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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL INFANTRY ASSOCIATION

**173<sup>RD</sup> AIRBORNE BRIGADE ISSUE**

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CONFERENCE  
EDITION

**Doughboy  
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**The Future  
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# CONTENTS

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Publisher is Chicken Dinner News, Inc.  
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Seale, AL 36875  
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## ★ ARTICLES ★

- 7 Message from the Commander of the 173rd Airborne Brigade
- 9 The Future of Airborne Infiltration
- 15 Enhancing Battlefield Sensing and Effects
- 17 Building First-Person-View Attack Drones
- 21 Doughboy Awards: Recognizing Outstanding Infantrymen

## ★ DEPARTMENTS ★

- 4 Messages from the NIA Chairman, NIA President and Chief of Infantry
- 23 National Infantry Museum Foundation Update
- 25 News & Awards

**ON THE COVER:** U.S. ARMY PARATROOPERS ASSIGNED TO THE 173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE DESCEND OVER TORCH DROP ZONE DURING AN AIRBORNE OPERATION AS PART OF EXERCISE SABER JUNCTION 24 IN HOHENFELS, GERMANY ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2024. (U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SGT JOSKANNY J. LUA)

## Call for Submissions

Do you have an opinion concerning one of the stories in this issue? We would like to print your responses in our Letters to the Editor column. **Have you researched a topic that is of interest to Infantry Soldiers?** Submit it to us as an article for the *Infantry Bugler*. **Do you have personal experiences or valuable lessons learned that would benefit other readers?** Let us be your vehicle for delivering those thoughts. Send your submissions to [bugler@infantryassn.org](mailto:bugler@infantryassn.org).



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## From the Chairman



LTG (Ret) Thomas F. Metz

As I continue to slow down after a wonderful 44-year career as a Soldier, Cadet, commissioned Infantry officer and flag officer, I have less and less connections into the current Department of Defense. Therefore, I must rely on the open media for U.S. Defense news. I'm enjoying my retired years living in rural North Carolina atop the Blue Ridge Mountains, however, I wish I could be more helpful to our membership via this quarterly

column. Hopefully, I can present challenges to our *Bugler* readers who are in the positions to manage these challenges.

A challenge that has been successfully managed was attacking Iran's nuclear capability. I think we can all agree it was a very important attack that was successfully executed. I assume a good After-Action Report was assembled for future attacks like this one, which saved thousands of our Servicemen and many more civilians.

As I have written before, we could find ourselves in WWII in the not-too-distant future. Currently, we are challenged to support Ukraine against Russia, and Israel against its neighbors. With the U.S. Forces focus on these two wars, I believe China will try to defeat Taiwan sooner rather than later. As I have written before, we could soon find our well-trained Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines in WWII.

The good news is that our recruiting of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines appears to be improving. If we must return to drafting our servicemen, we should obligate ourselves to give them "world-class" training in their MOS and preparation to enter their units ready for combat.

A big question in my mind is "do we have the ships and aircraft needed to supply our forces across the Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea? Concurrently? Can we protect our fleets to ensure our warfighters on the ground have the wherewithal to fight and win? Likewise for our Air Force's logistics aircraft.

But, let's go deeper into the logistics needed to win WWII. Is our industrial base ready to support the required warfighting equipment (e.g. ammunition, trucks, tanks, personnel carriers, artillery & mortar systems, ...and new equipment which use will require training within the theater of combat)? We must prepare our industry to produce warfighting equipment ahead of when it will be needed, which will allow our servicemen to train with their new equipment.

As the Multi-National Corps-Iraq commander, I had tremendous confidence in my battalion, brigade and division commanders. The Corps and above headquarters had to ensure those fighting units had the military wherewithal and training to defeat our enemies.

Lastly, realistic training with well-prepared Observers/Controllers helps units to develop and be prepared to fight our enemies. WWII may not have to be fought, but little evidence points in that direction. Infantry leaders will know what I have stressed in this column. To fight and win WWII we must have Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard prepared for and equipped to defeat our enemies. I call upon our Infantry War Fighters to train required tasks to high standards, accept criticism to improve in preparation to defeat our WWII enemies.

## From the President



COL (Ret) Robert E. Choppa

Young Infantry Captains need to think through everything! Moving, Fixing, Fighting, Finishing! Here are some thoughts for the Platoon and Company level.

The Infantry keeps moving—whether employed by foot, parachute, helicopter, plane, jet, Stryker, Bradley or Infantry Squad Vehicle. Mobility is key to engaging the enemy at the point and time of our choosing. Our best Warrior Leaders analyze terrain, weather, threat and unit capability to estimate "getting there." Getting the right force, the right weapons, the right ammunition and the right leaders to the place and time is critical to success. Accomplishing the mission and minimizing risk is critical.

All moving pieces require fuel and maintenance.

Whether AVGAS, diesel, water and food—all of our Infantry forces require fuel. Maintenance requires mechanics, parts, time and tools. Maintenance of Infantrymen includes sleep, rest, fuel and medics. Keeping everything running and operating applies to vehicles, aircraft and people. We have scientists that provide analysis and recommendations to logisticians and Infantry Commanders.

It is the Commander who provides motivation, will, focus/direction and desired end state. Infantry Commanders must consider everything!

Missions from higher (main and supporting efforts), combined armed forces (Armor, Artillery, Air Defense, Aviation, Engineers, Logisticians, Signals/Intel, Cyber, Intel, EW, Jammers, Space, etc.) plans need to include friendly forces (other nations/armies), joint forces (USMC, etc.), forces to left, forces to right, forces in rear and reserves, medical treatment and evacuation forces, etc. This includes aviation from all services.

Commanders must know what the enemy is doing and calculate what his next moves will be. They must know enemy threats, missiles, rockets, artillery, mortars, IEDs, mines, UAVs, UGV, armor, mobile forces/reserves, mounted Infantry and dismounted Infantry.

