



Commandant's NOTE

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THE INFANTRY—ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

The Commandant's Note in the November-December 1991 issue of *INFANTRY* was my first as Chief of Infantry, and the nearly three years since its publication have been exciting and challenging ones: exciting in terms of the initiatives we have implemented and challenging in terms of what remains to be done to ensure the readiness of the infantry force in a rapidly changing world. In this, my final Commandant's Note, I want to talk about the progress our branch has made, and what we need to do to ensure that it continues to perform its vital role as we enter the next century.

We live in a dangerous world; nations and societies are in crisis all around us, and amid all this our nation stands both as an example and as a source of hope. The example we offer derives from the stability of our society and its institutions, and the hope we extend to a troubled world comes from the humanitarian aid and peacekeeping forces we have deployed around the globe. We have been tested and have met the challenge, but if we are to remain a leader among nations for long, we must retain that credible degree of deployable military strength that will both reassure our allies and deter those who would be our enemies.

Tomorrow's threat may materialize anywhere between the poles, from the desert to the streets of a city, or on terrain ranging from the plains of western Europe to the Balkans, and it will not always be fought in traditional ways. Today, operations other than war will demand more and more of our attention, and it is infantrymen who can best participate in such efforts. Recognizing this, the Infantry School has taken the lead in developing and fielding the doctrinal literature, the training initiatives, and the technological improvements in equipment to support the conduct of such operations. The infantry has found ready application in the security and peacekeeping challenges of operations other than war, but its value is not limited to those missions.

History is replete with examples of the Infantry's ability to deny the use of built-up areas; to travel over extended distances, strike hard, and melt away before the enemy can react; to force the enemy to commit an inordinately large force in terrain not of his own choosing; and to draw support from a willing civilian population while disrupting lines of communication. An Infantry force has a greater degree of self-sufficiency than perhaps any other, and we must not lose sight of this quality as we decide what the Army of the next century will look like.

Tomorrow's threat outside the area of operations other than war may well call for a combined arms effort, but that may not always be possible. Even though the infantryman may sometimes have the added advantage of armor and artillery to complement his efforts, we must not forget that he will often have to perform his mission without this support, because the same terrain in which infantry is able to move freely can render armor highly vulnerable and artillery fire problematic.

The Gulf War and subsequent events have highlighted our need to prepare for the contingency of mobile warfare, but we may no longer have the luxury of a long buildup period or the overseas stationing of the troops necessary for immediate response to such crises. This means that the Infantry will remain the centerpiece of a force projection Army, one in which forward deployed units may be replaced by CONUS-based contingency forces and a greater degree of reliance on pre-positioned stocks. To be sure, reinforcing units may arrive as follow-on forces, but the odds are that an Infantry team of highly deployable light and heavy contingency forces will be the first ones in and the last ones out.

We have a lot going for us in this area: the night fighting lead of our Army has yet to be surpassed; such advances as the global positioning system have honed our ability to navigate accurately over land and water;

and laser technology has yielded a range of applications from target acquisition to the ability to degrade an opponent's own target acquisition systems. Further, our Bradley force is undergoing a modernization that will carry us into, and beyond, the year 2020; and an array of improvements to the infantryman's direct and indirect fire weapons will increase his lethality over that of even his Gulf War counterpart.

Behind these initiatives is the Dismounted Battlespace Battle Lab (DBBL) at Fort Benning, which was established—along with Battle Labs at other service schools—to identify and examine new approaches to warfighting across the whole spectrum of doctrine; tactics, techniques, and procedures; training; leader development; organizational design; materiel; and soldier support. The DBBL has been designated the lead TRADOC Battle Lab to conduct an Advanced Warfighting Experiment (AWE) in Fiscal Year 1996. The effort will be AWE 96-02, and will employ more than 60 digitizations and own the night (OTN) initiatives to develop warfighting payoffs in enhanced lethality, survivability, and tempo; digital inter-connectivity between light, heavy, and Special Operations forces, and joint services; and to examine future organizational design for light forces as candidates for Force XXI.

The Infantry School's Holistic Review of Infantry (HRI), discussed in the May-June 1994 Commandant's Note, parallels the Army's Force XXI modernization initiative to tailor the force to meet the expected threat of the year 2005. During HRI, the whole spectrum of the Infantry structure—from fire team to battalion—is being studied and modified, using lethality as the basis of change.

For the first time, we have the means to reduce dupli-

cation of effort, increase the return for each defense dollar, and put new equipment in the hands of the soldier—where it needs to be—faster than ever before. But equipment is only half of the equation; equally important is training, and that includes the training of both the soldier and those who will lead him in combat.

Now, more than ever, our Army needs high-quality infantry leaders, and the only way we're going to get them is to train them. The common denominator in any Army is the soldier, and we must continue to develop leaders who can train him, see to it that he is supported, and effectively lead him in combat. The quality of our leaders will determine how well the soldier does his job, and in the long run their success will determine the degree of credibility and respect the United States enjoys in its dealings with other nations.

The training of our future leaders, therefore, is an investment that we absolutely must make, even now, when other pressing needs demand our attention and our commitment of assets. The Army has taken significant budget cuts across the board that have affected our acquisition of weapon systems, facilities, manpower, and training, with the effect on training being the most ominous. In every war in our Army's history, it has been the well-trained soldier who has made the difference, and in every case in which poorly trained men and leaders have been sent into combat, lives have been squandered.

We have heard a great deal about avoiding any repetition of the mistakes of the past; now we have a chance to put that noble sentiment into action. The Army absolutely has to be the best trained in our Nation's history, because neither our Nation nor the world can afford for it to be otherwise.

