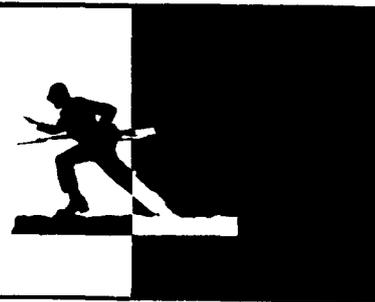


INFANTRY LETTERS



DOCTRINAL CONFUSION

I recently came across "Designing the Next Infantry Fighting Vehicle," by Gregory A. Pickell, in your July-August 1996 issue (pages 22-32).

I must strongly disagree with this article. The author is correct in stating that the current IFV is a confused vehicle and will not be fixed until its purpose is properly assessed. Unfortunately, he then does not do that but chases after a vehicle design instead.

The problem with current IFVs is doctrinal confusion about the role of infantry on the mechanized battlefield. In World War II, most of the infantry accompanying tanks was truck-mounted. Only U.S. and British forces had significant numbers of mechanized infantry in armored half-tracks within armored divisions. The Germans relied mostly on truck-mounted troops, and the Russians settled for the high-casualty expedient of tank-riding. While the choice was due to industrial capacity, the purpose in all cases was to deliver the infantrymen as close to the objective as possible and then have them dismount and fight on foot. With obvious exceptions in cases of rapid exploitation, motorized, mechanized, and armored infantry fought dismounted. The vehicle—whether truck, armored half-track, or full-tracked tank hull—was just a taxi. Vehicle machineguns were for air defense and suppression of enemy infantry. Enemy tanks were avoided and left to antitank weapons and the supporting artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers.

While infantry fought dismounted, supporting weapons could readily fire from vehicle platforms instead of wasting time dismounting and setting up—hence the proliferation of half-track-mounted mortars, howitzers, and antitank guns (tank destroyers) during

the war. The problem with the current IFV is that it collocates the infantry squad with its own supporting heavy weapon. This is a deliberate doctrinal flaw, not a design flaw. The need is for vehicles that can lift and transport infantry units—meaning squad carriers, weapon carriers, command vehicles, and logistical support vehicles. Ideally, the weapon carriers should be able to fire while mounted and buttoned up, but squads dismount their vehicles to fight. Tanks should be added based on METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops available, and time). This was the successful formula of World War II, and I contend that it is still valid today.

The author's cited examples are consistent. The 1982 Israeli incursion into Lebanon was successful until it bogged down in Beirut street fighting. The Russians' defeats in Chechnya and our problems in Somalia fit the same pattern: Armor doesn't survive well in built-up areas; it's an infantry fight, with armor supporting by fire.

Doctrine aside, I also disagree with the author's technical assumptions and proposals. He claims that western main battle tanks are too heavy while establishing 50 to 55 tons as right for an IFV. This is without basis. Pre-World War II armies recognized that bridge problems begin around the 15-to-25-ton range. Beyond 50 tons, however, you must already rely on solid bridges that generally handle larger loads. The real mobility problem that tanks face is usually not due to weight but to sheer bulk and width.

The proposed redesigned Abrams with rear exit cannot work. Side-mounting the engine does not eliminate the drive connection to the sprockets. Also, its claimed invulnerability is nonsense! Although the Abrams has the best protection of any tank, it is hardly invulnerable. Contrary to the caption,

Figure 6 in the article actually shows an example of sitting-duck infantry vehicles catching flank shots from enemy armor and blocking the return fire of their supporting tanks.

Again, the real problem with designing an infantry vehicle is with defining the role of infantry. Current IFVs are merely oversized light tanks with stowed local security elements. The correct answer is to have a family of vehicles that can carry the infantry's various fire and maneuver elements and protect them from artillery and small-arms fire while they move rapidly to their dismount attack positions.

If the threat ever becomes too great for infantry to survive dismounted, then infantry will be obsolete and should go the way of the horse and leave the battle to armored forces. I don't believe that is now the case, and we should not design equipment as if it were.

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THERE'S ONLY ONE DECISION PROCESS

In reference to "The Accelerated Task Force Decision Making Process," by Captain Norbert B. Jocz (INFANTRY, November-December 1996, pages 33-36), I offer the following comments: There is only one decision process in the United States Army; it is found in Field Manual 101-5, Staff Organization and Operations. There is no Accelerated, Combat, or other process. That is the Army doctrine.