Commanders must know terrain—location of friendly forces and location of the enemy. They must identify key and decisive terrain. They must read high ground, low ground, roads, bridges and built-up areas, etc.

Commanders must understand timing (date, time, periods of darkness, etc.), reaction and reserve times, indirect fire times, air medevac times, follow-on and follow through forces times and understand the sequencing of all missions.

Also, Commanders must understand the impact of operations on civilians, including citizens, built-up areas, infrastructure, etc.

Commanders at all levels must consider these and other things so that they can accomplish their missions while minimizing casualties.

Most of the Infantry Commanders' time will focus on impacting the enemy on the chosen ground. This is the close fight. This is the Actions on the Objective part of the mission. Many of the Commander's formations will have unique and various tasks and purposes. The Commander must understand and be able to communicate with their subordinate leaders— platoons, squads and fire teams—their intent. Keeping this simple and focused is key. Everyone must know the main effort, tasks/purpose. All must be ready to complete this mission.

The Commander develops a scheme of maneuvering that provides direction to his Infantry. This is his sequencing of the Commander's envisioned fight and it centers on the main priority effort. Of course, the enemy gets a vote. The threat Commanders are doing the same thing. Trying to fight our forces at the time and place of their choosing. Deception, camouflage, disruption, concealment, diversions and surprise are all essential to the enemy's plan. Continuous reconnaissance and scouting (ground, air, sensors, etc.) are essential to both plans. The ensuing battle will never go according to anyone's plan, so flexibility is key.

Providing flexible and simple plans will enable the initiative of your subordinate leaders. Trust and your support are critical to winning the close fight.

It is the Commander who provides motivation, will, focus/direction, and desired end state. Infantry Commanders must consider everything!



## From the Chief of the Infantry



BG Phillip Kinery

### Two and a Half Centuries of U.S. Foot Soldiers

Fellow Infantrymen, past and present, this year marks a momentous occasion: the 250th Anniversary of the United States Infantry. For two and a half centuries, the Infantry has stood as the backbone of our Nation's defense—a constant presence in every conflict and a symbol of unwavering courage and dedication.

From the citizen-soldiers who first answered the call to arms during the Revolutionary War, to the highly trained and technologically advanced warriors serving today, the Infantry has consistently embodied the American spirit of resilience, adaptability and selfless service. We've marched across continents, stormed beaches, fought in jungles and secured cities—always placing the mission first and our comrades-in-arms above all else.

Think back through our history. The grueling campaigns of the Indian Wars, the fierce battles of the Civil War, the trenches of World War I, the island hopping of World War II, the frozen Chosin Reservoir, the jungles of Vietnam, the deserts of Iraq and Afghanistan and the ongoing challenges of a complex world. In each of these, and countless others, it was the Infantryman—the foot soldier—who bore

the brunt of the fighting, who secured the objective and who ultimately prevailed.

This anniversary isn't simply a commemoration of battles won, but a celebration of the people who won them. It's a tribute to the NCOs who forged disciplined teams, the officers who led from the front, and every single Soldier who answered the call to duty. It's a recognition of the sacrifices made not only by those who fought, but also by their families who supported them through hardship and uncertainty.

The Infantry has never been static. We've constantly evolved, adapting to new technologies, new threats and new operational environments. Today, we are embracing transformation—leveraging advanced weaponry, robotics and information systems to enhance our capabilities and maintain our decisive edge. But even as we look to the future, we must never forget the foundational principles that have guided us for 250 years: physical toughness, mental agility, unwavering discipline and an unshakable commitment to our fellow Soldiers.

As we celebrate this milestone, let us reaffirm our commitment to upholding the proud legacy of the Infantry. Let us continue to train with intensity, lead with courage and serve with honor. Let us remember the sacrifices of those who came before us and strive to be worthy of their example.

To all the Infantrymen who have worn the blue cord, past, present, and future, Happy 250th Anniversary.

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# From the 173rd Airborne Brigade



**COL Mark E. Bush**  
Commander,  
173rd Airborne Brigade

The 173rd Airborne Brigade exists to provide a high-readiness, flexible response option to address emergent threat in Europe and Africa. Our people are our strength. It is our leadership's collective responsibility to prepare our Paratroopers to deploy into uncertainty, execute their competencies with endurance, outfight and outthink our enemy and return home with honor.

There are no shortcuts to excellence. We pursue it daily through disciplined repetition and hard work. Leadership here is not about rank. It's about possessing the moral strength to demonstrate the standard,

and to learn and adjust when we fall short of success. It's about being the one your Paratroopers look to when confronted with the unexpected.

That's why we invest in more than just training—we innovate. Across our formations, Sky Soldiers are experimenting with new ideas, testing them and learning hard lessons to make our Brigade better. The result is a culture of adaptation, fueled by trust, where junior leaders are not only expected to identify problems, but empowered to solve them.

This issue of the *Infantry Bugler* features articles from within the 173rd Airborne Brigade that highlight how we are shaping the future fight with innovation to

complement existing grit and fortitude. In one piece, CPT Robert Broz takes readers behind the scenes of our first-person view (FPV) drone program, where paratroopers have built, trained on and live-fired their own low-cost, attack drones. This capability is now part of our company-level playbook, giving small units the ability to strike targets with precision and minimal risk.

In another article, CPT Ryan Huseman challenges us to reimagine the way we infiltrate into combat. His article describes the enduring reliance on traditional static-line airborne techniques and provides affordable, realistic alternatives from stand-off personnel pods to swarming UAVs. These ideas could make future airborne forces more survivable in contested environments.

Finally, CPT Dillon Schaaf presents a compelling case for reintroducing a dedicated reconnaissance company at the brigade level. As cavalry squadrons case their colors, he offers a blueprint for how we can integrate ground scouts, drones, electronic warfare teams and precision strike capabilities into a cohesive, multi-functional reconnaissance formation.

