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SPECIAL REPORT:
LESSONS LEARNED IN OIF
SOLDIER FEEDBACK ON WEAPONS & EQUIPMENT



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

MG (Ret) Jerry A. White



As we open the first chapter on year 2004 the National Infantry Association and the National Infantry Foundation wish each of our members and Infantrymen worldwide a very happy and prosperous new year. At the same time we offer a solemn prayer for our soldiers who are

deployed around the globe in combat and peacekeeping operations. We pray for their safety and for their families who are enduring long and difficult separations from loved ones.

2003 was a great year for both your Association and the Foundation. Your Association enjoyed steady growth in membership. This is very good news in light of the number of members who are deployed in the Middle East and else where. As many of you know the mission of the National Infantry Foundation is to build at Ft. Benning a world-class National Infantry Museum and Heritage Park. This past year Congress appropriated \$8.5 million for the project and we enjoyed several other successes in our fund raising efforts. As a result, we are on schedule to break ground in 2004 and hopefully complete the project in 2006. The purpose of this facility is to educate all visitors on the valor and sacrifice of our great Infantry soldiers over the past 228 years. You will hear much more about this truly remarkable facility over the coming months.

During 2004 we will remain steadfast in our unwavering support for the Infantryman. The "grunt" is the heart and soul of this Association as he is for our Armed Forces. Over the past 228 years it has been the Infantryman who has done the heavy lifting for our Army and there is no reason to believe this will change, as our world grows more violent and dangerous with each passing day. Therefore, I pledge to rededicate the efforts of the Association to ensure our soldiers are duly recognized for their undying efforts to protect America's freedom and our way of life.

Joe Galloway, a world-renowned author and true American hero says it best: "Our Soldiers give so much and ask so little. I see them in my dreams, young, gaunt, burdened like pack animals, homesick, wary, weary—and so proud to be serving their country."

Have a wonderful year.

HOOAH!

Jerry A. White

MG (Ret), US Army



NOTES *From The Executive Director*

It's hard to believe that another year has gone by, but here we are in 2004. I want to thank all of you for all you have done this year, not only to help our Association, but for your organizations and our country. It's the support of people like you that helps maintain the Infantry spirit which is so excellently demonstrated by our troops, not only in Iraq and Afghanistan, but in hotspots throughout the world. We look forward to having many of our members

return safely to the U.S. in the coming year, but we also are aware that many more will be leaving as replacements, and we pray for their safety and success.

Our NIA membership grew this year by almost 13%, to approximately 3800. While this is a good rate of growth, with your help I'm sure we can attain our stated goal of 10,000 within the foreseeable future.

I would like to be able to maintain a quarterly schedule for publishing the Bugler, but our publisher needs to sell enough advertising to guarantee a 4-issue

contract. They are on their way to doing that, but if any of you have contacts with companies looking for a good advertising venue, please have them contact us. Once we attain that status, we can again publish on a regular quarterly basis. And, if any of you have interesting articles that you would like to see published in the "Bugler", please contact us.

I want to wish you all the best for 2004. Thanks again for all your support.

Dick Nurnberg

COL (Ret), US Army



CSM Timothy S. Green

Casual readers of the *Infantry Bugler* and members of the NIA know that:

The purpose of the National Infantry Association is to support the Chief of Infantry and the entire Infantry Branch (the only organization with this primary function): to share the camaraderie of like minded soldiers and citizens who believe in maintaining the Infantry spirit; to recognize, through our awards program, outstanding Infantrymen and Infantry supporters; and to preserve the Infantry heritage through support of the current National Infantry Museum and the construction of a new, expanded National Infantry Museum.

The NIA was "blued" in 1994 after lying dormant for four decades when it merged with other branch associations to form the Association of the United States Army. In the interim years we strayed from each other. Rather than celebrate our common branch in an infantry rally point, we began to indulge in our differences: light, heavy, airborne, air

WHY JOIN THE NIA?

By CSM Timothy S. Green

assault, and ranger. Fundamentally these different types of infantry either specialize in a means of insertion onto the battlefield or perform a specialized mission, but tucked into a pair of boots hustling towards an objective and crowned with a Kevlar helmet resides the soul of a common infantryman.

The soul of the infantryman is born in conflict—preparing for it, enduring it, resolving it, or recovering from it. It is in our blood, and when we are not directly involved in an action, we itch to get into the fray. The indomitable spirit of the American Infantryman is forged by the sharing of hardship, the conquering of indignity, the elation of mission accomplishment. The sting of sweat, the bitterness of cold, the pangs of hunger, and the misery of extended operations affect us equally, yet, strangely, strengthen our resolve and form unbreakable chains of camaraderie.

Glory, valor, courage, intrepidity, and sacrifice mark all infantry units, and we take pride in the achievements and accomplishments of all infantry units, regardless of means of delivery to the battlefield. Many infantry units' websites proudly record their history, their battle streamers, and their Medal of Honor recipients, but as infantrymen, all those histories, all those battle streamers, and all those combat heroes belong to all of us.

So why join the NIA? To paraphrase the ideal that "great armies don't make great squads, rather great squads make great armies," great local chapters will make a great

National Infantry Association. The strength and collaboration of great local chapters will help the NIA achieve its goals that benefit all infantrymen. Membership is indicative of commitment to our proponent; it strengthens the position of the Chief of Infantry when he must fight on our behalf; it empowers the NIA to work for us to the mutual benefit of all.

For more than 226 years the Queen of Battle has been lionized in epic war movies, in the memoirs of infantrymen, or the books of historians. Those venues go a long way to professionally develop us and educate the public about the infantry, but it is our collective responsibility, not historians and filmmakers, to preserve, protect, and perpetuate the history and heritage of the infantry.

