



# Commandant's NOTE

MAJOR GENERAL JOHN W. HENDRIX Chief of Infantry

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## GEARING UP FOR THE FUTURE

The contributions of our Nation's industrial base to her success in past wars cannot be denied, and this support has never been more imperative than in today's world. Our ability to maintain the technological edge over potential adversaries can spell the difference between effective, credible deterrence and military, political, and economic ruin. During the past two decades, advances in digitization, own-the-night technology, and communications have propelled the United States and her allies to the forefront of our profession. Today, the weapons and equipment of the next century are already coming into the hands of our soldiers. In this issue of *INFANTRY* I want to outline some of the materiel improvements that will support and sustain the soldiers of Infantry Force XXI.

The Army is executing its modernization effort through programs ranging from those that exploit off-the-shelf technologies and non-developmental items, to others that will require a longer research and development period before the equipment is fielded. Regardless of the length of time required, however, the goal of the modernization effort is the same: to increase the individual soldier's combat effectiveness by providing him with systems that will improve his lethality and survivability on the battlefield. Current programs under consideration include enhancements to current weapons, ammunition, grenades, optical sights, and weapons mounts. Other programs slated for Fiscal Year 1996 will include non-lethal ammunition for 5.56mm and 40mm weapons.

Recent accomplishments in the area of small arms modernization have given us laser hardening filters for the M24 sniper optic—a significant step, given the availability of directed-energy weapons among potential threat forces. Other enhancements include a night sight bracket for the AT-4, and blank-firing adapters for the M249 light machinegun. Further improvements that you can expect to see are the Mk 93 dual mount for the M2 .50 caliber machinegun and the Mk 19 Mod 3 grenade machinegun, and dim tracer ammunition for the 7.62mm machinegun.

The M30 boresight equipment for small arms and associated sights will be fielded within the next 12 months, along with the M4 carbine and a close combat optic for the M16 and M4. A multiple 30-round M16/M4 magazine holder, a flash suppressor/blast attenuator for the M24 sniper system, the XM144 Straight Telescope, and a 100-round assault pack for the M249 light machinegun are also planned to be fielded within a year.

These weapons and their related equipment will be complemented by several improvements in communications, electronics, and night vision technology. The Lightweight Video Reconnaissance System (LVRS) is a small, low-cost, video recording and transmission system that will improve the accuracy and reporting of intelligence information by ground reconnaissance units; it is scheduled to be fielded in the fourth quarter of FY 1996. Also under development is a small,

lightweight radio that will give infantry squad members an individual communications capability to improve their situational awareness and increase their operational effectiveness. Fielding of the individual soldier radio (ISR) is planned for the third Quarter of FY 97.

A dual-capability sniper night sight is undergoing operational testing and is expected to be fielded early in FY 1996. The new sight will enable a sniper to engage targets day or night without having to remove and replace separate sights. It will also improve the sniper's ability to deliver precision fire from concealed positions under a greater range of visibility conditions.

But the improvements do not stop there; researchers in the developmental technologies associated with clothing and individual equipment (CIE) have responded to concerns from the field, and soldiers are already seeing the results of their input. The enhanced hot-weather battle dress uniform (BDU) is scheduled to be available in Military Clothing Sales Stores beginning 1 October 1995. The new BDU will be 50 percent more durable than the old uniform, and a new hot-weather BDU cap will be fielded during the same time frame. New soldiers entering the Army will be issued one temperate and one hot-weather BDU cap.

During the coming months, the popular Extended Cold Weather Clothing System (ECWCS) will be improved by the addition of a roll-and-stow hood along with design features to make it more waterproof. The improved rain suit will reduce perspiration buildup through the use of state-of-the-art breathable material. This rain suit was a popular item with the soldiers—especially those in light units—who tested it. Additionally, a modular sleeping bag system has been developed that will consist of a lightweight sleeping bag, a medium bag, a stuff sack, and a bivy cover. The two sleeping bags can be used separately or zipped together. This sleeping bag system will replace

the current sleeping bags, and can be used in all environments.

As any infantryman will tell you, foot care cannot be overemphasized, and the CIE developers have not overlooked this important area. Each new soldier will be issued three pairs of sock liners that can double as dress socks or serve as liners with boot socks; these are designed to help keep the feet dry while reducing chafing, another important factor, particularly for the light force.

Other items that are under development include a PASGT (personnel armor system for ground troops) helmet that is four ounces lighter than the current model, and an improved combat vehicle commander helmet that offers the same ballistic protection as the PASGT helmet. An improved eye-protection system that offers both ballistic and laser shielding, and an improved tactical load bearing vest are being developed as well. Improvements have also been made to the mechanic's coverall, the butt pack, and cold weather underwear, and units will receive a new MRE (meal, ready-to-eat) that offers 24 menus instead of the 12 currently issued.

Modernization will extend to virtually every aspect of our profession, and in this Commandant's Note I have highlighted some of those systems and items that will directly benefit the Infantryman. By carefully articulating our materiel requirements to the industries that can meet them, the Army has—as in the past—called upon our industrial base to meet the needs of the force. As further development and fielding of these and other items of equipment become reality, our modernization effort will pay tremendous dividends, in the form of increased survivability, supportability, and lethality of the Infantry force. These qualities will continue to be reflected in the confidence of our allies, and in the cautious respect of our potential adversaries, as our Nation moves forward into the 21st Century.