These articles are not theoretical. They reflect lessons from recent operations and exercises across Europe and Africa. They reflect effort within our Brigade to move beyond conventional readiness endeavor, and advance to a posture that addresses contemporary battlefield requirements. We don't innovate for innovation's sake. We innovate to compliment the mastery of our fundamental warfighting skills. We innovate to ensure our Paratroopers are prepared to deploy into uncertainty, operate with endurance, defeat our adversaries and return home with honor.

*Sky Soldiers!*

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A U.S. Army paratrooper assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade recovers his equipment after conducting an airborne operation onto Torch Drop Zone as part of exercise Saber Junction 24 in Hohenfels, Germany on 4 September 2024.

# The Future of AIRBORNE INFILTRATION



The U.S. Army's conventional airborne forces, which conduct infiltration via static line parachutes, may benefit from a candid, even uncomfortable, self-assessment of the capabilities they provide, and the methods used to deliver them. The Secretary of Defense's "Army Transformation and Acquisition Reform" memorandum issued on 30 April 2025, indicated the intent to shift resources away from legacy platforms and weapons to invest in cutting-edge technologies intended to counter the growing strategic challenges in the Indo-Pacific and in defense of the homeland. With thoughtful modernization, airborne forces can continue to contribute meaningfully to national power projection—rather than risk becoming seen as outdated.

Technologies possessed by peer competitors to counter an airborne assault have increased dramatically in the past several decades:

The joint force's ability to project power and influence is challenged by proliferated anti-access weapons with increasing range, diversity, density and sophistication in the hands of both state and non-state actors who are devising innovative approaches to contest joint forces in all domains.

In my experience, while the administration has pledged to invest in cutting edge technologies, I've observed that the U.S. Army often relies on the joint force to deliver effective Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD)—a dependence based more on proven

partnerships than doctrinal ownership. Most advances in technology associated with an airborne operation, especially that of a Joint Forcible Entry Operation (JFEO) in which airborne forces seize a lodgment, have come in the form of advanced aircraft, long-range cruise missiles and a host of electromagnetic spectrum tools. These supporting technologies enable the force to gain and maintain air superiority, conduct SEAD and detect and jam enemy signals.

The techniques of airborne infiltration, such as the choice of the drop zone, the transport to the drop zone, the exit from the aircraft and the descent to the ground, have remained largely consistent from the introduction of military airborne operations eight decades ago. It's not hard to imagine that a World War II paratrooper might find today's static line parachute operations surprisingly familiar. A parachute assault remains a drop of individual paratroopers equipped with static line parachutes jumping from cargo planes traveling at 130 knots-indicated airspeed (KIAS) and 550-1,250 ft above ground level (AGL). An update to these techniques could help to bolster the survivability of an airborne assault force if SEAD is not 100 percent successful.

There are vulnerabilities associated with airborne infiltration. The future operating environment is likely to contain advanced surface-to-air-missiles (SAMs) incorporated into sophisticated integrated air defense systems (IADS). Networked communications and concealable and mobile adversary IADS platforms make them very difficult to suppress or destroy (Bronk 2020, 3). Additionally, the proliferation of capable man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) poses a significant risk to low-flying, slow transport aircraft. The nature of static-line parachutes and the fixed requirement for open drop zones exposes any airborne force that survives long enough to get to a drop zone to the devastating effect of our adversary's modern long-range artillery.

Adversaries such as Russia use particularly destructive munitions that Western militaries cannot or will not use. Further, adversary robotic technologies capable of swarming coupled with loitering munitions could threaten mounted and dismounted forces.

I anticipate our adversaries have identified suitable drop zones and designated them as pre-planned targets for their artillery. Savvy sensor operators would be alerted when a formation of transport aircraft within contested airspace suddenly drops altitude and slows in preparation to drop paratroopers. An analyst could readily narrow down the potential drop zones based on their earlier terrain analysis. A fire direction center could have rounds incoming as paratroopers are still exiting an aircraft, assuming any aircraft made it past the SAMs and MANPADs within the IAD system. Imagine being a paratrooper suspended in the parachute harness and getting targeted.

In practice, the Army has continued to conduct traditional static-line techniques while the Department of Defense has increased investments in costly technologies and platforms that conduct SEAD and control the air. In the past, the Army proposed huge cost-prohibitive overhauls such as the Future Combat Systems concept (Pernin et al 2021, 5). I recommend that the U.S. Army could employ relatively inexpensive techniques to augment the efforts of the units supporting the airborne operation.

In conjunction with developing an air-droppable personnel pod or capsule, I propose the following:

1. Develop the ability to drop conventional paratroopers at altitude and from a stand-off (similar to the capability provided by the Joint Precision Airdrop System (JPADS) platforms in delivering cargo) (ATP 4-48 2016, 57)
2. Develop the ability to drop at high speed and low-altitude (similar to the capability provided by the Extracted High-Low Speed Container Delivery Systems (EHLSCDS) platforms in delivering cargo). (PM FSS 2020, 7)
3. Develop the ability to be dropped directly into restrictive terrain (much like smokejumpers in fighting Western wildfires) rather than onto large open drop zones (USFS 2011, 14); and the incorporation of an organic swarming UAV that can provide protection, ISR, enhanced friendly and degraded enemy communications, deception, and lethality (such as the Perdix platform developed by MIT). (SCO Fact Sheet 2017).

My recommendations above could be seen best as a reimagining of the glider-borne Infantry from WWII. A personnel pod or capsule coated with radar-absorbent material

and fitted with an aerial delivery system such as the JPADS could be deployed from an altitude of 24,500-ft. above ground level. This altitude is out of the range of many SAMs and the JPAD system's three to one forward glide ratio meaning that the drop zone could be up to 14 miles away from the aerial release point, making it much harder for an adversary to predict the drop zone. A personnel pod capable of landing in restrictive terrain would make it even more difficult to predict the drop zone. Insertion into restrictive terrain would give the now dismounted troopers a mobility advantage and provide readily available cover and concealment versus a traditional drop zone, which is nothing more than a large open danger area.

