

# INFANTRY LETTERS



## BUILDING BETTER LEADERS

**T**his letter is in response to Command Sergeant Major (Retired) Hardwick's and Sergeant Major of the Army (Retired) Gates' article titled "A New Look At The Infantry Company" from the November-December 2004 issue. First, I think all of us will agree that every leader in an infantry organization is being challenged, and that lives and other serious consequences are based on our leaders' abilities. I don't think the answer resides in assigning current positions to higher pay grades; we'll just wind up promoting guys earlier to meet the need. We are already holding back to back major's boards to meet a deficit. We're short lieutenant colonels as well. Both of these will have a trickle down effect because we're already assigning captains to majors positions. The promotion rate for the last 2004 major's board was at just above 98.5 percent. While I know that following their advice of assigning more senior and experienced leaders to positions would be on par with the responsibility those positions now face, I don't believe it to be feasible. It would result in even faster promotions to fill new requirements, and we'd wind up with the roughly the same crowd doing the job, but as majors and captains. After all, if your going to assign somebody a job you ought to pay him according to what we say it's worth. Given our current state, I think the solution offered up by the CSM and SMA would be treating the symptom and not the problem.

I think the problem is how do we transfer experience faster to build more capable leaders earlier in their careers? Lieutenant Colonel J.R.Sanderson had some keen insights in a recent issue of *Armor* Magazine about how we might build better leaders. The recommendation pointed to a larger investment in our junior leaders earlier to equip them with the right tools to succeed. While there is no substitute for

experience, better transferal of the experiences of others through a program that builds tacit knowledge is probably the best we can do. We just do not have the bodies to assign them to the jobs we'd like to. There are active duty lieutenants and captains taking ARNG units to combat because of reserve shortages. That is just another example of adjusting to meet requirements, but it is indicative of why we can't assign majors as company commanders and career course-trained captains as platoon commanders.

The desire for qualified personnel must be balanced with the quality of instruction we consider to make them qualified. If you want personnel sooner, then they will not receive as much training. That has been the problem militaries have always had to deal with. Currently, we are making good progress through communities of practice such as [CompanyCommand.army.mil](http://CompanyCommand.army.mil) and its spin-offs for other leaders in filling gaps where the institutional Army leaves off. These "real time" and "near real time" problem-solving knowledge sharing sites, combined with unit intra-nets such as the 1st Cavalry Division's "CAV-NET" go a long way in imbuing leaders with the experience of others. These sites and other technology solutions help, but they only go so far; again, there is no substitute for experience.

As a profession, we need to discuss this further, and I thank the warriors who wrote the article for opening up the discussion. I think it is one that will (and needs to) surface again and again as we balance needs versus capabilities.

— **Captain Robert L. Thornton, Jr.**  
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## WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

**Do you agree or disagree  
with something you have  
read in our magazine?  
Tell us what you think!!!!**

Share your thoughts with other readers by writing a letter to the editor, which will be printed in the *Infantry Letters* section. One of *Infantry Magazine's* missions is to provide a forum for progressive ideas and create discussion. The views presented in our articles are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. Army Infantry School, Department of the Army, etc.

Even if you don't want to write a letter for publication, we are also interested in hearing what our readers would like to see in the magazine or any other comments about *Infantry*.

Please drop us a quick note and tell us what you like or dislike about the magazine and what topics you would like to see covered.

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## Recruiter Assistance Program Opens Doors to Officers

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS TAMMY M. JARRETT, ARMY NEWS SERVICE

Officers can now share their deployment experiences with their local communities through the Special Recruiter Assistance Program (SRAP).

As of January 15, officers who are currently located in CONUS and have served in support of Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom may request to participate in SRAP, where eligible personnel can serve up to 14 days on temporary duty at a recruiting station nearest their hometown.

"I think this is an excellent opportunity for officers to return to their hometowns to tell them about the positive things the Army is doing in the Global War on Terrorism," said Major Mark D. Van Hout, retentions officer for Cadet Command. "Many small towns never get the opportunity to hear what their hometown heroes are doing."

Before SRAP, interested officers could participate in the U.S. Army Command Cadet program called Officer Returning Alumni Program, or ORAP. The program, which is completely unfunded, allows an officer to return to his alma mater on permissive TDY status to share his experiences as an officer, said Van Hout.

"When SRAP came out, we [Cadet Command] thought it would offer our officers more opportunities to return to their schools since, as ORAP is run, an officer would incur out-of-pocket costs," Van Hout said. "Cadet Command believes this is a good initiative and feels that officers should be allowed to participate and support

this effort."

In addition to being a veteran, Van Hout said interested officers must be 28 years old or younger, display a positive image, and be articulate and enthusiastic about what they do.

"We only want high quality officers who are recommended by their chain of command," said Vanhout, who conducts the screening process for ROTC graduates. "I speak with the officers to find out what they want to share with their communities and basically make sure they can do what we want them to ... tell the Army's story."

Interested ROTC officers must submit their applications directly to Van Hout, at [VanhoutMD@USACC.army.mil](mailto:VanhoutMD@USACC.army.mil). All requests will undergo a screening process, which takes about seven days. Approved officers will be notified via e-mail.

Upon receipt of notification, approved officers must have their requests (DA Form 4187) approved by the first lieutenant colonel in their chain of command and then fax it to (757) 788-6677 or DSN 680-6677. An approved DD Form 1610 will be completed by the USACC program manager and faxed to the officer and his unit personnel section (as provided on the DA Form 4187).

