

“Destiny”: Readers Respond

Editor's Note: In his article, "Controlling Armor's Destiny," which appeared in the March-April issue, Brigadier General John Kirk (Ret'd.) challenged Armor and Cavalry soldiers to begin a professional discussion on the future of the branch. "We're fat, slow deploying, and too terrain-restricted and logistically hungry for a force projection Army," he began. "We're losing battles of survival at TRADOC, DA, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Congress. Armor's life is at risk."

His wide-ranging critique — and his inclusion of his Email address — triggered the beginning of a still-continuing dialogue. Some of these comments, and General Kirk's replies, appear below.

From LTC Rick Jung:

In reference to "Controlling Armor's Destiny," by Brigadier General John Kirk (Retired) — Wow! Great stuff! I wish I could express my thoughts as well as BG Kirk. He has hit the nail on the head. I can't believe that he's been retired since 1983, but maybe that's what it takes, someone outside, looking in, to give us an assessment and a direction.

Throughout my career, Armor has always been on the cutting edge of technology and doctrine. As a lieutenant, I reveled in knowing that I was at the forefront of military innovation and education. Over the years, gradual fiscal cutbacks have not only reduced training in units, but also forced Armor's schoolhouse (Ft. Knox) to operate on a bare-bones budget. It's obvious when you drive onto Ft. Knox that we have a lot fewer people trying to do doctrine and education. I get the feeling we are keeping our head above water instead of, as I mentioned above, leading or being at the forefront of technology, doctrine, and education.

I guess we're in a period of history similar to the years between the First and Second World Wars. In that era, our predecessors decided that military schools and education would be critical to our Army's future successes. Reading General Kirk's article brings to mind that our schools at Ft. Knox need to be the force of change once again. Maybe we can't station as many people as we used to in the schoolhouse, but perhaps the Chief of Armor could form mini-task forces comprised of Armor personnel stationed outside of Ft. Knox. These mini-task forces would be charged with responsibility to perform specific limited functions, for example, reviews of innovative and new technologies, automation applications and their impact on doctrine. Additionally, these task forces can collate and review data with respect to current operations by Armor forces and translate them into future doctrinal changes helping us to build the Armor force of the future. This is how we get straight input from the muddy boots to the laboratories.

We can't wait for the schoolhouse to be the sole impetus of change. I know, as an active duty officer, that the last thing we need is another additional duty, but just like BG Kirk, who takes the time to provide original thought and terse reviews, we can do the same. "We" refers to all Armor officers and NCOs. The Chief of Armor has a great pool of talent and the majority is not stationed at Ft. Knox. They're stationed all over the world. And we all have a wealth of experience and knowledge that we could pass on electronically. The schoolhouse, guided by the Chief of Armor, can then apply their limited resources to lead us into the Armor-Force-After-Next.

It is my firm belief that we have to capture common sense approaches, such as those written by BG Kirk. We've got to review them for applicability and rapidly apply them where necessary. In the words of BG Kirk, "We need to move out 40 years ago" and, we've got to keep moving to stay ahead of our potential adversaries. Let's prepare for the next fight, not the last one and we can best do that collectively, as a team.

From Edward C. Papke, training specialist, former AD sergeant major

Sir, great article. I am not an Armor guy. I am a civilian training specialist at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy (I'm a retired Air Defense sergeant major). I have the good fortune to be "working" at something I really do enjoy. I review all the branch periodicals as they appear. I don't know why I decided to read your article, but I am glad that I did.

We are struggling with the future here at fortress USASMA. We are now attempting to define the "Digital NCO." We don't know what that means, or what it should be, or if it should be. I will re-read your article; it is compelling, but a bit overwhelming for a tired sergeant major.

I am engaged in an on-going dialogue with several of my co-workers about where we were, how we got to here, and where we need to be in the future. We know that we cannot survive as we are now. We also feel that our training institutions are not producing the type and quality of leaders that the Army must have in the future. We knew at the gut-level that the determinists have won; but we also know that we have lost something. We are concerned that at one time we had NCOs that could get things done in any situation or environment, but are no longer able to function. Our school and personnel management systems have been very successful, unfortunately. Today's NCOs and officers are brighter and smarter than ever, but ...?

