

INFANTRY LETTERS



UNIVERSAL SKILLS

Once again the issue of the specialization of the Infantry rears its head. Colonel Huba Wass de Czege's article in *INFANTRY*'s September-October 1986 issue (pages 13-15) and Captain Marty J. Eaton's letter in the March-April 1987 (page 4) both lead to the conclusion that *Infantry should be divided as the Artillery branch was divided into the Air Defense and the Field Artillery branches.*

Before serving as a mechanized infantry company commander in the 3d Armored Division, I had never been in a mechanized unit, but I found the transition quite easy and discovered a few interesting things. The best squad leader in *my company in all phases—maintenance, tactics, and so on—was a sergeant who had previously served only in airborne units. My lieutenants had as a basic weakness the concept of not dismounting, because they felt their M113s would carry the day in most if not all situations.*

In the combat support company I had commanded previously, my antitank platoon sergeant had had extensive service in a Ranger battalion and little mechanized experience, but his platoon was credited by the corps IG with the best OR rate and maintenance program in the corps.

My point is that the basic infantry skills are universal. I believe that an officer or soldier firmly schooled in the basics of infantry makes an excellent infantryman no matter what "type" he is. Personally, I believe the transition from light to heavy is easier than the other way around.

There is no aspect of the infantry that requires the specialization of officers and NCOs. Outside of the gunners, I am not convinced that the 11M MOS is a valid concept. All infantrymen need to know how to breach fortifications; all infantrymen need to know patrolling and small unit tactics. The list is endless.

In addition to these skills, *some* infan-

trymen need to know how to maintain a Bradley, how to jump out of an airplane, and a few other things.

We are not creating a "Jack of all trades." We are creating a soldier who can conduct the basic mission of being an infantryman in different environments with different assets—a feat that is not at all impossible.

What I am afraid Captain Eaton has lost sight of is that mechanized infantry is not another branch, it is another form of the basic branch. The skills that defeat the enemy are the same in all the different aspects the infantry assumes.

JACK E. MUNDSTOCK
MAJ, Infantry
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

BOOTS AND FEET

Lieutenant Larry T. Staats' article "The Feet: Mission-Essential Equipment" (*INFANTRY*, March-April 1987, page 13) brought out some good thoughts on the care of a soldier's feet.

I've done some walking (with the 31st, 47th, 22d, 14th, and 18th Infantry Regiments), and on most of these walks, blisters would appear. It seemed that no matter what kind of combat boots I wore, I'd still get blisters. I took to carrying a needle, matches, merthiolate, and a roll of adhesive tape. On a break, I would heat the needle, break the blister, put on the merthiolate, slap on the adhesive tape, and be ready to move. It would still hurt but not as much.

One exception was the jungle boots issued to me in the 18th Infantry. (They may hurt, too, in time.) It just happened that near the beginning of that tour we went on operations in the "Rung Sat" swamp for three days at a time, breaking in 9th Division officers whose units were soon to arrive in Vietnam. Walking in all that water and mud softened the boots and, I suppose, molded them to our

feet. No blisters. But there was the problem of immersion foot.

Now everyone doesn't have a swamp to wade around in to shape up their boots, and this might not work on regular combat boots in any case. But this brings me to my final point: Once I read about some soldiers who had grease in their boots. Although there was no explanation for the grease, I got to thinking—grease, slippery, less friction. A jar of vaseline didn't weigh that much, so I added one to the stuff that went to the field with me. I put the vaseline on my socks, over the top of where my toes rubbed the toe of the boot, back on the heel, and on the sock where it covered the ball of the foot where the calluses were. It worked pretty well.

Whether this would work for everyone or not, I'm not sure. But if it cuts down on blisters and sick call time and helps accomplish the mission, then all you have to worry about is some yucky socks to be cleaned.

W.P. Conboy
SFC, Retired
Wenonah, New Jersey

BELLY FLOPPER TO JEEP

The picture in *INFANTRY*'s March-April 1987 issue of the Belly Flopper (page 7) recalled to my mind the many times I saw that vehicle scooting around Fort Benning when I served there 1933-38. Since you mentioned its role in the evolution of the jeep, I thought you might be interested in this additional information for your archives.

In the summer of 1944 as a student at the Army Navy College, I spent one month of the course at the Navy War College at Newport, Rhode Island, where many wealthy families maintained summer homes. They often included students in their social activities, and on one such occasion I was invited to the home of a

Mr. Frazer, who had started as a blacksmith in Tennessee, then worked his way up the ladder as the automobile industry evolved, finally becoming the head of the Willys Overland Company. In an after-dinner conversation, he told me that he had conferred at Fort Benning with the then-commandant, Brigadier General Walter Short, about building a lightweight utility vehicle. General Short told him that what the Army wanted was a vehicle that four men could carry across a fordable stream. Mr. Frazer replied, "General, what we want to do is build a vehicle that will carry four men across a fordable stream."

