

INFANTRY LETTERS



PEOPLE ARE OUR GREATEST ASSET

Major General Ernst has hit the nail on the head: The infantry squad *is* the key to battlefield success and *does* require 11 men to be effective over the course of protracted operations (see *Commandant's Note, INFANTRY, January-February 1997, pages 1-2*). My light training in the 10th Mountain Division and training advisory experience in Latin America in the Army Special Forces, as well as two light/heavy rotations at the National Training Center and two more at the Joint Readiness Training Center, have taught me well what austere, extended operations are.

The most important lesson learned is that people are our greatest asset. There will be attrition, and the squad and platoon must continue to fight and function despite almost certain losses in personnel and equipment. A nine-man squad that goes to the field with seven men—and then after a few days drops to five or six—can no longer effectively fire and maneuver; and the platoon can no longer adequately man key weapons without pulling more men from its squads. Ultimately, the ability of the squad and platoon to react and conduct fire and maneuver effectively is impeded to the point of endangering both the men and the mission.

A 34-man platoon can go to the field with 22 men in a training event using MILES (multiple integrated laser engagement system). But when the threat is real on a conventional (or unconventional) battlefield, 11 men instead of nine will mean the difference between success and failure. Operations other than war, peacekeeping operations, protracted deployments, independent and self-sustaining operations in all areas of the globe are part of the current infantryman's mission.

As General Ernst says, the squad must be resilient in its organization and function to meet its diverse mission requirements. The infantry squad on the ground faces a very real and personal battle; ask any current or former infantryman who has marched in muddy, wet boots along a rain-soaked road at night with a heavy rucksack. Let's give our infantrymen what they need to defeat the enemy—an 11-man squad.

BERNARD R. SPARROW
MAJ, Special Forces
Fort Bragg, North Carolina

WE NEED A 13-MAN SQUAD

I read the Commandant's Note in the January-February 1997 issue and wanted to send you my thoughts on the rifle squad.

The nine-man squad is too small. Although I believe the four-man fire team is the right size, we need to go to a 13-man, three-fire-team rifle squad like the one the Marine Corps uses. This squad will give us more flexibility in its employment, increase its ability to conduct fire and movement, and have the additional manpower to carry all the gear we are issuing to soldiers—night-vision equipment, batteries, radios, additional ammunition for machineguns and mortars.

A significant increase in the strength of the squad will have a high cost (for personnel and equipment, especially night-vision items), and we will have to pay it. The recent effort to reduce the grade structure of our NCO corps was a step in the right direction, but it did not go far enough. The current Army rifle squad has a staff sergeant squad leader and two sergeants to supervise the six other soldiers. We need to adopt the

same grade structure as the Marine Corps. The squad leader should be a sergeant and the team leaders hard-stripe corporals. The only specialists in the rifle platoons should be the radio-telephone operators and the machine-gunners.

The other problem is that we have way too many officers in the Army. We need to reduce that number significantly, and to do this we have to cut the number of headquarters units and major Army commands. These headquarters are supervising fewer and fewer units and soldiers and are often redundant. In the headquarters that remain, we need to use NCOs in many of the staff positions that are now authorized officers.

We can use the money saved by these measures to help pay the bill for the increase in rifle squad strength. We also need to go after the personnel spaces that other branches will no longer need. In some of the other branches, weapon systems will be crewed by fewer soldiers, and units can be smaller. The infantry will still be people-intensive and can use those personnel spaces.

Two other things: The 60mm mortar squad is also too small. We need at least five soldiers to operate effectively. Finally, the two-man machinegun crew in a light battalion is not big enough. The crew needs to be authorized three men in all types of rifle platoons.

MIKE DAVINO
MAJ, U.S. Army
Honolulu, Hawaii

WE NEED A WEAPONS SQUAD

I agree with Major General Ernst that we need a larger infantry squad. But above all else, we need a weapons

squad with dedicated NCO leaders.

