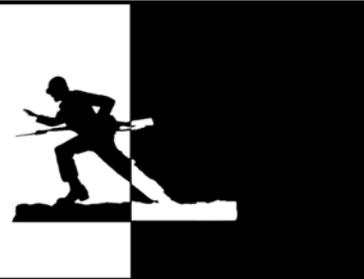


INFANTRY LETTERS



INFANTRY MORTAR LEADERS

The Spring 2002 issue of *Infantry* includes an excellent article on mortar indirect distributive fires by Lieutenant Gerard Acosta and Sergeant First Class Christopher Menton (pages 11-12). What the authors did not mention was the effort required to get their training events resourced and executed. Any of the 360-degree shoots they describe required sole-use access to and closure of almost the entire Fort Lewis artillery impact area. Impossible? Not to leaders who bother to learn how the range scheduling system can work to their advantage.

Over a period of nearly three years, I was privileged to watch one of the best mortar platoon sergeants I have ever known—along with a series of bold and aggressive mortar platoon leaders, as they developed, briefed, gained support for, resourced, and executed a run of great mortar live fire training events.

Far too often, mortarmen in infantry battalions seem to be peripherals. But over the past several years in 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry, they have been as fully engaged as their 11B brothers in creative, tough, realistic, exhausting, and memorable dry and live-fire training events.

Kudos to these mortar leaders and their chain of command for making this outstanding training come to life. The payoff is immediate—in terms of trained and ready mortarmen—and long-term, as these 11C soldiers carry the memory and the message through their time in the Army. They did what they joined the Army to do, and they've seen what "right" looks like. I look forward to having some of them return as mortar platoon sergeants and platoon leaders, wanting to continue the fight.

As a Field Artilleryman, I'm trained to be suspicious of things that seem to

work without numbers, but I always learn something from *Infantry Magazine*. Keep up the fire.

JOHN WELLER
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MORE ON INTERPRETERS

Major Paul J. Schmitt's article "Effectively Using Interpreters" (*Infantry*, Spring 2002, pages 22-27) is an excellent summary of the proper employment of linguists for small-unit commanders. Commanders should know a bit more, however, about the options for military linguists available to them, since (as Major Schmitt notes) there are a number of problems associated with the use of civilians as interpreters.

First of all, there is no dedicated MOS for Military Interpreter. The two most common linguistic MOSs are 97E, Interrogator, and 98G, Voice Interceptor/Transcriber. Of these two, the 97Es might more easily cross-train to act as interpreters, as their MOS involves the use of speech in a target language. But both MOSs could be adapted for interpreter duties if properly trained.

Unless they are enlisted with linguistic capability, both 97E and 98G receive linguistic training through military language programs, usually at the Defense Language Institute and Foreign Language Center. While the DLIFLC is rightly lauded for swiftly developing reading and listening skills in target languages, speaking ability is tested only once in the initial Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT). Thereafter, annual DLPTs test only reading and listening comprehension ability. As a result, speaking is an under-trained skill in most military linguists, particularly in more difficult languages such as Mandarin Chinese or Arabic.

In addition, as Major Schmitt notes, a good interpreter needs access to current cultural training as well as target language training. There is not yet a standard way of providing cultural training to military linguists. While some linguists are fortunate enough to spend time in countries where the target language is spoken, cultural expertise is often rudimentary among military linguists.

These issues are beyond the scope of the small-unit commander, but he does have an opportunity to overcome these deficiencies by providing training within his own unit. All too often, linguists in tactical assignments are under-valued and receive just enough annual language training to pass the DLPT at the minimum 2/2 standard. Just as infantrymen who go to the range but once a year cannot be effective in combat, military linguists need more training to be effective force multipliers. More training does not necessarily mean more expense—plenty of low-cost training materials and opportunities are available, both military and civilian. What the military linguist does need is a comprehensive training program that integrates him or her with small-unit operations and tests ability to translate under tactical conditions.

Appropriate scenarios can be included in field training exercises to provide these training opportunities. In addition, regular and frequent training in reading, listening, and speaking ability should be provided, preferably at least once a week. Training time for military linguists should focus on target languages. There are plenty of senior NCOs in the ranks of military linguists—and even a few officers—who will be happy to help design appropriate training programs for the tactical linguist.

As the current conflict shows, lin-

guistic ability is a critical, yet often under-valued, skill in the U.S. military services. It is high time commanders took deliberate steps to correct this problem and turned their military linguists into true force multipliers.