At the local level soldiers and infantry supporters receive the Order of Saint Maurice for significant and lasting contributions to our total infantry. Local projects cast a favorable light on the infantry and on the individual infantryman. Our personal and professional rewards will increase immeasurably as we increase our membership in local chapters and revitalize inactive chapters.

Fellow infantrymen, we have an obligation to those who served before us, we have an obligation to ourselves, and we are obliged to the infantryman of the future. Be proud of our total infantry, support the goals of the National Infantry Association, and FOLLOW ME to NIA membership.

CSM Green is currently in Afghanistan.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM:



PEO Soldier Lessons Learned

By LTC Jim Smith

In response to the Rapid Fielding Initiative after the initial operations in Afghanistan, PEO Soldier funded the supply of new equipment to deploying brigades. Many of these brigades were sent to Iraq. This article was originally designed as a report internal to the Program Executive Office for PEO Soldier concerning information gleaned just after an end to major combat operations was declared. LTC Smith's task was simply to gather feedback from soldiers while it was salient. In many situations, he was not able to tell these soldiers what was being done to solve the problems they encountered, nor to ask more specific questions that might get at the root of their concerns. In response to soldier feedback, focus teams were

sent to gather detailed information. As a result, the Project Manager for Soldier Weapons completed their Soldier Weapons Assessment Team Report 6-03. Elements of this second report have been inserted into LTC Smith's original report for added insight into the lessons learned. These segments are marked (**).

Bugler Magazine interviewed several Program Managers at PEO Soldier to learn what measures were being taken to address soldier concerns. Comments by PEO Soldier Managers follow LTC Smith's report. Due to space limitations, several items from the original report have been omitted.



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OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM:

PEO Soldier Lessons Learned

By LTC Jim Smith

INTRODUCTION

The following is a gathering of lessons learned on items of equipment either within the PEO Soldier domain or closely related to current or planned PEO programs. I gathered these lessons while serving as the PEO Soldier Liaison to the ASA(ALT)-SWA Operations Cell. I accompanied a team from the Science and Technology community conducting a similar mission for GEN Kern, Commander, AMC, and MG Doesburg, Commander, RDECOM, consisting of Mr. Bill Andrews, MAJ Rob Johnston and SFC Sam Newland.

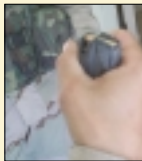
Between 5 and 10 May 2003, we gathered these lessons from soldiers serving in the Baghdad sector during Operation Iraqi Freedom. We spoke with a spectrum of soldiers ranging from Brigade Commanders to riflemen. The following units were interviewed:

- HHC/1-187 IN, 101st ABN (5 May)
- 2d BCT, 82d ABN (6-7 and 10 May)
- 3-325 PIR (7 May)
- 2-325 PIR (7 May)
- 3-7 CAV (8 May)
- FSB (8 May)
- 1st BCT, 3 ID (9 May)
- 3-69 AR (9 May)

The timing was fortuitous. In almost all cases, we were the first external visitors to the unit. Soldiers were fresh from combat operations and were just beginning the stability and support phase of the operation. They were eager to relate their experiences and thoughts on how equipment could be improved. They recognized that the equipment provided significant combat overmatch against the combatants they encountered enroute to and in Baghdad. However, soldiers know there is always room for improvement. In this spirit, the purpose of this document is to capture their feelings

on what worked well and what can be improved, as well as their ideas on how the deficiencies can be corrected.

LETHALITY



9mm magazine with insufficient spring force

9MM Pistol:

Soldiers expressed general dissatisfaction with the 9mm pistol. First and foremost, they did not feel it possessed sufficient stopping power.

They want a modification that will allow more accurate firing during limited visibility. One specific recommendation was the addition of tritium to the sight posts. The 9mm magazine performed poorly. Soldiers were stretching the spring in order to provide sufficient force to feed rounds into the chamber. They were dissatisfied with the guidance advising them not to stretch the spring and to load only 10 rounds in the 15 round magazine.

**Many of the M16 series and M9 magazines exhibited the same issues raised in Afghanistan. Several of the magazines failed to feed. It is evident that the spring tension was inadequate to feed the rounds in several magazines observed. Some of the M9 magazines had no tension at all. Several observed M16 magazines were difficult to seat in the weapon, or the feed lips tended to spread apart. Soldiers resorted to loading less than 30 rounds into the magazine. These issues may be attributed to worn out magazines and a lack of maintenance. However, these issues were not cited with the Beretta or OKAY magazines. OKAY magazines were fielded under the Rapid Fielding Initiative.

The issued 9mm holster was not used. Most soldiers/units purchased thigh holsters to increase comfort, access and availability. Soldiers whose personal weapon was the 9mm preferred a mode of carrying the pistol that allowed them access to the weapon without always wearing the LBV (Load Bearing Vest). The leather shoulder holsters did not hold up well in this environment. Thigh holsters came from a number of commercial sources, such as Blackhawk.



Issue 9mm holster mounted on OTV and commercial thigh holster

M4 Carbine: Soldiers were satisfied with the M4. It performed well in a demanding environment, especially given the rail system and the accompanying sensors and optics. As one Brigade Commander said "The M4 with PEQ and PAC provided overmatch over our threat equipped with AK47s and RPGs." The general consensus was that every rifleman wants the M4 rather than the M16A2.

The most significant negative comment was in reference to the M4's range. In the desert, there were times when soldiers needed to assault a building that was 500 plus meters distant across open terrain. They did not feel the M4 provided effective fire at that range. The 82d Airborne soldiers wished they had deployed with M14s at the squad level as the 101st did.