A swarm capable UAS such as the Perdix could fly an escort orbit with the personnel pod as it is in the air, serving as a countermeasure for SAMs, or could fly on a separate flight path mimicking a large radar signature and confusing enemy sensor operators. The personnel pod dropped from low-altitude and high speeds via a platform such as the EHLSCDS could increase the chance of survival for the delivery aircraft depending on the nature of the anti-access weapons present and reduce the time the airborne force would need to descend and assemble. All the above and traditional techniques could be incorporated into a multi-layered infiltration, making it much harder to defend against and maximizing the survival of the assault force.

The Army's doctrine states that "the evolving threat necessitates the development of comprehensive joint force solutions for gaining and maintaining operational access" (FM 3-99 2015, 1-1). Airborne forces could have the opportunity to continue to adapt their techniques to contribute to the joint force's collaborative efforts to execute JFEOs and maintain the relevancy of airborne forces.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★  
*CPT Ryan Huseman is assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Italy and is the current company commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment. He has served in multiple airborne assignments, is a Senior-rated Jumpmaster, and has multiple deployments throughout CENTCOM as both an Enlisted Infantryman and Infantry Officer.*



U.S. Army paratroopers assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade exit from a C17 Globemaster onto Torch Drop Zone as part of exercise Saber Junction 24.



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U.S. Army paratroopers assigned to 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, maneuver to an objective during a live fire iteration as part of Exercise Swift Response 25 at the Adazi Training Area, Latvia, 19 May 2025.

BY CPT DILLON J. SCHAAF  
PHOTOS BY STAFF SGT. RANDIS MONROS

★ FEATURE ★

# Enhancing Battlefield Sensing & Effects

## *The Imperative for a Reconnaissance Company*

**T**he modern operational environment demands that traditional Infantry brigade combat teams sense and respond faster than ever before. However, following U.S. Army Structure Document 25-29 (ARSTRUC 25-29), traditional Infantry brigade combat team cavalry squadrons have (or will) cease their colors, eliminating the traditional organic reconnaissance asset of the brigade.

As near-peer threats leverage a proliferation of reconnaissance and armed drones, enhanced electronic warfare capabilities and decentralized kill chains, the absence of an organic reconnaissance company could leave traditional Infantry brigade combat teams reactive rather than anticipatory. As an option to address this potential shortfall, Army force designers could establish a dedicated reconnaissance company at the brigade level that integrates emerging technologies such as short and medium range reconnaissance (SRR and MRR) drones, first person view (FPV) unmanned systems, electronic warfare capabilities and low earth orbit satellite communications. These assets are essential to enable persistent surveillance, rapid decision-making and precision effects in dispersed, high-threat environments.

Traditionally, Infantry brigade combat teams relied on cavalry squadrons for reconnaissance and security tasks. With two mounted troops and a dismounted troop, light cavalry squadrons provided reaction time and maneuver space for the rest of the brigade. As mentioned earlier, after April 2027, cavalry squadrons will cease to exist at the brigade combat team level. The forward-most element in the brigade will now be scout platoons. Scout

platoons are useful for achieving their battalion's reconnaissance and security tasks, but they are challenged to provide the same capabilities as the cavalry squadron. Given this limitation, a brigade could task organize so the brigade main command post is given operational control of all three battalion scout platoons to provide the brigade commander situational awareness of the close fight. However, there are several limitations with this model. First, scout platoons that are organic to an Infantry battalion will have separate and distinct training glidepaths with differing training priorities. Additionally, scout platoons are constantly determining how to best support their organic battalion.

If all operational control is given to the main command post, the main command post will receive control of three scout platoons that have varying levels of expertise. The scout platoons may have different communications plans and no unifying commander to provide command and control. Finally, giving operational control of all scout platoons to the brigade could remove the Infantry battalion's ability to provide themselves with reaction time and maneuver space to answer their own priority intelligence requirements. I recommend a force design that gives traditional Infantry brigade combat teams a reconnaissance company dedicated to answering brigade priority intelligence requirements. The reconnaissance company could be unified under a maneuver commander, which would allow the scout platoon to set conditions for the battalion.

A reconnaissance company of an Infantry brigade combat team could also integrate advanced technologies ranging from





unmanned aerial systems and electronic sensors to data fusion and real-time communications, in order to operate effectively across dispersed, multi-domain environments against near peer threats. The growing need to enhance the scale, variety and training infrastructure of our UAS program is well established.

During training exercises like Saber Junction 2024 in Germany and Swift Response 2025 in Lithuania, we witnessed firsthand the benefits and importance of leveraging effective short and medium range reconnaissance drones, both armed and unarmed, as well as one way attack drones. The short and medium range reconnaissance drones combined superior infrared optics with a highly mobile system, ranging from one to five kilometers. This had an enormous effect on the battlefield, especially when combined with one-way attack and armed reconnaissance drones. During the exercises, the 173rd Airborne Brigade's reconnaissance company used drones to identify high payoff targets and cue either indirect fire or one-way attack drone strikes, eliminating targets before direct fire contact was necessary.

Another sensing asset we used to cue effects was the military intelligence company's electronic warfare team. This team used their electronic warfare sensors to cue ground reconnaissance teams and confirmed what is suspected enemy presence, which enabled a precision strike to follow. Time-sensitive operations demand more than collection. In my experience, they require command-and-control architecture that moves data as fast as the fight. Persistent chat systems, enabled by mobile ad-hoc networks (MANETs) connected to low earth orbit satellites provide a resilient, beyond-line-of-sight means to deliver real-time situational awareness back to the brigade. Together, integrating unmanned aerial systems, electronic sensors, and data processes over a mobile ad-hoc network forms the foundation of a modern reconnaissance architecture—one that is fast, resilient and capable of driving precision effects in complex environments.

