

COMMANDER'S HATCH

Manuscript's Tone Raised Editing Questions

by Major General B. B. Bell, Commanding General, U.S. Army Armor Center



Over the last month there has been a lot of traffic regarding decisions to edit "Move It On Over," published in the last *ARMOR* Magazine. Let me set the record straight: The decision to edit the article, submitted by retired Army Brigadier General John Kirk, was mine.

The intent of *ARMOR* Magazine is to produce a professional publication that is sufficiently provocative to engender debate and discussion on contemporary issues facing the Armor force. Within this context, our editor is authorized and empowered to edit all articles for publication. As you would expect, authors agree to this up front. Almost always, editing consists of fairly docile grammatical and structural fixes.

In the case of "Move It On Over," I reviewed the content after becoming aware of concerns regarding the literary style of the author. On examination, I took editorial issue with the tone of the manuscript. To his credit, BG Kirk raised some very important points and challenged traditional thinking for revising *FM 100-5*. His scathing methods and personalized attacks, however, struck me as clearly out of bounds for a professional journal.

Following an additional edit by the magazine's staff at my direction and in my role as publisher, I added some further editorial corrections prior to publication.

I just want you to know, right or wrong, the decision to edit this article was mine and mine alone. I judged that BG Kirk's draft submission was inappropriate within a professional journal published at taxpayer expense. It was my call to make, and I made it without hesitation or reservation. I believe the integrity of *ARMOR* Magazine has been preserved. That's my view from the commander's hatch. Let me know what you think.

These are exciting times for the Army and our Armored and Cavalry Force. It is certainly a time of intense, focused effort at Fort Knox. Right now we are focusing on our responsibilities for forming, training, and fielding the Army's first "medium weight" force, known now as the "Initial Brigade," which will be fielded at Fort Lewis, Washington. TRADOC is providing the leadership for the brigade's ongoing development while the U.S. Army Infantry Center has overall proponentcy. The brigade is an "infantry-centric" organization with a basic composition of three infantry battalions and a Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RSTA) Squadron; however, it is at its core a combined arms organization. Its units will include several for which the Armor Center has direct responsibility for developing. The brigade's Reconnaissance Surveillance and Target Acquisition Squadron, the battalion scout platoons, and the battalion's medium gun system platoons are these organizations.

Specifically, the Armor Center is the proponent for the following Initial Brigade areas: (1) Conducting a performance demonstration at Ft. Knox of Initial Brigade vehicle/platform candidates for business, industry, and international suppliers; (2) Developing the O&O, doctrine, and DTLOMS requirements for the Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition Squadron; (3) Overseeing the development and fielding of the mobile gun system platoons within the infantry battalions; (4) Overseeing the development and fielding of reconnaissance platforms in both the RSTA squadron and the scout platoons within each of the infantry battalions and; (5) Leading the C4ISR development for brigade and below organizations.

Before addressing each of these efforts, I'd like to dispel some anxiety that has

surfaced in the Armor community regarding this effort. The first concern is that armored forces and the Abrams main battle tank are in danger of imminent demise. Absolutely untrue. Let's look at our recent past in an effort to put all this in the right context. As many of you know from service in the Cold War, we built a suite of platforms that dominated the Soviet threat to Western Europe. Each platform had at its core a requirement for battlefield effectiveness encompassing lethality and survivability. Because we were able to prepare the battlefield for almost fifty years, many battlefield mobility concerns were solved through engineering efforts. We dramatically reinforced all the bridges so we could cross MI tank formations, we improved the road infrastructure to give us the agility we needed, and we prepared battle positions in depth. We stockpiled enormous amounts of supplies and repair parts. Last, we pre-positioned or forward-deployed equipment on the battlefield to field ten divisions in ten days. Today, however, as we try to deploy formations employing the big five to immature operational theaters, we find that the deployability, mobility, and sustainability characteristics required for decisive strategic and operational maneuver are not resident in our force. Desert Shield (six months to deploy the force), Somalia, Bosnia, Albania, and Kosovo all instruct us that our superb (and winning!) Cold War capability designed for operations on an extensively prepared battlefield does not provide us the requisite capability for the small scale contingencies that confront us in the post-Cold War environment.

However, we cannot and we will not turn away from the dominant characteristics provided by the Abrams/Bradley fleet. As I stated in my first column as Chief of

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Armor, we will continue to aggressively pursue modernization upgrades to our M1 fleet as the dominant flagship of our full spectrum armored force. Meanwhile, we are on a path of scientific and technological research to achieve objective breakthroughs in lethality, survivability, deployability, and sustainability. I'll update you on this effort in future columns. Until and when we achieve this S&T breakthrough, the main battle tank is going to be required to ensure that we can win the nation's major theater wars.