There is also a significant safety issue that bears further investigation. Apparently when the M4 selector was in the "Safe"



M4 with Mount

position and the bolt was allowed to ride forward, the firing pin still made contact with the bullet primer. A CSM in the 101st personally witnessed an incident in which a soldier had an accidental discharge while his weapon was in the safe position. Numerous soldiers showed us bullets in their magazines that had small dents in the primer. There may be a "Safety of Use" message out on this issue, but it is not well known at the battalion-and-below level.

The flip-up sight on the M4 allowed the soldier to engage targets out to 600 meters. However, the plastic grommet that formed the small aperture was prone to falling out. Soldiers "super-glued" the aperture to the sight.

**Although the M4 MWS was reliable, the team observed light primer indentation occurrences in the M16 series rifles: M4s and M16s. As soldiers locked, loaded and cleared weapons prior to and after operations or as directed, the primer was indented. Upon return to CONUS, discussions with weapons engineers revealed that each time a cartridge is chambered in an M16 Series Rifle or M4 Series Carbine, a slight indentation is made on the primer. This is caused by contact of the free-floating firing pin against the cartridge primer as the bolt closes. This is a function associated with normal operation of the weapon. The Army conducted tests to investigate the effects of multiple dents on 5.56mm ammunition. No slam fire, or accidental discharges occurred.

**However, cartridges are not intended to be repeatedly re-chambered as this may de-sensitize the primer and/or deform the body of the cartridge case sufficiently to cause misfires. The potential for a misfire may occur in as few as 10 to 20 lock and

load cycles of the same cartridge. No misfire occurrences were directly observed from indentations but soldiers relayed some occurrences of accidental discharges when going through the clearing procedures. One soldier experienced a misfire from a round cycled through the chamber numerous times. Further testing is planned to more accurately quantify these conditions and establish the need for a Maintenance Advisory Message (MAM).

The M203 GL was most affected by the desert environment. Sand and dirt migrated into the trigger housing and clogged or jammed the safety.

**The M4 Modular Weapon System (MWS) was issued primarily to light infantry, Special Forces, and tank crewmen. It was evident that clearing operations in Iraq were not limited to infantrymen, light or mechanized. The majority of the force deployed in Iraq was mechanized units that were issued the M16A4 MWS. These proved cumbersome in the confines of tracked vehicles and during clearing operations in Baghdad. Other soldiers (non-Infantry) were also conducting these types of operations and were generally equipped for personal defense with an M9 pistol. These operations were typically conducted at night, but the majority of the soldiers did not have laser aiming devices, Close Combat Optics (CCOs), or tactical flashlights and did not have the interfaces to attach accessories to the Mil Std. M1913 rail system. Many soldiers used field expedient methods to attach items.

M203 40MM Grenade Launcher: Comments on the M203 were positive. Many soldiers felt it was the weapon of

choice for combat. Unfortunately, we are not able to realize the benefits of this capability in a training scenario. Soldiers did feel, however, that it was not safe to carry a round in the chamber. Some mentioned the need for a buckshot-type round.

**The M203 GL was most affected by the desert environment. Sand and dirt migrated into the trigger housing and clogged or jammed the safety. This issue was compounded by excessive lubrication. The fine, powdery sand could not be prevented from entering the housing area without placing the weapon in a hermetically sealed bag. Additionally the hand guards tended to slip-off. It is believed that the extreme heat caused the glue to melt and the bonding properties to break-down.

M249 SAW (Squad Automatic Weapon) Light Machine Gun: Overall the comments on the M249 SAW were positive. It provided the requisite firepower at the squad level, as intended. The short barrel and forward pistol grip allowed effective use of the SAW in urban terrain. Soldiers requested a better stowage position for the bipod legs. The legs interfered with the attachment of the forward pistol grip. If a pistol grip was attached and the legs were down, the legs made movement in the restrictive urban terrain difficult. Additionally the soft ammo pouches provided a great improvement over the plastic ammo canister. However, the 100-round pouch performed much better than the 200-round pouch. There is a design flaw that allows the ammo to get tangled in the 200-round pouch.

**SAW gunners were unanimously dissatisfied with the complexity of the M249 SAW. Its numerous small parts encumbered



M249 SAW Light Machine Gun

fieldstripping and were easily lost. Some SAW gunners resorted to extremely unorthodox methods to retain weapon availability. The M249 SAW was the most problematic weapon in the theater.

**The biggest issue among M249 SAW gunners was the 200 round plastic ammunition box. SAW gunners consistently remarked that the box habitually fell off, no matter the movement technique: walking or rushing. The spring tension was insufficient to retain the box in the slot. Soldiers used bolts, screws or wire to act as a retaining pin to keep the box from slipping from the slot. The box was extremely brittle and prone to break, especially at the box and weapon interface. Discussions with weapons engineers upon return to CONUS revealed that the weak interfaces were previously addressed in a change of the plastic ammunition box design. Some of the problems encountered may have been due to issue of the old design ammunition boxes. Also, the ammunition tended to rattle against the box, and soldiers used MRE cardboard or moleskin to buffer the noise. However, the M249 SAW 100 round soft Combat Ammunition Pack (CAP) was universally praised and was preferred over the 200 round plastic box. Gunners said that they would rather repack their ammunition basic load in several 100 round soft pouches than use the 200 round plastic box.

M240B Machine Gun: Soldiers had great confidence in the M240B. Negative comments were relative to the AG's load. Soldiers recommended fabricating the tripod out of a lighter material. The AG bag is not integrated into the remainder of the M08E and, therefore, was not easily carried. Additionally, the nylon bag melted when it came in contact with a hot barrel. Other suggestions included adding collapsible bipod legs like those on the SAW, wiring down the heat shields, and including an ammunition carrying system for 300-400 linked rounds.

Shotgun: The shotgun was a very useful addition to the MTOE. The weapons were



The XM107 Barrett .50 caliber sniper rifle

used mainly as ballistic breachers; therefore soldiers felt the length could be shortened. They removed the stock and local purchased pistol grips converting the shotgun to the preferred "sawed-off" configuration.

