



Mine plow-equipped M1A1 rolls down the lane at Gowen Field.

PHOTO: SGT George F. Johnson, Idaho ARNG

Innovation, Simulation Stretch 116th Cav's Resources

Innovative, flexible, and determined are words that best describe the 116th "Snake River" Cavalry Brigade as it changes forever the way the Army National Guard trains.

This 8-year-old roundout-enhanced brigade, headquartered at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, was chosen in 1993 as one of two brigades to participate in the experimental Simulation in Training for Advance Readiness (SIMITAR) project. Congress chartered SIMITAR to find high-payoff, advanced technology solutions outside the Defense Department's normal life-cycle procurement and development processes to overcome the traditional barriers to quality National Guard training — time and distance.

The Guard has only 39 training days each year. Project SIMITAR took each day and made it a more effective training period by limiting soldier travel time through maximizing the use of training simulation devices at local armories, by balancing gunnery and maneuver training through Abrams and Bradley compressed gunnery programs, and by utilizing simulation devices to prepare and

complement, but not to replace, live-fire training.

The success of the SIMITAR program was demonstrated this year during the largest and most complex annual training (AT) ever conducted by the brigade. This AT was a rehearsal for next year, when it will be the second enhanced brigade and SIMITAR participant to train at the NTC.

The 2-116th Cav and 3-116th Cav changed the Guard's training paradigm by completing most of Tank Table VIII qualification during drill weekends and beginning Tank Table XII qualification by day three of AT. In the past, it took almost the complete AT period for crews to qualify on Tank Table VIII, and rarely did platoons shoot Tank Table XII. During this annual training, all platoons shot Tank Table XII. It was the soldiers' dedication to the SIMITAR's Abrams compressed gunnery program that made the difference.

The gunnery program balances training time at home station, with simulation devices, with live-fire training time on the range. It also balances gunnery and ma-

neuver tasks training. The devices used are the Conduct-of-Fire Trainer (COFT), Simulation Networking system (SIMNET), and Abrams Full-crew Interactive Simulation Trainer system (AFIST).

AFIST was specifically designed by the Guard so full crews can train on precision gunnery skills and basic maneuver skills at the unit armory, or wherever unit tanks are stored. Each crew member trains at his station within the tank, so a high level of training realism is achieved.

The AFIST computer simulation system is attached to an M1A1 tank and is a simple matter to install. [ed. See *ARMOR*, March-April 1996.] Installation requires only one crescent wrench and one Allen wrench.

The optimum use of AFIST at home station requires four systems to allow for the entire platoon to train together. While one platoon trains on the AFIST, the other platoons rotate through maneuver training using SIMNET, or COFT, or tank maintenance training on actual tanks, and individual crew skills training.

The Guard's training paradigm was also altered by the 1-163rd Infantry Battalion, which was just organized and completed its Bradley New Equipment Training last year. This year, it completed most of Bradley Table VIII qualification during drill weekends and conducted Bradley Table XII midway through AT. It was the first time Bradley Table XII was performed at the Orchard Training Area.

The 1-163rd Mech Battalion's achievement was due in large measure to their innovation and dedication to the SIMITAR's Bradley compressed gunnery program. This program closely follows the Abrams compressed gunnery program with one exception. The Bradley program uses a Full-crew Simulation Trainer which includes the dismounted infantrymen (Bradley-FIST) system.

This system did not exist until the SIMITAR trainers identified the need for a simulation device that simultaneously trained mounted and dismounted troops. In the past, mounted troops went to one location and the dismounted troops went to another location for training. Now, Bradley-FIST allows both mounted and dismounted troops to train together in

one location. It is the only simulation device like it in existence.

The Bradley-FIST is appended to a Bradley that is integrated with the Engagement Skills Trainer (EST). The EST is a computer simulation device that allows dismounted troops to engage targets portrayed on a video screen.

The resourceful 116th Cavalry Brigade again broke new ground by field testing an innovative Combat Service and Support version of Janus. It was created at the request of the Brigade's BMMO and S-4. The brigade has a resident Janus programmer who improves and adapts the Janus database system to meet the brigade's needs.

The refined war simulation program now includes an extensive service and support database. This addition allows commanders to use the program to train units in combat maneuvers as well as providing food, fuel, ammunition, parts, equipment, personnel replacements, and medical support to combat units.

The CSS "play" begins when commanders request supplies and evacuation of injured personnel and damaged equip-

ment. Each commander (down to company level) can actually "see" the extent of damage to his or her company via icons on the digital battlefield display. Icons represent items such as broken vehicles and injured personnel. Depending on what they see, leaders generate the necessary equipment and personnel reports and send them through the proper channels. Commanders and staff can also watch each individual support elements move on the simulated battlefield and witness the results of their decisions, just as they would in reality.

The training achievements of the Snake River Brigade are closely monitored by the National Guard Bureau. With money and training areas becoming less available, all National Guard units will need to learn how to utilize these scarce resources better. The programs and strategies developed in the Snake River Brigade, through SIMITAR, will help these units meet the challenge of "doing more with less."

(This article was prepared by 1LT Dia Logan, 116 CAV PAO.)