



Commandant's NOTE

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LIGHT AND LETHAL

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and subsequent events have had a major effect on the United States Army. The first—and most obvious—is the dramatic downsizing that resulted from the peace dividend our political community anticipated in the face of a diminished Soviet threat. A second effect, and one with wide implications, involves the nature of the new potential threats and the way we must train and equip the force to meet them. Although this article addresses light forces, it is clear that early deploying units will include mechanized forces as well; future articles will discuss our plans for improving their lethality and survivability on the modern battlefield.

We will follow a dual approach in dealing with the new challenges posed by our changing world mission—technology and leader development. This article focuses on technological and materiel improvements and on the fielding of new equipment; subsequent issues of *INFANTRY* will discuss what we are doing to sustain excellence in training and leader development. Our focus on the soldier has never been more important than it is today. Recent changes in our noncommissioned officer courses, as well as in the officer basic and advanced courses, will produce the tough, thinking leaders that our Army demands and that our soldiers deserve. The expanded role of our premier small unit leaders' course—Ranger School—will be another timely subject. Watch for it.

During the nearly five decades since the end of World War II, we planned and trained, and focused

our materiel development to respond to the threat posed by the Soviets and their surrogates. At the same time, we oriented our contingency planning on specific global areas and scenarios. Our challenge is no longer that simple; we must now anticipate and react to a variety of regional contingencies around the world.

Because of the proliferation of military sales to third-world and developing nations, as well as to terrorist groups and drug cartels, it is now possible—and indeed highly probable—that potential enemies will possess modern, high-technology equipment. With this in mind, we must be able to defeat any adversary quickly with minimum casualties. Even though we are a smaller Army, our first-to-fight units must be both light and lethal; light in order to deploy rapidly and lethal in order to defeat a modern, well-equipped enemy. In order to do this, we need to maintain a technological edge over our opponents. Early deploying forces should receive state-of-the-art equipment as soon as it has been developed, tested, and approved for fielding.

The Concept Based Requirements System (CBRS) normally requires from five to seven years from concept to fielding, and we will not always have the luxury of that much lead time before we must confront an opponent. We have recently been able to reduce that time for some items of equipment through the Soldier Enhancement Program (SEP). This evaluation and procurement of off-the-shelf items can reduce the

time lag to as little as two or three years. Obviously, it may not be possible at present to reduce development time for all programs, but the SEP offers a significant improvement. We need to break the mold on how we do business. Why field equipment based on a five-year schedule? This delay is unacceptable for the units that are expected to be the first to fight.

We have identified four categories of equipment as being critical for early deploying units: night vision devices, weapons and munitions, command and control equipment, and those items that improve the environmental survival of the force.

The advantages of state-of-the-art night vision equipment were clearly demonstrated during the Gulf War. The superiority of our target acquisition and fire control systems enabled our mechanized and aviation crews to engage Iraqi targets at maximum ranges.

Command and control systems will become increasingly critical in responding to multiple contingencies, where we must interface with the combat units of other services, government agencies, and countries. Our command and control architecture must ensure that early deploying contingency forces have the equipment and the systems to control the high tempo such operations will entail.

Environmental survival equipment includes vehicular and personnel shelters, extreme weather gear, and individual clothing. It is important to make sure the infantryman is capable of fighting and winning under all climatic conditions.

Programs in the night vision category are night vision goggles (AN/PVS-7), the infrared aiming light (AN/PAQ-4), a night sight bracket with which

to mount night sights from the soldier's assigned weapon to the AT-4 antitank weapon, a third-generation replacement for the AN/PVS-4 night sight, a target pointer, and the thermal night sight.

Two new additions to the weapons and munitions category are the bunker-defeating munition and lightweight tripod. In the command and control area, new additions include the small-unit radio and the small, SLGR/PLGR (lightweight GPS receiver/precise lightweight GPS receiver) position locators. Finally, items being considered in the environmental survivability category include extreme cold weather clothing, the thermarest sleep mat, the combat sleeping bag, and the intermediate cold wet boot and glove.

Current plans would field this equipment to first-to-fight units over a period of three to five years. Some have been fully funded while others are yet to be provided with enough funds to equip all first-to-fight units. My goal is to find the funding to field all of these items to first-to-fight units within a year after the first-unit-equipped date.

A smaller Infantry requires us to have technological superiority before committing our force to a power projection role in a regional crisis response. Our Infantry must be deadlier and more effective than any opponent. The latest munitions, weapons, technology, and training are essential components of success. The challenge of the Infantry School is to continue to give our infantry soldiers a combat edge based on advantages in doctrine, equipment, training, and leader development—and remain ahead of potential adversaries—and to improve and sustain the lethality of our contingency forces as quickly as we can.