Following this visit, Willys began development, so when the Army did eventually generate its requirement, Willys with its head start won the competition hands down. In view of the number of vehicles required, however, it was decided that both Ford and Willys would build them. (As Mr. Frazer related it to me, Edsel Ford visited the Willys plant to receive the plans and remarked, "We don't like using your plans a damned bit." Mr. Frazer replied, "Edsel, you don't think we like letting you use them, do you?") As one might expect from a proud industrial giant, Ford did not surrender completely. The company made just enough minor changes that an experienced mechanic could distinguish between the two, and many claimed the Fords were better, although I could never tell the difference myself.

DAVID W. GRAY
MG, Retired
Golden Beach, Florida

LOST ART TO FINE ART

My compliments to Major Thomas J. Kuster, Jr., on his timely and vital article "The Lost Art of Patrolling" (INFANTRY, May-June 1987, pages 21-25). Except for a few patrol-oriented units such as the Rangers, for whom patrolling is a standard operation, I would venture to say that most infantry units pay only FM-lip service to what is truly an infantryman's art form.

Major Kuster makes the point that les-

sons learned in combat are rarely passed along to succeeding generations; this is especially true when we phase from a combat (Vietnam) to a non-combat (post-Vietnam) environment, and when personnel who would be in a position to impart this hands-on field expertise either leave the service or are promoted away from positions in which they might influence novice patrol operators.

What then will it take to ensure that the infantryman—who will be the commander's "eyes and ears" during the next conflict, be it low-intensity or classical—does not have to re-learn the tricks of the patrolling trade? A few suggestions:

First, unit commanders need to be flexible. Too often, written patrolling doctrine becomes "the bible" with no deviations allowed. Patrol commanders, most often junior NCOs—with only outline guidance—should be allowed to develop patrol techniques based on the "what works best" principle rather than on strict adherence to uniform and equipment SOPs. Pragmatic innovation should be the order of the day.

Second, we need to incorporate patrolling tips into current doctrinal manuals, perhaps as an appendix. This would be a compilation of lessons learned—along the lines of those laid out by Major Kuster—based upon the following:

Historical precedent. We should look at the techniques used successfully by U.S. forces during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam—in different theaters or areas of operation—to see which of them maintain their validity. Further, techniques adopted by foreign services, both Allied and opposing, should be studied for applicability.

Contemporary patrolling techniques. We should compile the techniques presently used by specialized units that are tasked with patrolling as a primary or secondary mission: U.S. Army Rangers and Special Forces, Navy SEALs, Marine Reconnaissance. This should include a study of Active, Reserve, and National Guard components. Again, techniques adopted by foreign services—from the then-Rhodesian infantry units in Africa to the British forces serving in Northern Ireland—should be analyzed and adopted, if they are workable within

the U.S. military context.

Patrolling, regardless of the type of conflict, will always be integral to the commander's planning sequence. The patrol, with its myriad missions, must be as self-protective, versatile in organization, and original in concept, in its peacetime configuration as it necessarily must be during times of conflict.

The lost art of patrolling? If we're going to score first-time battlefield successes—and save lives—the next time around, we had better rewrite that phrase to read "the *fine art of patrolling.*"

JOHN COLEMAN
Senior Editor
Soldier of Fortune Magazine
Boulder, Colorado

NAVIGATIONAL ERRORS

In the article "Know Your Angles" (INFANTRY, March-April 1987, page 38), Dr. Georgann Lucariello states that it is a "problem when instructors tell students to ignore the G-M angle when navigating because the change is so small." The author then provides data showing that errors from other sources, "within accepted Army standards," may be five to ten times as great.

I believe the author is trying to illustrate the principle that errors may add, and that the elimination of little errors will usually give a result that is a little better, even if a little better is still poor due to larger uncorrectable errors.

The proper question is how large the G-M angle can be before the benefits of correction outweigh the risks inherent in computation, and how this "critical" angle varies from one navigation problem to another. Shooting from the hip, I can't think of a situation in which I would risk a 2-degree or a 10-degree error to gain a 1-degree correction, especially in light of the larger errors implicit in dead reckoning with a compass in most terrain.

An additional reason for ignoring the Fort Benning G-M angle in field instruction is that it is too small to allow for testing. With a 1-degree G-M angle, statistical analyses of the performance of a large number of soldiers would be required to determine the differences be-

tween the groups that ignored the correction and those that used it. I assume soldiers need individual feedback about their performance.

