

# Commandant's Note

MAJOR GENERAL BENJAMIN C. FREAKLEY

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## FORT BENNING - A TRADITION OF TRAINING

After having been privileged to serve for two years as Chief of Infantry, I feel a deep sense of pride in the Soldiers who live and train at Fort Benning, in the units that have deployed to join the fight against global extremism, and in the civilian and military workforce that truly makes Fort Benning the home of the Infantry. We are a nation and an Army at war, and Fort Benning shows her support for this war in everything we do. We show it in how we train, deploy, and sustain our warriors; in the reachback support for deployed units; in the way we capture, examine, and disseminate combat experience; and in the way we care for our loyal, dedicated, family members who await their Soldiers' return.



Today's infantryman is the best trained, best equipped, and best supported Soldier this great nation has ever fielded, and our Army's successes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and in other troubled areas of the world have clearly shown that we are on the right track. Army initiatives in the employment of unmanned aerial vehicles; in the fielding of new or improved weapons, vehicles, and other equipment; in our training of marksmen and snipers; in our training and technological advances in detecting and neutralizing improvised explosive devices and other ongoing programs have all had a direct, measurable impact on how we fight and win. At the home of the Infantry we train warriors, all those superb Soldiers who have stepped forward when America needed them, and who have committed themselves to the defense of our homeland.

In this, my final Commandant's Note as Chief of Infantry, I want to talk about some ongoing initiatives that will continue to bolster the lethality, sustainability, and survivability of the entire force: combat arms, combat support, and combat service support alike. First and foremost among these is marksmanship, because as our warriors close with the enemy it is our accurate, massed small arms fire that will thin his ranks, destroy his will to fight, and break his resistance. Nowhere is this more evident than in the training we offer for squad designated marksman (SDM). The SDM program trains Soldiers to engage and consistently hit targets in the gaps and in terrain not otherwise covered by riflemen, and

complements the coverage provided by snipers, or when the latter are otherwise engaged. The M16 and M4 series weapons are both effective out to at least 500 meters, and SDM takes advantage of this to train Soldiers to kill the enemy at maximum range.

The warrior's individual weapon is his tool in trade, and the warrior must be one with the weapon. To achieve this, we are training Soldiers in reflexive firing techniques and battle drills that develop and reinforce quick, reflexive reactions against an asymmetric, cunning enemy. Marksmanship is clearly the warrior's edge, and

it is as important to our combat service support Soldiers' training as it is to an infantryman. We train our Soldiers in collective live fire exercises that enable them to deliver massed, accurate firepower against any adversary. A well-armed, confident, aggressive Soldier will fight his or her way out of an ambush or attack and continue to accomplish the mission, something that has been demonstrated in after-action reports out of the combat zones. As we continue to infuse the warrior ethos throughout the force, our enemies have come to realize that they face Americans who have both the means and the will to destroy them.

The contemporary operational environment is a complex, uncertain, and violent one, and we can only dominate it with leaders such as the superb junior officers and noncommissioned officers who are the point of the spear in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are confident, competent, flexible, and highly adaptable, traits that can all be developed, trained, and reinforced. We can best develop and sustain flexibility and adaptability through doctrine, professional education, and career management policies that encourage adaptability. Our doctrine is sound, and it provides a common language and way of thinking. It also offers a framework for the exercise of initiative and development of the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) that our young leaders are developing and successfully employing across the globe. Other leaders and units are quickly adapting these same TTPs to the circumstances in their own environments, and are in turn sharing their own experience-based knowledge. The enduring TTPs and lessons learned will in turn take root in the deliberations that

yield doctrinal manuals and lesson plans. But the doctrinal effort is only one aspect of training adaptable leaders and units.

We are complementing our doctrinal production and dissemination effort with professional education programs to encourage and sustain adaptability in our Soldiers and leaders. We do this by confronting students with as many tactical dilemmas as possible while they are completing resident and nonresident professional development courses. Adaptability has always been deeply ingrained in the American military tradition, and we must continue to reward innovation, valor, and quick, decisive responses to the unexpected. The doctrinal and professional education efforts must continue to be complemented with a diverse pattern of assignments that exposes Soldiers and their leaders to a broad range of units, geographic areas, and climates. Through this, they will soon develop the confidence and adaptability to rapidly acclimate to any operational environment and execute their assigned missions.

