

Commandant's Note

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RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

I am honored to once again serve at Fort Benning, this time as the 56th Chief of Infantry. My prior command and staff assignments at Fort Benning; in the Federal Republic of Germany; in Kosovo; at Fort Stewart, Ga.; in the Pentagon; in Iraq; and most recently with a NATO Joint Command in Afghanistan, have given me insights on how we build and motivate Soldiers, leaders, and the units that we will deploy in the defense of our nation, her people, and our way of life. Building the smart, fast, lethal and precise formations to meet the global challenges posed by today's complex global environments will demand our best effort.

The face of today's enemy is that of an implacable, resourceful fighter who embodies the warrior spirit, and the chaotic environment of today's Middle East is where he fights best. Gone is the monolithic, predictable threat that the Soviet Union posed during the Cold War, and in its place are a number of adversaries and non-committed players such as Taliban, Al Qaeda, ISIS, and units of Chechen warriors now in Syria who proved to be bitter, relentless foes against Russian forces during the Russian-Chechen Wars of 1994-2009. During the fight for Grozny, Chechens demonstrated an affinity for the urban fight when they not only inflicted staggering losses on Russian forces thrown against them, but also saw an opportunity to take the war to Russia herself, seizing hostages in a concert hall and other public buildings before they were killed along with a great many of the hostages. With ISIS claiming responsibility for the attacks in Paris and the downing of a Russian commercial airplane, they have revealed and expanded yet another dimension of conflict. The enemy has thrown down the gauntlet and we must be demonstrably ready to accept the challenge.

As we continue to train, deploy, and sustain Soldiers in this second decade of a war whose duration we could little have foreseen in 2001, the resiliency of the operational force has revealed the tenacity of our warfighters overseas and the total commitment of their family members and their support base here at home. Prominent U.S. entertainers and private citizens have also lent their support to initiatives such as Wounded Warrior and other Soldier-oriented programs. Our installations remain committed to the moral, physical, and cognitive components of the human dimension triad in full spectrum operations.

Today at the Infantry School and Maneuver Center of Excellence, we embrace the principles building Soldiers, Leaders, and small unit formations that are *smart, fast, lethal, and precise*. When the discussion turns to the desired end state of our training, the lethality of our fighting force is what

stands out because it is that and that alone which will break the enemy's will, reaffirm our capability and commitment to a cause, and reassure our allies — and our own citizens — that our Army is indeed in it for the long haul.

But lethality alone is not the answer; we must help our Soldiers become smarter. This is not solely a function of technical and tactical proficiency, but demands knowing how to develop and recognize the elements of situational awareness, the acquisition and reinforcement of language skills, an intuitive understanding of the nuances of a host nation culture, broadening of the foreign area officer as an alternate career specialty, and the willingness of junior leaders to commit to developing cultural and social skills that approach those that enabled T.E. Lawrence to lead and advise Arab forces against Turkish and German forces in Arabia during World War I. Today's wars will be fought in remote areas in which reliance on indigenous forces will spell the difference between victory and ignominious defeat. General Vo Nguyen Giap knew this, and was widely read on guerilla warfare, two of his most frequently read texts being tattered copies of Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and *27 Articles*. The latter reads like a checklist, and when one reads the list of rules for North Vietnamese soldiers living within a civilian populace the similarity is inescapable and ties in with Mao's dictum about the populace being the water in which the guerrilla swims.

The theme of this issue of *Infantry* is building the smart, fast, lethal, and precise formations that will mean victory on tomorrow's battlefields, be they in fields, forests, underground terrain, or on urban terrain. You will find subject matter that includes small arms, ATVs in the light fight, company coalitions, intelligence targeting, new rules of engagement, and the role of the brigade DCO. I highly recommend this issue of *Infantry* and encourage dialogue as we look at building Soldiers, leaders, and formations that embody the principles of *smart, fast, lethal, and precise*. I look forward to your input and any articles you want to see included in our branch magazine.

One Force, One Fight! Follow me!