During the past year, my unit (Company A, 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry) has experienced a drastic reduction in the number of its assigned personnel. With 129 allowed under our TOE (tables of organization and equipment), we were being manned at only 80 to 90 soldiers. To overcome this manning problem, we went to two squads in each platoon and used the other staff sergeant and his two sergeants to form a weapons squad. This accomplished three objectives: First, it gave the leaders who did not have any soldiers someone to lead. Second, it increased the command and control of our key weapons. And finally, it freed the platoon sergeant to concentrate on the "big picture." The good news is that we are slowly gaining soldiers (now at 109), and our squads are filling up. As we fill the third squad to fighting strength, the M60s will once again revert to the platoon sergeant's control.

As a former platoon sergeant, I feel that this position should be with the maneuver element so the platoon sergeant can assume control if needed. According to our current TOE, we are unable to free the platoon sergeant from the support-by-fire position during the attack. For this and other reasons, I feel that we need a weapons squad with dedicated leaders.

BYRON BARRON
1SG
Fort Richardson, Alaska

TOMORROW'S INFANTRY

I am responding to Major General Carl F. Ernst's request for input on the makeup of the infantry squad of the future. First, a bit about my credentials so you will understand the experience I bring to this subject. I entered the Army in February 1964 by way of the Army National Guard. I was in an infantry battalion organized under the 7-15E TOE. We were "straight leg," and this was long before there were any "light" infantry units. At that time the Army had mechanized (M113s),

straight leg (mostly in the National Guard), and airborne. I don't recall any Ranger battalions at that time, though there may have been some.

The 7-15E TOE gave way to 7-15H and finally to the modified TOE. (Yes, there actually was a time when units, even in the Reserve Components were organized at full strength.) Over the years, I have been called to duty in a number of situations by state or federal authority. In addition to leg infantry units, I have also served in mechanized infantry (M113s), armor, and artillery. I have served as an operations sergeant, intelligence sergeant, and first sergeant of a rifle company, and retired this year as command sergeant major of an infantry battalion.

I was ordered to active duty in 1968 for the civil disturbances in Baltimore; performed anti-looting duty many times; civil disturbance duty during the Vietnam War; I guarded a maximum-security state penitentiary and more.

I have trained with active duty units and personnel many times during my career, taking my battalion to Panama twice. In short, I think I know infantry as well as anyone and have long-term institutional knowledge.

We need to take another look at the good old "straight-leg" infantry. It has been so long since leg infantry was part of the Army that everyone has completely forgotten about it. We think in terms of mechanized and special-purpose—that is, airborne, air assault, light. The issue is not really one of organization but one of mission, and that is where we need to reconsider "leg" infantry.

Today, the Army needs units that are flexible and can be tailored to any environment—low-intensity conflict, high-intensity conflict, peacekeeping, and the like. Infantry (by which I mean, "leg") can be airmobile, and it can be light, simply by leaving some equipment behind. (We did not train for all light missions and still should not; the light units can do that).

What should be the size of the infantry squad? I believe it should be 11 men—one squad leader (staff sergeant), two team leaders (sergeants), two auto-

matic riflemen armed with the squad automatic weapon, two grenadiers using the M203, and four riflemen. (See TOE 7-15H for the complete organization; I believe I still have a copy if one is no longer available through normal channels.)

Why do I support this organization? Because ground cannot be held without troops! In planning a mission, we have to realize that no unit is going to be at full strength, even in peacetime. We have to acknowledge that we will have illness, schools, turbulence, and, quite possibly, casualties.

The size of the rifle squad in a mechanized unit will always be limited by the ability of the armored fighting vehicle to carry troops. We have to plan for at least five soldiers in the maneuver element and then determine the strength of the squad by counting backward. Given that, the squad needs two BFVs with squad leader, two drivers, two gunners, one maneuver team leader, one automatic rifleman, two riflemen, and one grenadier. The dismount team is divided into the two BFVs.

