

TRADOC System Manager For Abrams and the AGS Comments on "Assault Gun Battalion 96"

In response to Major Martin N. Stanton's article on the XM8 Armored Gun System (September-October 94), we would like to correct and clarify several topics concerning the Army's concepts for employment of the AGS and its capabilities and limitations.

The Army has no plans for fielding the AGS to assault gun battalions. 3-73 Light Armor Battalion of the 82d Airborne Division is the first unit designated to receive the AGS with subsequent fielding to the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment. The term Assault Gun Battalion has its genesis in Army programs of the 1980s designed to field a Mobile Protected Gun system to the 9th Infantry Division (Motorized) and other light infantry divisions. These plans and programs were superseded by the AGS Program.

New Army doctrine for the employment of the AGS is not required. Doctrinal tenets are found in the current version of FM 17-18, *Light Armor Operations*, and in FM 17-95, *Cavalry Operations*. Additionally, the AGS replaces the M551A1 (TTS) Sheridan in 3-73 Armor, whose crews, sections, and platoons already train on a habitual basis in close support of light infantry forces. In the case of the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment, the AGS will serve in the traditional role of armor support for reconnaissance elements. It performs the same role as do Abrams tanks in the existing heavy ACRs with obvious METT-T distinctions — survivability considerations etc., as is the case of employing HMMWV vice M3s.

Major Stanton's contention that the AGS is more vulnerable to shoulder fired anti-tank weapons than a main battle tank is

only partially correct. AGS Level III Armor was specifically designed to defeat such a threat and has successfully completed initial live fire tests. Additionally, technical testing has revealed that the AGS is fully capable of traversing difficult terrain in much the same fashion as the Abrams. Requirements call for the AGS to ford up to 40 inches of water as compared to the Abrams capability to negotiate 48 inches. In short, the AGS is capable of operations in difficult and demanding terrain. And by the way, AGS is equipped with an infantry phone system similar to the M60-series tanks.

We appreciate and applaud the thought-provoking contributions of authors such as Major Stanton to get the AGS story out, and encourage others to do the same. Professional dialogue is healthy and is a hallmark of our branch. We stand ready to assist writers in their research efforts...

The AGS is currently undergoing technical testing at Aberdeen Proving Grounds and enters operational testing at Fort Pickett, Virginia, starting in January of 1995. Current plans call for light infantry support missions as a test basis at Fort Pickett transitioning to a cavalry focus during IOT&E slated for January 1996.

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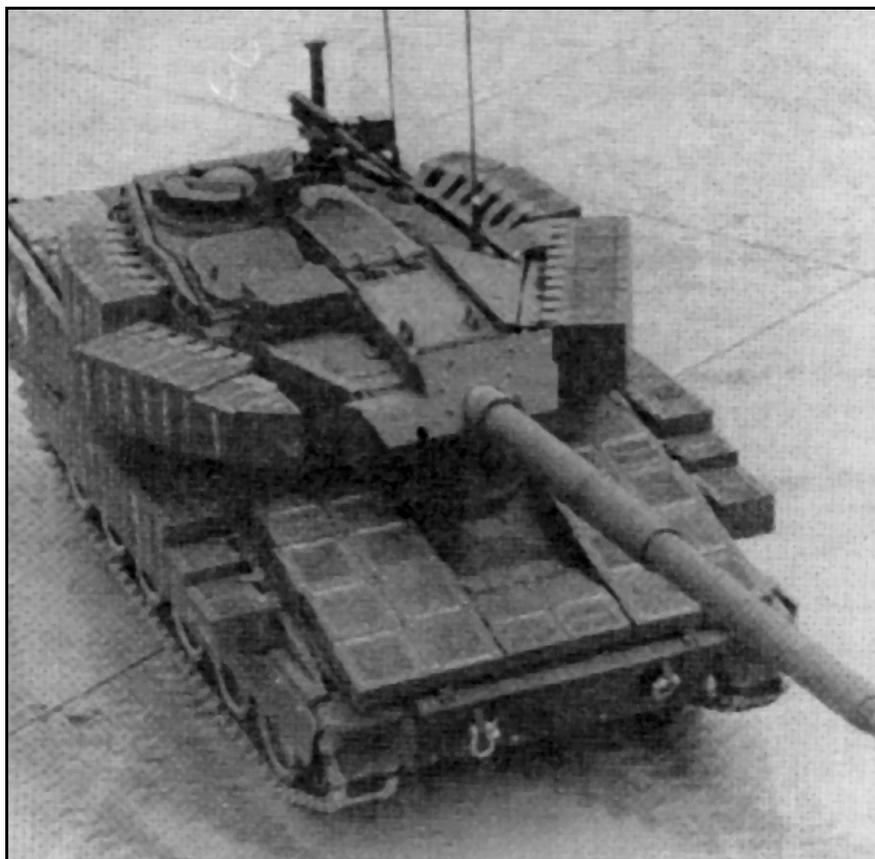
(Major Edwards is Light Systems Development Officer for the TRADOC Systems Manager for Abrams And AGS, Fort Knox.)

