

ADVANTAGES OF FIRING

As I read the September-October issue of *INFANTRY*, "Crossing the Meurthe," by E.A. Reitan (page 29) brought back old memories. My company, Company L, 30th Infantry, was in one of the two battalions of that regiment that crossed further north, as Mr. Reitan mentioned.

I completely disagree, however, with the conclusions he drew in his final paragraphs—that it wasn't necessary to fire one's rifle when attacking, since "there are enough deadly missiles flying around a battlefield anyway."

Just a few months earlier, Audie Murphy and I had been sent back to 3d Division Headquarters to receive our battlefield commissions. One of the reasons for my promotion, besides living longer than anyone else in the company, was my two years of college ROTC and the fact that I was a military history buff.

In Ardant du Picq's writings, I had read years before that few of his men in the Franco-Prussian War ever fired their rifles, and I had heard that the same thing held in World War II. Therefore, as a commander of squads, platoons, and companies, I insisted that my men lay down a barrage of rifle fire as they advanced. "Deadly missiles flying around" don't give an attacker fire superiority or keep the heads of the enemy down in their foxholes, unless those deadly missiles are flying and cracking near the defenders' heads.

Another advantage of firing is that the adrenaline flows—and the macho-Rambo spirit is aroused in the men. I used to be so adamant about "shooting up a storm" that I even sniffed the muzzles of my men's rifles to be sure they had fired in the previous action.

Breaking out of Anzio, I fired so many bandoliers of M-1 ammunition that the forward stock of my rifle started smoldering and I had to douse it in ditch

water. (Yes, it kept firing.)

I'll never forget holding one of my dying rifleman replacements. His last words were, "Gee, Lieutenant, I didn't even get a chance to fire my rifle!"

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FLOATING FOOTBRIDGE

During a recent field problem, an Engineer company at Fort Campbell built a unique bridge from aircraft cargo pallets, in the dead of night and under simulated combat conditions, for an infantry battalion to use in an assault river crossing. I would like to share the way this was done with *INFANTRY* readers, because it shows the true strength of the combined arms of Infantry and Engineers working together to complete a mission.

Company A, 326th Engineer Battalion (Air Assault) was given the job of getting the 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry across the river. The crossing would have to be fast so that the infantrymen could

regain contact with the enemy mechanized forces without losing momentum.

The key leaders of Company A devised an innovative plan to use not only RB-15s to cross the infantrymen but also a field expedient floating footbridge constructed from aircraft cargo pallets. With the approval of the entire chain of command, preparations began.

The staffs of the Engineer battalion and the Infantry brigade helped the unit obtain all the necessary materials. Heavy drop pallets were brought up from Fort Bragg, and 463L aircraft cargo pallets were obtained from Fort Campbell's Army airfield.

Before the assault crossing, the river was spanned by two steel cables about four feet apart and secured at each end with deadmen. The pallets were also brought forward and camouflaged in the woodline. The far shore was secured by an Engineer assault force that crossed in RB-15s to protect the construction site.

Before the actual construction of the bridge began, a platoon from the Infantry battalion assumed the security of the enemy shore, and a platoon of Military Police assumed local security and



Soldiers cross river on floating bridge.

blocked roads into the area.

The construction of the bridge was simple: Pallets were floated out on the water, and two snap links were used at each connection—one to hook the two pallets together (using the tie-downs already on the pallets), and the other to hook the pallets to the steel cable. This was done quickly and quietly. Smoke was used at the crossing site and at other points up and down the river for concealment and deception.

Engineer rally points and engineer guides were used to control the flow of troops through the bridgehead line. The infantrymen linked up with the engineers about one kilometer away from the assault river crossing site and were brought to ORPs. At the ORPs, the infantrymen were given quick briefings on the enemy situation, the location of the units around them, and the concept of the operation in which they were about to participate. They were then guided either to the rafting site, where they would use the boats to cross the river, or to the floating bridge site, where they would walk across.

