

Commandant's Note

BRIGADIER GENERAL BENJAMIN C. FREAKLEY

THE STATE OF THE INFANTRY

It was a true pleasure to be part of the Infantry Conference held last month. The United States Infantry has never been stronger than it is today. The infantry Soldier is and will remain the bedrock of our nation's fighting force. Since October 1918, Fort Benning has been the foundation of the Infantry, producing trained, adaptive Soldiers and their leaders imbued with the warrior ethos. Fort Benning will support the war on terror with one foot in current operations by providing Soldier enhancements for the current force now, and with one foot in the future by leveraging technology and defining requirements to meet the needs of the future force. We will continue to provide adaptive Soldiers and leaders to the force who will dominate the combined arms, joint, and coalition battlefield. Finally, we will blend evolving doctrine with technological advantages to build a future force that can dominate full spectrum operations.

In the past two years, we have seen the diverse and vital mission of the Infantry School pay huge dividends in the quality, tenacity, and valor of our graduates who have dismantled two dictatorial regimes and put their leaders to flight. It is our Army that must often bear the brunt of the danger and pay the highest price in the defense of freedom, and in every conflict of this century and in past centuries the Infantry has been the point of the spear. The trained, competent, confident infantrymen we produce and the adaptive, innovative leaders inculcated with warrior ethos whom they follow are the culmination of Soldier and leader development programs that started here and continue as they join their units around the world. Our vision and future focus for the Infantry describe today's adversary, his environment and tactics, and explain the value of today's deployments to the Army and the nation.

Our nation owes our successes in the global war on terror to the visionary trainers, doctrine writers, and logisticians of decades past and present, whose planning and foresight have contributed so much to how we train, deploy, and sustain the infantry force. The information management potential now at our fingertips enables us to draw upon satellite imagery, electronic and human intelligence, and other all-source information and immediately disseminate relevant, real-time information to those who need it:



the staffs and commanders of our infantry units. But even as we are meeting present-day threats we are preparing for foes unseen and challenges yet to come. While aggressively prosecuting the war on terror, we are constantly assessing future requirements and demanding that our enormous industrial and technological base examine ways to meet the needs of Soldiers who will follow us. We recognize the universal, asymmetrical threat posed by terrorists, and embrace the concept of multinational interdependence in future conflicts. We also recognize the pivotal role of the combined arms team in joint operations, something that has been amply demonstrated over the past two years. Finally, we continue to infuse lessons learned from past and present operations into our training and doctrine products. By accomplishing this, we will field — and sustain — a force that dominates the full spectrum of the environment in which it is required to operate.

This future focus on systems to support the infantryman includes Soldier as a System concept, the Future Combat system (FCS), the Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI), development and fielding of weapons of greater lethality, and increased emphasis on preparing for forced entry and urban operations. We continue to train and equip the Soldier in the future force with the latest need-based weapons and sustainment and survivability enhancements, doctrinal guidance, and training that replicates as closely as possible the conditions under which he fights. Our initiatives in the FCS program include those that support the infantry combat vehicle and its supporting variants. These variants include mobility, force protection, fire power, target acquisition, communications and information management and weapon systems that sustain our decisive edge on the battlefield. Our experience as proponent for the Stryker combat team is valuable in these efforts.

The Stryker is being deployed to combat in the next several weeks, capping a rapid development, testing, fielding and training program that has been unparalleled in the history of equipping our force. The Stryker Brigade Combat Team is an Infantry centric organization capable of rapid deployment, tactically mobile once on the ground, and possessing significant firepower. The platform is protected to withstand rounds up to 14.5mm, has a remote weapon station, can move on improved roads at 60 miles an hour

and is C-130 deployable. The vehicle is quiet, reliable and proven in tests and operational evaluations. But the Stryker Brigade Combat Team is more than just a unit with a great vehicle; it is all about the synergistic effect of tough Soldiers trained to standard, the best equipment available and a support system that is the envy of the world. The Stryker is ready to join the fight and win.

