



Commandant's Note

MAJOR GENERAL JOHN M. Le MOYNE Chief of Infantry

DEVELOPING THE "INITIAL" BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

You've heard about or read of the initiative by General Eric Shinseki, Chief of Staff of the Army, to give our nation a more deployable, lethal force. General Shinseki has challenged us to roll up our sleeves and help with this transformation process. Force projection has been a cornerstone of our response to contingencies for over two decades, and we must continue to refine our ability to quickly deploy and to fight and win across the full spectrum of conflict. We will do that by standing up a lighter, more deployable "Initial" Brigade Combat Team within the next two years. This initiative will be the subject of this year's Infantry Conference and in this issue's Commandant's Note, I would like to tell you where we are headed.

The Army is transforming itself as a result of changing conditions in the world. The Infantry has been on the cutting edge of change ever since our branch was established in 1775; this current transformation is no exception.

The message is clear: If we are to continue to field an effective, survivable, sustainable force in defense of our nation's interests, we must adapt our doctrine, tactics and materiel to meet a changing range of contingencies. The increasing urbanization of potential hotspots likewise demands the training and fielding of forces that we can deploy before an adversary has time to react. And these forces must be early responders in theater who can execute their assigned missions with flexibility, agility, and lethality equal to or as close as possible to today's armored and mechanized forces.

Events in our own hemisphere, in Southwest Asia and in the Balkans have demonstrated the likelihood that smaller scale contingencies will demand the lion's share of our attention early in the 21st Century. While heavy forces must always remain a deployment option, such issues as trafficability, infrastructure, and the capabilities of an adversary will demand that we explore more agile, less predictable and more survivable alternatives. This does not mean that tanks are going away, or that our Bradleys are going to be mothballed. Far from it; there are scenarios in which they are indispensable and under which we will deploy them. While heavy forces must always remain capable of deploying in response to a commensurate threat, General Shinseki has noted: "Those heavy divisions, good as they are, are also constrained by our ability to maneuver them in many places in the world where the bridging and highway structure and infrastructure cannot support that kind of weight." Light divisions will remain a vital part of the Army. The capability of rapidly deploying an airborne, air assault or light infantry task force is of great strategic value. A balance between strategic and tactical mobility, lethality, survivability and sustainability is the goal of this transformation.

The lethality issue is of particular significance, for it is the actual—and perceived—lethality of deployed forces that affords them the credibility they must have to meet the demands of stability and support operations and to transition into combat operations with little or no warning. The Infantry will continue to serve in its traditional role as the "first

responders" from our Contingency Corps, followed by flexible, more easily deployable units that themselves possess high degrees of lethality comparable to enemy forces.

We will continue to perform our missions as part of a joint and combined arms team, and the demands for rapidly transportable, survivable, self-sustaining units underline the need for interservice and intraservice cooperation. Here at Fort Benning, we have organized an "Initial Brigade Combat Team" task force within the Directorate of Combat Developments. This task force will draw upon the subject matter expertise of all directorates of the Infantry School, and will complement our efforts with visits and exchanges of information with Fort Lewis, where the brigade combat team will first see the light of day. We are working together with Forts Lewis, Knox, and Sill, other Army branch schools and the United States Marine Corps to meet our objective.

The future force will be designed from the bayonet and foxhole back; from the close combat, dismounted assault to supporting systems; a force centered on soldiers. In addition to the usual close combat tasks of the Infantry, it must be able to destroy hardened targets and possess a stand-off precision strike capability to defeat armored vehicles and targets. It must be trained to do this in open, close, and urban terrain while under the effects of indirect and direct fires, as well as in an environment of chemical, biological, and nuclear contamination. Tough missions!

The "Initial" Brigade Combat Team must also be able to exercise tactical, mental, and organizational agility. We must be able to quickly move forces operationally and tactically throughout an extended battlespace. We must likewise be able to transition from peacekeeping operations, to stability and support, to mid-intensity combat missions without missing a beat. Our advances in the realm of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance will support this organizational and mental agility by permitting the rapid transfer of information and orders. This means that the commander will no longer be tethered to a command post, but can now influence the actions of his unit from wherever he is in the area of

operations. Read this as leading from the front, at the critical place and time!

The versatility that future contingencies will demand requires the coordinated effort of the active and reserve components. Now, more than ever, "The" Army concept must become reality. The distinction between active and reserve forces will continue to fade away as deployed forces execute their missions. In order for the entire force to be capable of full-spectrum operations, we must design a force structure that will let us leverage the total capabilities of these units. Only in this way can we achieve the levels of lethality and protection that until now have been the province of the heavy forces, while laying claim to the agility and relative ease of deployability that characterize our light units.

The transition to a lighter, more deployable Army will not be a quick fix. We're going to take the time to do it right, and it will demand considerable time and effort. To those of us accustomed to the doctrine and organizations of the past, the initial brigade combat team will be both familiar and revolutionary. We will recognize many of the tactics, techniques, and weapons with which we are already familiar. Be prepared, however, to see some changes in how we deploy, in the increased emphasis on high-mobility vehicles we will be employing as carriers and weapons system movers, and in how we sustain our deployed units. The infantry mission—of closing with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver, to defeat or capture him, or to repel his assault by fire, close combat, and counterattack—will remain the same, but the way we train, deploy, and sustain the force may certainly change. The Infantry is no stranger to change. Our ability to adapt and improve the way we do our job has been one of our most enduring strengths. In the coming months you will read a great deal in *Infantry* magazine and other sources about the lighter, more deployable Army that is our vision for the future. We are committed to this important effort, and its success will demand the support and shared expertise of the entire Infantry community. Remember, this is the time to pay close attention, provide input where appropriate, and prepare to execute the new and challenging missions that will carry us into this new century.