XM107 Barrett 50 Caliber Sniper Rifle:

The XM107 may have been the most useful piece of equipment for the urban fight, especially for our light fighters. The weapon was used to engage both vehicular and personnel targets out to 1400 meters. Leaders and scouts viewed the effect of the .50-caliber round as a combat multiplier due to the psychological impact on other combatants that viewed the destruction of the target.

The most pervasive negative comment was that snipers felt the Leopold Sight was inadequate for the weapon—that it was not ballistically matched. If the sight was zeroed for 500, 1000 and 1500 meters, soldiers did not feel confident in their ability to engage targets at the "between" distances (e.g. 1300 m). Snipers felt there were better sights available for this weapon, such as the Sivorsky. Sniper team spotters felt the tripod for the Leopold Spotter Scope could be better designed.

M2 50 Caliber Machine Gun: The M2 50 received great praise. It performed exceptionally in this harsh environment. Soldiers did mention that the vehicular mount had too much play for accurate fire and that the large ammo box made it difficult to effectively manipulate the weapon.

Close Combat Optic (CCO): Soldiers appreciated the CCO. Many commented that

the new design and battery was a vast improvement over the previous CCO. Negative comments related to the honeycomb attachment, which was difficult to clean, and the difficulty in holding a zero.

One design change suggested was to fix the CCO about its axis within the half-moon spacer. Currently the CCO can rotate within the mount. This does not affect the accuracy of the sight but, if the CCO is not oriented properly when the soldier zeroes, his left-right and up-down adjustments will be on a cant. A simple tongue and groove design modification would fix the CCO from rotating.

Bore sighting of the weapon's sensors and optics has been fully accepted. We heard anecdotal evidence of soldiers hitting 40/40 day and 32/40 at night with optics in training. Soldiers purchased Bullet Boresights from AccuSite. The bore light fits in the chamber of the weapon. This eliminates the steps required to bore sight the bore light to the weapon.

**Units deployed in Iraq were experiencing the same issues with the Generation I M68 Close Combat Optic (CCO) raised in Afghanistan—condensation inside the body, loose power switches, poor durability and short battery life. However, units that received improved M68s (Gen II) through the Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI) did not have any issues. All the soldiers equipped with the Gen II M68s reported longer battery life. The antireflection device (ARD) provided an unexpected advantage in Iraq—the reduction of glare. Soldiers were able to distinguish the red dot better in direct sunlight.

ACOG (Advanced Combat Optical

Gunsight): Many soldiers expressed a preference for the ACOG over the CCO because of its magnification and its lack of need for batteries.

**Magnified optics were used more during OIF. Soldiers and units purchased several types and brands, but the most popular was the Trijicon, Advance Combat Optical Gunsight (ACOG) 4x, a Special Operations Peculiar Modification (SOPMOD)

component. Leaders primarily used these sights for target detection and identification, but the majority of the soldiers used the capability to acquire and engage targets.

There is some debate about the utility of a magnified optic during CQB situations. This item is part of the Rapid Fielding Initiative.

**Soldiers voiced a need for an integrated sight. Although the accessories enabled them to acquire and engage targets more effectively, weapon real estate was at a premium. Soldiers were limited to mounting a day or night sight and were required to bore sight and/or zero the sights individually each time they were mounted. Soldiers strongly suggested a combination day/night sight with an integrated laser-aiming device capable of close and long-range engagements.

MGO (Machine Gun Optic): Soldiers were satisfied with the performance of the MGO on SAWs and M240Bs.

PAC4/PEQ2/PEQ6 (Night Vision Devices): This equipment provided a significant advantage at night. A brigade commander commented that the enemy never seemed to grasp that we could see and hit them at night. The covers on the PAC4 were prone to fall off. Pressure switches were a common point of failure. The zero rails on the PEQ2 came unglued too easily. Some soldiers used the PEQ6 on their M4 because of the white-light capability. However, they felt the PEQ6 consumed batteries too quickly and was too easy to turn on accidentally. On the plus side, the visible red dot was effective in



82d M4 with SureFire Tactical Light

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The any light aiming specialists.

getting the attention of a person who was acting too aggressively.

Many soldiers purchased the SureFire Tactical Light and were complimentary of its design and durability. The only problem with this light was that the IR cover fell off easily. I received comments such as, "Our equipment should be as rugged."

Vehicle crewman purchased hand-held laser pointers to orient the fire of more than one platform weapon.

SURVIVABILITY

Interceptor Body Armor: Soldiers had great confidence in their body armor. There were numerous comments about comfort and weight, but in general, feedback was positive. The comments concerning comfort dealt mainly with maneuverability. Soldiers indicated that it was difficult to maintain a good prone firing position while wearing the IBA with plates. Their Kevlar interfered with the back of the vest, and it was difficult to keep their heads up while prone. Also, the plates made it difficult to seat the stock of the weapon into the shoulder as soldiers are trained. The foam impact pad in the airborne soldier's Kevlar further exacerbated the problem of contact between Kevlar and vest.

The performance demonstrated by the IBA during the operation was outstanding.

There were numerous examples of impacts, which could have been fatal, resulting in minor or no injury to the soldier.



Joint Service Lightweight Integrated Suit Technology

JLIST (Joint Service Lightweight Integrated Suit Technology):

The vast majority of comments referencing the JLIST were positive. As one brigade commander stated, "Unbelievable. I don't like wearing MOPP, but this one is OK." Soldier felt JLIST was an enormous

improvement over its predecessor. The negative comments concerned the heat. Most units received the woodland green suit and, for the crewmen, the material was not flame retardant. This forced them to wear JSLIST and NOMEK, which was not ideal in this heat. They felt the suspenders were of poor quality and made defecating in the field difficult.

