

INFANTRY LETTERS



WEAPONS FOR THE LIGHT DIVISION TOW COMPANY

In "Let's Reorganize the Light Infantry Division" (INFANTRY, May-June 1996, pages 16-19), Lieutenant Colonel Martin Stanton's proposal to reequip the TOW company's HMMWVs with a mix of .50 caliber and 40mm grenade machineguns makes a lot of sense for low-intensity conflict (LIC). This configuration worked well for 10th Mountain Division soldiers in the relief of Task Force Ranger in Somalia (see "Mogadishu, October 1993: Personal Account of a Rifle Company XO," INFANTRY, September-October 1994) and should prove equally valuable in future operations of a similar nature.

It may be worthwhile to take this concept a step further, however, by adding to this mix of weapons the M3 Ranger antiarmor, antipersonnel weapon system (RAAWS). An 84mm recoilless rifle, the RAAWS can give light forces the "shock action" firepower used so successfully in past wars to destroy bunkers, machinegun and mortar emplacements, and other fortified positions that were resistant to rifle and machinegun fire. A good example is found in "One Soldier—One Recoilless Rifle" (INFANTRY, May-June 1996, page 27), which relates how PFC Jose Alva used his 57mm recoilless rifle to destroy seven enemy machinegun emplacements that had been preventing the advance of friendly units in the 11 April 1951 attack on the Hwachon Dam.

At 20 pounds, the M3 RAAWS is considerably lighter than the new M240B machinegun, and easily man-portable. Instead of giving an antiarmor section 7.62mm machineguns for LIC (as Colonel Stanton proposes), swapping their Dragon/Javelin systems for the 84mm would give the unit commander greater tactical flexibility. While a 7.62mm machinegun can deliver fire *equal* to that

of enemy small arms, the RAAWS can provide an *overmatch* response through high-explosive and high-explosive dual-purpose ammunition. An M3-equipped antiarmor section could deliver supporting fires against enemy infantry; it could knock out any stray tank or light armored vehicle—something the section could not do armed only with 7.62mm machineguns.

The most commonly voiced objection to recoilless rifles centers on the idea that the firing signature would cause the gun crew to receive massive return fire. While the criticism seems as though it ought to be valid, I have yet to discover any documentation to support the theory. Indeed, the available testimony seems to indicate that backblast is not nearly the problem critics would have us believe, as evidenced by the following excerpts from "75mm Rifle Platoon in Korea," by Captain Phil R. Garn, *Infantry School Quarterly*, January 1952:

In most outfits during the early summer of 1950 there were many who shook their heads when the subject of recoilless rifles came up. Could they ever be employed successfully? They doubted it. Would the backblast, characteristic of the weapon, cause a lot of trouble—murderous counterfire? They were sure it would.

Used properly in combat, [recoilless rifles] proved themselves time after time. It didn't take the rifle companies long to learn the value of this accurate hard-hitting weapon. [A recoilless rifle] is one of the best supporting weapons, both in

the attack and defense, that the Infantry has. The backblast threat was soon forgotten as we developed our methods of employment.

With the demise of the XM8 armored gun system, and the pending retirement of the M551A1 Sheridan, airborne infantry units will soon be without a parachute-deliverable, direct-fire support weapon. The RAAWS (especially if equipped with a laser-ranging sight) mounted on an M1109 or M1114 up-armored HMMWV, could give airborne and light infantry a mobile shock weapon at relatively low cost. Can we afford not to field it?

Finally, a request: If any INFANTRY readers can provide first-hand accounts or documented stories of recoilless rifle use in combat—especially regarding the backblast or counterfire issue—I would appreciate hearing from you.

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BROTHERS-IN-ARMS

I am writing to offer a Canadian perspective on two articles that appeared in the May-June 1996 issue of INFANTRY. (I am Deputy Commanding Officer, First Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, or 1 PPCLI, a position equivalent to the U.S. Army battalion executive officer.)

A number of INFANTRY articles have been used as elements of our ongoing officer warfare study program. It is extremely important for us, as officers in an army that has been at peace since 1953, to keep in contact with the flow of professional thought in a warfighting army such as yours.

As you may be aware, the Canadian Army has participated in every United Nations peacekeeping mission since the

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first one in Suez. The overwhelming majority of these missions have involved Infantry soldiers in some capacity. While each mission has been different in various ways, we in the Infantry have been able to deduce certain basic principles to be applied in preparing for and conducting such operations.

