

Transformation From a Mobile Gun System Soldier's Point of View

Dear Sir:

I am a sergeant and a tanker in the greatest Army in the world. I enlisted in 1999 as a buck private, and knew I had to become a gunner on the M1A1. It's all I wanted from my first enlistment, and I worked my tail off to get it. A year and a half later, I was pulling triggers on my first TT VIII. Within 2½ years, I was proudly wearing my sergeant stripes. I was at the top of my game. I loved my job.

All things must change, however, and my tank was taken away only to be replaced by a tin can with a gun strapped to the top. I was relegated to an infantry unit to do a job I didn't sign up to do. Unlike my infantry brethren, I was now useless. My sentiments at the time were largely based on my fear of change. Would I stack up to my peers in an infantry company? Would I become a permanent detail donkey? How was I to fight without my 30 tons of frontal armor to protect me? How would a commander in an infantry company know what to do with us? It seemed as if some big shot in an office somewhere had it out for 19 kilos. The truth was, I had forgotten the necessity for growth and change. If we stop learning new skills, we are dead as an effective fighting force.

The Army is very similar to the human body in that it has to be stressed beyond its current level to achieve better performance. If it stagnates, it loses its ability to operate, and gradually wastes away. Our enemies are getting more technologically advanced every day and, likewise, we must change to stay one step ahead of our competitors. In spite of all the current setbacks to the Transformation program, generally, and Stryker vehicle specifically, I truly believe the Stryker Brigade Combat Team concept to be sound. Historically, the fighting force that moves the fastest on strategic objectives with the least logistical collateral wins.

My fears about integration into the infantry have largely been quelled. This is due entirely to the professionalism, competency, and compassion of the officers and noncommissioned officers of the Gimlet Battalion. Although the unit is still struggling with the vehicle issues, I believe this time has allowed us as a unit to learn lost skills and open our collective minds about the advantages of combining resources and knowledge. I am more mentally and physically fit as a result of our training content and tempo.

All is not wine and roses, however. The question persists about the new vehicle. The word around the campfire is that we might not get the Stryker at all now. With a lack of tangible answers at my level, speculation is running rampant. Soldiers are beginning to feel lost in the mill. This leads to other problems as well. Because doctrine

and SOP are being written as we progress, not having the equipment on hand is inevitably giving in to misconceptions, which could jeopardize future success. We are in danger of having to start the process all over again when the final product arrives. We must have the vehicle in hand to know its potential when it gets out in the real world. Also, as a tanker, my career bread and butter has been performing during gunneries. Without that, many of us will feel the pinch when awards are handed out. Opportunities to distinguish one's self is severely diminished. Our morale is slowly failing as a result. We tend to question our value when we are not actively engaged in our field. Tankers tend to draw a great deal of pride from their daily work. It becomes very difficult to find pride in being a busy-worker. As an example, our average workday is complete by 1400 hours. Between 1400 and 1700, we are forced to search for things to occupy time. The faster the new vehicles arrive — the better — even if they aren't a permanent addition to our unit. My skills, motivation, and potential are all wasted when I sit idle. Likewise, not having the necessary equipment on hand to adequately train in the combined arms environment has limited most infantry soldiers' understanding of the value of a 105mm armored, direct fire weapons system on call for support at a moment's notice. This type of system is a true force multiplier that should be used routinely.

The Stryker MGS is a difficult issue to address. As a tanker, I truly feel it was the wrong choice for this role. With continuing performance, armor, and contract issues delaying its arrival, I question how it remains a viable option. I believe the rush to find a "do everything" vehicle has forced us to compromise the specific needs of the role this equipment has to fill. As a soldier, I will, out of necessity, learn to use all aspects of whatever vehicle the Army gives me to its full potential. To do less would reduce my own survivability.

My outlook on the IBCT concept is that it will eventually become a great success. With a little tweaking along the way, this method of warfighting could become tomorrow's norm. One modification to the current program would be adding a 4th vehicle to the MGS platoons. The IAV is not a stand-alone vehicle, so having a 3-vehicle platoon forces one element to fight without support, which, in turn, leaves that crew exposed. The platoon's survival depends on massing fires. There is no more toe-to-toe fighting, like there is with tanks. Another adjustment is the training of replacement of soldiers to MGS roles. We need fresh troops to replace the losses that we are already incurring or to give bonuses to existing troops in an effort to stabilize them in their current

positions. This current level of loss cannot be sustained, and is very costly in terms of wasted training. Finally, the possible creation of a new MOS could solve many of the identity issues already addressed. Who we are is largely based on the job we do.

I truly look forward to seeing the growth of the next generation of soldiers. I am proud to be a part of this dynamic chapter in our Army's history. As a NCO, I could not be more delighted to be helping train the force of tomorrow.