Combat Identification: Commanders expressed a need for thermal and IR recognition features for the uniform. The "bat wing" configuration for the helmet worked well because it was less prone to fall off. All soldiers had a small patch of Velcro on their left sleeve for glint tape. We should consider adding this feature to future combat uniforms. Another suggestion was to embed the recognition tape into the fabric of the helmet cover and uniform sleeve.

Helmet: There were few comments on the current Kevlar because most soldiers were aware of the ACH (Advanced Combat Helmet), although none had been issued yet. In general, they expected that the ACH would be more comfortable.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

AN/PVS-14 Monocular Night Vision

Device: Most comments on these NVGs, from the units that had them, were positive. In general, soldiers agreed that they were a great improvement over the PVS-7 variants, both in terms of comfort and performance. Negative comments concerned the helmet mount and the battery compartment. The swing arm and the detent button on the mount were frequent points of failure. Soldiers recommended constructing these components of a sturdier material. The battery compartment cover failed frequently and required the entire sight to be exchanged. Soldiers suggested that a separate battery case might reduce the cost of repair.

AN/PAS-13 Medium Thermal Weapon

Sight: Feedback on the medium thermal weapon sight varied greatly,



Damaged Battery Case on PVS-14

depending on whether the comments came from the mechanized or light communities. Feedback from the mechanized elements was positive. They felt the clarity of the TWS outperformed the M2A2 sight in most cases. However, the light soldiers felt the TWS was too fragile and heavy for offensive operations. They would use it for defensive operations. Other negative comments concerned the availability of the TWS battery and how quickly the batteries were consumed. Also, the sight blurred when it was moved. Soldiers recommended a tripod for observation.

The Rapid Equipping Force provided a hand-held thermal viewer, the Raytheon X1, to the 101st. The 82d was aware of this and expressed a desire for a hand-held thermal viewer also.

Commercial GPS (Global Positioning

System): As is widely known, many soldiers purchase their own GPS systems rather than use the PLGR (Precision Lightweight GPS Receiver). The Rhino was provided to the 82d as part of the Rapid Fielding Initiative. Overall, soldiers were appreciative of this addition to their MTOE. The Rhino was a vast improvement over the PLGR due to weight, volume, power consumption and performance. The Rhino consistently acquired satellites faster than the PLGR. However, the soldiers stated they did not use the communications capabilities of the Rhino, at least not extensively, because it was not secure and consumed batteries too quickly in this mode.

Squad Communications: Based on the feedback, I believe this is the area that

requires the greatest attention by the Acquisition community. Soldiers had no confidence in the ICOM radios. Their range was unsatisfactory. Everyone had a Motorola-type hand-held radio that had much better range and power performance. Soldiers purchased handsets and longer antennas for their ICOM radios.

Whether mechanized or light, communications at the squad level was problematic. Mechanized leaders told us they needed a way for squads to communicate back to the platforms, and with each other, once they dismounted. Light leaders had the same concern in communicating with geographically separated squads operating independently in urban terrain. Soldiers had MBTR (Multiband Inter-Team Radio) radios at

company and platoon level. They felt the MBTR was a good solution for the squad, but it could be lighter and smaller.

Commander's Digital Assistant (CDA): Leaders agreed there is a need for a CDA device in the light infantry formation. The laptop variant of the CDA was very well received; however, the PDA variant was less so. The problems with the variant were a function of timing. Soldiers at the company level and below were occupied with activities associated with combat operations and had less time to learn the interface than their peers on battalion and higher staff. They also felt the PDA variant was too slow and consumed batteries too quickly.

In comparison, the mounted platforms received Blue Force Tracking for the

operation. BFT was extremely successful and received a good deal of credit for the success of the operation. Commanders indicated they needed something for the dismounted soldier as easy to use and reliable as BFT.

MOBILITY

Boots: Soldiers were generally dissatisfied with the performance of the Desert Combat Boot. The soles were too soft and easily damaged by the terrain. This seemed to be more of a problem for the boots manufactured by Altima. Many soldiers spent their own money to have the boots resoled with Vibran soles with mixed success.

Soldiers felt the boots held moisture too readily and would have benefited from ventilation holes, like those in the jungle boot. There were several complaints that the

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What does this mean to you? We can't say it any better than the report dated May 15, 2003 from *PEO Soldier "Lessons Learned"*: "CLP was not a good choice for weapon's maintenance (in Iraq). Soldiers considered a product called Militec to be a much better solution for lubricating individual and crew-served weapons."



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Damaged sole of Desert Combat Boot

boot cut into the top of the foot, and many soldiers did not use the bottom set of lace holes to reduce the pressure. Soldiers felt the sizing of the boots was inconsistent. Soldiers found the Belleville boots to be very comfortable, but too hot for this environment. The Marine Corps desert boot has a very good reputation.

Assault Ladder/Battering Ram/Quickly

Saw: These items were not used extensively because their weight and bulk interfered in the hasty attack/movement to contact type operations the units conducted. Soldiers stated they would have used the quickly saw if they had received the mission to conduct a deliberate attack, such as an airfield seizure. They gained confidence in the saw during training, but did not have a need for it during the operation. On the other hand, they damaged two assault ladders during training and did not feel this equipment was very useful or well designed. The battering ram was deemed too heavy for the missions conducted. As one soldier stated, "A battering ram may be suitable for a SWAT team that has to clear one or two rooms, but we clear multiple rooms in multiple buildings."

M-Gator: Soldiers are very appreciative of the M-Gator. They felt the addition of greater power and the ability to tow a trailer would increase its benefits. They would like to be able to mount a crew-served weapon for personal protection. The 82d has five per battalion and they are maintained at the company level by the mortar section. The 101st maintains the vehicles at battalion level.