I recommend a task organization for the multi-functional reconnaissance company that prioritizes modularity, sensor-to-shooter integration and the ability to operate across dispersed

environments. The multi-functional reconnaissance company could consist of three ground reconnaissance platoons, with each platoon designed to operate as part of a broader collection and targeting effort. At the core of each platoon could be two ground reconnaissance squads, trained for dismounted and vehicle-supported operations in both permissive and contested terrain with organic short-range reconnaissance drones. These squads can provide the brigade regardless of environmental conditions. These squads can be supported by a medium-range reconnaissance drone team that provides increased organic aerial reconnaissance and bombing capabilities. Each platoon would ideally integrate their own electronic warfare team to sense and exploit enemy emissions then cue another reconnaissance asset or strike. Finally, the platoon could have a one-way attack drone section, offering organic strike capability against high-payoff targets. At the company level, a headquarters element could include an intelligence and fires fusion cell responsible for synthesizing multi-domain collection into actionable intelligence. The result is a multi-functional reconnaissance company capable of sensing, seeing and striking the enemy to shape the battlefield for the rest of the brigade.

As the nature of conflict evolves toward greater dispersion, speed and complexity, I believe brigade commanders require reconnaissance elements that can survive and are decisive. I recommend a purpose-built, multi-functional reconnaissance company that is built around manned ground reconnaissance and supported by integrated unmanned systems, electronic warfare and lethal effects to provide a scalable solution. When paired with data driven communications, this organization could provide the brigade with more than just eyes in the brigade close fight. It could deliver timely, actionable intelligence. Building and fielding such a capability is not just a modernization step; it is an operational imperative.

CPT Dillon Schaaf, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, commissioned from the United States Military Academy as an Infantry officer in 2018. He previously served as the Comanche Troop Commander in 1-91 CAV and as a PL and XO in 2ABCT, 3ID.



# LESSONS LEARNED

## *Building First-Person-View Attack Drones for the Infantry*

In April 2025, the 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team demonstrated a new capability for the modern maneuver company. Over six days across Grafenwöhr and Hohenfels Training Areas in Germany, the Brigade conducted a Multi-Functional Live Fire Exercise (MFLFX) with one major goal: to integrate first-person-view (FPV), one-way-attack (OWA) drones into company-level strike teams.

Combat observations from the Russo-Ukrainian War show that 60 to 70 percent of destroyed Russian systems are the result of tactical drone strikes. At the same time, Ukrainian forces are employing up to 10,000 drones per month. These observations suggest the U.S. Army could reduce the cost of kinetic strike systems and rapidly expand manufacturing capacity to compete on a modern battlefield.

To close this gap, in the summer of 2024, COL Joshua Gaspard, the 173rd Airborne Brigade Commander, presented a problem statement to the Bayonet Innovation Team: develop a repeatable, scalable process for brigade-level units to procure, assemble, train operators and conduct live-fire employment of FPV drones.

Since then, the 173rd Airborne Brigade has aggressively pursued the integration of FPV drones. Our team started assembling its own FPV OWA Purpose-Built Attritable System (PBAS) drone dubbed the “Skyraider.” We built a 118-hour Short-Range Attack (SRA) Program of Instruction (POI) to train and qualify FPV drone operators. Lastly, we conducted three FPV OWA live fires, achieving an 85 percent success rate.

The 173rd Airborne Brigade developed a scalable, repeatable framework for building, training and employing FPV OWA drones. Below, we provide key lessons learned and steps to assist other formations to replicate this capability.

### Two Ways to Get Drones in the Fight:

There are two primary options to procure FPV drones: (1) commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) fully assembled drone; and (2) purchase individual components and build internally. For cost control and operator familiarity, the 173rd Airborne Brigade opted to order modular parts kits and build the drones internally. Once a unit identifies and procures an FPV drone, it must go through the arduous process of training its operators, gaining necessary approvals, and identify an arming and detonation method all before a live fire operation.

While the 173rd Airborne Brigade is pursuing multiple different arming and detonation devices, in its first three live fire exercises, we employed the SHIV 2.0 Fireset, developed by the Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) Armament Center (AC). The SHIV 2.0, also known as the SHANK Fireset, is a self-contained, self-powered system that enables remote command or contact-based initiation of a non-electric detonator through a shock tube, allowing adaptable employment across various munition types. During the MFLFX, the charge body contained 1.25 pounds of C-4 and did not include any projectile, fragmentation or shape-charge material.

### The team has tested SHIV 2.0 in four live environments:

1. February 2025 – Initial Testing: Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine, 7th Army Training Command and the 173rd UAS Platoon
2. April 2025 – MFLFX: 1-503 IN (A) and 173rd Combat Engineer Company (CEC)
3. April 2025 – African Lion 2025: 173rd UAS Platoon and 1-91 CAV
4. May 2025 – Swift Response 2025: 173rd UAS Platoon



A U.S. Army paratrooper assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade supervises the detonation of a live First Person View (FPV) drone at Pabradė Training Area, Lithuania, during a joint forcible entry operation as part of Swift Response 2025, 18 May 2025.

Overall, the 173rd Airborne Brigade successfully detonated 11 of 13 SHIV 2.0 devices. These tests helped refine the mounting process, shock tube routing, payload integration and validated the Fireset’s safe operating profile under tactical conditions.

1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment and the 173rd Combat Engineer Company executed three live FPV drone strikes during the MFLFX. Unlike the initial live fire in February 2025, no DEVCOM subject-matter experts attended the exercise. Graduates of the 173rd SRA POI executed this live fire.

The FPV drones flew a total distance of 2.6 kilometers from the launch location to the target area with a straight-line distance from operator to target of 2.1 kilometers. Two of the three strikes successfully detonated in the impact area. Below are recommendations based on lessons learned from the MFLFX FPV drone live fire.

### *Building UAS Squads at the Company-Level*

To maximize the effectiveness of attack and reconnaissance drones, each company should establish a dedicated UAS squad at the Company Headquarters level. Drone operations must be a primary, not secondary, duty assignment—regardless of Military Occupational Specialty (MOS).



