

RETENTION OF THE BAYONET

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SUBJECT: Retention of the Bayonet

1. PROBLEM. To determine if the infantryman has a need for the bayonet.

2. ASSUMPTION. The infantryman, in addition to engaging an enemy in combat, will continue to perform a variety of missions.

3. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM.

a. FM 19-15, Civil Disturbance, states that "The term civil disturbance includes all domestic conditions requiring or likely to require the use of Federal Armed Forces pursuant to the provisions of 10 USC chapter 15" (5:1-1).

b. FM 7-10, The Rifle Company, Platoons, and Squads, states that "The primary combat mission of a rifle unit is to locate the enemy and destroy his fighting capability" (4:1-2).

c. ST 21-150-1, Instinctive Rifle-Bayonet Fighting Techniques, states that "Bayonet training develops a spirit of aggressiveness in the individual and instills the will to fight" (13:2).

4. DISCUSSION.

a. With the introduction of increased mobility on the battlefield and the development of new tactics, the infantryman will still have the basic mission of engaging the enemy in close combat. When faced with this situation, he must be armed with a weapon that affords him the ability to continue the attack in the event his rifle becomes ineffective. The bayonet fulfills this requirement and is his last resort weapon (annex A).

b. For the infantryman to use the bayonet as a weapon, he must be proficient in its employment. This ability to effectively engage the enemy will be a direct result of his bayonet training. The training he presently receives provides this proficiency and enables him to fight the enemy on equal terms (annex E).

c. The infantryman uses his bayonet for a variety of purposes other than those related directly to close combat (annex F). However, he rates the current bayonet as an unsatisfactory combat knife. Consequently, he frequently will not carry the bayonet in combat but will instead substitute it with a more efficient personal knife (annex C).

d. Civil disturbance remains an existing problem the infantryman must be prepared and trained to meet. When he is employed in riot control, his mission will normally be

to maintain law and order or to restore control by using a minimum show of force. The bayonet aids him in carrying out this mission and has been rated as an effective and indispensable weapon in riot control (annex B).

e. The retention or elimination of the bayonet must be considered in respect to which action would be in the best interest of the infantryman. Elimination of the bayonet provides him no marked advantage, while its retention gives the infantryman the ability to perform missions requiring use of the bayonet (annex A) as well as a means of self-defense (annex F).

5. CONCLUSIONS.


a. The infantryman has sufficient need for the bayonet.

b. The bayonet does not provide the infantryman with an effective combat knife.

6. ACTIONS RECOMMENDED.

a. The conclusion in paragraph 5a be approved.

b. The bayonet be modified to make it a more effective combat knife.


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ANNEXES: A--Employment of the Bayonet in Combat Situations
B--Employment of the Bayonet in Civil Disturbance
C--Factors Favoring Elimination of the Bayonet
D--Factors Favoring Retention of the Bayonet
E--Effectiveness of Bayonet Training
F--Discussion
G--Bibliography

CONCURRENCES: (Omitted)
NONCONCURRENCES: (Omitted)
CONSIDERATION OF NONCONCURRENCES: (Omitted)
ANNEXES ADDED: (Omitted)
ACTION BY APPROVING AUTHORITY:

DATE:

Approved (disapproved), including (excluding) exceptions.

Signature

ANNEX A - Employment of the Bayonet in Combat Situations

1. The infantryman engaged in combat may be faced with the following situations requiring use of the bayonet:

a. "If you (the infantryman) must fight in a crowded or close combat situation where a shot would likely hit a friend as well as the enemy, the bayonet becomes your most effective weapon" (13:23).

b. "During infiltration missions at night, or when secrecy must be maintained, the bayonet is an excellent silent weapon" (9:1).

c. "It may be desirable to kill, stun, or capture an enemy soldier without alerting other enemy in the area. The bayonet, garotte (choke wire or cord), and homemade clubs are some of the weapons used for these purposes" (8:21).

d. "...when the situation does not permit the loading or reloading of the rifle, the bayonet is still the weapon available to the soldier" (9:1).

e. "If you temporarily run out of ammunition or if there is no time to apply immediate action to a malfunctioning (sic) weapon, the bayonet becomes your best friend" (13:23).