Slings: Soldiers were purchasing their own slings because the issued variant did not provide the flexibility or comfort they required. They purchased or fabricated tactical slings for the M4/M203 that allowed the weapon to be slung on their back or hung on their chest so they could respond faster to contact.



Tactical sling preferred by soldiers

SUSTAINABILITY

Desert Camouflage Uniform: Most

comments on the DCU addressed the need for pockets on the sleeves. The pockets on the front of the DCU were all but useless. Many soldiers, realizing that they will wear IBA in almost all environments from now on, have already had a tailor sew pockets on their sleeves. A similar suggestion was made for the pants pockets. The protective mask carrier and the thigh holster frequently blocked the current pockets. Soldiers suggested moving the pants pockets to the front of the leg.

Soldiers questioned the durability of the uniform due to the propensity of threads to give way, especially in the crotch area. They felt that dirt was to blame for the high failure rate. Soldiers did not receive an opportunity to have their uniforms

laundered for over 30 days of combat. When they did get the opportunity many refused it because of the perceived likelihood that their uniforms would be lost. We heard a request for a hand-powered platoon or company level washing machine (e.g. a wash board) from several different soldiers and units.

T-shirts: Soldiers purchased CoolMax-type t-shirts because of the wicking properties.

The shirts keep the skin dry, thereby keeping the soldier warmer when it is cold and cooler when it is warm. Under Armour is a popular brand. The soldiers were also knowledgeable about silk-weight underwear.

Socks: This very important item of equipment generated a good deal of discussion, especially among light fighters. Many received the black wool/poly pro blend socks which were too hot for this environment. Some received the Wright sock (tan outside/white inside), which shrunk too much after washing. Soldiers in 3ID received the dark green sock that was selected and continued to judge it as superior. Again, soldiers felt if they could just keep their socks clean they could better protect their feet.

Belt: As soldiers hung additional equipment from their waist, they needed a more robust belt. The belt of choice was a heavy nylon web belt with Velcro fastening and an extraction loop, like Blackhawk's CQB Riggers Rescue Belt.

Gloves: The Nomex gloves provided with the Rapid Fielding Initiative were too thick and warm for this environment. Soldiers preferred the air crewmen or mechanic style Nomex. Other popular gloves include motocross or batting style gloves. Some soldiers purchased HellStrom gloves from Blackhawk.

Hydration System: Everyone agrees that the CamelBak-type hydration system is the way to go. Soldiers stopped even using their one-quart canteens once the NBC

threat subsided. However, the CamelBak variant that we distributed to the 82d was not rugged enough. The most common comment stated that the bladders ruptured easily with no way to exchange them. Soldiers' personal experience with the CamelBaks they have purchased is much better. It seems either we purchased a lower quality version or we received a bad lot. CamelBak now offers an NBC variant that should be considered for future purchases.



Camelback bladders ruptured

MOLE (Modular Load Carrying Equipment): Overall, the soldiers appreciate the design and intent of the MOLE system and view it as a vast improvement over its predecessors. In general, soldiers are attaching pouches directly to the IBA and

not using the FLC. The exception to this rule is with the M203 and SAW gunners. If these soldiers are taken out of action for some reason, it is not reasonable to transfer their ammunition to another soldier, given the different sizes of the IBAs. In order to keep

the key weapons systems manned, the vest is transferred to another soldier. Soldiers asked that the surface of the IBA have as many loops as possible. They even said an X-large IBA should have more loops than a small one to take advantage of the greater surface area. According to the soldiers, the strengths of the MOLE system are its flexibility, the sustainment pouches, the repair kit and the comfort.

The soldiers identified several areas for improvement. First, there is general dislike of snaps. They felt, Velcro in combination with fast tech-type connectors were better. There is also a connector by a commercial company, Tactical Tailor, which soldiers used. The 82d did not bring the MOLE ruck because they have not certified it for



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airborne operations yet. Soldiers noted that the straps on the ALICE ruck, when worn in combination with the IBA, tended to ride out on their shoulders and cut off the circulation to their arms.

The MOLLE grenade pouch only accommodated fragmentation grenades. Flash-bang grenades and smoke grenades would not fit. There was also no pouch for their PVS-14s. They used the corpsman pouch, SAW pouch or MBITR pouch for their NVGs.

“I found it interesting that we received no comments on the fact that the MOLLE was woodland green and many soldiers did not have the desert camouflage covers.”

General comments on the assault ruck were positive, but many soldiers found it too small and not durable enough. To facilitate carrying 60 pounds in the assault ruck, they either added sustainment pouches and butt packs to their assault pack or purchased commercial rucks. I personally saw a large number of Blackhawk black rucksacks used by RTOs and others in lieu of the assault ruck. The message I received was that the need for a sturdy, stand-alone ruck for the assault outweighed the need for a modular component of the MOLLE system.

I found it interesting that we received no comments on the fact that the MOLLE was woodland green and many soldiers did not have the desert camouflage covers. I assume the paucity of comment was due to the lack of a need for stealth during this operation. However, we need to continue to pursue a common camouflage pattern or field sufficient quantities of camouflage covers.

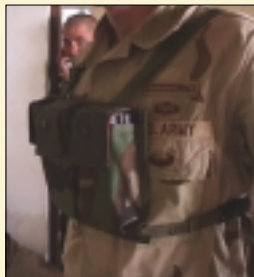
**Load carrying systems was a prevalent issue in Iraq. Several systems were used in theater: the All-purpose, Lightweight, individual Carrying Equipment (ALICE) Load Carrying Equipment (LCE), Load Bearing Vest (LBV), and the Modular Lightweight Load-Carrying Equipment (MOLLE). The MOLLE is the only system developed to interface specifically with the Interceptor Body Armor (IBA). The LCE, LBV and the M203 Grenade Vest were too bulky and cumbersome and did not interface well with the IBA, but soldiers used many of the ALICE components and attached them to the IBA. The two units issued the MOLLE attached the pouches directly to the IBA and used other items from the system to carry mission essential equipment. Load carrying issues were less pronounced in these units. Several units and soldiers purchased commercial load carrying systems and/or pouches in order to achieve better form, fit and function with the IBA. A number of commercial items, modifications and fabrications on current items, and field expedient methods were observed to address this issue. Soldiers continue to purchase items through catalogs or the Internet from companies such as Black Hawk, Tactical Tailor or Eagle in order to surmount this shortcoming.