ROBERT C. DALAGER
SGT, USA
MGS Gunner

Reactivating 3-73 Armor Could Bridge MOUT Gap

Dear Sir:

The Chief of Armor's report in the September-October 2002 issue of *ARMOR* Magazine should be welcome news to all proponents of armor in the light forces — still a subset of all tread heads, to be sure. Accepting the Stryker Mobile Gun System (MGS) on behalf of the Army, Major General Whitcomb correctly highlights the much-needed capability that the MGS provides brigade combat teams now being organized and trained. For many of us aging observers, the MGS acceptance ceremony also signifies the return of armor to the light forces — partially correcting past errors in developing such a weapons system, and the disastrous 1997 decision to deactivate 3-73 Armor on the eve of contingency operations in Bosnia and Afghanistan.

The MGS, in my opinion, will prove to be the critical element in the future success of the interim brigade combat teams, especially in urban environments. Although not well understood by the casual observer of military operations (or even some Cold War tankers that have not worked with light infantry), the mobile protected firepower of the MGS is often the determining factor in military operations on urban terrain (MOUT) mission success. The infantry "stacks of four" ballet is a wonder to behold and quite necessary in some situations, but a well-trained armor-infantry team is the key to victory in future fights. As seen in Palestine and at the few U.S. Army MOUT sites that train armor-infantry units to standard, proficient armor-infantry-engineer combined arms teams can achieve mission success on schedule and without the unacceptably high attacking force casualties that often result from these operations.

However, the good news of the accelerated Stryker MGS rollout is tempered by the bad news — fielding this capability to bri-

gade combat teams after September 2004 will miss most of the fights that loom on the horizon. Also, the light/airborne/air assault units most likely to be deployed for these difficult missions have no organic armor with which to train or fight. They must be content with the odd Joint Readiness Training Center rotation and on-the-job training (Mogadishu). A temporary and perhaps visionary solution is to reactivate 3-73 Armor as a MOUT battle force for the 18th Corps. A company of Sheridan's at Fort Bragg, Fort Campbell, and Fort Drum can provide deployable platoons for battalion-combined arms MOUT training and operations very quickly after reactivation. The core cadre for these units still exists. MOUT authors from *ARMOR*'s September-October 2002 issue, Sergeants First Class Wyatt and Barcinas, are shining examples. Vehicles, spare parts, and ammunition were quite plentiful in 1997 — all qualified for U.S. Air Force transport. The Sheridan, much maligned in its early, before-its-time career is a very good urban platform — exceptional strategic and tactical mobility, short 152mm gun tube for narrow streets, good crew protection, and a multipurpose conventional round that eats buildings — ask veterans of Panama City.

Why is this option visionary? It solves a major short-term combat deficiency and prepares for a rapid transformation to the Objective Force in two ways. The organization, doctrine, and people will exist to receive Future Combat Systems in the contingency corps and the unique gun-missile launcher technology may get another look — just when it may be needed to make the Chief's vision a reality. It doesn't get any better than that!

FRANK HARTLINE
COL, Ret.
Tucson, AZ

Conscripted vs. Volunteer Force

Dear Sir:

I am sure there will be other retorts to Captain Brian W. Brennan's article, "Limited vs. Total War," in your September-October 2002 issue. I am inclined to the view that the two World Wars are atypical, but the massive carnage has profoundly influenced global psyche so that we see wars pursued for limited objectives and with limited means as failures. And this isn't necessarily so! However, I would like to limit myself to a few comments about conscription.

First, European countries that maintain conscription do so as much for social as military necessity, and most European countries are phasing out conscription. The United States' all-volunteer military should be seen as a remarkable achievement. It has provided a large, well-motivated, adaptable, and high-quality armed force. The Red army of the Cold War era may have had an advantage in Central Europe, but it was not

overwhelming and could not match the United States' ability to deploy large expeditionary forces such as those to South West Asia in 1990.

Moreover, there is little historical support that volunteers perform any differently than conscripts. All soldiers do better when they believe in what they are doing. There are certainly social costs to conscription when societies are not unified as typified by the New York draft riots during the U.S. Civil War and the anticonscription campaign in Australia during the Great War.

An equally crucial issue is the availability of technicians, medical personnel, and other specialists. Having a healthy, well-educated, and cohesive society from which to draw such personnel is vital. This is where the United States has a comparative advantage. As a simple comparison, the United States trains more aircrew per capita than any other country — at least two-and-one-half times greater than that of Australia. The United States' preponderance is the same in most other specialist military skills.

I have little doubt that the United States will continue to lead the way in how to provide a steadfast and capable future military. This has a lot to do with the ability to reflect and change to new circumstances, if writings in *ARMOR* are anything to go by.

