

INFANTRY LETTERS



BRADLEY'S INFANTRY "HAS EVAPORATED"

I applaud Major General Carl Ernst's recognition of the fact that Bradley-equipped infantry units have difficulty conducting "the close gunfight," and I also applaud his efforts to rectify this situation. It is refreshing to see a top leader recognize what many in the lower ranks have known for a long time.

The core problem is that Bradley units cannot perform infantry tasks. General Ernst is right: the main problems are organization and manning. The units are so undermanned now that there are few if any dismounts. This is a bit ironic because the dismounts *are* the Infantry. The vehicle has become so important that while it remains fully manned the infantry it is supposed to transport, protect, and support by fire has evaporated.

I don't believe adding a machinegun team to each platoon will help, however. Unfortunately, neither will adding slots to a TO&E that is badly undermanned as it is. Additionally, it doesn't seem logical to have five soldiers get out of an armored vehicle to flop down behind a couple of machineguns to support the maneuvering fire teams. The Bradley, with its stabilized thermal sighted weapons array, is more than capable of providing adequate support fires, including 7.62mm. What is needed is more riflemen on the ground clearing those obstacles, buildings, trenches, bunkers, etc., and closing with and destroying the enemy infantry.

The other problem is organization. Praise to Lieutenant Colonel Chester A. Kojro, who wrote in the May-August

1998 issue of *Infantry* that current infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) are "merely oversized light tanks with stowed local security elements." He is absolutely right. We have organized around the vehicle instead of organizing the vehicles around the men. Bradley units are infantry in name only. This is further exacerbated by the fact that the Bradley's design priority got lost somewhere. Boasting more firepower than many World War II tanks, it will only carry six "dismounts" while its predecessor, the M113, would comfortably carry ten soldiers.

One way to fix the problem of the Bradley's dismount strength was recommended some time ago in an article in this magazine: Of the four Bradleys in each platoon, have two of them with turrets and two without. This would allow the Bradley platoon to carry at least eight more dismounts and would significantly reduce the weight, expense, visual profile, and maintenance requirements of half the platoon's vehicles, while retaining very credible firepower.

We need to recognize the obvious. Webster's Dictionary defines the Infantry as "that branch of the Army consisting of soldiers trained to fight on foot." Isn't it obvious that soldiers who operate an armored vehicle are not infantrymen; they are armored vehicle crewmen. IFVs should be viewed like any other means of mobility. Until we separate the dismounts from the vehicle crews, we will continue to have doctrinal problems. Let's get our infantry units fully manned, out of the motor pool, and into the field doing infantry training.

While we look at concepts for mod-

ernizing the Army through the *Revolution in Military Affairs*, the *Army After Next*, etc., perhaps we should consider putting IFVs/crewmen and dismounted infantry in different organizational elements. They could train separately on their individual tasks and then come together to train in combined arms operations on a habitual basis, much like tank units do in the traditional armor and mechanized infantry task force. Additionally, if dismounted infantry were recognized as a separate element, there would be more resistance to letting it get so low in operational strength.

This is all heresy, I know, but I believe that until we get the infantry elements fully manned and trained as infantry, mechanized infantry units will continue to have difficulty "fighting the close fight."

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