2. The infantryman, when preparing for offensive operations or in assuming a defensive posture, has found that:

The bayonet is a multipurpose weapon and has many non-fighting uses, such as a probe for mines, to cut vegetation (for fields of fire or camouflage), and other tasks when a pointed or cutting tool can be employed (9:1).

3. The infantryman may at times be employed in guarding prisoners of war, either in the forward area or in a regular compound. The bayonet could be employed in this instance in the same manner as it is in civil disturbance. The following quotation from FM 19-40, Enemy Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees, addresses this contention:

Elements of the guard force are used when necessary to quell disturbances and regain control of dissident PW elements. Forces employed in riot control use infantry or riot control tactics as required, supported by organic weapons and riot control agents (6:3-7).

ANNEX B - Employment of the Bayonet in Civil Disturbance

1. Civil disturbance operations are missions the infantryman must be prepared to meet. The following show the responsibility the Army has in civil disturbance.

a. "The Secretary of the Army has been designated as the Executive Agent for the Department of Defense in all matters pertaining to the planning, deployment, and employment of military resources in the event of a civil disturbance" (5:2-1).

b. "The Department of the Army has principal responsibility for coordinating the functions of all military services in these areas, while the other services are responsible for providing such assistance as may be requested by the Executive Agent" (5:2-1).

2. Once the infantryman is employed in a civil disturbance operation, his bayonet may be used as a weapon to restore order. Experience in civil disturbance has shown that:

a. "The rifle with bayonet and riot control agents have been the weapons most widely used in civil disturbance control operations. The rifle, of course, being primarily an extension for the bayonet is also used in antisniper operations" (5:I-1).

b. "The rifle with bayonet is the weapon most commonly used by troops in riot control formations" (5:B-2).

3. The effectiveness and use of the bayonet in riot control was addressed in a study conducted by the Human Resources Research Office (HumRRO), Division No. 4, in November 1968. One of the conclusions of this study was that "The bayonet is highly valued as a riot control weapon" (3:2). In a questionnaire administered by HumRRO, personnel were asked to rate the effectiveness of the bayonet in riot control. The findings showed that:

Slightly over 80 percent of the individuals in this study rated the bayonet as an indispensable or very useful weapon in riot control. When asked to rank the importance of the following reasons for using the bayonet in riot control, the subjects ranked them in order of this listing: psychological effect, allows control without gunfire, less serious wounds inflicted, the soldier is better armed with it than without it (3:14).

ANNEX C - Factors Favoring Elimination of the Bayonet

1. While the value of the bayonet has been shown in civil disturbance operations (annex B), it also has the following disadvantage:

In certain situations, the use of the rifle or rifle with bayonet has produced undesirable reactions from civil disturbance participants and has resulted in an escalation rather than a reduction of the intensity of the civil disturbance (5:J-1).

Additionally, the United States Military Police School commenting on FM 19-15, Civil Disturbance, stated

...recent developments indicate that use of the riot baton in situations previously reserved for the bayonet in riot control formations is compatible with D. A. policy and can be doctrinally justified (12:2).

2. Results of a survey done by HumRRO, Division No. 4, in November 1968 showed:

a. "The bayonet frequently was not carried in combat. When it was carried, it was seldom fixed. When it was fixed, it was seldom used. Thus, the bayonet probably does not account for a significant number of enemy casualties" (3:11).

b. "The majority of the officers and enlisted men questioned do not believe that the bayonet is a satisfactory combat knife" (3:13).

3. "Opponents to retention of the bayonet voice the added argument that to be a truly effective weapon, the soldier who employs it must assume a standing position for an extended period of time; and that the upright soldier, however effective he may be wielding his bayonet, makes an excellent silhouette target for the enemy soldier with a rifle" (2:3).

4. Advocates of the bayonet state that one of its advantages is it instills confidence and aggressiveness in the soldier (annex D). HumRRO in their study addressed this aspect and found that "When asked whether the possession of the bayonet gave the men in their unit or themselves added confidence and aggressiveness, less than 50 percent of the men answered yes" (3:11).