RUSSELL MILES
Victoria, Australia

The Brigade Deep CASEVAC Plan

Dear Sir:

I read with enthusiasm the article by CPT David Meyer in the September-October 2002 issue of *ARMOR*. An article on the often-overlooked aspect of CASEVAC is always welcomed and I appreciate his insights on the challenge of "connectivity and access."

I have one question about the platoon sergeant's (PSG) role in the CASEVAC procedure. How does he transport a casualty, or casualties, which is more often the case, in his M1026?

Though I have no experience in a brigade reconnaissance team (BRT), I do have 3 years of experience as an M1026 equipped PSG in the 2d ACR. I found that I could not realistically transport a casualty in my M1026, and I am assuming the BRT PSG would face the same problem.

Nearly every available inch of cargo area in my truck was covered with something. My crew seats contained rucksacks, my cargo area was full of basic issue items and MREs, my back hatch held a spare tire, my tailgate had fuel cans and a tow bar, my hood was covered with concertina wire, and my brush guard carried pickets. All available floor space in the front of the HMMWV was taken up with additional gear and, of course, my gunner also needed a place to put his feet. If I had a few cubic feet of floor

space available, I carried notional mortar rounds. In real life, that space would have contained boxes of MK19 ammunition.

Is it time to adopt a different model of HMMWV for the scout platoon sergeant? Would an M1035 or M1038 be a more reasonable choice? It would certainly facilitate CASEVAC and also enable the platoon to move forward with additional class I, III, and V munitions.

JASON A. HASTINGS
Camp Doha, Kuwait

Training for the Commander's Intent

Dear Sir:

It is often stated that the minimum we need for tactical success is the mission statement and the commander's intent. When the enemy does not cooperate with our plans and the fog of battle has set in, it is vital that leaders use these two pieces of information to accomplish the task. Leaders who can react quickly and decisively to rapidly changing situations are crucial to our organization. Those who are only capable of inflexibly following the plan will often find themselves on the losing side. This concept was reinforced this summer as I watched sophomore cadets at the U.S. Military Academy conduct maneuver training. Those squads and platoons that possessed leaders with initiative and an understanding of the commander's intent succeeded while others failed. In my experience, company-level and below training emphasizes execution of the plan. This is a deficiency that should be remedied, if possible. I propose a guide for planning this type of tactical training.

An example of 'plan-oriented' training is the platoon lane training that my mechanized infantry battalion conducted in Germany. This training consisted of three platoon lanes, each with a different mission focus. The lanes consisted of a platoon defense of a battle position, a platoon hasty defense, and a platoon attack. Do not misunderstand me; the training provided some excellent lessons and a rare opportunity to maneuver the platoon. However, the training failed to test leaders' ability to react to the unexpected. In all scenarios, the intelligence on the enemy was flawless and the enemy performed exactly as expected. The only requirement was for leaders to execute the plan to standard. Certainly this was enough of a challenge for some depending on the level of experience involved. However, we can and need to do better.

Training should be conducted to emphasize execution of the commander's intent. The way to do this requires only a slight modification to our current lane training doctrine. Leaders and units can receive a mission, conduct troop-leading procedures,

Continued on Page 50

LETTERS from Page 4

and begin execution of the mission. The modification comes when the enemy is not in templated positions, is on a different timeline, or is using a different direction of attack. For example, a unit finds that the enemy is not in the templated position and must adjust the objective's location because the commander's intent was to destroy all enemy vehicles in sector. Also, the unit is defending a battle position and the enemy is attempting to bypass this defense. Now the leader must change posture and move his defense to prevent enemy penetration of the phase line in accordance with the commander's intent. With these changes, we force the leader to react to a different environment than he had expected. If he possesses a firm understanding of the mission and the commander's intent, then he will react appropriately and emerge victorious. If not, then an AAR can be conducted and the unit re-cocked with yet another spin on the enemy situation. The idea is to engrain in the leaders that the plan is a good structure for their operations but it must not hinder mission execution.

Training is often constrained by land, money, time, and available personnel resources. This may force units to conduct plan-oriented training. However, if the resources are available, then intent-oriented training should be conducted. The amount of land required for this type of training will probably be larger. The boundaries of the lane need to be sufficiently wide to allow a leader and/or the OPFOR to react or maneuver in a rapidly changing environment. The amount of time needed to train a unit will probably increase as well. This is due to both the need for retraining and the amount of time it will take leaders to develop fragmentary orders. The bottom line is the way the lanes are resourced and planned will change slightly.

Despite the ease of the transition to this new model, we cannot abandon the old model completely. There is definitely value in the old methodology. Units need the structure of the old lanes when key leaders have turned over or a large period of time has lapsed since the last training event on this mission. Units and leaders need to ramp up to the new level competence before beginning intent-based training — envision the old system as the crawl and walk phases and the intent-based training as the run phase.

