

INFANTRY LETTERS



MORTARS, FORGOTTEN ASSETS

I do not mean to add fuel to the already highly volatile and seemingly parochial approaches many authors have taken recently on the question of whether mortars are maneuver or artillery weapon systems. I do believe, though, that these authors have failed to get to the crux of the matter, which, for me, is the fact that mortars are not "broken" but simply forgotten indirect fire assets.

As an Artilleryman assigned to the Infantry School as a fire support instructor for the past year, I continually find myself telling Infantrymen that mortars are the maneuver force commander's most responsive indirect fire asset because he owns them, and that a fire support officer's responsibility to the maneuver commander is to assist, advise, and make recommendations to him on all matters pertaining to the integration and synchronization of all fire support assets into his battle plan.

The crux of the problem for me, then, is not one of who owns the mortars but who doctrinally has been given staff responsibility and tasked to ensure that all the support assets are in fact incorporated into the maneuver commander's plan and that these assets accomplish the maneuver commander's intent of fires. That responsibility rests, and rightfully so, with the fire support officer.

The solution to the problem does not lie in the parochial question of who should own the mortars. It lies more in the realm of aggressive mortar platoon leaders and fire support officers who know the mortars' capabilities and limitations, the complementary nature of mortars to the overall fire support system, and how to "sell their wares" to the maneuver commander. By "selling their wares," I mean the mortar platoon leaders and the fire support officers must ensure that the maneuver commander

understands that mortars are extremely useful indirect weapon systems that provide him with combat power.

When I make reference to mortars in teaching my classes, I always caveat these remarks by telling the students that if the training of their mortars and our fire support personnel is not integrated in peacetime, when war comes, the mortars will still be a forgotten indirect fire asset.

If we continue this futile parochial argument about which branch should own the mortars, the real problem of remembering to use them at all will continue to haunt the maneuver and fire support communities alike, to the detriment of all.

The solution again for "our forgotten mortars" lies not in ownership but in the selection and training of aggressive mortar platoon leaders and fire support personnel at the company and battalion level who will "sell their wares" as indispensable indirect fire assets.

PETER C. LENTZ
CPT, Field Artillery
Fort Benning, Georgia

ANTIARMOR TECHNIQUES

I read with great interest the articles "Killing Enemy Armor," by Major James B. Leahy, Jr. (pages 8-11) and "Team Eagle," by Captain Mark J. Perry and Lieutenant Marc A. Sierra (pages 11-13) in the November-December 1989 issue of INFANTRY, and would like to comment on them.

On the first of these articles, the TOW missile, with its long time of flight, is not suitable for free-wheeling armor battles. It is best used in carefully sited positions with stringent engagement orders. Because of its high-power sight and high hit and kill probabilities, it is best used

for high payoff targets, not just "tanks."

The following are examples of the targets on which I would use TOWs:

- Commanders' vehicles.
- Mine plow/roller tanks.
- Air Defense Artillery vehicles.
- Self-propelled artillery in a direct fire role, or the 2S9 SO-120 self-propelled mortar.
- Scout vehicles.
- A BTR 60/70/80 in a formation that is otherwise equipped with tanks and BMPs. (It is probably an engineer vehicle.)
- MTLBs or ACRVs. (They are probably division artillery or frontal aviation controllers).
- Antitank vehicles or antitank guns (Rapira 3).
- SU-130 assault guns. (If this gun exists, it is a 130mm field gun on a T-62 tank chassis.)
- Minelaying vehicles.
- AVLB or ribbon bridging.

If we use these targeting priorities, we will be able to erode the enemy's command and control systems, remove his supporting arms, and blunt his ability to create and breach obstacles. Our combined arms team will then be able to destroy him in detail. Naturally, at some point, TOWs may have to engage tanks, but this engagement should be at a point specified in the operations order.

As for my comments on "Team Eagle," the authors basically reinvent the combat support company and miss the real issue: Why does a Bradley fighting vehicle battalion (which has 53 TOW launchers plus the antitank company) need improved TOW vehicles (ITVs) at all? ITVs are slow, poorly protected, have a low rate of fire, are not suitable for overwatch, and provide the enemy with an organizational clue as to what type unit he is facing. A tank company in the BFV battalion makes much more sense.

