

PROFESSIONAL FORUM



Infantryman's Combat Weapon

CAPTAIN MAX OLIVER

Combat developers, material developers, and operations research specialists working within the Army are endeavoring to focus and define the direction of infantry small arms development. Some of the concepts being explored in the development of the next generation of infantry weapons may some day make possible a battle scene similar to the following:

Private Orloff struggled to regain his breath from the recent exertion of getting to his concealed position. He was a seasoned veteran of combat, having survived a year in the frontier regions of Afghanistan back in the 1980s and now the first four days of this conflict in the rolling hills of Europe. He had not felt the fear that today caused his heart to pound so hard since the first few days of active campaigning against outnumbered and overmatched rebel forces in that other faraway country. There he had quickly learned that death rarely came from rebel rifle and machinegun fire.

As he peered through the brush and trees, straining to see the enemy's positions, he reflected on his training. He had been taught that he was superior to any soldier he would have to face. He was an excellent marksman, one of the best in his regiment.

He had been taught how to maintain and use the AK-74 he now cradled in his arms. He could hit a target at 400 meters almost without fail. But he knew that in combat targets were never furnished for him. Only fleeting glimpses of enemy soldiers revealed their presence, and there was never enough time to get off an aimed shot. He also knew that an unaimed shot might cause the enemy to duck but that would be all.

Orloff really had come to fear only the crunch of heavy artillery rounds and the thump of the armored vehicles' heavy guns. The vast majority of his comrades sent home for long stays in hospitals, or for burial, had been torn ragged by shell fragments. Even when locked in very close fighting, throwing hand grenades seemed more effective than trying to shoot an unseen target.

Here on this close-in battlefield, he was expected to drive the enemy infantry from their positions so the armored column five kilometers behind his unit could advance. So what caused him to react with a gut-wrenching fear now? He was straining to hear, and desperately hoping not to hear, a new sound on the battlefield—a pop followed by a small thump that more often than not meant a casualty in the vicinity

of the explosion. This pop-thump was all over the lines and was rapidly changing the way he and his comrades fought.

But enough reflection. His buddies and superiors were counting on him and on each other. He had to advance to another position to get ready to assault the enemy's position. Running low and hard, he rushed forward for only three seconds, cutting and darting behind a tree and a bush. As he dove to the ground, he heard the crack of an enemy squad automatic weapon as it sprayed his trail with fire. Nothing to fear from those bullets shot too late and too far off the mark, Orloff told himself. But even so, for the first time since childhood, he muttered a prayer to the god he was told didn't exist.

It didn't help him. He had been spotted and located. Private Orloff did not hear the several pops or see, or even really feel, the explosions of the small explosive shells, some as much as ten feet away, which took his life.

On the other side, Specialist Four Forman was tired and really in wretched shape. For nearly five days he had been in and out of heavy fighting. And for several days before that he had gone with little sleep, preparing for the nightmare he and

his unit knew was coming. He and his foxhole buddy had spent nearly six hours preparing the position they were now staring out of. He had some avenues of observation out to 800 meters, but most of the area to his front and flanks allowed him to see out to only 500 meters. He knew the enemy force was getting close, because the artillery barrage had lifted just a few minutes earlier, a sure sign that Ivan was on the way. He could hear the whoosh of long-range antiarmor weapons from around him and the occasional thump of 25mm guns from the overwatch positions to his rear. The first glimpses of dismounted infantry to his front alerted him, and he began to choose targets.

About 400 meters slightly to his right, he saw an enemy soldier make a classic rush to a new position. The SAW gunner to his left also noticed this move and fired a burst at the fleeting target, driving it to cover. Specialist Forman did not even try to get off a hurried shot, although he could have if the enemy had been close and very threatening. He remained calm and, without thinking about it, raised his weapon, placed the hollow dot of the sight on the spot where he knew the enemy had gone to ground, and quickly fired a round from his five-round magazine. He then immediately fired a second round a few feet in front of the en-

emy soldier's last known location in case the soldier was crawling to another position. One of his squad mates to his right had done about the same thing, and the four closely spaced explosions ended forever the threat from that enemy.

