

INFANTRY LETTERS



PLATOON TEAMS

In regard to Captain Joseph K. Miller's "The Platoon Team" (INFANTRY, January-February 1986, p. 14), I would like to make a couple of observations.

First, armored cavalry officers have long appreciated the merits of combined arms operations at platoon level. Until recently, all armored cavalry platoons contained a mix of scouts and tanks, which allowed for the combination of maneuver, firepower, and protection that Captain Miller cites in his article. Even under Division 86, regimental armored cavalry troops retain a mix of scouts and tanks to provide these same advantages. The main problem, that of leadership, is both the key to the successful operation of any platoon and a problem that will not be practical to overcome at platoon level. It is difficult enough to habitually attach companies and platoons to form task forces and company teams, let alone expand this to platoon teams.

Short of developing a "combined arms" branch composed of tankers and mechanized infantrymen, the creation of platoon teams will generally bring more problems than benefits.

If a commander is determined, however, to create platoon teams, it would be more effective to keep pairs of like vehicles together. If it is necessary to lead with tanks, lead with a pair of tanks, not just the platoon sergeant's former wingman, who is often the junior track commander in the tank platoon. What happens, for example, if the lead tank becomes mired, throws a track, or hits a mine and suffers loss of mobility? With unlike vehicles, the overwatching tank must expose itself to assist in recovery, weakening the available overwatching fires.

Finally, in the example Captain Miller cites, unless the overwatching tank platoon was asleep, the vehicles hit by main gun rounds less than seven seconds

into the engagement would have been enemy tanks and not Bradleys.

In spite of my objections to the creation of platoon teams as envisioned by Captain Miller, I am pleased to find articles on combined arms operations appearing as often as they do in your magazine.

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MARKSMANSHIP

I agree with S.L. Walsh of the Marine Corps when he recommends that the Army return to a known-distance basic marksmanship program to train each soldier in fundamental marksmanship principles (INFANTRY, January-February 1986, p. 4). I have served in both the Marines and the Army, and my experience with the Marine marksmanship program was vastly superior to that with Army marksmanship training.

I recall that during Marine basic training, the recruits underwent a full two weeks of marksmanship training. One week consisted of classes and "snapping in"—the painful process of practicing stable firing positions in the kneeling, sitting, off-hand, and prone positions. The second week was live-fire practice on known-distance targets up to 500 yards away. The training culminated in a qualification day—shooting for score. No one can go through Marine Corps marksmanship training and not gain an appreciation of what a rifle can do at long range.

On the other hand, during my Army

ROTC advanced camp experience at Fort Bragg (supposedly a basic training equivalent for cadets), we trained and qualified with the rifle in a matter of *three days*. There was very little snapping-in, no dry-fire practice, and classes were rushed and unprofessional. Range coaches were silent spectators—not training aids to the soldier. The range consisted of silhouette targets from about 20 to 200 yards away, which were designed to "pop up" from dense foliage. This was intended to test the soldier's "target acquisition" ability. Unfortunately, many of these targets failed to pop up or were obstructed by the vegetation around them. Many cadets were given minimal qualifying scores by "nice guy" coaches just to get them off the range. In short, it was a disgrace.

In a way, I can understand the Army's concern for training soldiers under realistic conditions on the range. But such training is inappropriate for initial entry training. Skills such as target acquisition and engagement of targets during reduced visibility are important skills for the combat soldier. But for the basic trainee (or his ROTC counterpart) it is far more important to stick to the basics of marksmanship as the Marines do.

In my nine years of military service I have qualified four times as a rifle expert (three times in the Marines and once in the Army Reserve). Any proficiency that I have with an M16 I attribute to my Marine Corps training. The Army training has been, at best, a "going through the motions" proposition.

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We welcome letters from our readers and print as many of them as we can. Sometimes it takes a while before we find room. But keep writing on topics of interest to our readers, and we'll do our best to publish your letters, sooner or later.

FROM THE OPPOSITION

Since Captain Wingo (INFANTRY, May-June 1985, p. 42, and March-April 1986, p. 7) and Captain Cormier and Ser-

geant Holmes (November-December 1985, p. 5) were allowed to suggest and support an extended FTX for Reserve Component (RC) units in your magazine, I believe your readers should also be allowed to digest the opinions of the opposition.