The OEF/OIF officers will report with their signed DD Form 1610 to their designated ROTC/Recruiting Station commander.

For more information, e-mail MAJ Van Hout, call him at (757) 788-3076/DSN 680-3076, or visit [www.usarec.army.mil](http://www.usarec.army.mil).

## Reunions

**The 45th Infantry Division Association (Thunderbirds)** will hold its annual reunion September 29 to October 5, 2005 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

For more information, contact Raul Trevino at (210) 681-9134 or write to:  
Raul Trevino  
2145 NE Street  
Oklahoma City, OK 73111

**The Society of the First Infantry Division (Big Red One)** will hold its 87th annual reunion from July 20-24, 2005 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia. The society is composed of veterans who served in World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Desert Storm, the Balkans, during the Cold War, during peacetime, and now those who have been deployed as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

For more information, call (888)324-4733, fax (215) 661-1934 or send an e-mail to [Soc1ID@aol.com](mailto:Soc1ID@aol.com). Those interested can also write to the Society of the First Infantry Division, 1933 Morris Road, Blue Bell, PA 19422.

# Benning Tests M-9, Alternatives

SPECIALIST NIKKI ST. AMANT

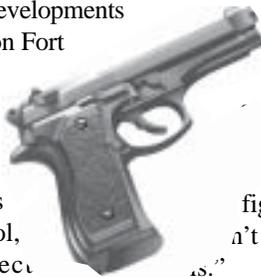
The Directorate of Combat Developments (DCD) and Soldier Battle Lab on Fort Benning began analyzing the current-issue M-9 handgun and possible alternative weapons January 24.

"I want to make it clear, this is not a selection of a new pistol," said Charley Pavlick, project officer with DCD's Small Arms Division. "We are responding to concerns we have from (Soldiers deployed Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom) that report a lack of confidence in the M-9 for several reasons. This is an analysis of different features and characteristics that are available with other weapons platforms."

Some of the concerns with the M-9 include many stoppages, uncomfortable function control and the low lethality of the 9mm ball round, Pavlick said.

The Army hasn't made an official decision to make a move from the M-9 to a new sidearm, Pavlick said. DCD will rewrite the draft requirements documents after the experiment is complete, and then officials will make a decision.

Army officials decided to switch from a .45-caliber sidearm to the 9mm in 1954, but that change wasn't fully implemented until 1984, Pavlick said. It was only when the supply of rebuilt .45s began running out that the Army finally started the 9mm



Personal Defense Weapon program.

"The decision to switch was very logistical," he said. "The states was trying to move NATO joint operability, and we fighting the Cold War. Target effect isn't a factor in that decision. Now it is."

The performance of better sights, larger barrels and double-action-only firing mechanisms are what DCD analysts will be taking a look at.

The test firers for the experiment are representative of the force, Pavlick said. Soldiers of varying rank, military-occupation specialty, and gender are included.

The testing started this week with a baseline qualification to assess the basic marksmanship of the firers with the M-9 and familiarization fires with alternative weapons.

Staff Sergeant Michael Morten is one of the test firers. He fired the .45-caliber version of the Smith and Wesson 99.

"You can really feel the difference," he said of the Smith and Wesson. "It fits better in my hand. The sights are easier. I thought it would have more kick being a .45, but the recoil is the same as the 9mm. I thought it was excellent."

(SPC St. Amant is assigned to the Fort Benning Public Affairs Office.)

## 29TH INF CONDUCTS TSIRT

During the 1st Quarter of Fiscal Year 05, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 29th Infantry Regiment conducted its first Theater Specific Individual Readiness Training (TSIRT) for Department of Defense civilians, contractors and military personnel deploying to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).



The training is focused on individual tasks and is two weeks long. During the first week DOD civilians, contractors, and military personnel attend mandatory classes and training which includes country threat briefs, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), unexploded ordnance, media awareness, first aid, and NBC. Also during this week, military personnel qualify on their assigned weapons and certain civilians fire for familiarization.

The second week is only for military personnel. Their training consists of such tasks as basic map reading, PLGR (Precision Lightweight GPS Receiver) orientation, crew-served weapon familiarization, and short range marksmanship.

Fifty-two tasks are taught within these two weeks. In the 2nd Quarter, we are implementing an Urban IMT lane. All of these tasks are taught by Reserve Soldiers from the 108th Division and contractors from the OMEGA Training Group.

At this point, approximately 1,000 DOD civilians, contractors, and military personnel have been through the training.

## CULTURAL AWARENESS CORNER

**GREETINGS** — An Arab will shake hands gently and may pull those he greets toward him and kiss them on either cheek in greeting. Arabs may also hold hands to walk to other locations. If an Arab does not touch someone he greets, he either does not like him or is restraining himself because he perceives the person is unaccustomed to being touched. After shaking hands, the gesture of placing the right hand to the heart is a greeting with respect or sincerity. To kiss a forehead, nose, or right hand of a person denotes extreme respect. Use of appropriate titles such as "Doctor" or "Professor" along with an individual's first name is common.

**TALKING DISTANCE** — Americans usually prefer to keep at least an arm's length between them and others. Arabs, however, prefer less space between themselves and others. They will often maintain 12 inches or less during a conversation. An American will tend to back away when an Arab crowds him, but the Arab will merely step forward. If the American continues to back away, the Arab will continue to step closer or wonder if he offended the American.

(Taken from the Department of Defense's *Iraq Country Handbook*.)