Don't Tie AGS to Infantry Pace

Dear Sir,

I read with interest Major Martin N. Stanton's article in the September-October 1994 issue of *Armor* entitled "Assault Gun Battalion 96." When I reached the sentence in the third paragraph of the article where

At left, the AGS is seen with Level III add-on armor package. Employment concept calls for three levels of armor protection, tailorable in theater to the local threat.



MAJ Stanton states that "...the battalion would cross-attach its companies to support light infantry units, one company per brigade, my alarm induced me to race to the end of the article and check the author's branch, which was, as expected, of the infantry variety.

As an armor officer graduate of the Infantry Officer Advanced Course at Fort Benning, I have the utmost respect for the infantry branch and the doctrines associated with light infantry warfare. However, the doctrinal focus of this article seems to take us back to the early WWI days of treating tanks as mobile pillboxes. Under MAJ Stanton's suggested task organization, an assault gun battalion commander could look forward to having his companies cross-attached to brigades, who might then cross-attach the platoons to infantry battalions, who could then cross-attach individual tanks to infantry companies. The author further supports this view with his "jungle trail combat team" example, and his statement that battle runs should be accomplished at a "walking pace." I think that many experienced armor NCOs might further anticipate taskings from his cross-attached unit 1SG, such as moving water, ammunition, and other materiel around the battlefield in his M8 AGS.

There may be occasions for such task organizations, but certainly this should not be used to form the primary set of METL tasks of any armored force. Armor is best suited

as a mobile force designed to close with and destroy enemy forces using fire, maneuver, and shock effect. Armored forces are most lethal when employed decisively in maneuver scenarios, preferably massed and supported **BY** infantry.

They are also ideal for cavalry missions, giving cavalry units a greater ability to conduct all classes of security (screen, guard, and cover), economy of force (hasty/supporting attack/defense), and pursuit missions.

The article's strategic deployment scenario involving light infantry division AG Battalions and the 2d ACR (L) supports my point.

In this scenario, the U.S. enters a theater of operation by deploying all LID/Airborne AG Battalions and the 2d ACR (L) under the auspices of XVIII Airborne Corps. Such a force would thus be far more capable than was the case in DESERT SHIELD to deter/fight an enemy force while the U.S. moves more forces into the region. In my opinion, such an operation would most optimally be accomplished by designating the 2d ACR (L) commander as the maneuver commander of this "Dragoon Battle Group," and focusing corps-level attention on the joint service support of his operations. Cavalry-style operations conducted in this scenario by AG Battalions will not mirror the doctrine, training, or logistics practiced at home station as envisioned by MAJ Stanton. AG Battalions would have to conduct

security and economy-of-force missions like other armor and cavalry units in the Army are trained to accomplish.

The armor community should rally to retain proponentcy for armor doctrine and training as it related to the AG battalion. The XM-8 Armored Gun System looks like a tank, moves like a tank, and kills or dies like a tank; therefore, it probably is a tank, so let's treat it like one. To MAJ Stanton's credit, he has laid out an articulate justification for fielding AG battalions in the Army, and he has set out a baseline set of assumptions and recommendations about their organization, training, and employment. It is up to the armor community to refine these ideas, and explore alternatives. My own inclination is that there is a great deal of doctrinal richness to be mined from MAJ Stanton's unexplored idea to cross-attach the AG battalion to the light/airborne division's fourth (aviation) brigade. Perhaps this brigade should organically control both the AG battalion and the reconnaissance squadron. Such a combat team could routinely work as a cross-attached armor-cavalry-aviation force that, if combined with a battalion of air assault infantry, would rival the lethality and effectiveness of much heavier forces.

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