Soldier modified load carriage



Commercial ReadyMag product



Commercial chest-mounted bandoleer

Neck Gator: Many light soldiers told us that the neck gator was the single best piece of gear for the desert environment. Unfortunately, it is not flame retardant so the vehicle crewman could not use it.

Magazines: Soldiers carried as many as 15 magazines with them during this operation. They local purchased two items to facilitate their ability to manage this amount of ammunition. They purchased several commercial variants of devices that allow quick magazine changes, such as the ReadyMag product pictured below. They also purchased commercial bandoleers for wearing additional magazines on the chest and upper leg.

CONCLUSION

Overall, soldier equipment performed well and enabled the very impressive execution of the difficult operation these soldiers completed. However, our soldiers are professionals and, as such, have valuable opinions about how the equipment should be designed and how it can be improved. I offer the following synopsis from my foxhole (see chart).

LTC Matthew Clarke, Product Manager for Individual Weapons, responded to some of the issues addressed under his area of supervision. He acknowledged that recent reports from desert environments have indicated to PEO soldier that the 9mm has insufficient lethality and problems with the magazine. Many soldiers resorted to stretching the spring, but according to LTC Clarke this action compounds the problem. The current magazine design has bullets that are staggered. If dust and dirt enter the magazine, they can disrupt the rolling process as bullets are fed into the weapon causing them to jam. "We are currently looking at a magazine program that we hope will resolve some of the current difficulties," LTC Clarke said. "We are looking at a coating and design hat will preclude susceptibility to dust and dirt. The new design will be fielded as soon as possible."

The most significant soldier comments on the M4 concerned range. LTC Clarke noted that units had made a trade off when they changed from M16 to the M4. The loss of the tail end of range (approximately 50 meters) was considered an acceptable exchange for reduced weight and heightened portability and maneuverability. "We would love to give the soldier a weapon that will do everything and anything, but that just won't work," LTC Clarke commented. However, PEO Soldier is working on a new program, the XM8, as a potential replacement for the M4/M16 that allows the user to change out the barrel depending on the mission. "Of course, you wouldn't change the barrel in the heat of battle," said Clarke, "but the capability will be there. The theory is that a commander

can tailor his squad for the potential need giving it greater variance of capability." His department is also testing a coating that can be applied at the manufacturing level to aid in weapon lubrication.

"We always hear of issues with weapons," said Clarke, "and it's a difficult thing because we are not there first hand to see the problems."

LTC Clarke's office has been working on a Lightweight Shotgun System (LSS), a bolt-action, 12-gauge shotgun that attaches underneath the barrel of the M4 Modular Weapon System and provides the capability to fire 2.75 inch and 3 inch lethal, non-lethal and door breaching rounds. The LSS weighs 2 lbs. 11oz unloaded and has a detachable five-round magazine. Testing on the weapon is complete and it was fielded late October to the 10th Mountain Division.

"We always hear of issues with weapons," said Clarke, "and it's a difficult thing because we are not there first hand to see the problems. The soldiers are in harsh conditions and the equipment is used hard. Things wear out. It gets used in ways it has never been used before. We find new types of failures that we haven't seen. Some we expect, some we don't." LTC Clarke appreciated the many positive comments by soldiers, but stressed that PEO Soldier's duty is to look at all systems for possible improvement, even when comments are positive, striving always to maintain overmatch capability and aiming for constant improvement.

David Nelson, Deputy Product Manager for Clothing and Individual Equipment, stated that LTC Smith captured comments from soldiers that were consistent with those his office has

TOP PERFORMERS:

- **Lethality:** The soldiers and their leaders that employed the XM107 had nothing but praise for the accuracy, target effect and tactical advantage provided by this weapon.
- **Survivability:** A tie between JSLIST and IBA. Clearly both of these systems are on the right design path.
- **Mobility:** It would be difficult to convince the units to return to the days before the M-Gator...and I wouldn't want to be the one who tried to take it away.
- **Situational Awareness:** Our suite of optics and sensors provided an overwhelming tactical advantage against the quality of threat encountered in Iraq.
- **Sustainment:** The CamelBak-type hydration system is clearly what the soldiers prefer. We just need to emphasize durability.

TOP AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- **Lethality:** The pistol system requires greater stopping power, improved magazines and a better holster.
- **Survivability:** Combat identification still relies on methods and technologies used 10 years ago. Our army is extremely lethal. We rely too much on the discipline and skill of our soldiers.
- **Mobility:** Soldiers can get pretty passionate about boots and socks. I recommend a down-select for boots similar to the one conducted for socks.
- **Situational Awareness:** Communications at squad level and below. The squad radio is currently not a PEO Soldier item, but one we can help fix with the Land Warrior program.
- **Sustainment:** Soldiers still spend too much of their own money to purchase the quality packs, pouches, belts, underwear, socks and gloves they believe they need for mission success and comfort.

received from other avenues. Nothing in the comments came as a surprise.

"Efforts are underway to deal with all of the less than favorable issues that were raised," Nelson said, "and we have a path forward or a solution in place for each item."