And what is happening at the Combat Training Centers is really scary. We are seeing the mentality again in Operation Allied Force. Air power will carry the day. The determinists are in heaven. They are beside themselves with

joy. In any case, my mind is reeling and I wanted to get this off with the hope of initiating a dialogue and gaining focus....

REPLY: Appreciated your note more than most others I got. Gratifying as hell that an NCO (active or retired), let alone SMAJ, troubled to read the article, got the drift, sees some use for it. Expect(ed) the officer corps to get their backs up. Wasn't exactly kindly to them.

Here are some derivative notions that apply to the corps of NCOs, 1SG/CSM, their schools:

- For the tactics to work we need sound personal NCO/officer/soldier relationships. Peace/war systems of all kinds — per, log, training, admin — have got to parallel each other damned closely, not quite exactly. Give 'em a mission, push down the resources, coach, measure results, hold folks accountable, give 'em a hand if they need help.

- Demand leadership in bdes/regts/bns/below. Restore mentoring in companies thru brigade. In great armies, officer/NCO corps were mentored and experienced more than schooled.

- Put the management burden and its digits at the levels that can sustain the people/machine/analytical resources, peace and war — division up, no lower.

- Turn the school system from teaching administrative drivel survival skills to a core of value systems, professional relationships, soldier operational skills.

The Army school system has destroyed both the ability/perceived need for E5-O10 to mentor. Our mobilization mentality expects the schoolhouse to turn out consumable sergeant and officer products in much the same way OCS once did, with an emphasis on peacetime systems. Wrong! Stinks! Politicizes the hell out of both corps, degrades ground truth abilities in favor of hands-off test knowledge, builds disabled outfits or ones that operate at far less than best levels.

- Troops end up teaching themselves — from books, tapes, sims. Not very relationship-building.

- And they're always looking over the shoulder for the machine's next conscience-free "gotcha."

Likely prostitution of the proper use of "peacetime" schools, whatever that means, was evident in the late '70s, with PNOC/BNOC. All of a sudden, 1SG/CSM took an "over to you" (the school) attitude. It was reinforced when the corporate body decided "hands on" training/testing were too tough in the early '80s, got them rescinded in favor of something more convenient. The last vestige of results-oriented responsibility went out the window, hence mentoring. CAS3 had the

same effect, providing battalion commanders with admin experts instead of a system simple enough for them to understand, operate, coach the next generation on. Any system so complex that it can't be taught in an outfit's gonna bust in battle.

The NCO corps needs a sound rebellion against this apcray! The AG/PER/LOG pukers have become the Army's dominant forces. It's more dangerous to bust admin stuff than to lose at the NTC/JRTC. I personally believe that schools have the obligation not only to teach, but also to explore our values in an unconstrained, attribution-free environment and report results to people who often don't want to hear them. Ground truth has to be hammered at these glossy guys of all ranks until they get the message....

From COL John Rosenberger, Commander, 11th ACR

BG Kirk, just read your article in *ARMOR* — "Controlling Armor's Destiny." Terrific! When can you come and share these ideas with the leaders of the Blackhorse Regiment? I'll send you invitational travel orders. I'd like you to ride with the Regiment during an NTC rotation and lay out your ideas at OPD and NCOPTD seminars. If you're interested, we can coordinate specific times.

From MG Ed Bautz, Ret'd

John: Am somewhat tardy in letting you know how much I enjoyed your *Armor* masterpiece. There is a lot of good stuff for the thinking reader to profit from. I hope that it stirs up some action in other quarters that have responsibility for the subjects covered...

From MAJ William Loudon:

Sir: It was a pleasure talking to you Wednesday morning. I just finished reading your article in *ARMOR*. Your straight talk on doctrine and circumspect view of the masters of military philosophy is refreshing to me...

