Commandant's NOTE

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THE FUTURE INFANTRY—AN ASSESSMENT

The world has changed more in the past five years than any of us could have foreseen, and with it the requirement for an Army structure geared to a threat of the 1970s. The changed nature of the threat and today's economic realities have caused us to take a hard look at where we want to be and what we have to do to get there. We recently completed an Infantry Functional Area Assessment (FAA) which closely examined the ongoing restructuring and its effect on our functional areas out through 1995. The purpose of the FAA was to show the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army how we are going to implement the restructuring while assuring the least possible adverse effect on the Infantryman, readiness, training, total force integration, and modernization, to name a few of our concerns. In this month's Commandant's Note, I want to highlight some aspects of the FAA and let you know where we stand in relation to them.

Our current doctrine and structure evolved in response to the threat posed by the Soviet Union and its surrogates around the world. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emergence of an array of states—often with conflicting interests—both the threat and our responses to it have taken on a new face. The possibility of having to conduct an array of contingency operations on short notice has highlighted the role of the Infantry, since Infantry units will be the first maneuver forces deployed and may have to provide the security for the arrival of follow-on heavy forces. Recognizing this mission, the Infantry must have the mobility, weaponry, survivability, and sustainment systems to ensure that we can move fast, hit hard, and redeploy once the job is done. We did just that during DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, but then our Army was larger, we had forces in Europe that could be moved into theater, and we could count on a great many other nations to lend their support, conditions that may not always exist.

The infantryman deserves the best weapons and equipment we can provide, and our efforts in the area of soldier systems have yielded considerable success. The Soldier Enhancement Program (SEP), initiated in 1990, focuses on improving the soldier's combat effectiveness through the development and fielding of improved equipment and lighter, more effective weapons. The difference between SEP and similar programs is that the SEP is aimed at short-term development programs that can be ready for type classification in three years or less, while other programs require a much longer time for completion.

The Soldier's Integrated Protective Ensemble represents the interface of state-of-the-art technology with the latest in weapons development and identified technologies deferred to far-term efforts. This program assessed the potential new capabilities to develop a modular, head-to-toe, individual fighting system with a soldier-to-soldier communications capability, which will greatly improve the combat capability of the soldier. The system was first demonstrated in November and December 1992, and the test results were published and released in March 1993.

The soldier's capability as an integrated fighting system will be developed through the Enhanced Land Warrior program. This initiative will address lethality, command and control, survivability, mobility, and sustainment, and the Infantry School is attempting to field this modular soldier system within seven years.

The Small Arms Master Plan—discussed in the May-June 1993 issue of INFANTRY—is on schedule, and will define and identify solutions to the Army's small arms requirements out to the year 2000 and beyond. This program will develop the optimal type, mix, and munitions of small arms for the multi-contingency battlefield of the future. The end products of the program will be an individual combat weapon, a crew-served weapon, and a personal defense weapon, with the first of these—the objective individual combat weapon (OICW)—being the centerpiece of the objective small arms family. The final OICW technology, still under development, will determine the course to be followed in developing the crew-served weapon of the trio.

Modernization is not limited to the small arms, however. Similar improvements are under way in antiarmor weapons, mortars, and laser countermeasure systems as well. The initial operational test and evaluation of Javelin, a medium

antitank weapon, is currently underway, with the first units scheduled to begin receiving the system in the third quarter of FY 1996. The Improved Target Acquisition System has been funded for procurement, while the Line-of-Sight Antitank and the Non-line of Sight Combined Arms systems remain under consideration as long-term projects for the Infantry.

The Mortar Master Plan (MMP) will set the course for mortar development, requirements, and fielding into the next century. The MMP will assess the benefits of current systems, look at possible improvements to those systems, and address future mortar requirements. As for completed and ongoing mortar actions, the 120mm mortar is replacing the familiar 4.2-inch mortar as the battalion mortar system. The 81mm M252 mortar has replaced the M29A1 in light forces, and the 60mm M224 is now fielded with airborne, air assault, mountain, light Infantry, and Ranger companies. The mortar ballistic computer (MBC) is now used for automated computation of firing data; a planned Revision III upgrade for the MBC will expand its capability to include 120mm non-developmental ammunition and the enhanced family of ammunition, and it will be fielded in FY 1994. An improved mortar ballistic computer that will integrate mortars into the digitized battlefield via a link with the advanced field artillery tactical data system is scheduled for fielding in FY 1997.

The Infantry FAA also addressed the need for dedicated snipers in the battalions of light Infantry divisions. Experience has shown that snipers are often drawn from the reconnaissance platoons and rifle squads. Dual-hatting a soldier as a sniper only means that we will end up with one man trying to do two jobs, and that his perishable sniper skills will deteriorate for lack of use. We cannot afford to let this happen. In our peacekeeping role, as well as our possible deployment to places where operations in built-up areas are the rule, the surgical targeting skills and minimal collateral damage of well-trained and properly employed snipers are indispensable. The assignment of dedicated snipers to Infantry units of all components will require relatively few soldiers, and is an investment that is well worth the cost.

Another issue of great interest to commanders is the reconnaissance capability of light and heavy Infantry brigades, an issue originally addressed—but not resourced—in the Division 86 brigade headquarters organization plan. The U.S. Army Infantry Center and School will continue to examine possible alternatives that will increase the brigade commander's ability to see out in front of his unit and will enhance the ability of his security force to detect and react to threats as they arise.

Infantry doctrine, which has undergone considerable evolution in just the past few years, received close scrutiny in the FAA. In the recent past, AirLand Battle doctrine—now supplanted by Army Operations Doctrine—characterized our response to the threat posed mainly by the then-extant Warsaw Pact and by the forces trained according to the Pact's doctrinal precepts.

In the past five years, we have seen sweeping changes in the nature of contingencies in which Army forces have been committed. The traditional mission of the Army—to mobilize, train, deploy, and fight against an enemy trained and equipped in a generally predictable manner—has not gone away. We are now seeing increased involvement, however, in nation building, riot control, disaster relief, and noncombatant evacuation operations. As stability is threatened in those regions in which we have strong national interests, we may find ourselves in a peacekeeping role. These expanded missions will require doctrinal modifications that will allow us to handle our broader responsibilities.

These are but a few of the issues we addressed in the Infantry FAA. Looming over the training, doctrinal, personnel, and equipment changes of the future is the reality that we will have to accomplish these changes with less, not more, than we have had in the past. That means fewer personnel, fewer training dollars, restrictions on the type and scope of training we can conduct, and less money to spend on our weapons systems' development and facilities maintenance. This is our challenge. To guard our resources, save whenever and wherever possible, spend only when we can see tangible benefits, and remember that we are as responsible for the way we spend our money as we are for the defense and security of our Nation.