Sergeant First Class Stevens grunted a little as he settled himself and about 45 pounds of gear into his fighting position overseeing his platoon's prepared defense. Sergeant Stevens was a soldier's soldier. As a young private he had participated in some of the last fighting by Americans in Vietnam and had led his platoon in combat on the island of Grenada. He knew how to train, take care of, and discipline the varied assortment of men the Army had given him.

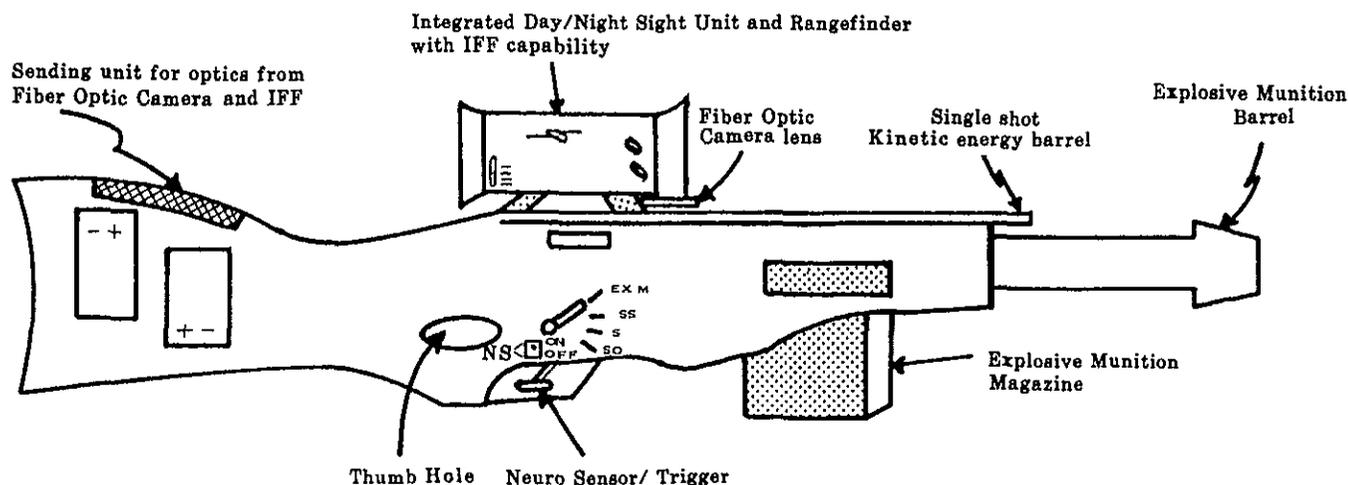
Some years earlier, before this war began, he would relax with his Army buddies and, among the war stories and lies, wonder out loud about the weapons the infantry was going to fight with in the future. He knew that Specialist Forman, right below him, probably had never given the subject much thought, having been in the Army only about 18 months. Forman had been issued a brand new multi-shot, magazine-fed, grenade-firing Infantry Combat Weapon the day he reported for infantry training. He had never touched the venerable M16. But Sergeant Stevens had. He had truly loved the weapon. He had car-

ried it in slightly different variations for many years and had trusted and relied upon it.

Even so, he had often wondered why there wasn't a better weapon for his soldiers to use. After all, the Army had spent so much money on other items in getting a unit ready for combat. As the supply sergeant reminded him every time he updated his hand receipt, his present platoon was worth a lot. For example, the platoon-leader carried a location system worth more than \$40,000; the platoon was covered with sophisticated night vision goggles and sights costing \$2,000 to \$8,000 each; the clothing each man wore cost over \$500; and the helicopter they flew in cost millions. Yet, as recently as two years ago, the rifles they carried—the main piece of equipment meant to actually destroy the enemy—had cost the Army less than \$500 each.

