

# Commandant's Note

MAJOR GENERAL WALTER WOJDAKOWSKI

## A CENTURY OF TRAINING APPLYING THE LESSONS LEARNED

In April 2007, 100 years ago, the Army established the School of Musketry at the Presidio of Monterey, California. This was beginning of the Infantry School. In this Commandant's Note I want to discuss how the Infantry applied lessons learned in combat to improve the training of our Soldiers even as the Infantry School itself evolved over the course of a century.

Friedrich von Steuben began the U.S. Infantry's first systematic training when he drilled George Washington's Continental Army at Valley Forge in 1778. Following the Mexican War the Army's peacetime training continued intermittently until the Civil War, which represented the first confrontation between eighteenth century tactics and nineteenth century technology. Union and Confederate forces sustained casualties far greater than those of any earlier conflict. The massed frontal infantry attacks favored by Union and Confederate forces early in the war fell apart in the face of field artillery firing canister and grape shot and the massed fires of rifles accurate to ranges two or three times those of the smoothbore muskets still in use. These Civil War lessons spawned Major General Emory Upton's *U.S. Army Infantry Tactics*, published in 1874, which remained in use until after the Spanish-American War of 1898.

Following the Spanish-American War, Lieutenant General Arthur MacArthur, Commander of the Pacific Division, established the School of Musketry at Monterey in 1907 to address shortcomings identified in the war with Spain. The post at Monterey was too small for training large numbers of troops, however, and the school moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma as the Infantry School of Arms in 1913 where field artillery, infantry, and cavalry officers and noncommissioned officers learned the fundamentals of their profession.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 and initial reports from the field showed that our own Army needed to train for modern war, and on a far larger scale than ever before. Fort Sill was not big enough to accommodate the levels of training needed and the Army selected a site near Columbus, Georgia, and named it Camp Benning. The machine gun school left Fort Sill and moved to Camp Hancock, Georgia, in the summer of 1917. Soldiers trained there on contemporary machine guns used by the warring powers. At the same time, the Small Arms Firing School opened at Camp Perry, Ohio. The Army officially established Camp Benning on October 19, 1918, less than a month before the end of World War I. By now, after-action reports flooded the War Department from Europe and after close scrutiny our training further evolved.

Camp Benning escaped the closure of military posts during

the post-war demobilization when Colonel Paul B. Malone — himself a decorated WWI brigade commander and staff officer — presented the case for preserving the camp before Congress. He stressed the urgent need for a single infantry school where the

Army's Soldiers and leaders could learn their profession, and on February 20, 1920, Congress voted to resume the construction and growth at Camp Benning.

As war clouds again spread over Europe in World War II, Fort Benning trained over 600,000 Soldiers and commissioned 52,000 lieutenants by the end of 1945. The Infantry Board received and applied the lessons learned during WWII for the next generation of Soldiers. Ranger units in Burma, the Pacific, North Africa, and Europe necessitated Ranger training at Fort Benning. The first Ranger class for individual candidates graduated on March 1, 1952. Barely five years after World War II, the Korean War presented new challenges as the Army faced an enemy whose massed infantry assaults and tenacity again gave rise to changes in tactics, techniques, and procedures to deal with this new threat.

In Vietnam the limited road network and elusive nature of the enemy demanded better mobility. Under Major General Harry W.O. Kinnard's leadership the 11th Air Assault Division tested and refined the air mobility concept at Fort Benning in 1963, and in 1965 deployed to Vietnam as the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). Throughout the Cold War, during the Vietnam War, in Operation DESERT STORM and smaller conflicts, and now during the global war on terrorism we still gather and apply the lessons learned in combat. Our ability to capture and rapidly disseminate information on the enemy's intent, his weapons, and his tactics, techniques, and procedures enables us to share intelligence with our allies, and to train our own Soldiers to destroy him.

The Infantry saves lives and wins battles because we collect and share relevant information on the enemy. As we welcome the Armor School to Fort Benning and become the Maneuver Center of Excellence, we look back with pride on those early days after 1913 when infantrymen, field artillerymen, and cavalymen trained together at Fort Sill and we look forward to this superb training opportunity in the future.

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