In conclusion, we want leaders who can react and apply doctrine appropriately in non-doctrinal situations. The only way to realistically prepare leaders for this task is to place them in these situations during training. I believe that if we can get to this intent-based training method, we will more effectively prepare our leaders and units for mission accomplishment.

CPT PAUL MAXWELL
U.S. Military Academy
West Point, NY

Books Are Available On Additional Battles

Dear Sir:

I wish to make a correction to the book review in the September-October 2002 issue of *ARMOR* on *Battleground Europe: Cambrai - The Right Hook* by Major Joseph McLamb. I heartily agree with Major McLamb that these superb, compact books are a "staff ride in a can;" the books, however are not limited to World War I. The Pen and Sword Books of the Leo Cooper Publishing house are available for the *Utah Beach and the Airborne Landings*, *Omaha Beach*, the British and Canadian Landings at *Gold, Sword*, and *Juno*, *Pegasus Bridge/Merville Battery*, *Nijmegen*, *Hell's Highway* (the Advance of British XXX Corps in Operation Market-Garden), *The Island* (the fighting in the Betuwe area between the Rhine and Maas rivers south of Arnhem in October-November '44), and *Arnhem*. I can personally recommend them as I used all of the aforementioned titles in a staff ride that I conducted with friends in September 2002. The time and money spent purchasing and reading these books was well-spent and invaluable preparation for my comrades and I. I would like to add to Major McLamb's endorsement that the books greatly aid in navigating in European traffic and contain tips about insurance and local laws and customs. The books are also extremely useful as a reference guide to other books as they are well illustrated and contain precise, pertinent maps that so many other histories lack. Another is also available on the destruction of the U.S. 106th Infantry Division in *St. Lo* that I found useful.

SCOTT C. FARQUHAR
LTC, Infantry
Hohenfels, Germany

Rescind Environmental Constraints

Dear Sir:

For more than 10 years, I have routinely been disgusted with the environmental restrictions placed on units training in federally owned training areas. I have experienced and have heard of some pretty ridiculous constraints that have us injecting our training events with farces such as "DeGama Lakes" at Fort Bliss, and "politically sensitive red-cockaded woodpecker nesting areas" at Fort Stewart. I have been angered that training stops at Pinon Canyon when it rains. I have been incensed that soldiers are not allowed to "neutral steer" armored vehicles at Fort Stewart or Pinon Canyon.

So now, the United States has been attacked. The commander in chief says to everyone in uniform, "Get ready." We are standing on the precipice of certain war. So now what? Well, we will continue to do what we've been doing for years... preparing to

fight our country's wars. Everyone I know in uniform who has heard our president's call has a cold feeling gnawing deep in their gut knowing that we are the ones who are going to have to take the fight to the enemy. We are the ones who will make the enemies of freedom pay for their crimes. We are the ones who will spill our own precious blood if necessary.

I am making an impassioned plea for an end to the environmental constraints placed on our preparations for combat executed in our nation's training areas. I can think of no greater time to end these restrictions that may very well cost the blood of our soldiers in combat. We need to train our soldiers under all conditions without being concerned about causing damage to the ecosystem.

I ask you, what is more valuable, the life of the soldier or the ground he trains on? I argue that human blood is infinitely more precious than the fauna, flora, or any species of animal life living on that ground. Anyone who argues otherwise cheapens the value of human life and subverts the cause of liberty and freedom.

There are no units in the United States military that are environmental "terrorists." No units purposely defile their playing field for the sake of thumbing their noses at the environmental establishment. We have exercised good faith in being environmental stewards; we have followed the rules in our supply rooms, arms rooms, motor pools and, yes, training areas, often by the threat of action by our fellow government agencies. We have never once threatened to leave them on their own to defend our country. Instead we have submitted and, as a result, have watered down our training just a little here and there to comply.

The time has come in our country's hour of need to rescind these petty restrictions, which are meaningless when compared with the lives of our country's sons and daughters. We can no longer afford to sacrifice the quality and demands of realistic training for the sake of the environment — a sacrifice that may equal a sacrifice of men and women in the impending war.

CPT PATRICK M. COOLEY
A/1-409th Cav (TS)

Correction

The following corrections pertain to the TASS Armor Battalions section of the National Guard Unit listing, November-December 2002 issue, page 51.

The commander of Region A, 1st Armor Battalion, 254th Regiment is LTC Huggard. The senior instructor is MSG Beierschmitt.

The commander of Region C, 1st Armor Battalion, 218th Regiment is LTC Brooks and the chief instructor is MSG Long.