



Commandant's Note

MAJOR GENERAL CARL F. ERNST Chief of Infantry

THE INFANTRY—SECURING THE FUTURE

The Queen of Battle has served the United States of America in war and peace for 224 years, and the social, technological, and doctrinal changes that have marked our transition from a revolutionary state to a world power during that time have been astonishing. Today we have come to accept improvements in technology almost as a matter of course, as the gap between yesterday's science fiction and today's feasibility has narrowed. Our force projection capability has enabled us to respond to worldwide contingencies while reducing the size of forward stationed forces around the globe. We have seen similar improvements in force modernization, target identification and acquisition systems, anti-fratricide technology, and communications systems. Some of our most striking successes have been in the field of night operations, and I would like to use that as a good example of how far the U.S. Army has come since those tentative years, when our forefathers committed everything they owned—or hoped to own—to found this great nation.

From the earliest days of the Republic, American militia and Regulars had to grapple with the problems of night operations, and for a long time the advantage lay with our Native American adversaries who were well-versed in moving and operating under cover of darkness. But we soon learned how to use the night as well, and the confusion and fear that attended night operations gave way to confidence. The American Army conducted one of its first large-scale night attacks at Yorktown, when her Infantry captured Redoubt #9 from the embattled British, in a daring night bayonet assault. This was possible because careful, detailed

training had transformed the rough militia units of the previous fall into a well-trained, efficiently led, cohesive force. The Continental Army developed the basics of many of the tactics, techniques, and procedures used today, such as short-range recognition signals, unit release points, guides, a probable line of deployment, and clandestine breaching, examples of the innovation that characterizes today's Infantry as well.

That confidence has continued unabated until this day, when we can say without fear of contradiction that we now own the night. Even in the early days of the Vietnam War, darkness offered our foe a cloak of invisibility that we were hard-pressed to penetrate. But we did, and by the time we left Vietnam our enemy could no longer boast of impunity at night; it was now his turn to be afraid of the dark. Our first primitive infrared and starlight night observation devices have been replaced with equipment whose range, resolution, and reliability continue to be refined and improved even today. Night operations are now the preferred mode for Infantry, because of the concealment and the element of surprise they allow. Such operations can often be accomplished with fewer friendly casualties, and with greater psychological and physical damage to the enemy, his positions, and his materiel. We have seen commensurate improvements in the accuracy, mobility, and responsiveness of our artillery fire support systems. At the same time, the flexibility, mobility, and survivability of logistical support have also been upgraded to better sustain the maneuver force.

Today's combined arms operations draw upon the capabilities of the Abrams main battle tank, the Bradley

fighting vehicle, the Paladin and other artillery systems, Army Aviation, and the myriad combat support and combat service support assets whose refinements and product improvements have kept pace with those of our own branch. This is how it should—and must—be. Given the potential threats that we face today, as well as those that may rear their heads in the next century, intra- or interservice parochialism cannot be allowed to hamper our efforts to achieve unity of effort against those who would test our national resolve. We have made considerable progress in this direction: Army and Marine Corps initiatives in the field of military operations on urbanized terrain (MOUT) are being tied to the efforts of other branches and services to enable us to deal with future adversaries, regardless of the terrain they may choose. The Joint Contingency Force Advanced Warfighting Experiment scheduled for September of next year will highlight the cooperative effort and mindset that have enabled us to focus our efforts in this crucial aspect of our national defense. The time, effort, and resources that we and our sister services are committing to this experiment will yield tremendous benefits in the years to come.

Having personally observed—and been a part of—the changes of the past three decades, I would like to share some observations. During and after the Vietnam War, we experienced the polarization of our society's attitudes toward the Army, its missions, and indeed even a challenge to its necessity. We completed the transition from a draft Army that had drawn its manpower from a cross-section of our society, to a volunteer force that relied instead upon a variety of motivational appeals to attract the personnel needed to maintain an adequate defense and a credible deterrence to the threat—primarily the Warsaw Pact—that we perceived at that time. With the inception of the volunteer force, we once again focussed on the basic building blocks of the Army: skilled, motivated, disciplined Soldiers led by competent leaders of high character, and our progress and innovation in the field of leader development has been phenomenal. Changes to officer training have been broadened to meet the diversified challenges of both combat missions and stability and support operations. We have implemented a noncommissioned officer education system that is every bit as comprehensive and challenging as the professional education system of our officer corps and is the best in the world.

During the same time, the combat training centers at Fort Irwin, California; Fort Polk, Louisiana; and Hohenfels, Germany, came on line to hone the tactical

maneuver skills of the combined arms force. During the past 30 years, the Army has undergone a remarkable period of recovery that continues even today. The time, money, and effort spent on modernization, quality of life, and training issues paid off when we were called upon to deploy forces to Operations *Urgent Fury*, *Just Cause*, *Desert Shield*, and *Desert Storm*, to Somalia, and—most recently—to the Balkans. Credit for our success in these and other missions belongs to the superb Soldiers of our United States Army. We must continue to attract and retain Soldiers of their quality if we are to defend our nation and her people against all adversaries. Quality of life is a key element of readiness, and we must continue to commit resources to barracks, housing, and the infrastructure that can support Soldiers and family members. We need to make Soldiers' pay commensurate with the demands and sacrifices that we place upon them and, at the same time, closely examine what we are doing for retired members of the Army family, many of whom are centers of influence in their own communities.

At a time when we are trying to bolster enlistments in all of the services, these retired men and women can significantly influence the decision of a young man or woman to join our Army, and it is their own perception of how they are now being treated that will determine the extent of their support for our efforts. In the Civil War, both World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam, we relied on the draft to provide the manpower to field our army, and—unless we can attract enough volunteers—we may once again be forced to rely upon the draft. Our Soldiers are our best recruiters, and when friends and families visit them at their duty stations, they tell the Army story. We must spare no effort to ensure that the truth they pass on to others will encourage the listeners to become part of the proud, wonderful experience that is the United States Army.

As I approach the end of my tenure as Chief of Infantry, I see great cause for optimism. We have the best trained, best equipped, and best supported Infantry in the world, with virtually limitless technological advances and potential for success on the horizon. Our country has historically revealed its commitment to its values by putting its Soldiers in harm's way, by drawing that line in the sand that defines the limit of aggression, and it has always been the Infantry that has drawn and held that line and paid the heaviest price. Since June 14, 1775, the Infantry has always answered the call to arms, and will continue to do so as long as we recruit, train, and retain the Infantrymen who will carry on that proud tradition. Hooah!