

From The Editor

WATCH YOUR LANE

The past year has been a busy one for the Army, with troops deployed on a wide—and sometimes dangerous—variety of missions around the world, helping our own citizens cope with natural disasters at home, and all the while preparing for the transition to a ten-division force. We have seen the emergence of proponent battle laboratories at major installations, field-tested digital technology, and launched the Infantry Force XXI initiative here at Fort Benning. Significantly, the past year also witnessed the continuation of numerous combat developments programs that will contribute tremendously to the lethality, maneuverability, and survivability of the Infantryman. And this is what I want to talk about.

At company and battalion level—where most of our readers are to be found—a top priority is any equipment the soldier can wear, fire, or otherwise use to better accomplish his mission. It may be the end product of the Small Arms Master Plan, the Objective Individual Combat Weapon, with bursting and lightweight kinetic energy munitions. It may also include any of the night vision devices, global positioning systems, improvements to the mortar, or the latest developments in machinegun technology.

Decisions on simulations, digitization, and virtual reality will have their eventual impact on how the platoon sergeant, platoon leader, or company commander does his job, but until such initiatives are fully operational the immediate concern of these leaders must be to train and lead soldiers who can still close with and destroy the enemy by fire and maneuver.

Those groups and nations who can threaten our national interests may not possess our degree of technological skill, but this doesn't mean that they lack the will and the means to achieve their ends. In the past, we have fought less advanced adversaries, underestimated them, and suffered because of it. So how are we to prepare for the challenges of tomorrow?

One step is to gain the perspective that the study of military history can provide. Another—and more concrete—solution is to focus on tough, realistic training in the mission essential tasks that your unit will be expected to perform upon deployment. That is what spelled success in the past, and it will enable a unit to win in future as well. A leader owes it to himself—and the men entrusted to him—to stay abreast of his profession by readings and study, so keep an eye on Infantry Force XXI, Land Warrior, and the myriad programs and initiatives that accompany them. But while you are doing so, remember the immediate threat, the enemy you may face in the more immediate future, and watch your lane!

RAE

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