

INFANTRY LETTERS



DONT REPLACE M60 WITH M249

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following letter, written 6 February 1991 somewhere in Saudi Arabia, arrived at our office on 7 March.

As my company prepares to fight Iraqi troops north of our assembly area, I have found there are three things I can count on: my fellow troopers, INFANTRY Magazine information, and the M60 machinegun.

While weapon procurement is not a democratic process, I have discussed the proposed replacement of the M60 with the M249 (SAW) with soldiers in my company, and none of them would place a SAW instead of an M60 in our support positions.

In my limited experience as an airborne rifle platoon leader and company executive officer, I have seen many examples of the M249's limitations as a general purpose machinegun.

On the streets of Panama City during Operation JUST CAUSE, my platoon engaged two Panama Defense Force (PDF) soldiers who had attempted a "drive by" attack on my positions. The vehicle, a Japanese sedan, was engaged head-on by M16A2 and M249 fire. The 5.56 bullets simply bounced off the windshield; few penetrated, until an M203 round neutralized the vehicle.

In February 1989 my Ranger training platoon was issued M249s for the desert phase of Ranger School. A day later, the Ranger instructors had us return them to the arms room because they frequently jammed in the Utah desert.

During Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM my company has trained extensively for seven months in the sand of Saudi Arabia. During a battalion live fire exercise, six

of our 18 M249s jammed continuously. None of the M60s did. The other M249s in the battalion fared no better. Both types of systems were clean and lightly lubricated. The M249's excessive jamming also occurs on zero and qualification ranges and with blank training ammunition. This hardly inspires confidence.

A cursory glance at the two weapons' specifications, as found in their -10 level manuals, illustrates their significant differences.

Not only does the M60 outgun its smaller counterpart, but it fulfills several key missions the M249 can't.

How well can the M249 neutralize or suppress an enemy bunker with its limited penetration? Likewise, can the M249 accomplish the M60's current role as a platoon weapon against light skinned vehicles? I suggest that the SAW will fare even worse against a tactical vehicle than against a Panamanian Toyota.

In the M60's air guard role in a tactical vehicle, the replacement M249's decreased range and penetration will reduce its effectiveness against even the lowest and slowest threat aircraft.

We had heard that the proposed replacement of M60s with M249s would affect only mechanized TOE units in which limited troop compartment space and the fighting vehicles' own additional firepower were considerations. We can't see the logic in taking away 70 percent of the firepower of light and airborne infantry.

I hope the announcement of the change (INFANTRY, January-February 1991, page 6) will encourage other infantrymen to write and revive the issue before we make a great mistake that will be paid for on future battlefields.

It would be difficult for me to explain to my proud M60 machinegunners why

I was taking away their beloved "pig" and replacing it with an underpowered "piglet."

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LIGHT PLATOON FIREPOWER

The recent U.S. Army decision to replace the venerable M60 machinegun with the M249 squad automatic weapon (SAW) in the ground mounted role was a tough call.

The M60 has a 25 percent greater effective range and weighs only 20 percent more than the M249. The M60 is combat proven, and reliable under adverse environmental conditions.

True, the M249, has a three-to-one cost advantage, but the cost of the M60s already in the force structure is sunk. New M249s will have to be procured as an out-of-pocket cost to out-year budgets.

Three opportunities, however, materialize from this replacement decision:

First, the two-man M60 machinegun team could be reduced to a single M249 gunner. By shifting to 5.56mm, each machinegunner would cut his ammunition weight in half. Further, the M122 tripod could be deleted to conform with other bipod-mounted M249s in the platoon.

Second, the two manpower spaces saved could be reinvested to improve platoon firepower. For example, two self-propelled MK 19-3 40mm grenade machineguns (GMGs) could be placed in each platoon headquarters. The MK 19-3 GMG would extend the platoon leader's influence to 2,200 meters, improve platoon suppression capability

with a sustained rate of fire of 44 rounds of high explosive dual-purpose (HEDP) per minute, and provide a top-attack capability against light armored vehicles in hull defilade.

The platoon burden would be alleviated if each MK 19-3 gunner was mounted on an all-terrain vehicle, such as the commercially manufactured AMT-600 transporter. The AMT-600 weighs less than a half-ton and has a 600-pound payload, enough to carry the GMG and more than 380 rounds of HEDP ammunition. The gunner could double as the vehicle's driver.

Finally, instead of languishing in a depot as wartime reserves, the M60s that had been phased out of the ground role could be reconditioned and reissued to arm selected tracked combat and tactical wheeled vehicles that are now unarmed. (Operation DESERT STORM has probably served as a painful reminder of the necessity for rear area security, especially along lines of communication.) Mounting displaced M60s on vehicles that normally operate forward of the division rear boundary makes good operational and economic sense.

In summary, the potential reutilization of two manpower spaces could be the critical factor in the M60 replacement decision. The M60-M249 trade-off could result in a significant improvement in firepower if four infantrymen armed with two M60s were replaced by two infantrymen armed with M249s and two armed with self-propelled MK 19-3 GMGs.

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COMPANY DEFENSE

In response to "Effective Company Defense: A Matter of Time and Task Management," by Captain John F. Agoglia and Major John D. Johnson (INFANTRY, January-February 1991, pages 38-41), again, this is a structured approach to organizing the confusion instead of exploiting opportunities that exist on the battlefield.