From MAJ Dale Wilson, Ret'd

Sir: You're my kind of tanker! I really enjoyed your article in the March-April issue of *ARMOR*. I hope there's more like it forthcoming...

From LTC Edge Gibbons, 2nd Bde., 3rd ID:

Sir: Applause! What a great article — the Army ought to hire you to write the current version of the stillborn FM 100-5....

Your article is right on the money, not just for the armored force, as you well know. I have a couple of questions for you. Why did you decide not to discuss the concept of the decisive point in your comments on Focus? I agree with your ideas, but believe that decisive point is a useful tool to ensure that you focus combat power at the decisive place and time, rather than a place and time.

Second, Sir, you decided not to mention centers of gravity. I know you hate SAMS guys... but CoG can be good if not misused. I guess my problem with killing with a "rapier" is to ensure that you put the rapier in the right place, instead of merely making a lot of cuts.

Finally, Sir, I disagree with your condemnation of "simultaneity." You are right on in that all of us must "share a habitual, almost subconscious, common concept and thought pattern." If we as leaders achieve this end, then the correct application of simultaneity can ensure that we employ the joint/combined team in concert, instead of having things like separate "air campaigns," etc. This helps to ensure the focus which you so rightly point out should be one of our modern principles.

Your discussion of combined arms is absolutely correct, and in my limited experience I believe that it is simultaneously one of the most misunderstood concepts in the Army today. Most guys have this idea that "combined arms are good, and I want some," yet when asked to define combined arms, they can come up with an answer little better than "putting a bunch of different guys/branches/weapons in the same general area and somehow we get this thing called synergy."

What we lack today (the last, best definition of the concept being found in the 1982 FM 100-5) is WHY and HOW we get combined arms EFFECTS. The 1982 manual defined combined arms as "two or more arms in mutual support to produce complementary and reinforcing effects that neither can attain separately." Guys don't know the difference between complementary effects (which result in synergy) or reinforcing effects (that obtain massed effects), or realize that the application of effects must be simultaneous in order to produce the requisite output. This is a problem that continues to get bigger as FM 100-5 grants less and less space to the subject.

...Your article has provided me with some great one-liners that I plan to embed in my command philosophy... and if I am fortunate enough to command, will try to create an outfit that will be fueled by trust and empowered by the willingness to underwrite risk.

Just my thoughts, Sir. Again, they need to give you the 100-5, and maybe we would end up with a unifying body of knowledge that will be applicable to every soldier in the Army, instead of a piece that can allow SAMS guys to show how smart they are at the expense of its relevance to the guys in the trenches.

REPLY: Appreciated your note. You woke the dozing Iclauseclast. Apologies for directness below. Took weeks to make article the kind/gentle/circumspect piece it was. Perception of you to see that it ain't just aimed at *Armor*.

SAMS. Don't hate it! Was one of its early champions. Am damned unhappy with results. Seemed to me its charter should have been:

- Produce, for service in the field at or below corps, graduates of uncommon humility, depth, candor, inquisitiveness, flexibility, ability

and willingness to challenge academic/institutional assertions.

- With the Army War College, conduct unrestricted examinations of the Army's probable geopolitical future and military/political strategy and operational concepts.

- Provide a resource for unconstrained review of Army's present/future doctrine, not its creation.

Misfire! Its founders exhibited symptoms of likely future problems — arrogance, elitism, narrow preconceptions, rather than broad, open spirit of inquiry. General officers, whose own ignorance/compliance orientation made them "me too's," unquestioningly embraced SAMS' headings, vice protecting their Army from institutional/individual misdirections, and demanded graduates as planning aides de camp to conceal own weaknesses. Besides attitudes, some SAMS follies:

- A syllabus that invests too much student time on marginal payback studies. Burn, start again.

- Abusive use of the institution by TRADOC/DA as a "house" resource. Assignment of responsibility for FM 100-5 puts the doctrinal/other saddles on exactly the wrong horse. Rather than challenging assertions, the director is saluting the same flagpole as the rest of the Army. Wrong! SAMS (and AWC) should be our Army's conscience, not its sycophants.