Infantry platoons should have a weapons squad, consisting of two M60 machinegun teams of three men each and two antitank teams. It is imperative that this organization have a squad leader who can train the teams. Otherwise, these will be delegated to someone else, and training will suffer. The squad leader can also be an assistant platoon sergeant, if necessary, and help run the platoon when his teams are deployed.

The company has a mortar platoon of three 81mm mortars, with appropriate staffing for company fire support missions. The unmodified TOE shows the parts of the battalion above platoon. I would like to point out that this organization is very sustainable with its organic troops and equipment; modifying the TOE would bring us right back to where we are today.

In summary, I recommend that the Army return some number of infantry battalions (TOE 7-15H) to the force to accomplish the many missions that may arise where boots on the ground are a

prerequisite, to supplement current mechanized units and take deployment burdens off them. These units have firepower that is lacking in light, airborne, and Ranger units. Staff them with full-strength 11-man squads, and give them the truck support included in the TOE. A battalion becomes 100 percent mobile when augmented with a platoon of 2½-ton trucks.

Mechanized infantry should have 11 men with six needed to support the five-man dismount element.

ABE STERNBERG

TRAINING FOR NONTRADITIONAL MISSIONS

The past 10 years have seen the United States Army employed in many nontraditional roles. In previous years, we referred to these missions as low-intensity conflict; that euphemism fell from favor when we realized that soldiers were still at risk of getting killed in a low-intensity mission. The term has now evolved into *stability and support operations*. This encompasses everything from restoring democracy to other nations to hurricane relief right here in the United States.

The Army's purpose has been and always will be to fight and win our nation's wars. But the employment of the Army in roles that do not involve actual conflict is just as necessary to world stability and peace. The Army has the ability to provide services that no other agency can provide, which makes it ideal for operations similar to the hurricane relief missions regularly performed in the southern states. No other

organization can deploy and sustain itself in the same manner. The same tenets of professionalism and leadership apply to those soldiers who are away from their families even if they are not fulfilling the traditional warfighting role.

The infantryman will continue to bear the brunt of the workload in these operations, just as he does in combat. If anything, these operations will place a greater strain on small-unit leaders as they face unfamiliar rules of engagement and the need to exercise more restraint. Training needs to reflect these changing demands.

Here at the United States Military Academy, cadets undergo a weeklong continuous field exercise in which we focus on light infantry tactics in a limited war scenario. In response to the changing dimensions of the modern battlefield, the Department of Military Instruction has created a scenario that depicts the world today. The department has introduced civilians to the battlefield, some armed and some not, who must be appropriately dealt with. Happening upon an observation team from a fictitious neutral nation is not uncommon, and we as leaders are faced with the difficulties of a battlefield on which the players and the noncombatants are not clearly defined.

What lessons can we take from such training, and what value does it have for others who may want to try similar training? It makes leaders think outside the box. Decisions are not clear-cut, and there is no field manual in the world that tells the young leader what to do when encountering civilians who may or may not be armed and who don't speak our language. It also

teaches us that the world we are entering is complex and confusing, and that a lone squad leader who elects to exercise restraint in the face of perceived hostility can affect the outcome of our entire foreign policy with another nation. The world has changed, and we must be willing to change with it.

PAUL D. CARRON
Cadet, USMA
West Point, New York

AUDIE MURPHY RESEARCH FOUNDATION

The Audie Murphy Research Foundation is trying to locate veterans who served with Audie Murphy in World War II and who would be willing to contribute their recollections, information, or photographs to this historical preservation and education effort.

Audie Murphy often said that "the real heroes never came home" and agreed to write his biography, *To Hell and Back*, so the men he served with would not be forgotten.

The Foundation's first newsletter contains Audie Murphy's account of Staff Sergeant Sylvester Antelok's Medal of Honor action that cost him his life. Terry Murphy is personally interviewing men his father served with and letting them tell their stories in their own words.

The Foundation's address is 118008 Saratoga Way, Suite 516, Santa Clarita, CA 91351; telephone (805) 272-0780.

LARRYANN WILLIS
Executive Director
Audie Murphy Research Foundation

