

the "FLOT" (forward line of troops). We are told this is the "cover force battle." Although the "enemy" has advanced eight "klicks," it has yet to reach the prepared defenses of the Orange forces. The corps commander's "G-2," the intelligence officer, briefs us on how he is getting a steady flow of information from his "rollover" troops, specially trained soldiers whose mission is to stay behind as the enemy "rolls over" their positions. They stay hidden and communicate battlefield intelligence to their respective headquarters. Other intelligence flows in through aerial surveillance, and most important, the front-line troops at the "point."

The report of the "firing" of a Lance missile provokes one journalist to ask whether the advance of powerful and sophisticated weapons could lead to a reduction in the number of troops required for European defense. Was the infantryman becoming a dying species? The commander's answer: "Tanks, missiles, nuclear weapons, can be used to destroy targets, enemy positions, and what have you, but it's only the infantry and engineers on the ground who can consolidate and hold that territory. . . . No, the infantryman will by no means be a dying species." (Sam Nunn, Frank Carlucci: Are you listening?)

We leave the headquarters to observe the "battle" via helicopter. We touch down at the "point," the most advanced position of the Blue forces. Here, we are able to observe the "combined arms team," the basic fighting formation of Army-Airforce operations. A young captain, the company commander, in a few moments, briefs us in amazing detail on his company's unfolding engagement. No doubt, his briefing is designed for trained officers, not humble journalists. Describing how his most forward troops are engaging the enemy, he reports that a "JAAT" (joint air attack team) comprising Army attack helicopters such as the new Apache and Air Force F-16 fighter bombers, had just hit an armored formation of the Orange forces.

We remount our helicopter for more observation. This region of Germany is characterized by rolling hills and low mountain ranges. While the open farmland is ideal for mechanized operations, it is interspersed with deep forestland and other natural features suitable for organizing defensive positions and bases for attack. These maneuvers are aimed at exercising these operations, an opportunity that many of the soldiers not only appreciate, but see as absolutely necessary.

Although these maneuvers cover a front of no more the 30 kilometers, equivalent of only one of NATO's 26 divisions on the central front, their observation clearly gave a glimpse at the challenges before NATO in the face of a Soviet military machine undergoing unrestrained development and expansion. The question, as it has confronted NATO since President Reagan signed the INF agreement and spurred on talk of U.S. troop withdrawals, is whether the political leadership of the Alliance will betray what is clearly a commitment among the soldiers of the Alliance to carry out their responsibilities.

France vows military support for Germany

by Christine Bierre

French President François Mitterrand and Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, in statements made prior to the Brussels summit meeting of NATO leaders at the beginning of March, warned against American disengagement from Europe and underlined that France would view a Soviet attack on West Germany as tantamount to an attack on France itself.

Chirac stressed, in an interview to *l'Express* magazine published Feb. 26: "I think it necessary to demonstrate more clearly than ever to Germany that she is not alone. This is why I declared in the firmest possible way, that the engagement of France side by side with the Federal Republic, would be immediate and without reserve in case of conflict. This is why I rejoice in the latest concrete developments of Franco-German cooperation, the mixed brigade and the Defense Council, which open the way for the creation of a common strategic space between our two countries, something which General de Gaulle wished for wholeheartedly, and which was contained in germ in the Franco-German treaty of 1963."

President Mitterrand, in an interview to the daily *Ouest France*, criticized the trend in the United States toward withdrawing the nuclear umbrella from Europe. He also opposed plans to compensate for the withdrawal of medium-range nuclear missiles, under the INF treaty, by modernizing short-range missiles. Germany is at the center of any future battlefield, he said, and "Germany has difficulties accepting the idea of being a territory stuffed with nuclear explosives and the probable target of a short-range nuclear war. One can and must understand that. It is true that most of the nuclear weapons of a very short range, cannot attain real objectives beyond the territorial limits of Germany, from where they are presently located."

Asked what America can do to reassure the West Germans, Mitterrand responded: "Ensure the balance of forces in all areas, and do everything to make sure that German soil is not the theater for a new war, which is what deterrence is intended to prevent." On the question as to what are the limits to Franco-German cooperation, he replied, "It is not the duty of France alone to defend Germany, but of the alliance as a whole. The fact that, beyond that, two European countries, friends and allies, linked by several treaties, wish to cooperate intensely, can only be useful to all other partners. The fact that, along with this cooperation, the embryo of a European defense appears, is something that suits me well."