- Abusive use of the graduate resource. Assignment policies suck! More of the graduates should have been assigned to bns/bdes to use their knowledge, help them develop IIE. Should not have been tagged by PER for special handling.

- Bum results. The initial recom by the Jedi Korporation to Schwarzkopf was world class dumb. And it took a SecDef and president to fix, not a soldier. Criminal.

- Lousy perspective. Our sense of history, never very damned good, has diluted both "jointness" and the utility of military advice to our civil masters. SAMS is contributing.

- AirLand, one of TRANARC's few good works, is dead. The ghost of Billy Mitchell haunts not only USAF, but also us, broadly, in our artillery, Army Aviation and intelligence. Twenty years of SAMS should have bought us better knowledge of brother services. AF history is much our business lest past repeat. Army shouldn't have let spirit of Patton-Quesada team die.

- Jugularlessness. Saddam.

- Lack of strategic grasp. In Bosnia, Yugo, we've let the Europeans saddle us, our president, with responsibility (world's view) for their (Europe's) corporate historical fears, a "new" villain in Milosevic, a bungled air campaign. FYI, Milosevic's Dad (or G'pa) exhibited same characteristics in WWII, hurt US/UK efforts to support anti-nazi guerrillas. Who knew that, recommended prophylaxis to prevent recurrence? We're shallow.

- NATO's earned our support in resolution of their continental problem, not assuming its burden of global hostility. Clark should have been yanked out, a European put in the catbird seat. Need for us to be a peripatetic world's policeman makes us ugly Americans often enough.

- The arguments/decisions/tactics being used in the air campaign smack of Pinetree, Whitehall, and Downing St., 8 USAAF/Bomber Command, WWII. The names have changed. Add to the three authors cited in my article as "should reads" for Army guys, particularly SAMS; USAF History and Strategic Bombing Survey, of WWII and Gulf. Clark/Macgregor should know better analytically, factually, historically.

- Studying stuff to death. We need guys who can decide/recommend (without pretentious quotes or cites) in seconds and minutes in a mission-tailored framework, not days/weeks, in accordance with a preordained matrix of abstract theory or in studied repetition of history.

Bottom line is that we need SAMS/its products, but they must have apostolic humility, not view themselves as Napoleonic figures or faculty to an Army.

Clausewitz. Bright fellow, but the Freud of battle, confusing more analysts/patients than he ever helped. His battle analyses are largely long OBE. We have struggled much too hard trying to hang something finite or tangible on shifting sands to preserve his name or "greatness." Center of gravity, my opinion, was bilge when it left Clausewitz' pen. If not, its brief life ended when we figured out what to do with steam and the electron. The whole argument's now specious at best, geometric predestination at worst. There are three parts to a man's, army's, or nation's ability to fight — a reason, will, means. COG is undefinable as shown by inability of anyone to find one, save maybe the orientals. Schweinfurt? Ploesti? What's Milosevic's? Where was Ho's or Giap's? Ours in RVN wasn't where anyone thought — except NVN. Our streets, the Congress, the political will of the president, our fielded force, Uncle Ho's trail, etc.?

Decisive Point. If there is such a thing, it's a threshold rather than a time or place — your opponent loses the initiative, freedom of action and you seize/retain it. It may be time, place, psychology, reduced capability or event. Another throwback to what was often pretty obvious on a smallish battlefield full of visual cues.

Before moving to other points/terms, it's useful to get at our vocab problem. Just as we search for deterministic equations, we seem compelled to hang a term on everything we do. Music's illustrative. As in battle, we try to employ X instruments to get a result. In music, winning over the audience is winning. In battle, it's winning over the enemy, physically, psychologically, or both. In music, we have a shared language. We keep inventing one for fighting.

Simultaneity. Argument stands. In music, we only occasionally want everything to play at

the same time. It repeats synchro's problems of general understanding, operational utility. Simultaneity's possible/useful only when it's affordable. In conditions of parity or marginal superiority, we just can't attack everything at once — violates FOCUS. Nice notion, but often needs a resource richness we don't enjoy or shouldn't demand as a share of the Army's/nation's total. On the other hand, there are ways to fake it. We need to learn them as a skill.