Several lessons were learned during the exercise:

- The 463L pallets could be put together more easily than the heavy drop pallets and in half the time.
- Using the cables, 100 meters of bridge could be constructed in an hour.
- The cables were not really necessary, but they added stability when foot troops crossed the bridge.
- Since each pallet could easily hold the weight of a combat-equipped soldier, such a bridge could be used to span a gap of any size.
- Kedge anchors or shore guys could be used on bridges that spanned rivers with strong currents using field expedient systems such as snap links and rappel ropes.
- Since all site preparations were below ground (the deadmen) or below water (the cables), the equipment could be left in place for future operations without being detected by aerial reconnaissance.

The entire Infantry battalion was across the river in less than three hours, including all the slice elements.

This bridge was a design that my commanding officer, Captain Samuel A. Guthrie, and I came up with, and we

hope others will be able to make some use of it as well.

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REFLEX/NIGHT SIGHT

The new emphasis on night operations resulting from maneuver warfare doctrine brings forward a glaring problem: The present U.S. service rifle, the M16, does not have an effective night sight. Modern combat is showing that potential enemies try to capitalize on this night blindness with human wave attacks. During the daytime, the lack of a reflex sight causes the fleeting urban terrorist to use "hit and run" tactics that do not allow infantrymen time to properly use iron sights for firing. And in the future, American soldiers may be fighting far from resupply, and every shot will have to count. This is why a combat reflex/night sight system should be adopted as soon as possible to increase the speed, accuracy, and firepower of our infantry forces.

As it stands now, the iron sights on the M16 rifle force the infantry commander to rely on battlefield illumination, tracers, and a limited number of Starlite scopes. Giving every infantryman a night vision device is neither desirable nor economically feasible. Presently, they are too bulky, fragile, and expensive, and they require numerous replacement batteries. In the defense, enemy scouts probing our defenses are difficult to engage discreetly without giving the infantry commander's position away. Sentries with Starlite scopes cannot provide adequate security against large reconnaissance elements. The only options available are to shoot blindly with tracers, use illumination, send out a patrol (thereby subjecting the patrol to possible ambush without night sights), or let the reconnaissance element go about its business of picking our defenses apart.

If the enemy attacks our defensive position, infantrymen equipped with M16/M203 grenade launchers will be firing illumination rounds when they could be

better employed firing high explosive rounds at dead spaces or covering a sector of fire with their rifles. Likewise, 60mm mortars and higher level supporting fires may be needed to provide illumination, detracting from killing power and setting a precedent that may lead to an over-reliance upon higher support.

Furthermore, in the offense, the commander will be facing defenders with pre-arranged fields of fire and obstacles. Illumination would serve only to help the defenders repel the attack and would act as a signal to let other enemy units in the area know where they needed to go to assist their comrades. The success of a night attack rests upon the assaulting unit's ability to neutralize the defenders' position quickly and accurately. A night sight would help.

I'm not advocating that battlefield illumination be done away with. Obviously, there will be times when it gets so dark that illumination must be used, as in thick jungle vegetation. But for the most part starlight and moonlight provide enough light for human night vision to work. What we need is not a fancy space-age device that can turn night into day but a sight that will allow our soldiers to aim and hit targets up to the limits of their natural senses—a sight that will allow the rifle to be accurately aimed at subtle battlefield indicators such as shine, movement, silhouette, noise, or muzzle flash.

Fortunately, such a sight exists. It has been found to be simple, sturdy, lightweight, and easily mountable to the M16 rifle's carrying handle with a single nut and lock washer. In addition, it doesn't block the regular iron sights, so they can still be used if so desired. It is relatively inexpensive and, most important, it is combat proven and tested as providing unequalled daytime target engagement speed and night firing accuracy. It is called the occluded eye gunsight or OEG for short. It consists of a small nitrogen-filled tube with a radioactive element that is visible in the daytime and at night. It is impervious to rain, snow, sleet, mud, and dirt. It has even been run over by a jeep without harm.

The OEG is not an optical sight, so the firer does not look through the sight and reduce his vision. It does not matter how dirty the lenses get as long as he can see

the sight's red dot. Both eyes are used to fire, thereby improving the field of observation.

