



Commandant's Note

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Mechanized Infantry—Close Combat Fighters of the Heavy Force

“Close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver to defeat or capture him, or repel his assault by fire, close combat, and counterattack.” This is the mission of all Infantry—Light, Airborne, Air Assault, Ranger, and Mechanized. Whether conducting offensive, defensive, or stability operations, Mechanized Infantry brings the unique capability of conducting close combat in all terrain. Mechanized Infantry units that are not trained to conduct the close gunfight will be incapable of fulfilling their role as an integral part of the combined arms team. Observers have noted that the lack of dismounted Infantry has driven combat training center scenarios to employ mechanized Infantry more like a Cavalry force than the flexible, powerful maneuver element it actually is, and we need to reverse this trend. Mechanized Infantry leaders must ensure that their units are trained and ready to perform all Infantry tasks.

I recognize the tremendous training challenges confronting the commanders, leaders and soldiers of Mechanized Infantry units, and I want to tell you what we at the Infantry School and Center are doing to address them, especially dismounted strength and capability.

The main problems are organization and manning. To achieve decisive results, commanders must have a dismounted, close combat capability. We have recently made several Tables of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) changes which should improve the manning level in Mechanized Infantry Battalions. The most important of these is the addition of a five-man machine gun section, which will increase the platoon's dismount strength. Ideally, each rifle platoon would have three squads of nine men each as in the other types of Infantry. We are working toward this goal. Two other

measures should also relieve some of the pressure on the strength of the rifle squad.

The first of these, adding a third medic in each tracked ambulance, allows evacuation and treatment of casualties without diverting rifle squad members. The second changed some of the Skill Level one support platoon drivers from an 88M—Motor Transport Operator—military occupational specialty (MOS) to that of an 11M—Fighting Vehicle Infantryman. This formally recognizes what many units are already doing to increase the number of dismounts available. While these measures may not completely fix the problem, they can help. And we will continue to search for ways to ensure there are sufficient Infantrymen available to fulfill the requirements. For their part, commanders must be diligent in preventing Infantrymen from being funneled away from duty in rifle squads.

Another challenge is leader training. Some of our younger Mechanized Infantry leaders do not know when or how to employ their Infantry squads and platoons—partly because they have never had sufficient dismounts to employ. To address this problem we have added a field training exercise to the Bradley Leader Course (BLC). After three iterations of BLC, we have found the exercise dramatically increases a Bradley leader's understanding and ability to employ his dismounted rifle platoon. Specifically, lieutenants recognize the need to integrate Bradley supporting fires with the maneuver of their dismounted squads. In the FTX, they develop the skills and techniques necessary for Bradley platoon command. This addition to the institutional training of our junior leaders provides a foundation upon which field commanders can build.

The 29th Infantry Regiment is currently completing pilot Master Gunner course with class 1-98. This will

be a 13-week course—one week longer than the current POI—and will focus on the Operation *Desert Storm* (ODS) improvements to the Bradley Fighting Vehicle. Three of the additional five days of instruction will be directly related to ODS improvements, while the remaining two days will be attrition-related. The Infantry School has examined its Bradley instruction to identify those areas in which students have historically not done well, and is putting additional emphasis on those areas to improve students' learning and retention of the subject matter.

The Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course (BNCOC) has seen some improvements as well. The consolidation of all career management field (CMF) 11 BNCOC instruction at Fort Benning is now complete, except for Soldiers stationed in Alaska and Hawaii, and they will be part of the consolidation by the end of this fiscal year. While the duration of BNCOC remains at seven weeks, the program of instruction (POI) now includes instruction in our Dismounted Battlespace Battle Lab's night fighting experimental facility, the precision lightweight GPS (global positioning system) receiver (PLGR), and the single-channel ground and airborne radio subsystem (SINCGARS). We have also included a program of computer instruction to develop and enhance the skills that these junior leaders will need in today's digitized environment, and the JANUS simulation will supplement BNCOC instruction beginning in January 1998.

Soldiers in CMF 11H will receive training on the Mark 19 grenade machinegun and the .50 caliber M2, M60, and M249 machineguns, while those in CMF 11C will receive training on the Army's 120mm mortar. The POI for 11B and 11M Soldiers will include more training in dismounted operations and MOUT, as well as in demolitions and patrolling.

Resourcing continues to be the major challenge to effective training. There will seldom be enough time, materiel, or facilities available to maintain proficiency using only full-force training. Leaders at every level must use other methods to supplement the full-force exercises. At the Infantry Center, we are committed to providing Mechanized Infantry leaders and soldiers with simulations that facilitate unit training. Several

advanced training simulations, such as the Close Combat Tactical Trainer, are under various stages of development and fielding. Our challenge is to integrate the rifle squad into all Mechanized Infantry training simulations. Omitting this key component of the Mechanized force from simulations, especially as we increase our reliance on them, is clearly not an option. In addition to simulations, commanders use other low-resource and time proven tools such as the Tactical Exercises Without Troops (TEWT) to prepare for more resource intensive events. TEWTs are invaluable for exercising command and control techniques and refining SOPs. The Infantry Officer Advanced Course and Bradley Leader's Course use TEWTs to address tactical execution, and emphasize the TEWT as an execution tool, and not just a terrain walk or ground reconnaissance in preparation for other training.

Mechanized Infantry training requires an appropriate balance between crew and squad training. The rifle squad is the foundation for the Infantry force. This is as true in Mechanized Infantry as it is in the other four types. Ultimately, training must produce squads capable of aggressive close combat, crews that can provide effective supporting direct fires, and leaders who can synchronize the two. Field Manual (FM) 23-1, *Bradley Gunnery*, contains a proven methodology for crew training. TC 7-9, *Infantry Live-Fire Training*, provides Infantry leaders a similar strategy for the live fire training of rifle squads. In achieving the balance between crew and squad training, leaders must remember that over 50 percent of Mechanized Infantry tasks require successful performance by rifle squads.

The final part of Mechanized Infantry training is the synchronization of the team. FM 71-1, *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Company Team*, is due for publication and distribution in the first quarter of fiscal year 1998. This manual, a combined arms effort by the Infantry and Armor Centers, is a giant step in the right direction. Incorporating the latest doctrinal changes and recent lessons learned, this manual contains proven processes, procedures and techniques, and will be an invaluable tool for company and team commanders.

Five types of Infantry. . . One Mission