

From The Editor

CUTTING THE LOSSES

Soldiering is a dangerous business, and each military occupational specialty (MOS) carries risks peculiar to the duties of soldiers in that specialty. The risks of combat are many and diverse, and we train for them. Obviously, some training requirements offer more risk than others: Airborne and airmobile operations, live fire exercises, handling of fuels and munitions, operating heavy tracked and wheeled vehicles, and operations that involve mountaineering or river crossing expertise—to name but a few—all include the potential for injury or death, but in this note, I want to talk about two dangers not associated with combat operations.

Regardless of the MOS of the soldiers involved, firearms accidents continue to be listed as causes of death and injury among our military men and women. While some accidental shootings may occur among the combat service support MOSs and are often attributed to unfamiliarity with the weapons, an alarming number are still found within the ranks of those infantrymen who handle firearms on a daily basis and who have simply fallen victim to complacency. Firearms are the tools of our trade, and unless we understand that they are deadly serious we will continue to lose the very men and women that we can ill afford to do without.

The basic rule of firearms safety is simple and direct: Do not point a gun at anyone or anything you do not intend to shoot. Watch your soldiers—and their leaders. Do not tolerate horseplay in the field, in garrison, or on the range. If leaders understand and enforce this basic principle, we can break the cycle of lives ended early, families destroyed, and careers abruptly terminated.

A second cause of death, disfigurement, and disability among our soldiers is discussed in Command Sergeant Major Spears' article on Page 10 of this issue. He talks about the realities of the use of tobacco products. This is a sensitive area in our profession, because it is tied to the complex issues of machismo, bonding, and image, all things of importance to young soldiers. The facts are long since in on tobacco; there is no mystery about the risks involved. The only mystery is why otherwise highly motivated, successful officers and enlisted men with enormous potential for service to their country, their families, and themselves would put it all at risk. This may not be a popular subject, but reality seldom is.

Risk will always be with us, but we can often control the type and degree of risk we are willing to accept. That is part of the leadership challenge.

RAE

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

INFANTRY is available to subscribers at \$12.00 for one year and \$23.00 for two years. Foreign (non-APO) subscribers must add \$4.00 per subscription per year to cover the cost of surface mailing and handling. Foreign air mail rates will be furnished upon request. Single copies are \$2.50 each if sent to a U.S. address.

Payment must be made in U.S. currency, by international money order, or by a check or draft drawn on a U.S. bank. For best service, payment should accompany each order, because we cannot start a subscription until we have received full payment for it. Checks, money orders, or drafts should be made payable to INFANTRY.

One-year subscriptions are not refundable; two-year subscriptions are refundable, but service and handling charges will be deducted.