Nelson is concerned that soldiers don't know the things being done to correct the deficiencies, especially those units that are first to deploy. "If they knew what is in the works—if they had a kind of movie trailer that said 'Coming soon to you!'—they might complain that it's not coming soon enough, but they would eagerly await the new equipment while using the old." He sees the Rapid Fielding Initiative as one way to bridge this gap.

Nelson was pleased that soldiers were comfortable with their body armor and chemical suits. The advanced combat helmet should overcome the interference noticed with the back of the vest. It has a lower profile and a lighter weight. He noted that JSLIST, which has a hood, was not intended for combat vehicle crewman, but for the dismounted soldier. His office is working



Assault ladder in a MOUT training operation

with the armor community to authorize a different version that was designed for aviators, but would be applicable to combat vehicle crewmen.

The assault ladder was issued only days before it was officially adopted. Officials at PEO soldier believed that it was ready for adoption. "All indicators suggested they were suitable," Nelson said. "We need to look more closely to see why there were problems."

"Efforts are underway to deal with all of the less than favorable issues that were raised."

According to Nelson, the desert combat boot was designed in 1990-91 for the soft sands of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The design is being changed to add a durable sole and remove the wick away liner. The Belleville boots that soldiers identified as comfortable are identical to the standard issue boots for FY04.

Uniform modifications include focusing on the utility of the pockets and where they go and changing the collar to the same design as the woodland green uniforms. Nelson noted that most clothing is intended to serve its purpose for 120 combat days, but acknowledged that other factors, such as how old uniforms were to begin with and the intensity of environmental conditions, affect the longevity of a uniform. PEO soldier is pursuing a plan to add the t-shirt to the clothing bag. Some soldiers have been provided a moisture wicking t-shirt under the Rapid Fielding Initiative. According to Nelson, the Chief of Staff of the army has decided to change to a wider more rigorous belt to meet the needs of the soldier.



Lightweight Shotgun System (LSS) attaches underneath the barrel of the M4

"Gloves are an interesting problem," said Nelson. Few glove manufacturers exist in the United States, making them a challenging item to find. The office is currently working with the Sewall Company to make a flame resistant glove that is lighter and more resilient. They are also looking at the possibility of incorporating the Special Forces Modular Glove System into the family of gloves for the army.

PEO Soldier sees MOLLE as a work in progress. "Feedback tells us that there are areas to be improved, special pouches needed. However, each unit that provides feedback offers unique feedback," Nelson said. "The MOLLE is like boots, everybody has an opinion." Nelson said they are trying to take all the feedback and turn it into a modular system with enough compartments to satisfy each unit. They are also looking at providing a personal hydration system and a variant that could be used in a chemical environment with the MOLLE.

Soldier feedback is welcomed at PEO Soldier. The website, www.pmsoldierequipment.army.mil, offers e-mail capability for soldiers to express their opinions on any piece of equipment. Soldiers may also submit a proposal to the Soldier Enhancement Program. The current elbow pads were adopted from a soldier-submitted proposal several years ago. Any soldier who buys an item for himself that he likes, needs, and feels others need should submit it on the web page. All proposals receive an extensive evaluation as PEO Soldier examines the newest technologies for solutions to improve equipment.

★ News and Awards ★



LTC Ed Dickens was presented the OSM (Centurion Level) on July 25, 2003 by BG (P) Lloyd Austin III, ADC-M for the 3d ID, COL N.A. Dennington, Installation Chaplain for Fort Stewart, is seen securing the award around LTC Dickens' neck. LTC Dickens also received the Meritorious Service Medal (6 OLC) and the Mayor's Coin from the Honorable Thomas J. Ratcliffe, Jr., Mayor of Hinesville. (Photo by MSG Edward Slaughter, 3d ID Inspector General's Office.)



On May 16, 2003, LTC (Ret) George H. Boucher was inducted into the Order of Saint Maurice by LTC (Ret) Patrick W. Burke at the 2003 Reunion of the 5th Regimental Combat Team (Korea) in Jacksonville, FL.

Presented at the reunion of the Outpost Harry Survivors Association in June 2003, Savannah, Georgia:



SGT James E. Steffan, awarded the OSM, with his wife Minnie and John Ross.



Mr. Mark H. Woods was presented the OSM by LTC (Ret) Patrick W. Burke.



LTC (Ret) John H. Pate Center, accompanied by his wife, was presented the OSM by PFC William F. Delwert.



SFC Donald A. Chase (left) and SFC Rankin Burchfield, Jr. (right) were presented the OSM by Martin A. Markley, Chase was accompanied by his daughter, Ellen. Burchfield was accompanied by his wife, Rella.

★ News and Awards ★



Cadet (now 2LT) Les Craig, USMA, receives the NIA's Top Infantry Cadet Award. Pictured with him is BG Leo Brooks, Cadet Commander.



MG (Ret) Jerry White presents Congressman Sanford Bishop with OSM at the annual meeting of AUSA in Washington, D.C.



MAJ Fred Hughes, PM-CCWS, PEO-TM, Redstone Arsenal, was awarded the Order of Saint Maurice by BG(P) Freakley, Chief of Infantry, Fort Benning, GA.



CSM Earl Rice, the highest ranking enlisted soldier in 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment, receives the Saint Maurice award. Rice has been with 2-503rd since its reactivation and helped Lt. Col. Dominic Casaccio lead the 2-503rd into combat. (Photo by Spc. Brandon Aird, 173rd Airborne Brigade Public Affairs)



COL Mike Ryan was presented the OSM by AR-PERSCOM Deputy Commander, COL Robert Marsh. (Photo by MSG Brian Kappmeyer, AR-PERSCOM PAO)



MGR Kenneth Leuer presented the OSM to COL Joseph Votal at the Ranger Memorial prior to the Change of Command Ceremony 7 Aug 03. His wife, Michele received the Shield of Sparta.



National Infantry Association

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