Unfortunately, in most of the world the G-M angle is too large to ignore, and at a good many Army training areas it is too small to allow for effective training and practice in the field. There is, however, an inexpensive way to solve the latter problem, regardless of the local magnetic declination. The grid on training maps need only be rotated (by the printer) to artificially create a significant G-M angle, say 11 degrees. Actually, the terrain is rotated under the grid, since the grid is natural only when parallel to the map edges. Rotation should be in a direction to minimize the slight shift in sun and star azimuths. At first glance, it may seem that such a rotation would result in an unnatural situation for the trainee, but that would be true only for trainees who grew up nearby and knew the training area intimately.

WILLIAM W. COCHRAN

Wildlife Specialist
Illinois Natural History Survey
Champaign, Illinois

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Lucariello replies as follows:

The purpose of my article was first to make soldiers aware of the discrepancy between what is printed on the map sheet and the current declination, and second to warn them about ignoring seemingly small declination differences. The unadjusted differences, or choosing to ignore a regional declination, can result in an error that is additive in nature.

I agree with Mr. Cochran's comment regarding performance pressures on the soldier. But the G-M angle and conversion procedure is one bit of information that is written on the map sheet, and the declination can be easily updated.

Granted, for short distances, the small declination error can be ignored with relatively few significant consequences. However, as was indicated in the article, this ignorance exacerbates navigational error over long distances.

Although lack of accuracy while navigating is a significant problem, a more catastrophic problem arises when

a soldier is positioned in one area and calls for fire in a nearby area. His choice of ignoring the declination, paired with the firer's choice, may result in extensive casualties.

Therefore, the question I pose to Mr. Cochran is this: What is the cut-off between "too small" a G-M angle to make a difference and one large enough to be significant?

MORTARS FOR LIGHT PLATOONS

The article "Mortars for Light Platoons," by Richard K. Fickett (INFANTRY, May-June 1987, page 15) is right on the money.

The method of employment Mr. Fickett outlines is, to my recollection, the one used by our 60mm mortar section in World War II. Our mortar section sergeant was the FO, and the FDC was, in essence, between his ears. The mortars were usually close enough to him for his hand and arm signals to be effective. To my recollection, our 60mm mortars were much more useful, reliable, and effective than our machineguns (M1919A4s). The M-2 baseplate for the mortar gave a very nice direct fire capability to it also.

The weapon capability chart in this article seems to be quite subjective. The 30-06 round fired by the BAR (Brown-ing automatic rifle) and the LMG (light machinegun) is the same round, and has the same effects. In practice, the LMG is limited by the burn-out range of its tracers, which puts its effective range at about 700 meters. The BAR may be the single most accurate rifle ever built. Since good shooters can hold the M-1 rifle or the M14 rifle in the black at 1,000 yards, I'm sure that the BAR could also hold in the black at 1,000 yards (or meters) and beyond.

Since light infantry carries its ammunition into battle, high cyclic rates of fire are, or can be, detrimental to them. Light infantry needs one round, single shot effectiveness. I do not recall the exact numbers now, but in World War II it took about 10,000 rounds of 30-06 ammunition to inflict one casualty on the enemy. (With the 5.56mm round, that number

came out to be something like 100,000.) Numbers like that make the 60mm mortar round seem like a real bargain, don't they?

Infantry units at the rifle squad level cannot function without having the indirect fire capability of a 60mm mortar available to them. The terminal ballistics of high angle fire is a requirement for success on any battlefield, low-intensity or high-intensity. The 60mm mortar round kind of whispers in on its final trajectory, giving very little notice of its arrival, and this makes it more effective than noisier kinds of shells. Also, the firing signature of a 60mm mortar gets lost out on a battlefield. In comparison, the firing signature of a light machinegun is spectacular and will draw counterfire from everything the enemy has available.

Radar detection and sophisticated artillery would probably not be present on the low-intensity battlefield to bother the 60mm mortar sections. Even where they were present, quite enough time would elapse for the mortar crew to displace to alternate locations. Under some conditions, the baseplates could be left behind, and when the positions were re-occupied the original firing data would still be useful.

Machineguns are for high-intensity battlefields. Mr. Fickett is correct in saying that our light infantry cannot afford to deploy without the 60mm mortar in their possession. One also has to keep in mind that a light infantry brigade has no artillery. (My World War II division's regiments all had cannon companies armed with 105mm howitzers, in addition to the guns of the division artillery.) Even in those days, mortars were something like three or four times as effective as machineguns and rifles.

Would I trade a pair of LMGs for a 60mm mortar? You bet I would!

ROBERT P. KINGSBURY
LTC, Infantry and
Field Artillery (Retired)
Laconia, New Hampshire