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Based on our exercises, we recommend a UAS Squad consist of nine personnel:

ROLE	PRIMARY DUTIES
<b>Squad Leader</b>	Oversees tasking and integration with company-level operations; deconflicts airspace; ideally an FPV OWA drone and SRR UAS Master Trainer.
<b>Strike Team Leader</b>	Receives strike tasking orders; deconflicts airspace; arms the drone; wears second set of goggles to assist with target acquisition (if necessary); validates route plan.
<b>FPV OWA Drone Operator</b>	Flies and controls the FPV OWA drone; builds drone route plan.
<b>Weaponeer</b>	Recommends munition and targeting solutions based on enemy composition, desired effects, and available platforms; recommend demolition / charge construction background (12B).
<b>Equipment Bearer</b>	Manages communication equipment; carries batteries and drones; provides local security.
<b>Hunter Team Leader</b>	Receives tasking order; submits flash reports; deconflicts target custodies; deconflicts airspace.
<b>SRR Drone Operator (Primary)</b>	Flies and controls the SRR drone; provides real-time surveillance and reconnaissance for the company.
<b>SRR Drone Operator (Alternate)</b>	Assists primary operator; manages extra batteries and drones; secondary SRR drone operator when required.
<b>Forward Observer</b>	Conducts dynamic targeting with SRR UAS; deconflicts airspace; sends spotting reports; provides BDA.

Current combat observations indicate that drone strikes miss their intended targets, primarily due to human error, including misidentification, targeting delays and poor navigation under combat conditions. During MFLFX, drone operators conducted live-fire strikes in a highly structured environment, where they:

- Identified targets in advance
- Conducted visual confirmation using binoculars
- Flew through rehearsed, low-threat corridors

- Navigate to targets using terrain association
- Penetrate contested airspace without real-time navigational aids
- Find and strike targets actively using camouflage, decoys and terrain masking

In my opinion, brigades have an opportunity to implement a tiered certification and qualification program for FPV drone operations, modeled after field artillery certification cycles with monthly, quarterly and semiannual tasks. I believe drone proficiency should be a primary task. Units must enforce flight currency standards without exception. Frequent hands-on training remains the most important factor in building lethal, confident and adaptable drone pilots. The table below outlines a recommended training progression:

CATEGORY	TRAINING TASK	FREQUENCY
Flight currency	10 hours of live flight or 20 hours on the simulator	Monthly
OWA Drone Tables I-III	Individual Certification	Quarterly
Table I	General Knowledge and Target Identification Test (Friendly and Enemy)	Quarterly
Table II	FPV Drone Proficiency Tasks (FPT) Some examples: • Construct a OWA Drone • Construct and attach a firing device • Program headset and controller to drone	Quarterly
Table III a	Flight simulation with Master Trainer • Static target • Moving target • Wave-off	Quarterly
Table III b	Inert flights with Master Trainer • Static target • Moving target • Wave-off	Quarterly
OWA Drone Tables IV-VI	Team Certification and Qualification	Table Dependent
Table IV	Team, Inert flights with Master Trainer • Static target • Moving target • Wave-off	Quarterly
Table V	Team, static range live fire	Quarterly
Table VI	Integration of live FPV engagement into platoon-level or above live fire exercise	Semiannually

During the MFLFX, FPV drone operators struggled to identify targets using analog video feeds—particularly in wooded terrain, low-light conditions and cluttered environments. While analog systems offered advantages like low latency and strong signal penetration, their low resolution made it difficult to distinguish targets from terrain features or decoys. In several cases, operators misidentified impact craters as valid targets.

To mitigate these challenges, units could pursue artificial intelligence solutions that enhance visual identification and reduce operator error. The Army's Artificial Intelligence Integration Center (AI2C) is developing tools that apply Automated Target Recognition (ATR), enabling drones to identify and track targets even in degraded visual conditions. These tools can also support visual lock and autonomous terminal guidance, allowing drones to complete strikes after signal loss or image degradation.

The MFLFX proved that Infantry formations can integrate organic FPV strike teams and dynamic targeting with small UAS systems at the squad, platoon and company levels. To build upon the MFLFX, this summer and fall, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment will integrate two live FPV OWA drone strikes into each platoon live fire iteration. In the fall, the 173rd Airborne Brigade will execute the MFLFX 2.0 with 40 live FPV drone strikes. Ultimately, our goal is to establish a repeatable training model that units across the Army can adopt, ensuring rapid integration of new technology to enhance, rather than replace, our core warfighting skills; technology must remain an enabler, not the end state.

CPT Robert Broz, commander of Chaos Battery, 4th Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, is a Field Artillery Officer with five years of experience in fire support systems and techniques. A 2020 graduate of Norwich University, he brings a strong foundation in joint fires integration and airborne operations.

*CPT Tyler Shekleton is a Field Artillery officer currently attending the Field Artillery Captains Career Course at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He has served as a Fire Direction Officer, Platoon Leader, Battery Executive Officer and Company Fire Support Officer in the 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne). He is a 2021 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point.*



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# 2025 DOUGHBOY AWARDS

## Recognizing Outstanding Infantrymen

The Doughboy Award was established in 1980 by the Fort Benning Chief of Staff, COL Edward “Shy” Meyer, for purpose of honoring Infantrymen and civilians that have made significant and lasting contributions to the Infantry and the Infantry community. These honors are rendered through the presentation of the Chief of Infantry’s Doughboy Award, at the Doughboy Awards Dinner. The Doughboy Award is the highest honor the Chief of Infantry can bestow on an Infantryman. The first recipient of the award was Mr. Bob Hope. The award was presented to him at a Navy Shipyard in San Diego by Meyer’s wife and MAJ Ton Konitzer.

The award is a chrome replica of a helmet worn by American Expeditionary Soldiers during World War I (WWI) and the early days of World War II. The term “Doughboy” originated in Texas where soldiers trained along the Rio Grande in preparation for WWI. The Soldiers become covered in the dusty, white adobe soil and were called “adobes” by mounted troops. This changed to “dobies,” which became doughboys.