Then, to the chagrin of many oldtimers, and amid a lot of skepticism, the Army began equipping its infantry soldiers with new weapons that weren't even called rifles and machineguns. These weapons fired small bursting projectiles—20mm for the light individual weapon and 30mm for the medium crew-served weapon.

Now, when Stevens' platoon fixed an enemy unit with fire and maneuvered in for the close assault, the fire from these weapons caused tremen-



dous casualties before hand-grenade range was reached. His soldiers did not have to try to hit a moving target; they used automatic range-compensating, micro-computer-controlled sights attached to weapons that were designed around target-destroying munitions. The only throwback to the old days was the weapon system used by the snipers attached to his platoon. But even their weapons were somewhat different from those of the past, as they were 300 Magnums with sophisticated ranging sights. These weapons gave the commander discriminate long-range point-type weapons to complement the other fires of the platoon.

In combat, Sergeant Stevens had seen soldiers on both sides fire thousands of bullets at each other, with only an occasional hit. His platoon

was now successfully fighting greatly outnumbered, in part because of the advanced weapon systems they carried. As he surveyed his platoon again, Sergeant Stevens knew that the battle was won. They had out-matched the enemy's range and killing power. This time, however, it was not just the big guys who had the technological advantage; the grunt who took and held ground was also ahead of his grunt adversary.

This success story, although quite fictional, could be true in a future conflict. The challenge to making it a success is for combat developers and industry to pull together and exploit known, already proven technology and make it happen. Some of the very first studies conducted by operations research specialists for the Army, and many more stud-

ies since, have clearly shown that infantry soldiers have rarely inflicted casualties with their individual small arms.

It is clearly time to take a new approach to the problem of arming the United States Infantryman. If we block the word "rifle" out of our vocabulary and think instead of a "weapon system," new approaches become possible. This kind of thinking has been written into our Small Arms Master Plan, which is still in its staffing stages.

Captain Max Oliver is a Military Police officer assigned to the Directorate of Combat Developments at the Infantry School. He previously served as an MP company commander in Hawaii and with Military Police Advisor Readiness Group Redstone. He is a 1976 ROTC graduate of Eastern Washington State University and holds a master's degree from Troy (Alabama) State University.

Ammunition Dummy, Inert, and Simulated

CAPTAIN DEREK A.N. SORIANO

The daily business of soldiers in peacetime is to train for war, and their training should be as realistic as possible. With ammunition resource constraints, however, the planning, coordination, issue, and resupply of ammunition in peacetime training is often no more than a paper drill. Soldiers and leaders are denied actual hands-on experience and are left with a false sense of security that ammunition will be readily available in wartime when and where they need it—and that it will not greatly affect the loads they must carry.

To educate future battlefield leaders on the importance of planning for, distributing, and carrying ammunition and other munitions, the

U.S. Army Infantry School is now integrating the use of dummy, inert, and simulated (fabricated) ammunition into all the tactical training exercises in certain leader courses—Infantry Officer Basic, Advanced Noncommissioned Officer, Officer Candidate, and Ranger. Emphasis is placed on ammunition considerations from planning to actually carrying the necessary items and replacing them at the objective. The intent of this initiative is to make training as realistic as possible to ensure that leaders are trained to consider all of the factors involved in accomplishing a mission.

Each of these courses has a prescribed load of individual and squad munitions that is to be carried, ac-

ording to the mission, on all appropriate field training exercises. (The fighting load ammunition for IOBC is shown here as an example.) Live or blank ammunition

IOBC FIGHTING LOAD AMMUNITION	
PER MAN	
5.56mm magazines	7 (5 inert, 2 blank)
Grenades	2 (w/expended fuses)
PER SQUAD	
7.62mm (100-rd boxes)	11 (8 inert, 3 blank)
40mm	44
LAWs	4
Claymores	4