

INFANTRY LETTERS



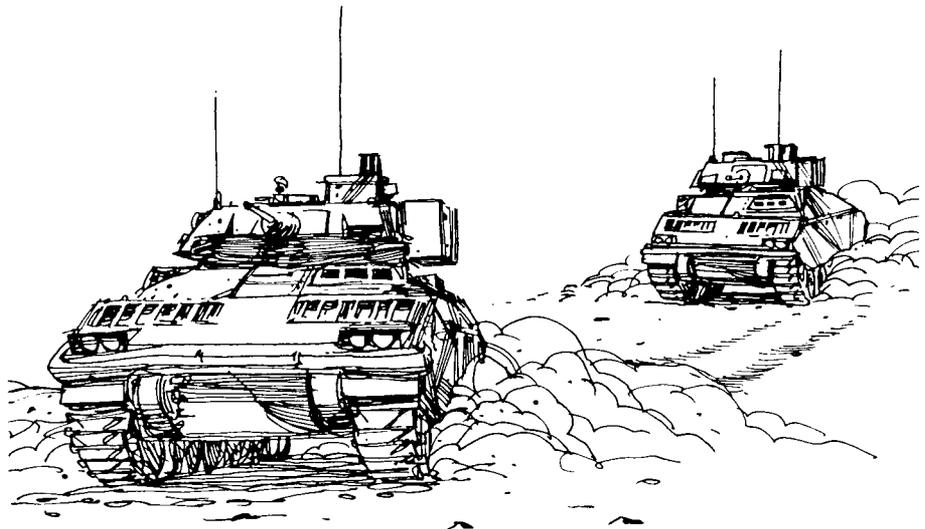
“NEXT IFV” IS TOO HEAVY

I am writing in response to Captain Greg Pickell’s article “Designing the Next Infantry Fighting Vehicle” (INFANTRY, July-August 1996, pages 22-32).

As you’re going to see in Bosnia, the 33-ton Mz and 63-ton M1A1 are too heavy for most roads and bridges in the Third World. Instead of spending \$100 million now so we can have a light tank—the M8 AGS (armored gun system)—we’re “researching” a 43-ton external gun tank to replace the M1 series.

While I appreciate Captain Pickell’s idea of making a turretless M1 into an IFV in the style of the Israeli Defense Force, this is not what we need desperately in a world that moves by air. If it cannot be airdropped or STOL (short takeoff and landing) airdropped directly onto the battlefield—not a heavily defended airfield with concrete runway—it will not be there in time. His 50-ton IFV is too heavy if it takes weeks or months to get to the battlefield. I know the capabilities of the C17 aircraft; less than a dozen delivering one M1 main battle tank or turretless IFV at a time isn’t going to deploy significant combat mass. The United States will again become a “paper tiger,” reluctant to deploy its light troops because it has given or thrown away its M113 armored personnel carriers. (See the article in the December 1996 issue of *Soldiers* magazine on building reefs in the Atlantic using demilitarized M113s and M60 tanks). An M113A3 with an EX-35 105mm external gun or 106mm recoilless rifle would be a better use of our money and would save lives. An M113A3 or an M8 is better than nothing—but nothing is what we’ll have if we keep pursuing 50-ton monster armored vehicles.

The Army should be geared to the best fighting efficiency, not to keeping Brad-



ley infantrymen and Abrams tankers employed. Waiting for them to airdrop and forcing the airborne units to seize a heavily defended airfield for them is tantamount to suicide. We’ve got to look past self-serving narrowness and see that the U.S. is a strategic air power, just as England was once the world’s preeminent sea power. Like the Russians, we need our airborne to be a completely mobile combined arms team that after landing can converge on the enemy’s vulnerable center of gravity while he’s still disoriented. Waiting for *anything* instead of moving out at once is a recipe for disaster on the information-age battlefield. Even the “bad guys” have cell phones and watch CNN.

Except as a future replacement for the Bradley in heavy divisions, I disagree with Captain Pickell’s idea. We are ignoring the force structure of the units that are going to actually fight, not languish in a motor pool in the continental United States. I, for one, do not want to see the world lost to aggression because we are dependent upon heavy vehicles to deploy a force that can fight and win. When we really have to fight somewhere in a hurry, this mindset will result in nothing—our

light troops fighting with only the weapons they have in their hands because the heavy elements cannot get to the fight. We cannot afford to have our light units sacrificed because they lack the backup of heavy units and their commensurate firepower.

