

INFANTRY LETTERS



MORTARS AND SMART MUNITIONS

The article "Mortar Employment," by Major Christopher A. Collins in *INFANTRY*'s March-April 1992 issue was well-written, and, as it applies to existing systems, accurate.

But there are differences between what Major Collins ascribes to mortars and what the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) mission needs statement (MNS) calls for. The statement, dated 12 June 1991, calls for smart overlapping fire from all weapons. We specifically included 60mm, 81mm, and 120mm mortars in the requirement for smart munitions. We have since differentiated between guided munitions for positive identification friend or foe (IFF) and smart (fire and forget) munitions. This was done at the Infantry School's request.

The question that drove the development of the MNS was: Can the Army provide the infantryman with the same probability of hitting the target that the Navy achieved in the Tomahawk land attack cruise missile with 15-year-old technology? That hit probability, after a successful launch, was approximately .5. After reviewing the technology, the answer to the question was Yes!

What, then, are the implications? An 81mm mortar with a shaped-charge warhead can defeat about 98 percent of all the armored vehicles in the world today. If a mortar platoon can carry between 500 and 900 rounds, what opposing force can run over an infantry battalion that has a combination of guided and smart munitions consisting of half the basic load?

This combination is an important distinction because of the inherent lethality of smart munitions. A guided munition that assesses the battlefield and provides positive IFF is coupled with a pulse of

more than 50 smart munitions that take advantage of the mortar's inherent high rate of fire.

This combination makes for a potent infantry battalion. The pulse of smart munitions could easily be followed by a guided munition to do battle damage assessment and another pulse of smart munitions as necessary. Guided munitions have the added benefit of being effective against dug-in positions and bunkers. A mortar round capable of penetrating armor plate, with an incendiary follow-through, could turn the inside of any bunker into a much-too-warm environment. Fire support computers based on the global positioning system (GPS) with each tube tied to GPS base laser range finders can mean first-volley (not first-round) fire for effect with devastating results against armor, infantry, or bunkers. An 81mm mortar mounted in the back of a HMMWV (high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle) could provide for mobility and shoot-and-scoot that even self-propelled artillery could not match. Light infantry backed by a large-caliber, longer-range guided munition such as the non-line of sight and HIMARS, could become more than a match for opposing forces in a contingency setting.

The military technical revolution that is taking place emphasizes greater mobility and far greater lethality. Smart and guided munitions forward can go a long way toward meeting USCENTCOM's requirement to cut our deployable tonnages by half without cutting our combat capability.

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MORE ACCIDENT THAN DESIGN

The article "Advanced Combat Rifle," by Major Rodney W. Joye (*INFANTRY*, January-February 1992, pages 10-14) illustrates that the world's rifle ammunition has resulted more from accident than from design.

The 7.62mm NATO round is an optimized .30 caliber rifle round, but the world has generally agreed that this type of ammunition is too powerful for infantry requirements. The Russian 7.62 x 39mm and the German 7.62mm Kurz were designed more to use existing production tooling than for ballistic performance. And, of course, we have 5.56mm NATO because the Colt AR15 and M193 rounds were designed according to a light-bullet, high-velocity philosophy.

The M855 round and Major Joye's proposed 68-grain .22 bullet are attempts to optimize the 5.56mm caliber. Both of these rounds still lack performance at longer ranges. A true optimum combat rifle cartridge would be more like a 6mm bullet of 85 to 90 grains at about 2,800 feet per second from a 5.56mm NATO cartridge case. Such a round would combine light weight, minimum recoil, and reasonable ballistic performance by design.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: A cartridge such as Mr. Weader proposes already exists; it is the 6 x 47mm, developed by Remington for their Model 40XB bench-rest rifle. Although not commercially available, the round is popular among handloaders.

MILITARY HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

The U.S. Air Force Academy will hold the Fifteenth Military Symposium 14-16 October 1992. The theme of the symposium is "A Revolutionary War: Korea and the Transformation of the Postwar World."

For further information, anyone who is interested may write to me at HQ USAFA/DFH, USAF Academy, CO 80840-5701; or call (719) 472-3230.

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REUNION OF VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge will hold their annual reunion in Nashville, Tennessee, 8-11 October 1992. All veterans of this memorable conflict, their families and friends, and

interested history buffs are invited to attend.

Plans are also under way for a gala celebration of the 50th anniversary of the battle in December 1994.

Additional information is available from Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, P.O. Box 1129-P, Arlington, VA 22219-2029.

NANCY C. MONSON

CHOOSE GOOD RADIO OPERATORS AND DRIVERS

A leader, whether he leads a platoon or a battalion, should choose his radio operator and his driver from among the best soldiers available. His radio operator or driver often speaks for him, and if either fails to represent him well, effective communication goes out the window, and with it goes his ability to command.

Effective radio communication, in

particular, requires competent, self-confident, authoritative speech. A leader can't do his job tied to the radio, and he can't stay awake 24 hours a day. A radio operator should make all callers feel confident that their messages have been understood and will be delivered promptly. He should also have a healthy share of common sense; a caller can quickly detect a lack of it.

Leaders too often accept without question poor performers who are assigned to them as radio operators and drivers. I did so myself as a lieutenant and as a company commander. If you're a leader, accept only good ones. And if you're in a position to provide these personnel for a higher level, provide only good ones.

A good radio operator, especially, gives a leader a distinct advantage. A poor operator gives him a handicap.

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