The Chief of Staff of our Army has made a strong case for change. To achieve the required joint operational capabilities I discussed above and remain the world's dominant land force, the Army must develop new, adaptive and innovative capabilities. These capabilities must be built around full spectrum versatility, strategic responsiveness, and joint interoperability. The major theater war (MTW) requirement remains the most dangerous threat to our national security. However, small-scale contingencies (SSCs) have been and will continue to be the most frequent challenge the Army will face in the foreseeable future. One of the most daunting aspects of these future threat forces is their application of asymmetric tactics and technologies in urban and complex terrain to counter the technological and numerical advantages of U.S. joint systems and forces. As I noted, it is evident that our heavy forces are not rapidly deployable and lack the tactical agility and sustainability required for these missions. Our light forces, conversely, lack lethality, survivability, and tactical mobility. The Initial Brigade will be a rapidly deployable, full-spectrum, combat brigade with its organizational design optimized for small scale contingencies. In other words, it will fill the existing gap in Army force capability.

Throughout the development of the Initial Brigade, we have worked hard to define platform (vehicle) requirements that achieve maximum organizational effectiveness in both projection dominance and battlespace dominance. Simply stated, we want a common platform approach in the organization that achieves proper synergy between projection dominance requirements on one hand (deployability, sustainability, and MANPRINT) with battlespace dominance requirements (lethality, survivability, and mobility) on the other hand. A high level of platform commonality is essential to achieve the appropriate synergy between projection dominance and battlespace dominance. I'm satisfied that our analyses to date have effectively defined platform requirements that are in harmony with the brigade's organizational and operational concept and give us the best op-

portunity possible to optimize the organization's effectiveness.

Starting two months ago, we began communicating the platform requirements to business, industry and international suppliers. As you read this, a wide range of existing platforms are being demonstrated here at Knox to see how they perform in conditions that closely replicate the operational environment envisioned for the Initial Brigade. The demonstration includes each of the dominant brigade platform requirements for a mobile gun system, infantry carrier, ATGM platform, and reconnaissance platform. The ability of available platforms to be adapted for other requirements in the Brigade — engineer, CSS, C2, etc. — are also key objectives. Company grade officers and NCOs from the force are operating the equipment and communicating directly with industrial leaders the need for adaptation and technology insertions to meet requirements.

The bottom line for this demonstration is to ensure that the Army gains an understanding of the platforms (and their off-the-shelf capability) that are currently available to meet the Brigade's near term requirements, while precisely communicating adaptability and technological insertion requirements to the suppliers of the platforms.

Following the performance demonstration at Knox, the intent is for the Army to initiate a formal competitive acquisition process that will culminate next summer in procurement decisions regarding appropriate platforms for fielding. Again, the performance demonstration at Knox is an opportunity for an open two-way communication process regarding platform requirements. One more point — absolutely no decision has been made regarding a wheel or track drive train. We'll let the analysis and force effectiveness requirements lead us to the right solution.

The Brigade's RSTA squadron is designed to give the brigade commander high levels of situational understanding throughout the Brigade's battlespace. Its O&O describes a unit optimized for multi-dimensional reconnaissance and surveillance operations in small-scale contingencies operating in complex and urban terrain. Over the years, our doctrine has been based on an operational context that involves making contact, developing the situation, then maneuvering for decisive combat. The RSTA is designed within the Brigade's structure to dominate situational understanding and provide the opportunity for the commander to first develop the situation, maneuver out of contact, then make decisive contact to defeat the enemy at a time and place of his choosing. The

RSTA squadron is designed to provide high quality information and knowledge concerning the widest array of threat conditions common to small scale contingencies, including: conventional and unconventional enemy forces, terrorists, transnational groups, paramilitary/police organizations, political groups, organized criminal groups, etc. In its primary role of reconnaissance and surveillance, the squadron orients on the area of operations and the threat, vice solely on the main body of the friendly force. This is an exciting and powerful reconnaissance and surveillance organization with the capability to dominate situational understanding within an area of operations for the brigade commander, thus ensuring the Brigade's mobility and freedom of maneuver prior to contact. As TRADOC's lead agent in developing the RSTA squadron, we at Knox will work hard to ensure the organization achieves its O&O objectives across the DTLOMS.

In the next Commander's Hatch, I'll describe the brigade's mobile gun system requirement as well as battalion scouts and the C4ISR issue. Additionally, I'll lay out how we envision the brigade operating in major theater wars side by side and integrated with the big five.

We expect this whole body of ongoing work will lend itself to parallel efforts to review the force effectiveness of the 2nd ACR and to relook the requirement for an armored gun platform in support of the 82nd Airborne Division. We are addressing both of these issues now.

We have an incredible team of truly professional military and civilian leaders here at the Armor Center working tirelessly to turn visions, guidance, and opportunity into reality. I am very proud of all these great soldiers and civilians and can assure you they will do their part to produce trained soldiers, effective organizations, great equipment, and doctrine and TTPs to meet your needs into the 21st century. The Initial Brigade is exactly the right force to meet a very challenging requirement for our warfighters and we are naturally enthusiastic about meeting the crucial responsibilities of the Armor and Cavalry Force associated with this tremendous initiative. I'll keep you posted and look forward to an exciting and energetic dialogue. I would ask that you give us your thoughts and insights through any forum as we all work to field this important addition to the Army's suite of capabilities.

Forge the Thunderbolt and Strike First!

MG B. B. Bell
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