

INFANTRY LETTERS



INFILTRATION

I must add an important aspect to the article "Infiltration Attack," by Lieutenant Colonel Martin N. Stanton, in *INFANTRY*'s March-April 1996 issue. Colonel Stanton, who has seen many such attacks fail during his tenure at the National Training Center (NTC), addresses the most complex and important form of infantry maneuver. (For that matter, heavy forces must deal with this tactic to align with the style of fighting that TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5, Force XXI Operations, is calling for us to conduct tomorrow.)

Colonel Stanton also provides several valuable techniques but omits another critical factor, which is *trust*. Due to its inherent complexity, infiltration (instead of infiltration attack, which derives a different meaning) demands a level of trust that only solid teams can build by executing this mission several times—not the one or two times a company commander has to conduct it during his short tenure as a commander.

Infiltration tactics are as the name implies. Soldiers, in small groups or as individuals, seek small gaps in enemy lines and slip through undetected. The first intimation the enemy should have of our presence is once we are behind him.

Although I can conceive of infiltration tactics being used in a context of methodical battle (as Colonel Stanton implies through the use of such terms as "formations" and "control"), and other non-manuever warfare styles of fighting, it is fitting that I discuss these tactics in addition to and not in contrast to what Stanton considers critical.

For one thing, infiltration tactics were conceptualized historically along with maneuver warfare, and as TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5 is repeating today. For another, it is difficult to imagine infiltration tactics working very well unless "command" is highly decentralized, and

unless those at the lowest level exercise high initiative, such as we find in *Auftragstaktik* or mission tactics. Also, in infiltration tactics we see concepts discussed in the TRADOC pamphlet, especially identifying enemy soft spots and weaknesses and using several thrusts.

Slipping undetected through enemy lines is certainly not a new idea. What is new is that in the U.S. Army we are now—for the first time since the War for Independence—seeing infiltration tactics as an option for large-scale forces and as an alternative to our longstanding preference for attrition warfare. Earlier, infiltration was viewed as a technique for reconnaissance work, and as tactics for Rangers or guerrilla forces and other small units that had no other choice. As Stanton says, it is rare. The opposing force at the NTC has used its augmented infantry companies in this role for years.

The tremendous power of infiltration tactics derives not from assaulting strongpoints but from having our troops suddenly appear behind the enemy. Using even the oldest, least imaginative definition of maneuver—"gaining a position of advantage over the enemy"—the force that has worked its way into the enemy's depths has outmaneuvered its opponent in the strongest sense. When the enemy has oriented his "security zone or positions," we probably do not want to be in front of him. If we can be in back of the enemy's defenses before he has any inclination to reorient them, we defeat his plans before he can execute them. (Something that simulators and MILES cannot show is the stress of reacting and making decisions under real combat conditions.)

Like many aspects of Force XXI Operations, infiltration tactics require high-quality soldiers. To begin with, the soldier or leader described in the pamphlet must make his own decisions and do it

on the spot. Tiny gaps in enemy lines cannot be seen in advance and mapped out ("infiltration lanes"). Their very existence may be fleeting. Also, extreme physical courage is demanded, because fighting inside enemy lines is fighting close! The soldier who has infiltrated can enjoy a tremendous psychological advantage because it is he who has the initiative while his opponent has no idea how many enemy he is confronting or where they are coming from. It requires tremendous moral toughness to realize this psychological advantage. The soldier who has infiltrated is, after all, surrounded.

German assault units of World War II did not use formations. There was a mutual trust between individuals, and each employed the best method of supporting his fellow rifleman or squad leader. In contrast, our mission training plans demand exacting places for our infantrymen, and for that matter, tanks and a specific reaction to prescribed enemy actions.

Colonel Stanton is correct in implying the importance of using the numerous techniques to facilitate infiltration. But no checklist or procedure will ever take the place of units that have high-quality soldiers who come with cohesive units that build trust, and understand the true high-tempo required on the battlefield of tomorrow.

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EDITOR'S CORRECTIONS

The authors' biographical data that accompanied the article "Direct Fire Planning: Platoon and Company Sector Sketch" (January-February 1996, pages 39-41) were not entirely accurate:

Captain Matt La Chance is not as-

signed to the 2d Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. He is assigned to U.S. Army Readiness Group, Fort Meade, Maryland.

Captain Christopher S. Hart served as a platoon leader and company executive officer in the 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry—not in the 11th Infantry.

Our apologies for the confusion.

IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS

I read with great interest and enjoyment your May-June 1996 issue and would like to offer a comment on the two articles on military operations on urban terrain: "Bradleys in the City," by Captains John L. Miles, III, and Mark E. Shankle; and "M113 Lessons from Operation *Just Cause*," by Captain James B. Daniels.

In both articles the authors cite a paucity of guidance in FM 90-10-1, *An Infantryman's Guide to Combat in Built-*

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up Areas. As the officer who was primarily responsible for the creation of that manual, back in the late 1970s, I would like to assure these authors, as well as INFANTRY's general readership, that the information in FM 90-10-1 was researched as well as was possible at the time. The primary sources were training experiences in Europe, especially with the Berlin Brigade; historical accounts from various actions in built-up areas; and test data of infantry weapons, including the Bradley's 25mm gun, against typical urban targets. Unfortunately, the one

source not available to us was actual combat experience of modern U.S. infantry units operating in cities. As a result, we were careful to include in the manual only the data we felt the evidence could support, and to avoid any guidance of a speculative nature.

As Captains Miles, Shankle, and Daniels point out so effectively, the Army today can draw on the combat lessons learned from a number of operations. Articles such as theirs are important contributions to the literature of urban combat, and merit the attention of the doctrinal community, not only at the Infantry School but throughout the community.

I am very gratified that three young Infantry officers have advanced the work I started almost 20 years ago.

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