TacAir's an easy example. Missions which used to be air superiority, interdiction, air support have necessarily changed to ADA/C2 and air sup, then the other two, generally in priority (sequentially), not simultaneously. Arty can seldom FOCUS fires when doing GS, GSR, DS concurrently. You can't be combined arms-strong everywhere at once. Multiple crossing sites, multi-penetrations of obstacles, even multiple combined arms teams are only possible when you have plenty toys. Look at what happened to Schlieffen. Cause, effect.

Synchronization. Musically, it's sparingly used, then for a purpose. Same in war. Lock step, inflexible, of limited operational use — Frederick's squad drill transposed to this century. Worst of all, it becomes boringly predictable. Our entire "joint" operational concept is globally clear, can be countered without huge resources or great cleverness. By practice, psychology, doctrine and airframe/weapons stockage USAF is less TACAIR capable than it was ca. 1980.

If I were a hostile, I'd invest heavily in Tandy, buy lots of Radio Shack ADA/C2 phonies, sink bucks into mobile ground forces well-protected by LOMAD/SHORAD, draw USAF into a fake air unbattle, and attack like hell an Army dependent on its organic CS.

Harmony. Generally what we're after, does produce synergy, infinite variations, surprise.

Asynchrony. What we're trying to create in his outfit, but we may use it in ours to achieve surprise by breaking a mold or to create the impression of chaos in our force.

Asymmetry. Bogus term. Superiority, as defined, de facto does this.

Synergy. Delete term. Found it first in Soviet doctrine of the late '50s. No one understood it then; few do now. Confused the hell out of the first O3-O6 I tried it on. Everyone started searching for an equation to get some. Putting determinism and probabalism on the same page is easier. There are times when reinforcing is as synergistic as complementing and is complementary. We need plain words/ concepts, neither conceiving nor talking like lexicographers.

Back to the harmonization/synchronization question: I knew what DuPuy meant, but he sure as hell picked the wrong word for an Army. "Effects of..." is as confusing as synchronization/synergy. We need results — suppressed, disabled, or destroyed. I have yet to figure out "% destroyed." Must mean we also have guys who are lightly, moderately, or

severely KIA. Do we create "effects" of death, destruction, suppression?

You're on the right assignment track. Humility/simplicity would be the biggest gift you can have/give others. Genuine thanks for your thoughts/kind words. If my response disappoints, there remains room for honest disagreement, even among pros.

More than any other factor, parachute mafia has strangled the Army.

A voice from the sky (or monitor) is no substitute for command presence on the ground.

Good Hunting
K

Remembering a Comrade In Berlin Standoff

Dear Sir:

Space prevented recognition of a fellow Armor soldier and cavalryman in my article, "Controlling Armor's Destiny," in the March-April *ARMOR*. TF Tyree, the U.S. force at the checkpoint that day, was led by MAJ Thomas B. Tyree, commanding Co. F, 40th AR, Berlin Brigade. The TF was comprised of a cross-attached mech company and Tyree's four-platoon tank company. It's said that the Checkpoint Charlie face-off broke before he had unpacked his foot locker or duffle after transfer from USAREUR to Berlin.

It was a fine performance under huge stress, complicated by his unfamiliarity with the Berlin perspective/situation. Tyree had earlier commanded a tank company in USAREUR, later served at HQ, SHAPE, and commanded a cavalry squadron in Vietnam in '67-'68, where he earned two Silver Stars, a Bronze Star with V, and other awards. COL Tyree retired in 1971 and has since died.

JOHN KIRK
BG, Ret'd.
Tacoma, Wash.



The scene at Checkpoint Charlie, as U.S. M-48s, rounds in the chamber, faced off against Soviet T-55s. Story author BG John Kirk, then a captain, was in the jeep next to the guardhouse in the center of the photo.