The two articles in question are "Establishing a Zone of Separation," by Captain Fred W. Johnson (pages 31-38), and "Situational Training Exercises in Stability and Support Operations," by Lieutenant John Brennan (pages 39-41). Both are excellent articles whose findings and recommendations almost exactly match our own experiences.

The first article is of particular interest to our battalion as we did many rotations in Cyprus where a longstanding UN zone of separation (ZOS) existed between the forces of the Republic of Cyprus and the "Turkish Republic of North Cyprus." Canada maintained an infantry battalion in Cyprus from 1964 to 1994, rotating on a six-month basis. Our battalion did at least 13 tours there, with many senior NCOs accumulating three or four tours to their credit.

As well, 1 PPCLI (as part of UNPROFOR Croatia Command) established the first UN ZOS to be formed in 1994 in Croatia, between the forces of the Republic of Croatia and the rebel forces of the self-styled "Serb Republic of the Krajina."

Our experiences in both cases were similar to those Captain Johnson described, although we were required to do the same task with only a tiny fraction of the engineers, aviation, and presence of force your battalions were able to apply in Bosnia.

Like your troops in Bosnia, in Croatia we found that our biggest threat was mines—on our six-month tour, mines cost us one dead and several seriously injured. Inability to clear certain areas reduced our counter-patrolling and ZOS surveillance capability. Our clearing procedures when working with the opposing force mine clearance parties were almost identical to those described by Cap-

tain Johnson, with the exception of the mineroller that we were unable to obtain from its base in Canada.

We were also plagued by inaccurate or nonexistent opposing force mine records, as well as by their reluctance to participate. Our advice would definitely be to take any information provided by local opposing forces with a very big "grain of salt."

Lieutenant Brennan's article reflects very closely our own training practices in preparation for any peace operation, and I am certain that it will be just as successful as our own methods, if not more so. However, I would like to mention at this point some of the principles that the Canadian Infantry regards as vitally important in preparing battalions for such operations:

Train for War. Peacekeeping is just another operation on the scale of the use of force. It is best carried out by the well-trained, disciplined and cohesive soldiers who are the products of a solid combat training program. Depending upon the nature of the mission and the stability of the situation, you may need to use force or the clear threat of it to enforce your mandate. From a purely practical point of view, if the ceasefire falls apart, you may very well have to fight your way out, or fight to hold your position. Opposing forces can quickly recognize professional troops trained for war, as opposed to the less professional forces that far too many UN nations send on such missions.

Build Teams. The best unit is the one in which soldiers, NCOs, and officers know each other well and have worked together for a long time. While this goal is becoming increasingly difficult for us to achieve in our under-manned battalions, it is something you must strive for. Avoid the "build from scratch" mentality: its few benefits will be greatly outweighed by a serious lack of cohesion in teams and sub-units.

Develop Junior Leaders. In peace operations, much depends on the individual soldier, the NCO, and the junior officer. These individuals must be taught, encouraged, and permitted to use their

initiative and be self-reliant. A section commander or platoon commander may find himself making life-or-death decisions with international implications, many kilometers from company headquarters. He must be able to think and act *now*, secure in the knowledge that his commander supports him. In effect, this is the spirit of maneuver warfare in action, which reinforces the need to train for war.

In closing, I believe that Infantry battalions of the Canadian Army may have much to offer their brothers in arms of the U.S. Army as you prepare for operations other than war. I strongly recommend that all U.S. Infantrymen establish informal channels of communication with a Canadian infantry battalion. You will find we are very willing to help, and the experience will be mutually beneficial.

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RESEARCHING BOOK ON 1st SQUADRON, 4th CAVALRY

I am interested in locating men who served with the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, during the Vietnam War. I am researching a book about the squadron's activities in Vietnam. My projected book will deal with the squadron's operations in South Vietnam between 1965 and 1970. It will focus on the memories and experiences of those who served with the squadron during its entire time in Vietnam. Additionally, I would like to hear from veterans who served between 1970 and 1973 with C Troop, 16th Cavalry, which was formed from the assets of D Troop, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, when the squadron left Vietnam.

Veterans who served with either of these units may write to me at P.O. Box 1634, Manhattan, KS 66505-1634. I will provide them with information regarding my book and the association.

WILLIAM VAN HORN