Lethality is a key component of this equation, because our success — and our credibility as an Army — will always rest upon our demonstrated ability to kill or capture the enemy through the use of close combat, fire, and maneuver. It gives a potential adversary pause if he knows the consequences of his actions is swift and certain destruction. The fanaticism and tenacity of an opponent will avail him little, for we have already engaged tougher and more determined opponents throughout our nation's history. Nor have we lost sight of the collective effectiveness of the combined arms team. Artillery has long been hailed for its lethality, a reputation that has been justly earned in two world wars and lesser conflicts, and today we are examining ways of teaching leaders to employ artillery to a greater extent and more effectively, but in the close fight — the last 400 meters relies on disciplined small arms fire delivered by aggressive infantrymen that carry the day. It is with this in mind that we are continuing to emphasize basic rifle marksmanship as the cornerstone of an infantryman's training, even as we examine potential improvements to those individual and crew-served weapons that decide the close fight.

Any discussion of the Infantry's vision must consider both today's adversary and his likely successors. The term asymmetrical warfare is recent, but the concept is not; its elements of unpredictability, surprise, and multidimensional action at points of supposed vulnerability have been employed by both America and her adversaries in every conflict since the American Revolution. The sophistication of the adversaries we now face is largely a function of technological advances of the past three decades. The use of motorcycles to dart unobtrusively through congested areas and traffic to attack convoys, the proliferation of improvised explosive devices, instant communication using state-of-the-art data links, and attempts to shape public opinion here and abroad are refinements of old techniques, and our abilities to neutralize them are already reducing their effectiveness. The roles and risks of noncombatants have changed as well. Today we see mosques, schools, hostages, and unarmed civilians used as instruments of enemy operations, something that further increases the friction of war and increases risk to our Soldiers. The battlefield has to some extent now become one of complex terrain and built-up areas, demanding that we continue to address the tactics, techniques, and procedures of forced entry and urban operations. We cannot afford to regard refinements to the rules of engagement as something of limited use, and only applicable to today's adversaries; the skills we forge and hone today are good ones, and

will pay dividends in future operations. The ability to confidently transition from combat to non-combat operations is essential in today's contemporary operating environment, and remains another critical element of our training.

Today's threat finds Active Army, Reserve, and National Guard components engaged in more deployments than at any time since the Korean War, and to areas where combat actions and real threats are the rule rather than the exception. Today, over 180,000 Soldiers are deployed in 65 countries. These circumstances demand a great deal of our Soldiers, and they are more than up to the tasks set before them. And they are adaptive. The biggest combat multiplier we had in the 1970's was our recent combat experience against a tough, competent adversary in Southeast Asia. Ours was an Army whose officers, noncommissioned officers, and Soldiers had been tested and tempered in the fire of Vietnam, and the Warsaw Pact arrayed against us in Europe could claim no such competence. The combat experience gained by the components of our one Army can only be hinted at in training: that combat edge, those leadership techniques, instincts and reactions learned by being there have given the Infantry a fighting edge that we have not seen since Vietnam, a fact that potential adversaries should consider.

All branches have benefited from this, combat, combat support, and combat service support alike. The war on terror may be a long one, but we have broken the back of two hostile regimes since September 11, 2001 and the remnants of those regimes are in disarray. When one considers the caliber of today's Army Infantrymen, and the doctrinal and tactical leaps that we have made in the past 10 years, one cannot help feeling both proud and confident: proud that we are part of the world's premier fighting force, and confident that the security and future of this great nation and her people are in good hands.

The Infantry School has come a long way in the past 85 years, and we continue to train and field the finest Infantrymen this great nation has ever sent forth to defend America and her institutions. Join us in this effort. Feedback from the field is the bedrock of our efforts to improve the mobility, lethality, and survivability of the infantry force. We need your input, in the form of articles for *Infantry Magazine* and from your comments addressed to the Infantry Forum and Infantry Online.

We solicit your assistance in our efforts to create a more currently relevant sequel to "Infantry in Battle", that timeless analysis of World War I infantry tactics first published under the direction of Colonel George C. Marshall in 1934. Our recounting of battles and engagements from Somalia to the present must be captured for our future leaders. We are always alert to ways we can better do our job of training the force. Give us your assessments of the proficiency and readiness of the Soldiers and leaders we send to our units around the world and your recommendations for improvements to equipment, doctrine, and training. [Follow me!](#)

One Infantry — Our Infantry