Somalia was only a foretaste of the future. Let’s hope we can get some air-deliverable armored fighting vehicles (AFVs) to our airborne and light troops before North Korea invades or Iraq overruns Kuwait again. What would happen if Iraq seized our pre-positioned M1s and M2s in Kuwait and destroyed the airfield before we could get our tankers into theater? We have M113A3 AFVs that weigh exactly the same as vulnerable road-bound five-ton trucks that can be turned into flaming wrecks by a mere burst of small-arms fire. But we take the tracked M113A3 (which can swim and protect our men from enemy fire by traveling cross-country) and throw it into the ocean to make reefs and keep the five-ton trucks, using the excuse that we don’t have enough airlift. Certainly, if all we have available is 30- to 70-ton AFVs, we’ll never be able to air-deliver enough fighting vehicles to give our light troops shock

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action. Our enemies mount heavy cannon on almost anything that moves, while we make excuses and rationalize. How can we expect anything but another "Task Force Smith" in our future?

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DON'T SELL THE MK 19 SHORT

This is a belated response to Mike Sparks' letter in the November-December 1994 issue of *INFANTRY* (page 4). Readers of that letter may have noticed that there is no mention of the Mk 19 grenade machinegun. There has always been a need for organic infantry direct-fire weapons. The use of combined arms integrating armor, artillery, and air support is essential to supporting the soldier engaged in conflict. But the infantry soldier must also have organic support weapons that are not subject to the deployability and maneuverability limitations of the combined arms.

In his letter, Sparks proposes the M40A2 106mm recoilless rifle (RR) as the shock-weapon solution. He labels the AT-4, LAW, 90mm RR, and M3 Ranger antiarmor assault weapon "ineffective shock weapons" with several limitations. He discounts the heavy machinegun and the TOW as lacking instantaneous shock

effect, not working at close range, and not economical.

Not to discount any other weapons, I believe the least appreciated organic infantry direct-fire weapon and the solution to any shock-weapon need is the Mk 19. It can be vehicle-mounted or ground-mounted in various configurations. The Mk 19 with the HMMWV, combined with airlift, would quickly provide support anywhere on the battlefield. It is not necessary to bring back and adapt the 106 for a purpose the Mk 19 already serves. The 106 requires the use of a .50-caliber spotting rifle and must be adapted for night vision and thermal imaging devices. Clearly, the Mk 19 needs no spotting rifle and is already compatible with advanced sighting devices.

The greatest advantage of the Mk 19 lies in its firepower. It gives the unit a heavy volume of close, accurate, and continuous fire with the ability to deliver high-explosive dual-purpose (HEDP) and high-explosive (HE) ammunition. The M430 HEDP grenade can pierce armor up to two inches thick (at zero-degree obliquity). It can kill personnel within five meters of the blast and wound those within 15 meters. A maximum effective range of 1,500 meters for point targets and 2,212 meters for area targets makes the Mk 19 a formidable weapon. Its rate of fire is equally impressive with sustained fire at 40 rounds per minute, rapid fire at 60, and cyclic fire at 325 to 375.

The Mk 19 is a here-and-now weapon of recent manufacture with ammunition that can be adapted to a wide range of needs. I am sentimental toward the 106mm recoilless rifle; in fact, I would even love to see the "old" BAR return, but it is clearly yesterday's technology, compounded by old-age problems and ammunition. At ground level, we need more Mk 19s and less longing for the weapons of yesterday in solving the need for a shock weapon.

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FIRST INFANTRY DIVISION REUNION

The Society of the First Infantry Division (Big Red One), which is composed of soldiers who served in World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Desert Storm, during the Cold War and in peacetime, will hold its 79th Annual Reunion 6-10 August 1997 in Alexandria, Virginia.

For information, please contact me at 5 Montgomery Avenue, Erdenheim, PA 19038; telephone (888) 324-4733, FAX (215) 233-9381.

ARTHUR L. CHAITT
Executive Director

TACTICAL SOPs REQUESTED

In order to create a TACSOP library that students may use while at the Infantry School, the Tactics Division of the School is asking units from company through brigade level to provide copies of their tactical SOPs. Units wishing to participate in this project are requested to forward copies of their SOPs to:

**Commandant
U.S. Army Infantry School
ATTN: ATSH-ATT
Fort Benning, GA 31905**

For further information, call the Chief, Tactics Division, Combined Arms and Tactics Directorate, at DSN 835-5726 or commercial (706) 545-5726.