Adaptability arises from knowledge, and observations and comments from the combat zones have revealed a need for more comprehensive cultural awareness training and education. The immediacy of the present war demands urgency, and the Infantry School has already taken steps to meet that requirement. We are laying the foundation for cultural awareness training in the Infantry Captains' Career Course, the Infantry Officer Basic Course, the Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course, and the Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course. Our near-term effort is focused on the threat presented by radical Islamic fundamentalism, and our cultural awareness training concentrates on specific geographical areas of current interest. The 29th Infantry Regiment has already published country handbooks for 11 regional nations and has begun disseminating CD's to units. Infantry Magazine has been running a cultural awareness feature in every issue since January 2005, and will continue to do so. All personnel departing Fort Benning, either as part of Benning-based unit deployments or through the CONUS Replacement Center, will receive cultural awareness training as well. Cultural awareness will remain an integral part of the USAIS curriculum because it is too important to be left to chance, and because we cannot overlook this combat multiplier.

Those of us committed to the profession of arms see the defense of our nation, her people, and her institutions as paramount, and nowhere is that noble goal more exemplified than at Fort Benning. The Experimental Force first manned by the 29th Infantry Regiment in the spring of 2004 links doctrine, training, and technology in conjunction with the Soldier Battle Lab to evaluate new weapons; equipment; concepts; organizations; and tactics, techniques, and procedures before they are fielded or implemented. We have addressed and aggressively supported the Army Transformation using a full-spectrum approach to overcome a doctrinal deficit that would hamper progress. This includes a comprehensive assessment of the challenges to training the commanders of our modular brigade combat teams, and we are examining the changed role of installations as trainers, maintainers, and readiness reporters when one or more of their units deploys and others remain at home station.

Indirect fire support remains a top priority for the Infantry as

well. The Infantry Center recognizes that organic fires are an indispensable element of the infantry combined arms team, and insists that the combination of joint and organic fires will ensure that infantrymen can always put steel on target when and where it is needed. Infantrymen have never gone into battle without supporting mortars and cannons, and they never will.

The Infantry School has long been recognized for its contribution to the lethality, survivability, and sustainability of the combined arms force, and the Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC II) clearly meets those three goals. The course trains lieutenants of all branches in order to develop competent, confident, and adaptable leaders, grounded in warrior tasks, and able to lead Soldiers in the contemporary operational environment. A graduate of BOLC II is trained in both the warrior tasks and the warrior battle drills, will not accept defeat and will never quit, and demonstrates the characteristics of an Army leader. We graduate officers who live the Army Values and embody the warrior ethos, and who leave Fort Benning to lead still other warriors in the fight against global extremism. Tom Brokaw hailed those who went forth to defend America in World War II as The Great Generation; today the call for America's warriors has gone out again, and once more her sons and daughters have stepped forward to defend our homeland. They are ready to serve, and Fort Benning is proud to receive and train them.

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## WOJDAKOWSKI ASSUMES DUTIES AS CHIEF OF INFANTRY

Major General Benjamin C. Freakley handed command of the U.S. Army Infantry Center over to Major General Walter Wojdakowski August 12 at Fort Benning.

Major General Wojdakowski's first Commandant's Note as Chief of Infantry will appear in the September-October issue of *Infantry Magazine*.

Major General Wojdakowski is a 1972 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. His most recent assignment was as the U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army Acting Deputy Commanding General. He also previously served as the Deputy Commanding General, V Corps, and as the Deputy Commanding General, Combined Task Force Seven, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Baghdad, Iraq.

Major General Wojdakowski had also served as the Assistant Commandant of the U.S. Army Infantry School from January 1997 until September 1998.

Major General Freakley will next serve as the commanding general of the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York.