

Commandant's Note

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DISMOUNTED OPERATIONS Training to Achieve Victory

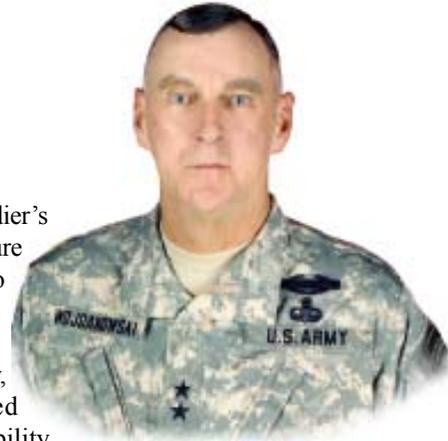
Today we are fighting the enemy on his own turf, and in the contemporary operational environment that means we must train intensively for dismounted operations. The dismounted infantry fight demands the utmost of our Soldiers, and in this Commandant's Note I want to discuss the changing missions of non-infantry units and some of the considerations that contribute to the successful execution of dismounted operations.

The dismounted fight is no longer the sole province of the infantryman. Soldiers of other military occupational specialties are patrolling, securing convoys, training local forces and performing what we once saw as purely infantry tasks in the built-up areas and countryside of Iraq. Their peers are carrying out similar missions in Afghanistan, in the Balkans, and other regions of national interest. These are demanding missions, often requiring a paradigm shift in how we train, and the Infantry School and other branch schools are committed to training Soldiers and their leaders in the skills they will need as they fight on unfamiliar terrain.

The global war on terrorism is characterized to a large extent by the complexity of the terrain on which dismounted U.S. and Coalition forces operate, and we must learn how to fight there. Soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan face extremes of weather ranging from the blistering heat of the Iraqi deserts and plains to the numbing cold of the Hindu Kush. They fight on terrain as dense as the urban sprawl of Baghdad and in the rarified air of Afghan mountains at elevations ranging up to well over 10,000 feet. At those elevations Soldiers, leaders, and medics have to remain alert to cold weather injuries, but also to the danger of altitude sickness, something we are learning to deal with in terms of both medical and physical conditioning.

Physical conditioning is an imperative to sustain the mental and physical toughness the infantry fight demands. We cannot evaluate physical readiness by APFT scores alone, and leaders must avoid excessive optimism based solely upon these test results. The Ranger-Athlete-Warrior conditioning initiative of the 75th Ranger Regiment highlighted in the May-June issue of *Infantry* is applicable to non-Ranger units as well. Dismounted units well understand the matter of the Soldier's load, and we must train as we will fight. This includes road marching while carrying combat approach march loads and practicing to quickly reduce the fighting load once contact is imminent or underway. FM 3-21.10 (FM 7-10), *The Infantry Rifle Company*, offers doctrinal guidance on Soldier's load planning. Common sense tells us that we need to tailor the load to the mission, and planning for link-up with our vehicles will further reduce the burden on Soldiers and save their stamina for when they most need it. Even though combat developers are making every effort

to reduce the weight of the Soldier's combat load, leaders must ensure that the infantryman goes into battle with what he needs, but unencumbered by non-mission essential equipment. Ultimately, the success of a dismounted operation will depend on mobility, stealth, and surprise and we must train to achieve these.



The Center for Army Lessons Learned has made available vast amounts of data gathered over the past three decades and particularly during the global war on terrorism. We see that Russian operations in Afghanistan and Chechnya revealed the limitations of their command and control (C2) systems once their fight moved into the complex terrain of mountainous and urban environments. Today, our own infantry leaders conducting dismounted operations rely upon current dedicated C2 systems, while the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is working to field more advanced C2 technology for testing and evaluation under field dismounted conditions. With the materiel assistance of DARPA and other agencies, units hunting down insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan are employing the latest in C2 equipment as they deny the enemy the use of terrain he formerly dominated.

The time required to maneuver dismounted Soldiers through complex terrain reinforces the necessity of detailed intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). IPB must include likely enemy courses of action once the attack is initiated or discovered, and we employ both human and electronic intelligence to gather the data we need. Unmanned aerial vehicles and satellite imagery contribute to the effort as well. Units need to realistically consider the time needed to reach the objective for day and night operations, and must include recovery time prior to the action. When planning fires to restrict enemy mobility, we must consider our own courses of action to ensure that we do not restrict our own ability to maneuver.

Our Army's success at dismounted operations is due in large part to Soldiers' and leaders' ability to quickly adapt to changing enemy tactics and incorporate what they have learned into training. Today's many initiatives in the lessons learned program lie at the core of how we train Soldiers and units to fight, and because of this each Soldier deployed in the global war on terrorism is better trained than his predecessors. We have seized the initiative from those who would destroy us and are closing the circle around the terrorists and their sanctuaries.

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