Captain Jocz states, "The checklists and graphs of a decision making process will not solve our problems." I could not agree more; however, the

statement implies that the system is flawed. The process is not flawed; it is misunderstood and not studied or practiced to the degree that it should be.

In the brigade command and battle staff training portion of the Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) at Fort Leavenworth, we conduct 14 rotations a year. I state without fear of contradiction that the process is not understood in the National Guard or active duty units that we train when they arrive. This is not because the system is too complex; it is because the system is not practiced. The solution is not to create a new system not supported by our doctrine; the answer is to understand and practice our existing doctrine.

Developing one course of action is not a decision process. Conducting the process in an accelerated manner is possible but only if the base process is understood. In reality, we will not have enough time in almost any situation. The base process as defined in Chapter 5 of FM 101-5 is good and should be followed. No one dies at the combat training centers. We go to those locations to train and learn our craft. If we cannot practice the full decision making process there, where can we practice it? After we understand and use the process, we can innovate.

Wargaming is used to create a visualization of the battle and to recognize branches and sequels. No wargame can predict the outcome of a battle in regard to enemy and friendly losses. Wargaming is a clear example of the application of the art of warfighting, something that must be conducted by personnel who have an understanding of the nature of warfare and weapon effects. The process can be learned but must be practiced frequently to achieve the desired results.

In preparing this letter, I consulted with the commander of the Joint Readiness Training Center and a battalion commander at the National Training Center. Both assured me that the complete process is taught at those locations and is what the rotational units are ex-

POSTAL REGISTRATION

1. **Date of Filing:** 30 September 1997.
2. **Title of Publication:** INFANTRY.
3. **Frequency of Issue:** Bimonthly.
4. **Location of Known Office of Publication:** U.S. Army Infantry School, ATTN: ATSH-OTI, Fort Benning, GA 31905-5593.
5. **Location of Headquarters of Publication:** U.S. Army Infantry School, ATTN: ATSH-OTI, Fort Benning, GA 31905-5593.

pected to use. I also had an extensive discussion with General (Retired) Richard Cavazos, who has as much experience as anyone with the application of the process in BCTP, and some of his suggestions have been incorporated into this letter.

It is a great thing for Captain Jocz to provide ideas to the community, but we need to understand and use the current system before we attempt to change it.

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PSEUDO SCIENCE

I disagree with the assertions contained in the article "Tobacco Use and Its Effects on Readiness," by Command Sergeant Major Sam Spears in your November-December 1996 issue.

Having served in the Army from January 1943 to August 1968, all I can say is that we must have been a poor lot of combat infantrymen—hands shaking so badly we could not shoot straight; unable to see at night, walking around with unhealed wounds; freezing to death because we were unable to counteract the cold weather we faced in Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, during the Bulge, in Italy, at Chosin. Of course, I am talking about all of us poor slob who smoked!

I don't mind some people using pseudo-science, but I expect more from our senior NCOs. Just imagine, six-minute miles seem to be the standard now. Is this right? And I can even recall the days when airborne troops ran

while wearing combat boots, and did quite well, thank you.

And to lump smoking with such things as "high percentage of body fat, extremely high or low body mass index, low endurance levels, and low muscular endurance levels (as evaluated by performance on sit-ups)." How many of those injuries were caused by smoking? By the other factors? From my reading and talking with light infantrymen, most of the so-called "lower-extremity overuse injuries" were, in reality, caused by questionable training policies.

Finally, over the years, I believe that plain old-fashioned booze causes more damage to the Army than smoking ever has. You know that great image of the warrior: a hard-charging, hard-living, hard-drinking man

Someone once said that converts make the most ardent believers. Apparently, Sergeant Major Spears falls into that category, having been a smoker for 30 years. And I feel certain his present rank and position require him to be a leader on the "Politically Correct" track.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Sergeant Major Spears' article was in no way intended to denigrate the character or accomplishments of our veterans. Rather, it sought to present our readers with facts based upon empirical data so they could make reasoned decisions concerning the use of tobacco products.

One of the roles of INFANTRY is—and always has been—to offer a forum for the exchange of information relevant to the Infantry branch, and the health of the force is as important an issue now as it was during World War II.

INFANTRY also attempts to foster professional development by means of thought-provoking articles and features, and has evidently succeeded, at least to some extent, with Sergeant Major Spears' piece.