Battle position (BP) defenses are now outdated except to deny some sacred ground that is politically unsound to surrender. These defenses face current and potential enemies that will be heavily mechanized and armed with artillery and will infiltrate their infantry using third-generation tactics. This is a dying tactic that must be re-written in doctrinal manuals and restructured in training environments such as the National Training Center and the Joint Readiness Training Center.

The Army's warriors are inflicted with the checklist approach to dealing with the enemy. It seems a task can be accomplished if it is correctly written. I'm not saying that teaching lieutenants and sergeants the basics of defense is wrong, so long as many other approaches are used to counter what I call the graphics approach.

The graphics approach is one in which a plan can be a total disaster, but it has a chance to be approved if the graphics are done to officer advanced course doctrinal standards. (This also includes a good, orderly brief to a leadership that does not need to know what the air defender is doing because he has already been issued a mission order and can be counted on to coordinate and accomplish his task.)

This approach is being presented and carried over into our higher ranks. The authors of the INFANTRY article, both of whom possess vast knowledge and have observed hundreds of NTC battles, somehow think that all leaders are walking into the NTC without any knowledge. This is because doctrine is drummed into all of us as the rule, and tactics do not become important until six months before an NTC rotation. We are not taught to think, just to react.

First, the operations order is approached with too much methodical detail, because units are expected to present observers or evaluators with long detailed orders and overlays for everything. What happened to the commander's intent to this company? The warrior must view the terrain with an eye to what the enemy is capable of doing and the vision his commanders two levels up have of the result.

General Hermann Balck, the brilliant German tactician, would sit with his subordinates and tell them his mission order quickly in simple terms on the basis of the enemy: "I want *you* to go here, *you* to block here, and *you* to be prepared to reinforce success, because *this* is the result I want to see."

This approach can be translated using common tasks, training drills, and knowledge of the enemy. Using just checkpoints on an overlay as references, a company commander can tell his young warriors, "I want *you* to orient in the vicinity of CP 5 and *you* to orient on CP 3, while *you* remain in reserve to counterattack to any CP that exploits an enemy weakness, such as a flank or rear." And the key to this order is the *why*—"to channel the enemy and destroy him in depth to enable the battalion to conduct a counterattack while the brigade penetrates to guard the division flank." Because this commander's subordinates have been trained in their tasks and understand war, they can go off and accomplish their missions. The commander must hold them to standard instead of to a detailed chart. The company now orients on a moving enemy instead of a stationary engagement area on the map!

In using the BP defense, we are taking away our vast mobility advantage. Our defense plans also call for required times in phases. This is fine in the ARTEP environment where we all know the enemy will not arrive until a certain time. But what happens if we do not have satellites to mark the enemy's arrival date? We cannot cling to a mindset that catches us in phase two with the enemy entering the graphic engagement area.

Units beat the OPFOR at the training centers, and will be able to beat their current enemies, using what I call the flex offense and defense. Screening forces using counter-surveillance and counter-reconnaissance forces tied in with electronic warfare units from brigade, will be positioned in depth. While the battalion and brigade position most of their mobile combat power in multiple hide positions in depth in

preparation for a counterattack by fire and maneuver in the direction of the enemy orientation, platoons and sections of killer teams will be in position between these security and mobile forces to wear down the enemy as he moves through the depth. The company BP defense with its long preparation time offers the enemy a known target. In the case of the flex defense, the focus will be on the enemy, not on the graphics.

The winning commander is not the one who takes the battlefield and tries to make it look pretty and linear and where an ideal enemy will drive right into the obvious engagement area. The winning commander is the one who accepts confusion and exploits it! We do this with trusted subordinates and mission orders (another subject that is written about but not practiced). We focus on the end result and not the signature block on the maneuver overlay.

Basically, it comes down to this: Never do the same thing twice in tactics or operations. The authors of the article in question attempt to do the defense preparation in phases by a set time. What a commander needs to do is train his troops in the use of their basic tasks and the leaders in their understanding of being warriors, and then assign them a mission order and allow them to

execute it. He needs to stand back and observe how his leaders apply the basics to each tactical situation he assigns. The key is not time management but personality management.

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CANADIANS IN THE GULF

I am trying to get in touch with Canadians who have served in the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf. Write to me at 82 Florizel Avenue, Nepean, Ontario, Canada, K2H 9R1; or call me at (613) 996-1388.

FRED GAFFEN
Military Historian

VETERANS OF NORMANDY INVASION

We at the Eisenhower Center are attempting to preserve the record of the common soldier, sailor, and airman who took part in the 1944 Normandy invasion. I am therefore calling on all veterans of the Normandy invasion, in

whatever capacity, to contribute their own taped oral histories to the D-Day collection at the Center. For the 50th Anniversary of the invasion, the Center plans to publish a book "Voices of D-Day." It will be based on the oral histories.

Please write to me for details: The Eisenhower Center, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 70148.

STEPHEN E. AMBROSE
Director

25th INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION

The 25th Infantry Division Association will hold a convention in October 1991 in Hawaii to celebrate the division's 50th anniversary.

Anyone who is interested in becoming a member of the Association, or who is interested in attending the convention should write to: 25th Infantry Division Association, ATTN: LT Ross, Brigade S-2, HHC, 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, HI 96857-6032.

IAN ROSS
Acting Secretary

