Commandant's NOTE

MAJOR GENERAL KENNETH C. LEUER Chief of Infantry

SPIRIT OF THE BAYONET

Infantrymen everywhere will understand the pride I felt when I was told I was returning to Fort Benning to become simultaneously the Army's Chief of Infantry, the commander of the Infantry Center, and the Commandant of the Infantry School.

At the same time, though, that pride is overshadowed by my deep awareness of the heavy responsibilities that accompany this high honor, of the obligation to continue the work begun so well by my distinguished predecessor, Major General Ed Burba, and by the knowledge that the decisions made at Fort Benning bear directly on the infantry's role as the battlefield integrator of the Army's combined arms teams to fight, win, and live to fight again.

In the few weeks I have been here, I have found things exciting and moving on. I have particularly enjoyed renewing my association with the School of the Americas, an organization I came to know well when I commanded the 193d Infantry Brigade in Panama in the early 1980s.

The team on hand here is most impressive at all levels. I am especially pleased to have Brigadier General Barry McCaffrey with us, for he brings to his position as Assistant Commandant an Army-wide reputation as an infantry warrior imbued with the "spirit of the bayonet."

I feel fortunate to have come to Benning fresh from an assignment as commander of the 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized). The experience I gained in that position combined with the perspective offered by my present one give me a good awareness of the needs of our infantrymen in the field and a recognition of the things we must do to meet those needs. I also bring with me a set of values that have guided me throughout the years and will continue to guide me in the months ahead—DO WHAT IS RIGHT in TRAINING, CARING, and COMMUNITY.

From my own experience and from my personal study of the military art, I am convinced that although the combined arms team is unquestionably the tool of victory, within that team the Infantry is the key element. It is both the integrator that brings together and the seal that holds the effectiveness of the other weapons and arms. The infantryman has the toughest job of all, for he is at the cutting edge, putting together the combat power at the point of decision.

Accordingly, his weapons and equipment must be the best we can design. His training must fully prepare him—physically, mentally, and morally—to win, if necessary, against numerical odds. His leadership must be positive, proficient, firm, and completely professional. Therefore, we must do what is right to achieve total success in all of those areas.

Training, of course, is what we are all about. Training is everything and everything is training. I have spent a lot of time with infantry units in the field. Some of what I have seen has pleased me; some of it has not. We sometimes appear to have forgotten what we once knew about basic infantry soldiering and battlefield survival.

We must not forget that the individual soldier is still the ultimate weapon on the battlefield. If he is taught the basics of infantry soldiering, and if he is required to practice those skills over and over to certain standards, then we will all stand a far better chance of winning the next battle.

Every infantry leader must learn the basics of infantry soldiering. They should know and demonstrate to standard their knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of their weapon systems and how those systems function; they must know how squads, platoons, and companies maneuver on a battlefield; they must know and understand battlefield administration and logistics; they should learn all they can about battlefield communications; they must learn how to read terrain and how

to use the terrain on which they find themselves; and they must understand and use all available Army aviation and Air Force tactical air assets in their training scenarios. These last two constitute a key aspect of our AirLand Battle doctrine, and the infantryman and the aviator must learn how to work together effectively.

At the same time, every infantryman must be completely professional in his appearance and attitude, disciplined, and physically fit. To be a good infantryman, a soldier must have discipline, self-respect, pride in his uniform and his country, a high sense of duty and obligation to his comrades and his superiors, and a self-confidence born of demonstrated ability. To paraphrase an old Army saying, "Who ever saw a soldier with low self-esteem wearing a medal?"

We will do our best to see that all of our students learn the basic infantry skills before they leave Benning, and that they are professionals in the truest sense of the word, disciplined, and fit to fight.

All of us in positions of responsibility must also help our soldiers and their families to grow. The health of our Army—its readiness—depends upon the health of its soldiers and their families.

At all levels of command, we are all concerned with resource management—budgets, dollars, manpower spaces, energy conservation, and the like. We work hard to apply good resource management to our field training, external evaluations, SQTs, maintenance activities, and all the rest. And we talk a lot about taking care of our soldiers. But do our words manifest themselves in actions that our soldiers can see as tangible evidence that we truly care? It isn't simple in these days of limited resources to do that. All too often the soldier is the one who bears the major share of the disadvantages caused by resource constraints, most often in the form of poor training.

The heart of the Army is the management of human resources; it is what complete leadership is all about. Existing within our total package of human resource management, therefore, are such activities as in-processing, assignments, job training, awarding of MOSs, and increasing qualifications for greater responsibility.

Inseparable from these more definitive areas of resource management are such considerations as housing, medical care, recreation, off-duty education, religious programs, safety, counselling, law enforcement, and all the other similar areas that influence a soldier's satisfaction and well being.

If we try to manage all of these programs in isolation from each other, if we do not consider the effect of one on the others, we are not really taking care of our soldiers and their families.

This is the kind of management and the kind of leadership we will achieve at Fort Benning and the kind we will emphasize to students at the Infantry School.

Hand-in-hand with our concern for our soldiers and their families must go an equal concern for establishing and maintaining the best possible relations with the various civilian communities outside our gates. The time has long passed when we could close off those communities at the front gate. Today, we depend too heavily on them and they on us, and we simply cannot ignore each other's problems.

Finally, I have been charged with being the single proponent for the infantry spectrum, and the spokesman for all of the infantry as well, remembering that my decisions must be for the good of the Army and not for that of special interest groups.

As one of my predecessors put it, "There is indeed only *one infantry* (with a capital 'I'), but at the same time, there are *several infantries* (generic, with a little 'i')." To my mind, every infantryman, no matter the label that might precede his name, is an infantryman first and his basic mission has not changed since 1775. That mission is to get to the battlefield and close with the enemy by fire and movement to destroy or capture him, or to repel his attack by fire, close combat, or counterattack. That is the true "spirit of the bayonet."

We cannot afford to have infantry officers and noncommissioned officers hold views so narrow and be so specialized that they cannot serve effectively in different types of infantry units anywhere in the world. They must receive training and experience in a total environment involving branch specialty, combined arms, and joint and combined operations.

In this year in which we celebrate the bicentennial of our Constitution, no American has greater cause for pride in our 200 years of free existence than he who now wears, or has worn, the Infantry's crossed rifles. The Infantry has always been there, in every crisis from Concord Bridge to the present.

We face awesome challenges, and today's infantrymen must prove better, more capable than the soldiers of any previous era of history. They must extend themselves to reach a standard of excellence never before achieved by the line soldier.

At the Home of the Infantry—and every infantryman is a part of the Infantry School—we need your ideas, suggestions, and feedback if we are to give our infantry soldiers the equipment, doctrine, and leadership they will need to fight, win, and live to fight again. In the "spirit of the bayonet," then, talk to us, write to us, give us your ideas. The key to success is open and frank communication. Together we will continue to produce the best infantry soldier and leader in the world.