This year’s recipients are: GEN (Ret) Vincent K. Brooks, CSM (Ret) Gerald E. Klein and Mr. E. Paul Voorhees. This year’s awards will be presented on 9 September at the National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center.

### GEN (Ret) Vincent Brooks

GEN (Ret) Vincent Brooks served in the U.S. Army for more than 42 years from his entry into the U.S. Military Academy at West Point until his retirement from active duty in 2019 as a four-star general. Brooks spent his final 17 years of service in the general officer ranks and for nearly all those years in command of large, complex military organizations in challenging situations.

His military service includes tours of duty in Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, the Western Hemisphere and the Indo-Pacific Region as well as the American Homeland. The warfighting units to which he was assigned, and commands where noted, include: 82nd Airborne Division, 1st Infantry Division (2 company commands and division command), 1st Cavalry Division (division command), 2nd Infantry Division (battalion command), 3rd Infantry Division (brigade command), III Corps (deputy corps commander), Third Army/ U.S. Army Central (theater army command), U.S. Army Pacific (theater army command), and U.S. Forces Korea/ROK-US

Combined Forces Command/United Nations Command (joint, combined and coalition unified command).

In his post-military career, GEN Brooks has served on the board of Diamondback Energy, Verisk Analytics, Jacobs Solutions, Amentum, Gary Sinise Foundation and Korea Defense Veterans Association. He is a consultant principal with WestExec Advisors and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. He is also a Fellow at Belfer Center at the Harvard Kennedy School, Clements Center for National Security at the University of Texas and Strauss Center for International Security and Law at the University of Texas. He also held an endowed chair as the Class of 1951 Chair for the Study of Leadership at the United States Military Academy.

GEN Brooks holds a Bachelor of Science from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, a Master of Military Art and Science from the U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, an Honorary Doctor of Laws from New England School of Law, and an Honorary Doctor of Humanities from New England Law | Boston.

He is the Honorary Colonel of the 9th Infantry Regiment (Manchu) and is a Distinguished Member of the 16th Infantry Regiment.



GEN (Ret) Brooks

### CSM (Ret) Gerald E. Klein

CSM (Ret) Gerald E. Klein entered the Army in October 1972 and completed Basic Training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Dix, New Jersey. His stateside assignments include Fort Leonard Wood, Fort Lewis, University of Wisconsin, Fort Benning, Fort Polk and Fort Riley. He has also served overseas tours in Germany and Korea.

CSM Klein served as a Drill Sergeant and in every Infantry leadership position from Rifle Squad Leader to Command Sergeant Major in the 75th Ranger Regiment. He served as a Battalion Command Sergeant Major for the 3rd Battalion 75th Ranger Regiment at Fort Benning: 5th Battalion 20th Infantry Regiment in Korea and the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry



Regiment at Fort Benning. He was the Command Sergeant Major of the Operations Group, Joint Readiness Training Center and the Command Sergeant Major of the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division at Fort Lewis. He also served as the Command Sergeant Major of the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and Fort Riley, and the Command Sergeant Major for the United States Army Infantry Center and Fort Benning.



**CSM (Ret) Klein**

CSM Klein's military education includes the 7th Army Non-commissioned Officer Academy Basic Non-commissioned Officer Course and Advanced Non-commissioned Officers Course; and Class 32 of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. He is a graduate of the United States Army Drill Sergeant School, the Basic Airborne course, the Ranger

course, the Pathfinder course and the Special Forces Underwater Operations course. He holds an Associate of Arts Degree from Columbia College and is 17 hours from completing his Bachelor of Arts Degree in History and Government.

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit; Meritorious Service Medal with eight oak leaf clusters; Army Commendation for Valor; Army Achievement Medal; Good Conduct Medal 9th award and numerous service decorations. He also earned the Combat Infantryman Badge; Expert Infantryman Badge; Master Parachutist Badge with two Bronze Service Stars; Pathfinder Badge; Scuba Badge; Drill Sergeant Badge; Canadian Parachutist Badge; Jordanian Parachutist Badge and the Ranger Tab.

CSM Klein is a Distinguished Member of the 75th Ranger Regiment and is a member of the Ranger Hall of Fame. He resides in Pittsview, Alabama.

## **Mr. Emmett Paul Voorhees**

Emmett Paul Voorhees was born in Columbus, Georgia, in 1945. The son of a WWII paratrooper, young Paul dreamed of following in his father's footsteps, but an injury he suffered as a child rendered him "unfit for service," according to the Army.

He decided that if he couldn't serve in the Army, he would serve the Soldiers who served in the Army. In 1963, 18-year-old Paul and his father purchased Columbus Military Surplus, a 1,200-square-foot storefront on Broadway in Columbus.

From the start, Paul and Jack Voorhees trusted the Infantrymen—the "Joes"—from Fort Benning who gave them proven and practical business advice, though the guidance often came in the form of a stern warning not to fleece the boys

of Benning. It was the Rangers specifically who helped shape inventory and pricing. It wasn't long before the sign out front read "Ranger Joe's" and a military icon was born.

Today, Ranger Joe's International Military Supply serves service members and law enforcement officials all around the globe and more than 50 allied countries. The store, which relocated to Victory Drive in 1975, still serves the Soldiers and families of Fort Benning. Paul Voorhees is still taking advice from his patrons. He has designed and manufactured boots and berets made to Ranger specifications. During the Global War on Terrorism, if Soldiers found the boots issued them didn't fit properly, he'd exchanged them for free.

Since Paul first anted up the money for a Ranger bowling team in 1966, Ranger Joe's has been sponsoring and funding events and programs that impact the quality of life of Fort Benning families and their Soldiers, including intramural and post sports teams, MWR events, the Best Ranger and Sniper competitions, field trips for Fort Benning schoolchildren, and much more.