It is true, as Captain Wingo suggests, that some combat units will spend 10 days in the field, with some naturally spending more and some much less. But it is more a certainty that all combat units will experience, on a more frequent basis, the luxurious feeling of being pulled out of the field and then the apprehension of considering their repeated return to the field.

Two trips to the field create a far more realistic environment with far more training benefits. Realism means that the officers and NCOs are going to have to prepare for operations more than just once, and few would argue that a little more planning and work is involved when the troops are moved from the cantonment area than when they are moved from one spot in the field to another. And then there is the added leadership challenge of being able to pump the troops up for yet another go in the field after an enjoyable and much deserved R&R period.

Middle weekend breaks have really been bad-mouthed, particularly by Active Army officers who can't comprehend RC units' taking a break in the middle of their annual training period. (Active duty units and their commanders would be a trifle reluctant, I'm sure, to give up their 30-day leaves, free weekends, and training and athletic holidays for a 365-day stretch in the field.) The time spent away from training builds a sense of unity and morale in all armed forces personnel that is hardly equalled in the field, but it produces better field work.

These breaks are extremely beneficial to the leaders of RC units, who have time to pause and reflect upon the initial stint in the field and so to capitalize later on their earlier and good decisions, and to correct the errors that were recognized. And then, more important, the troops can greatly benefit and their morale can remain high, after their conscientious leaders have taken time to prepare themselves adequately for the second trip to the field with meticulous study and planning,

thorough reconnaissances and repetitious TEWTs.

Two report cards are better than one. Tactical and maintenance evaluations are more effective if the responsible soldiers and their leaders are able to correct any deficiencies in a matter of days instead of being forced to wait until another training period. While one trip to the field may give an operator, and possibly a neglectful first-line supervisor, a failing grade, a second trip provides them with an opportunity to achieve a passing score.

It's just too easy for leaders to inform their troops that when they're back in from the field, they're back for good. That's not realism. Annual training is, for RC units, the most important training period. Too many deficiencies, beyond on-the-spot corrections, will be noted at the end of an extended FTX to have to wait until another year to realize correct applications and impressions.

Middle weekends at annual training should be considered for their training value and not looked upon merely as an RC vacation. That weekend can divide two intense training opportunities, and the training can't help improving the second time around as a result of the middle weekend break. Realism means that units will go to the field to fight more than just once. Middle weekends allow us to train for that reality.

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NEED FOR SYMBOLS

The year of 1985 was one of incredible change for the 7th Infantry Division (Light) at Fort Ord. It was a year of conversion and of growth—growth not in numbers but in experience and potential.

This change was not limited to a new title and a new modified table of organization and equipment. These were simply the mechanics of conversion. The real change was in the attitude, the spirit, and the will to win of the Light Infantryman. The Light Fighter has become an elite warrior through a demanding developmental process in which equipment is

only a tool. It is the human element—the privates, NCOs, and officers—that has made the light infantry a success. And a success it indisputably is!

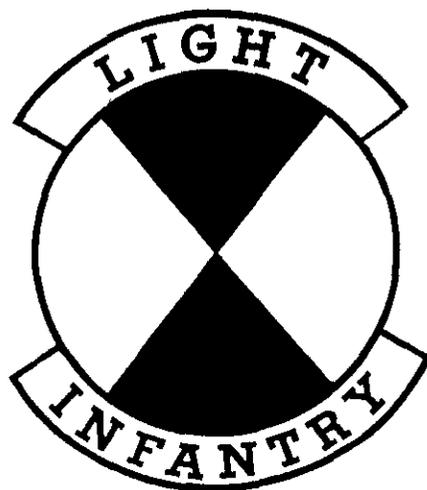
The light infantry fills a critical gap in our nation's defense network that must meet today's geopolitical situation. The 7th ID(L) can now deploy to a situation that is too large for a Ranger battalion to handle but that must be met with a faster response than a larger, heavier division such as the 82d Airborne or the 101st Air Assault Divisions can offer. The Light Fighters are prepared and ready to go, now.

The hard work and sacrifice of every soldier—from COHORT private to commanding general—who has brought the division to this state of readiness now deserves to be recognized and rewarded with some special symbols to show that they are of a special make—elite soldiers.

The first method of expression should be a unique beret—brown to symbolize the dusty hills of Hunter-Liggett, the sandy shores of North Africa, or perhaps the murky swamps of Central America.

