

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## DON'T CHANGE EIB

Reference the letters in *INFANTRY*'s November-December 1988 and January-February 1989 issues concerning the Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB), the idea of making the EIB only a temporary award with periodic requalification is a foolish one. Aside from the administrative problems it would cause, what would it do to morale?

Why not make Ranger School graduates go back and "re-qualify"? After all, they can also forget a lot! Then we have the Combat Infantryman Badge. That would be a really challenging re-test.

The EIB is an award for successfully meeting and passing certain tasks. The training and testing are demanding, and they do improve MOS skills.

I served on this past year's EIB committee for the 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division. We started with 600 soldiers in the competition, but only 38 soldiers met the standards.

Let's stop all of this hoop-la about changing the EIB (to make it harder) and support our soldiers with pre-training and encouragement.

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## COMBAT EXPERIENCE

Reference the article "Extra Magazine Pouches," by Master Sergeant David A. Pils (January-February 1989, page 18), what ever happened to our Army's combat experience?

In Vietnam, we always carried a battle dressing at the bottom of every one of our ammunition pouches. It raised the magazines a little so they were easier to retrieve and gave every man more dress-

ings in a readily accessible place. One battle dressing does not do the job with most combat wounds.

Cravats were worn around our necks and laced through the belt loops of our pants so that they were out of the way and readily available when we needed them.

A bottle of water purification tablets was taped to the top of every canteen, and things like foot powder, Band-Aids, and iodine solution were always carried inside the rucksack—where all non-combat gear belongs.

Canteen covers were used to carry grenades and magazines, because they held more than the regular ammunition pouches and were easier to get into.

Smoke grenades are not essential to fighting and were carried attached to the outside of our rucksacks. If we needed them we always had the time to get to them.

And finally, contact is never broken with smoke grenades—except at places like the NTC—as Sergeant Pils implies. This is done with CS, WP, and fragmentation grenades. To think otherwise is folly, and to make such statements is dangerous because soldiers, as General Summerall once said, "think as their leaders think." And I worry that some of our leaders may not be thinking as they should!

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## EFFICIENCY REPORTS

Reference "Writing Efficiency Reports," by Major Harry D. Stumpf (January-February 1989, pages 14-16), it's reading articles like this that causes us NCOs not to trust the NCO-ER with its bullet format.

The example of the first sergeant with the profile is not a good one for first-time

raters to see: "In spite of setting a high standard in physical fitness and routinely leading the company in physical training, First Sergeant \_\_\_\_\_ is exempt from the APRT because . . ."

I can understand explaining why there is no APFT score, but wouldn't it have been better to state, for example, that "Even with, or in spite of, a physical profile, First Sergeant \_\_\_\_\_ sets the standard for physical fitness and routinely leads the company during training."

In the first example, "in spite" is like saying "you may be good but you've got a profile, so you're not that good." Maybe this is simplistic, but a lot of us feel that way.

The old system may not have been the best, but the "buzz" words were there and everyone knew what they were. Now it's going to be up to the raters' writing ability as to who gets the better NCO-ER.

This letter will not change the new system, but maybe it will cause raters (me included) to carefully read and re-read what they write before sending an NCO-ER forward.

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## ARMORED FORCES MONUMENT

An impressive monument is being planned that will honor the "citizen-soldiers" and the "citizen-Marines" who served in the armored forces since World War I.

The Armored Forces Monument will consist of a three-foot wall around a 30-by-40-foot black granite engraving depicting the evolution of the armored forces from the U.S. cavalryman through World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. It is scheduled to be

dedicated on Veterans Day, 11 November 1990.

It will be adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery's new visitors center on Memorial Drive where some four million visitors will see it each year.

The memorial is being financed through donations, not public funds, as a gift from veterans to the American people in the spirit of "Their Valor is Your Heritage."

Veterans and friends of the U.S. Army's armored forces who are interested in contributing to the memorial may write to the Armored Forces Monument Committee, P.O. Box 1146, Fort Myer, VA 22211, or telephone me at (703) 532-0776.

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#### **M24 SNIPER WEAPON VERSUS THE M21**

I would like to comment concerning the news item in the March-April 1989 issue of *INFANTRY* (page 5) on the M24 sniper weapon system.

The item states that the scope on the M21 system cannot be removed by the operator. This is definitely not the case.

The Leatherwood ART-II issued with the M21 system can be detached quickly by means of the two large attaching screws on the side of the mount. In Vietnam, the scope was normally removed at dusk and replaced by an AN/PVS-2 or AN/PVS-4 night vision device for shooting under nighttime conditions. The snipers of the 9th Infantry Division racked up a number of night kills using this system in the Mekong Delta region. In addition, with the scope removed, the iron sights of the M21 can be used. (The news item states that there is no backup sight system on the M21.)

It is true that the M21 was not "user maintainable" since the receiver group is glass-bedded to the stock, but that type of maintenance is not needed on an operator level. I've had an opportunity to handle the M24 system, too, and I cannot think of a reason why the shooter would want to remove the action from the stock

to perform normal maintenance and cleaning.

The news item also failed to note that the backup sights used with the M24 system cannot be fitted when the scope is in place, and I can't imagine trying to detach the scope and attach the sights under any kind of pressure (to say nothing of the fact that the sights would not be zeroed).

The M24 doesn't have a detachable box magazine like the one that the M21 system has. And since the scope is mounted overbore, the weapon cannot be loaded from stripper clips but must be single loaded. This will force a sniper to carry loose rounds in his pocket, which is not going to be conducive to the rapid reloading of the five-round internal magazine. A box magazine could not be fitted because of the requirement that the system be capable of chambering the .300 Winchester Magnum round at some

time in the future.

A great number of fine 7.62mm NATO sniping systems are available in the free world today that are capable of fine accuracy at ranges up to 1,000 meters, but the supposed need for a more powerful cartridge knocked them out of the running.

Finally, it would seem that the Army is paying a lot of money (\$5,145) for a system that doesn't seem to do everything a sniper of today needs for it to do. Inadequate backup sights, no capability for fitting night vision devices, slow reloading, and a highly questionable civilian-made bipod seem to point to muddled thinking and unfair procurement practices that may cost a sniper his life on tomorrow's battlefield.

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#### **SPIRIT OF AMERICA PAGEANT**

Spirit of America, the U.S. Army Military District of Washington's annual patriotic pageant, will return to the Capital Centre in Landover, Maryland, for its 28th year.

This year's pageant can be seen at 8:00 p.m., Wednesday through Friday, 14-16 June and at 2:00 p.m., on Saturday and Sunday, 17 and 18 June.

The show, which features a cast from the 3d U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard) and The U.S. Army Band (Pershing's Own), traces more than 200 years of U.S. history.

It also showcases three of The Old Guard's specialty units: The U.S. Army Drill Team, The Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, and The Commander-in-Chief's Guard.

Admission to the pageant is free, but tickets are required because of the great demand. Anyone who wants tickets should write to Spirit of America, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC 20319-5050.

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