He has helped pay for funerals and purchased thousands of meals for Soldiers, veterans and Fort Benning families. He helped spearhead and fund the Fallen Soldier Memorial in Columbus. He co-founded the Back the Blue organization to support law enforcement officials. An ordained Baptist minister, Paul continues to serve Soldiers, veterans and law enforcement and public safety officials as a chaplain.



**Mr. Voorhees**

Paul funded his own trip to Iraq twice (2003 and 2010) and Kuwait once (2007) to minister to Soldiers in combat zones and to supply them with Bibles. He counts the experience as one of the greatest honors of his life. He returned from Iraq in 2010 with a renewed confidence in the Soldiers taking care of Soldiers but was struck by their concern for their families back home. That became his mission.

These days, Paul's wife Janice handles the day-to-day business of Ranger Joe's and Paul concentrates on the various ways he supports Soldiers and their families. He often says, "God was at His best when He created the American Soldier," and he lives his life in service to God's great creation.

Paul was presented the Army Commander's Award for Public Service and a Medal of Merit, both in 2003, and he was inducted as an honorary member of the Ranger Hall of Fame in 2004. ★



# Celebrating the Army's 250th Birthday with a Bang

On the eve of the Army's birthday, guests were entertained with a lively Night at the Museum on 13 June. The evening was filled with Soldiers in various period uniforms representing 250 years of the Infantry's history and acted as a preview for the following day's festivities. The lobby was filled for the grand unveiling of the updates to the Last 100 Yards. Thanks to the steady campaign commitment from Securing the Future members, the Museum was able to renew the failing audio/visual system that gave the exhibit its original award-winning impact. After a thunderous cannon boom, the ramp exhibit sprang to life and guests wandered through to new sights, sounds and reenactors bringing the Infantry battles to life. One volunteer of note was David Moore dressed in his father's uniform, the infamous Hal Moore, representing his legacy from the battle of Ia Drang during the Vietnam War.

Delicious food was prepared and ready in Cavezza Hall to welcome guests after they experienced history with 40 uniformed Soldiers sharing their battle stories of Lexington through Afghanistan. Once guests had settled in their seats, Museum Foundation President and CEO, BG (Ret) Pete Jones thanked our Veterans and Volunteers for keeping our Museum a cornerstone of the community. Columbus Mayor Skip Henderson commemorated the 250th Birthday of the Army by warmly recognizing the importance of the support and sacrifice made by the families of those who serve our great nation. Fort Benning's Maneuver Center of Excellence Commandant, MG Colin Tuley took the stage and reflected on the week's activities which put the spotlight on "best teammates" between the military and civilian communities. The crowd was pleasantly surprised when the legendary, General George Washington, took to the stage to share his accounts of the formative years of our great nation and closed the evening to thunderous applause.

The next day, more than 3,000 guests joined us in celebrating the Army's Birthday in our free community event—Salute to the Army 250. The festivities officially commenced after the MCOE band played the National Anthem and the cannon was fired from volunteer Civil War Reenactors. Guests were entertained by Soldiers dressed in legacy uniforms throughout the Museum galleries and everyone enjoyed free movies during the day. On campus we had incredible community partners selling lunch from their food trucks and Frank's Alley sponsored two hot-dog eating contests in the Courtyard with a cheering squad provided from Officer Candidate School onlookers. Museum visitors delighted in the flawless parachute jump by Fort Benning SilverWings and our littlest guests burned off energy in the bounce houses. One attraction took our event to new heights, thanks to the Friends of Army Aviation—guests had the opportunity to purchase a roundtrip flight in a Vietnam era UH-1. The warbird loaded and took off from our Inouye Field and flew along the Chattahoochee River with the doors wide open and the sounds of freedom roaring. We are still reeling from the support shown by the community in honor of the Army's big day. ★



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On 18 June 2025, SFC Christopher Holmes was presented the Order of Saint Maurice. Present at the ceremony was SFC Holmes' wife, Christina and sons, Aiden and Liam.



On Veterans Day 2023 in Alachua, Florida, SFC Zachary Lewis, (left), was presented the Order of St. Maurice. Joining him for the presentation were 1SG Kyle Lewis, (center), and SFC (Ret) Ronald Lewis.



On 4 May 2025, Mr. Kim, Jong-Wook was awarded the Order of Saint Maurice by the National Infantry Association in honor of his service as a KATUSA in the United States Army and for his dedication to enhancing the ROK-U.S. Alliance. After completing his military service, Mr. Kim has continued to strengthen this important Alliance through his participation in Korea Defense Veterans Association (KDVA), KATUSA Veterans Association and the Korea-US Alliance Foundation (KUSAF). On hand for the presentation were (left to right) Kwak, Sang-Mo, Senior Advisor, KATUSA Veterans Assn.; Kevin L. Miller, president, KDVA GA Chapter; Kim, Jong-Wook, KDVA Board of Directors; COL (Ret) Rob Choppa, NIA president and CSM (Ret) Chris Lewis, VP, National Infantry Museum Foundation.



On 13 June 2025 at the Airborne and Special Operations Test Directorate at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, COL Scott Brannon presented the Order of St. Michael to MAJ Josh Cook.



On 2 May 2025, Vietnam Infantry veteran, Al Lipphardt was presented the Order of St. Maurice by NIA president COL (Ret) Rob Choppa at the Vietnam Wall Memorial located at the National Infantry Museum. Lipphardt is the current national VFW Commander-In-Chief and served in the 196th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam. Present also is COL (Ret) Richard Caravana, former 196th Brigade S3 in Vietnam and OSM recipient.

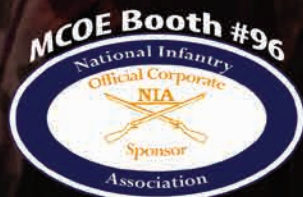


On 3 July 2025 at the Henry H. Lind NCOA, SSG Keith A. McIntosh was presented the Order of St. Maurice by MSG Jonathan H. Lainez.



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