualification program, is consistent with the range of the weapon. The accuracy, range, and penetration of the new SAW ammunition can give every SAW gunner the potential punch of a machinegun team. In fact, in September and October 1984, the Infantry Board conducted a test that confirmed the fact that the M249's accuracy is comparable to that of the M60 machinegun. (See INFANTRY, July-August 1985, page 10.) Whether or not we will replace the M60 is still under consideration and discussion.

As we continue our efforts to give the infantryman the best possible equipment, we are evaluating the configuration and use of new optics or day/night sights in our enhanced M16A2 program. If these tests prove that modified rifles with scopes are practical, it will mean a significant increase in the probability of hits by a trained rifleman at extended ranges. These sights will also have the potential for simplifying basic rifle marksmanship training, which would be another step toward giving the infantryman an opportunity to influence the battle at increased ranges.

As for the future, the advanced combat rifle (ACR) will make aiming faster and training easier. We expect that it will also be more reliable and easier to maintain than any weapon we have had to date. Technological improvements are being investigated that will allow the rifleman a much greater probability of hitting his target at all combat ranges. Among them are salvo fire, flechettes, and advanced fire control devices. Also, caseless ammunition in the future may allow us to carry more ammunition with less weight. We raise a priority with any infantryman.

The demand for weapon proficiency and basic marksmanship skills in our infantrymen is as great today as it has ever been. As trainers, leaders, and commanders, we must continue to give them the best equipment and the best training programs we can to insure their success on the modern battlefield.

Infantry soldiers love to fire their weapons, and they want to be good shots. Given that desire and our training programs, we can make the American rifleman of today as feared by potential enemies as he was in the past.