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LET'S PREPARE FOR THE RIGORS OF COMBAT

This letter is in response to Major William Shaw's letter in the Spring 2002 issue of *Infantry*. Kudos to Major Shaw! Outstanding point that is often overlooked and overshadowed in today's Army of run, run, run: Although I think there are flaws in his theory of scrapping the entire current APFT for a mere four-mile foot march in 50 minutes, I personally like to run, but running is not the end-all to fitness. What is often overlooked in the debate on the APFT and the best way to measure a unit's fitness is that the APFT is a mere guideline—a base line, if you will—to measure a soldier's total fitness level and his physical ability to perform his mission in combat. It is our responsibility as leaders to train our soldiers for the rigors of combat—not for the APFT.

As an Infantry company commander at Fort Hood, I have a well-structured PT program that everyone in the company participates in, including my commo, supply, and mechanics as well as my infantrymen. Every week, we conduct a foot march, gradually increasing the weight and the distance, ending each session with combatives training, culminating monthly in a 12-mile foot march with 45 pounds, and combatives certification. Each quarter, I evaluate company fitness by conducting numerous events that cover the entire spectrum of physical events that prepare them for the rigors of combat:

- Current APFT with chin-ups (minimum of 6).
- 12-mile foot march with 45 pounds (standard, under 3 hours).
- A five-mile run (standard, 40 minutes or less).

- Combat Water Survival Test (pass).
- Combatives Certification (each soldier conducts drills and is required to do an instruction type of walk/talk-through of a chosen drill).

The standards are: 290 or better in the APFT five-mile run in 38 minutes or less; strong swimmer in CWST, and the 12-mile road march in less than 3 hours. The soldiers who exceed these standards receive an award and special privileges in accordance with the company PT policy, and also act as emissaries throughout the post—helping other units administer the CWST and instruct combatives.

Rifle PT, bayonet training, combat runs in boots and BDUs, and guerilla and grass drills round out our PT program. I established the policy, my NCOs enforce it, and our APFT pass rates and scores have skyrocketed, along with morale—not to mention that the goal has been met: We are physically prepared as infantrymen for whatever rigors we may face in combat.

Maybe we could incorporate Major Shaw's idea into the current APFT, and make the four-mile foot march in 50 minutes the fourth event, thus making the APFT a four-event test, worth 25 percent each.

I agree with Major Shaw that General Stilwell's walk out of Burma provides an important lesson from history—especially as infantrymen. But let's not forget that the fitness of infantrymen also includes strength, endurance, and the ability to fight and survive the four levels of warfare: bombs, bullets, blades, and bodies!

Good walking, Infantrymen!

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CPT
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WEIGHING THE GENERALS IN THE KOREA WAR

I am writing to comment on the Expert Infantryman Badge item in the Career Notes section (*Infantry*, Spring 2002, page 48) and the book reviews on General Douglas MacArthur (page 49).

During World War II, I served in

combat as a first scout of a rifle squad of Company E in the 376th Infantry Regiment, 94th Infantry Division, XX Corps (commanded by General Walton Walker). The 376th was the first regiment in which all soldiers qualified for the EIB. At that time, the EIB required a 25-mile road march and a "forced march" of nine miles in two hours in full field gear. Today it is 12 miles instead of 25 and no mention of a forced march for the EIB. Is this badge still for males only?

After World War II, I went back to school and graduated from college in 1950. When the war in Korea started two weeks later, I re-enlisted for Infantry OCS and was commissioned. When the war started, General Walker commanded the ground troops, until he was killed in an accident the following December.

I served in combat under General Walker, and my opinion of him is far superior to that of historian Stanley Weintraub. I realize that hot and negative things like hero-bashing sell books. But in my opinion, Weintraub has gone too far in bashing Walker and MacArthur (and too far in praising General Matthew Ridgway).

In Korea, MacArthur and Walker stopped the advance of the North Korean Army and then defeated it. When the Chinese Army came over the Yalu, MacArthur and Walker slowed it down and stopped it at about the 38th parallel. They did those things with a relatively small fraction of the total losses in Korea.

The vast majority of the American lives lost in Korea occurred while General Ridgway was in command. This puts Ridgway at the bottom of my list of all the generals who ever wore an American uniform. And yes, I had been a rifleman under General Patton. Patton had about half the losses other commanding generals had in Europe (on the basis of losses per 1,000 men, per day of combat, FM 100 series).

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