Although a beret may not technically improve fighting ability, it does symbolize pride in a unit. (That can be confirmed by anyone foolhardy enough to try to remove one from the head of a soldier belonging to the Rangers, the paratroops, or the Special Forces.)

The second symbol should be a light infantry tab, to be incorporated into the division patch (see sketch). The 7th ID(L) bears little resemblance to the previous 7th Infantry Division, and this change



should be reflected in an updated divisional shoulder patch.

The Light Fighters of the division need some symbols. In spite of the active programs to encourage soldiers to attend Ranger, Air Assault, and other schools, a relatively small percentage of privates and junior enlisted men are actually given an opportunity to attend. And it is these very soldiers who project the image of the unit and these who want the symbols that can display their unit pride to the world. The 7th ID(L) is, after all, the prototype, original light infantry division of the Army!

General John A. Wickham, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, said in his White Paper on the light infantry division that "accoutrements to foster the elite image of the soldiers in the light infantry division also must be designed and provided."

By authorizing these symbols, the Army will be recognizing the Light Fighters of the division for the commitment, the desire, and the willingness to fight and win that they have shown in this year of conversion. The symbols would be a multiplier of soldier power!

The cost of these symbols would be minuscule, especially when compared to the millions of dollars spent on other equipment, but the return in unit pride, morale, and esprit de corps would be incalculable.

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WOMEN AND THE MILITARY

Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military, in its fourth year of publication, wishes to consider manuscripts bearing on women's military and paramilitary activities in any part of the world in any time period.

Also of interest are papers dealing with the activities of female civilian support personnel—such as Red Cross workers—and of military wives. *Minerva* also publishes analytic and opinion pieces concerning gender-related military issues.

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DR. LINDA GRANT De PAUW
Editor and Publisher

NIGHT ATTACK DOCTRINE

Recently, I had an opportunity to conduct an extensive literature search and subsequently to review a number of technical reports and articles from military periodicals on the subject of night attacks. I carried out this task with considerable interest because a few years ago, as a light infantry company commander, I was always looking for a dismounted night attack procedure that I thought would work in combat. I wasn't convinced that the doctrinal limited visibility attack described in FM 7-10, The Infantry Company, had much chance of succeeding in combat.

The present doctrinal night attack requires that too many cold, wet, apprehensive soldiers, acting as guides, remain for a long period of time close to the objective. Additionally, it is unlikely that all of the lateral movement, as squads and then individuals move forward and fan out inside the enemy's wire to occupy the probable line of departure (PLD), will go undetected by even a half-alert defender. Finally, the security advantage gained by communicating with wire does not seem to come even close to outweighing the troubles in using it.

The latest infantry company level doctrine, FC 7-14, Light Infantry Company Operations and ARTEP Mission Training Plan, dated 19 February 1985, provides company commanders with fundamental concepts and principles of how to fight light infantry. The offense chapter addresses six types of attack. It does not, however, address limited visibility or night attack, and the PLD does not appear on its list of control measures.

During my research, I came across two articles in particular, both from INFANTRY's May-June 1977 issue, that should be extremely valuable to the light infantry leaders of today:

In "A Lesson from the Past" (page 31), Captain Robert R. Harper, Jr., iden-

tifies and discusses the unit level keys to the successful night attacks employed by units of the 104th Infantry Division during World War II. During the period October 1944 to May 1945, the 104th Division conducted more than 100 successful night attacks.

In "New/Old Solution" (page 33), Captain Michael T. Dawson identifies and discusses a number of shortcomings he saw in the then-existing dismounted doctrinal night attack. He then described how a dismounted night attack would be conducted today by a unit using the night attack concepts of the 104th Division.

I recommend that you reprint these two articles. You would be doing a great service to the light infantry soldiers of the U.S. Army.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Although we cannot reprint the two articles, we are pleased to provide a reference to them here. (Copies are available in most libraries.) In addition, we have an article on an illuminated night attack coming up soon, which we hope will be helpful.

REUNION SHAEF

A year ago we began looking for veterans of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) and, to date, have found 375 out of a possible 5,000 still living.

Our first reunion will be held 12-14 September 1986 in St. Louis.

Anyone who is interested in more information may write to me at the SHAEF Veterans Association, P.O. Box 42, Fair Haven, NJ 07701, or call me at (201) 842-4206.

CHARLES ALLEN PETERSEN