As I wrote in *Armor* in 1986, this tank company would do the following:

- Increase the combat power by as much as four to nine times over the ITV by providing a well-protected, accurate, long range weapon system with a high rate of fire capable of penetrating all targets on the battlefield. (Determined by using methodology found in *Numbers, Prediction, and War*, by Colonel T. N. Dupuy.)

- Slightly reduce the size of the mechanized infantry battalion.

- Eliminate the need to routinely attach a tank company to a mechanized battalion, thereby increasing teamwork within the organization and concentrating the firepower of the tank battalions.

- Increase operational security, because a mechanized infantry and tank task force would have identical vehicles.

- Slightly ease service support, because tank ammunition takes up less space than missile ammunition. Of course, the fuel consumption of the battalion would be increased, but it would be well within the capability of the J-series battalion.

- Training the tank company would not be a great burden in this organization. It could probably lend the battalion much knowledge in gunnery training. The ranges for the vehicles would be virtually identical (especially on an installation that had a multi-purpose range complex). If all else failed, it could always train with a sister tank battalion.

The tank is an essential part of the infantry battalion task force. As General Spigelmire says in his Commandant's Note in that same issue of *INFANTRY*, "It is difficult to imagine an Infantry officer who does not jump at every opportunity to increase his mastery of his unit's weapons."

For years, regimental armored cavalry squadrons have employed a disparate set of weapon systems—three ground cavalry troops, a tank company, and a howitzer battery—that are capable of acting with great teamwork, of piling onto an enemy when he is found, and of massing immense combat power. Adding a tank company to the BFV battalion would increase its flexibility, firepower, and staying power. (Now if only tank bat-

talions would get a BFV company . . .)

In an era of tough resource constraints and ever more capable opponents, these techniques and organizations are vital to the success of the combined arms team on the battlefield. I urge all armor and infantry officers to consider them carefully, and to employ them whenever it makes tactical sense.

MICHAEL K. ROBEL
MAJ, *Armor*
Redlands, California

DECLINING PRESTIGE OF THE EIB

The prestige of the Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB) is in decline. Look around. Everyone seems to be wearing one. Are there really that many "experts" in our ranks today? How do so many soldiers come away with an award that was once very difficult to earn? The standards have been lowered, and practice sessions are often scheduled for large units that ensure large numbers of recipients. And how prestigious can an award be when nearly everyone owns one?

According to the Chief of Infantry in the September-October 1989 issue of *INFANTRY* (page 1), "The standards for these tasks are taken from the current Soldier's Manuals and related publications." Since the standards are the same as those required for the average Infantryman, I recommend that the "Expert" be taken out of the title and that the award be called simply the Infantryman Badge.

Experts in any field should be able to do things much better than the average achiever. All of us have seen soldiers whose performance is much better than that required by the Soldier's Manuals. These soldiers are in a class by themselves, and the EIB was meant for them.

Scheduled training for the EIB test devalues the award by producing greater numbers of recipients. Setting aside time for concentrating on selected tasks cannot help improving the soldiers' passing potential through an exercise called "repetition," which is famous in the Army. What ever happened to self-

motivation?

One should compare the "voluntary Expert Infantryman Badge Test with the mandatory Army Physical Fitness Test. Army Regulation 350-15 states, "Temporary training periods solely devoted toward meeting APFT requirements are discouraged."

I recommend that the standards for the Expert Infantryman Badge be raised above Soldier's Manual standards so that the recipients can truly claim the "expert" title. I further recommend that commanders rely on the self-motivation of their soldiers to seek the badge on their own and to devote their personal time practicing for the test. Fewer individuals would receive the award, to be sure, but its value would climb to past levels, and the award would regain its former prestige.

MARSHALL K. MADDOX
PSG, Nebraska Army
National Guard
Falls City, Nebraska

SOCIETY OF THE FIRST DIVISION

The Society of the First Division (Big Red One), which is made up of men who served in World War I, World War II and Vietnam, as well as in peacetime will hold its 72d Annual Reunion 22-24 August 1990 in Louisville, Kentucky.

For more information, please contact me at 5 Montgomery Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19118; telephone 215-836-4841.

ARTHUR L. CHAITT
Executive Director

173d AIRBORNE REUNION

A reunion of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) will be held 5-8 July 1990 in Washington, D.C. The brigade served in Vietnam from 1965 to 1971 and in Okinawa prior to Vietnam.

Further information is available from Sigholtz-Capital Chapter, International Society of the 173d Airborne Brigade P.O. Box 27478, Washington, DC 20038-0478.