All the firer does is place the dot on the target and fire. Multiple targets that are moving can be engaged successfully and quickly. Firing while wearing the M17A1 field protective mask would also improve, because eye relief would not be as close as with iron sights.

The present unit comes with simple windage and elevation adjustments and can be zeroed in a matter of minutes. It is only 5¼ inches long and weighs only 3½ ounces. It fits compactly and neatly on the M16's carrying handle. The radioactive element lasts for 10 years and can then be simply and inexpensively replaced.

As a combat infantryman who has seen the shortcomings of iron sights in actual live fire exercises in both the daytime and at night, in the blistering heat of the 29 Palms desert, the cold of Fort McCoy, and the suffocating humidity of Camp Lejeune's forests, I can say without a doubt that the OEG is the near term answer to our present rifle sight shortcomings.

Something should be done to get this remarkable sight into our troops' hands as soon as possible.

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SYMPOSIUM ON LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

The United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and the U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC) are jointly sponsoring a symposium on Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) in cooperation with the American Defense Preparedness Association. The symposium will be conducted 4 and 5 March 1987 at the Naval Training Center in Orlando, Florida.

The symposium will address these aspects of LIC: The political-military perspective; global aspects of the LIC threat; implications of LIC for U.S. forces; DoD organizational structure for LIC; logistics and engineering; C'I; combat and mobility (land forces, aviation,

and "brown water"); materiel requirements and future development for LIC; and training. The symposium is unclassified except for one session on C'I, which will be Secret/No Foreign.

The purpose of the symposium is to apprise industry of LIC developments and materiel requirements and needs. More than 400 managers, engineers, and scientists from the DoD RDA community as well as industry are expected to attend.

For additional information, call AMC's Project Office for Low Intensity Conflict, located at the Belvoir Research, Development, and Engineering Center—AUTOVON 354-6873 or commercial (703) 664-6873.

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A BIT OF HISTORY

In the Spring of 1953, I was the commanding general of the newly reactivated 1st Armored Division at Fort Hood. We were preparing for a corps maneuver in which the division would be opposed by the 82d Airborne Division, a National Guard Infantry division, and two separate tank battalions.

Before the maneuver, an Assistant Secretary of the Army visiting the division mentioned that there was a paper on the Chief of Staff's desk that would eliminate the armored personnel carrier. I pointed out that this would do away with the concept of the armored division. I asked him to ask the Chief of Staff not to sign it until after he had visited the coming maneuver.

When the Chief of Staff arrived by plane at Fort Hood, I met him and took him to one of my armored infantry battalions. When he said he had never been in an APC, I suggested that he go with a squad that was leaving with its unit as part of the maneuver.

When he returned some two or three hours later and got out with the squad, he went up to the squad leader and said, "Doesn't the noise, vibration, and darkness bother you?" To which the squad leader replied, "Not as much as walkin', suh!"

When I took the Chief of Staff to his

plane for Washington, we did not mention the APC further—but he never signed the paper eliminating the APC.

The Army may owe a lot to that Infantry squad leader.

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INFORMATION NEEDED ON 3d ARVN DIVISION

I am currently working on a master's degree in Vietnamese History at the University of Hawaii. I am also a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army National Guard.

I am conducting extensive research for my thesis, which deals with an analysis of the formation, organization, training, and leadership of the 3d Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Infantry Division in late 1971 and early 1972 in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam, and on the subsequent operations of the 3d ARVN Division during the 1972 Easter Offensive.

I would like to hear from and talk to all MACV, XXIV Corps/FRAC, USARV, and other unit personnel who took any part in the discussion, planning, and implementation of the decision to organize and equip the division in the latter part of 1971 and early part of 1972. I would also like to hear from all U.S. Army advisors who served with MACV Advisory Team 155 (3d ARVN Division's U.S. advisory team) from the Fall of 1971 to the Fall of 1972.

My address is 1342 8th Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96816; phone (808) 735-6958.

HOWARD C.H. FENG

