Commandant's NOTE

Major General Edwin H. Burba, Jr.
Chief of Infantry

Over the past three years, the Infantry School has probably spent more time on antiarmor weapons than on any other type of weapon system. Replacing the Dragon has been our first priority, because it allows the Infantry to conduct its roles on the battlefield whether it is light infantry or heavy. An Infantry unit that does not have an efficient and effective manportable dismounted system cannot perform tasks such as reconnaissance, counterreconnaissance, breaching, clearing, fixing, suppressing, securing, ambushing, fighting in restricted terrain and built-up areas, and conducting close overwatch to assist tank and Bradley attacks when they encounter heavy resistance.

Our search for a medium system goes far beyond merely finding a replacement for the Dragon, a program currently in technology demonstration. The Marines are improving the Dragon warhead, which we may adopt as an interim system, and tests are ongoing with the French MILAN and Swedish BILL antiarmor systems. The MILAN does offer excellent penetration and performance but it weighs 82 pounds, which means it is not really manportable—certainly not by a single man. Two men can carry it, but three would be needed to carry extra rounds.

What we really need is a new and improved family of Infantry Antiarmor Weapon Systems (IAAWS). This family would include mobile, all-weather, day and night, heavy, medium, and light antiarmor systems that would improve our ability to extend target acquisition and effective engagement beyond the current limits.

As for a heavy weapon, even as we put TOW II in the field, we knew it was going to be obsolete very quickly. So, as we went through the AAWS-M (antiarmor weapon system, medium) analysis, we also looked at a heavy system. Thus far, we have gotten approval for two TOW product improvement programs that will keep us in the ball game for at least the remainder of this century.

Other technologies may even take the TOW further than that. That is important to us because we as Infantrymen will have to decide whether we want to keep a heavy system on our Bradleys. If we do and we change the technology, the Army must be prepared to pick up expensive vehicle integration costs. We are looking in detail at various options now. Meanwhile, even though the clock's ticking on it, we have to muster up every bit of capability we have to get as much longevity as we possibly can out of the TOW.

We have not ignored Echo Company. We are working hard now with a hypervelocity missile that will not only penetrate a tank but may even knock it over, given the missile's kinetic energy. We are also looking at a fiber optics guided missile (FOG-M), an over-the-horizon system, to mix with the hypervelocity missile in the Echo Companies. (We are thinking of two hypervelocity missile platoons and one FOG-M platoon.)

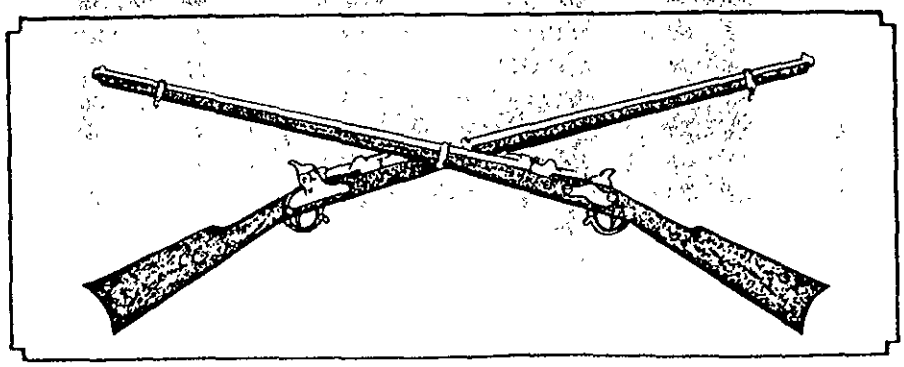
We also need a lightweight system to replace the LAW that has the ability to kill such lightly armored vehicles as BMPs, BRDMs, and BTRs. We need to be able to bust bunkers. The AT4, a European missile system, weighs 15 pounds and has good penetration for its weight. We are buying the AT4 in large quantities, and it will be issued to our Infantry units in Fiscal Year 1987. The 82d Airborne Division and the Rangers will be getting it first because they have critical deployment requirements.

Meanwhile, we have the Shoulder-Launched Multipurpose Assault Weapon (SMAW) bunker buster. The Marines have gotten good use out of it and are enthusiastic about the system. What we have been looking for all along, however, is a multipurpose weapon that will combine a light antitank killer and a light vehicle killer with a bunker buster. That is a difficult problem to solve because the physics of defeating rolled homogeneous armor and that of defeating reinforced concrete are at opposite ends of the spectrum.

The introduction of the IAAWS should not generate any new MOSs for the employment or maintenance of the weapon systems. The use of 11H crewmen where long-range antitank (LRAT) systems make up only one platoon out of an antiarmor company will help in cross-leveling assets within the company. To achieve simplicity of operation, maintenance, and training, the particular piece of equipment (weapon, acquisition device, vehicle) and its logistical support system will not exceed the capabilities of the current 11B, 11H, 27E, 35H, and 45K MOSs. In other words, we will not need soldiers with exceptional psychomotor skills to operate the systems.

Complete training subsystems will be developed specifically to support all phases of individual and collective training. Even assuming there will be no increase in training-base POI hours, training bases will still require an increase in instructors and other training resources.

New equipment training (NET) requirements for user testing and system fielding will be considered during developmental testing and completed at the conclusion of operational testing. The training devices needed to support system training will be developed by the materiel developer, and extension training will be developed as required. Our units will be responsible for training enough personnel to make sure their IAAWS will be adequately manned.

The maintenance concept must remain consistent with our current support organizations, concepts of operation, and repair level policies. We must also make the greatest possible use of our existing TOE tools, TMDE, and other support equipment. The vehicle chassis we select for use in our heavy and light forces will have much in common with the other vehicles in our force structure. Although the range and quantity of our repair parts and other supply requirements will be consistent with our current support capabilities, we do estimate that the extended range of the new systems will increase their number of engagements during a battle. Based on improved hit probability, we have to examine our ammunition expenditure rates to forecast the effect on our logistics support system. For example, does a more accurate system require less ammunition?

To sum up, antiarmor fires from heavy, medium, and light systems are critical to the effectiveness of the combined arms team. Without modern antiarmor weapons, the full operational capabilities of our tanks, attack helicopters, and infantry units will never be realized. New antiarmor systems using leap-ahead technology will ensure that our Army continues as an effective fighting force on the modern battlefield. We are now well on track in translating these technologies into reality.