As they did so, I noticed several problems:

- Some of the soldiers had difficulty fixing their bayonets.
- The grenadiers discovered that bayonets could not be fixed to their weapons with the barrel of the grenade launcher attached.
- Several improperly assembled bayonets could not be fixed.
- Some soldiers did not fire their rifles after their bayonets were fixed.

The platoon eventually swept through its objective in good order. And in the after action review (AAR) that followed, the soldiers openly discussed the things they did right and those they did wrong. Their comments focused on a number of commonsense lessons concerning the bayonet and suggested that the unit needed additional drill and practice. The soldiers' observations included the following:

- Soldiers must learn to appreciate and respect the M-9 bayonet as a weapon first and foremost, instead of as a fieldcraft tool or wire cutter. Leaders cannot limit their soldiers to using bayonets during the time spent on a bayonet assault course and expect them to gain confidence in its use as a weapon.
- A fixed bayonet should not discourage a soldier from firing his rifle. Leaders should routinely have their soldiers fix bayonets on live fire courses or other ranges so they can become accustomed to firing that way.

- Under the stress of combat or even a live fire assault range, otherwise simple tasks are often difficult to execute. If soldiers fix bayonets regularly, therefore, they will be able to perform this simple and basic task more easily in combat.
- To prevent malfunctions and poor performance, all leaders should conduct pre-combat checks of personnel, weapons, and equipment. They should check the M-9 bayonet for maintenance and proper assembly to ensure that the latching mechanism can engage the bayonet lug on the rifle barrel. (The M-9 does not need to be disassembled for routine cleaning and maintenance. In fact, according to the operator's manual, disassembly is not authorized.)

The U.S. infantryman with fixed bayonet epitomizes our service. If leaders encourage and advocate its use on live fire and assault ranges, they will develop soldiers who are not reluctant to use it and officers who will not hesitate, when appropriate, to give the classic command, "Fix bayonets!"

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SWAP SHOP

[illegible]

Submitted by Captain David S. Sutter, Livonia, Michigan.