ANNEX D - Factors Favoring Retention of the Bayonet

1. "New weapons, improved equipment, and new tactics have been introduced into modern warfare; however, fire power alone will not always drive a determined enemy from his position. He will often remain in defensive emplacements until driven out by close combat. The role of the soldier, particularly in the final phase of the assault, remains relatively unchanged. His mission is to close with and disable or capture the enemy. The rifle with fixed bayonet is one of the final means of defeating an opponent in an attack" (9:1).
2. "The bayonet serves as a secondary weapon should the rifle develop a stoppage" (9:1).
3. "In hand-to-hand encounters the bayonet may be used as a hand-held weapon" (9:1).
4. "A knife (or bayonet), properly employed, is a deadly weapon. You can use it on patrols to silence an enemy sentry or you can use it for close-infighting when you do not have a rifle" (9:94).
5. "Retention of the bayonet as a combat weapon based purely on frequency of use or cost effectiveness cannot be justified. On the other hand, its possible use as a last resort or special circumstance weapon supports its retention under the obligation to give the combat soldier all practical means to accomplish his mission and provide for his self-defense" (14:1).
6. "Bayonet training contributes to physical conditioning, and to the instilling of motivation and discipline..." (3:1).
7. "Bayonet training develops a spirit of aggressiveness in the individual and instills the will to fight" (13:2).

ANNEX E - Effectiveness of Bayonet Training

1. For the bayonet to be used as a weapon, the infantryman must possess a basic skill level in bayonet fighting. HumRRO, in November 1968, conducted a survey of military personnel concerning the bayonet. One of the aspects explored was the effectiveness of bayonet training. Their findings showed that:

a. "When asked whether or not they felt confident in their ability to face an enemy soldier in bayonet combat, 785 of the 1115 responses (or 70 percent) were affirmative. Thus, the majority of the men feel themselves to be at least as competent in the use of the bayonet as an enemy soldier they are likely to face" (3:16).

b. "The subjects indicated that bayonet training was a good physical conditioner, and also that it was effective in instilling motivation and discipline. However, the majority of the individuals in the questionnaire also indicated that other combative training (unspecified) could achieve the same high level of physical conditioning, motivation, and discipline in a comparable period of time" (3:19).

2. Since the HumRRO study, the United States Army Infantry School in 1969 developed the Instinctive Rifle-Bayonet Fighting System (IRBF). The new system was approved by Headquarters CONARC for adoption in March 1970. The effectiveness of this new system can be summarized as follows:

Tests conducted during development showed that the instinctive system afforded better results over the old in almost all respects to include accuracy, target penetration ability, speed, and confidence. In summary, training under the new instinctive bayonet system manifestly approaches achievement of the goal of a training effort commensurate with expected benefits in combat (14:TAB C).

3. Based on the above information, it appears the infantryman receives adequate training in bayonet fighting and is proficient enough to engage an enemy in close combat. Additionally, bayonet training also improves his physical condition, discipline, and motivation, although other forms of combativeness achieve the same effect.

ANNEX F - Discussion

1. The arguments for or against retention of the bayonet address valid points. Each one studied presented sound evidence supporting a particular view. By close analysis of the advantages and disadvantages, each one can be justified by applying it to a special situation or an unique circumstance. However, two significant factors must be addressed. The first is that by eliminating the bayonet one of the most effective weapons in riot control would be lost (annex B). The argument that the riot baton can be used in situations normally reserved for the bayonet only applies in special situations (annex C). The second factor is the responsibility incurred by all commanders to provide the infantryman with all available assets to accomplish the mission and for self-defense (annex D). The second factor is particularly important in the event the infantryman's rifle fails to fire. In summary, elimination of the bayonet provides the infantryman with no significant advantage and reduces his capabilities in riot control as well as defending himself when the situation requires.

2. In non-fighting situations the infantryman has shown he will use his bayonet in cutting vegetation or probing for mines (annex A). Additional uses would be applying first aid, constructing shelters, or opening containers. These instances show that the infantryman armed with the bayonet, as opposed to without it, is better equipped to face a variety of situations.

ANNEX G - Bibliography

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