

LETTERS

Article Addressed Issues "No One Wants to Discuss"

Dear Sir:

MAJ Donald Vandergriff's article, "Without the Proper Culture: Why Our Army Cannot Practice Maneuver Warfare," *ARMOR*, Jan-Feb '98, serves as a startling testament of the frightening condition of our Army today. MAJ Vandergriff proposes that it is impossible for the Army to adopt maneuver warfare given our current culture of, among other things, "centralized control," our focus on "individualism and self-promotion," and "zero-defects." I strongly applaud MAJ Vandergriff's assessment of our culture and his determination that maneuver warfare is beyond our grasp, given these cultural weaknesses.

MAJ Vandergriff proposes a real revolution in the Army culture. I believe that he has addressed the issues that no one wants to discuss in his assessment of the Army today. Before we can successfully execute the Army After Next, we must look at our basic selves and come to terms with our shortcomings and faults. The problems in personnel management, leadership, and centralized control are short-sighted reactions and habits benefiting only the current Army and not the Army that our junior soldiers and leaders will lead and operate in 2010 and beyond.

I applaud his call to tear down the facades of centralized control and address the cultural reasons for not adapting to maneuver warfare. Our failure to meet his call will stymie the adoption of whatever form of warfare we take on in the next century and contribute to the further demise of our professional culture.

To the "Technos," I must challenge your thoughts in regard to the development of German military reform by quoting General Charles de Gaulle, "the superiority of good (German) troops was abundantly clear. How else is one to explain the prolonged success of the German armies against so many opponents? For the 1,700,000 deaths which they counted in all, the Germans, better trained than anyone else, killed 3,200,000 enemies; for the 750,000 prisoners which they lost, they took 1,900,000." James S. Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg, Hans von Seeckt and German Military Reform*, (University Press of Kansas, 1992), p. 13.

As military professionals, we must all recognize that we are currently at a paradigm in military affairs. It is time to look into the eyes of the elephant and change our course before we are overcome by our own minutia.

Undoubtedly, many of you will think my views and comments are a bit reactionary. I would encourage you to study Dwight Eisenhower's experiences in the 1920s when he was threatened with court martial for advocating stronger tank forces.

MAJ Vandergriff, I raise my glass in your honor and accept your challenge to start a revolution in military thinking. Our failure to

follow your call will only lead to failure on tomorrow's battlefields.

ANDRE HALL
CPT, Armor
(USAR)

Heavy Force Emphasis Flirts with Irrelevancy

Dear Sir:

I am a currently serving Armor officer. I write to voice my displeasure with the irrelevance to which the Armor Center is condemning my branch. I also wish to state my dissatisfaction with *ARMOR* Magazine, that increasingly dilatory and backward-looking professional journal published by the Center.

As much as Armor Branch may wish otherwise, WWII is over. As inconvenient as it may be to our heavy force structure, the Cold War is also over. The probability that, in the foreseeable future, we will fight another industrialized nation in high-intensity mobile armored warfare is so close to zero that it might as well be zero. The Abrams and Bradleys are magnificent vehicles, but the major conflicts for which they were designed are in our past. The present and future requirements for armor are much "lighter."

I am not suggesting that Armor Branch abandon the heavy force completely — it is, after all, the ultimate guarantor of American dominance in land warfare. I am concerned that by concentrating almost exclusively on heavy force operations, Armor Branch is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the kind of force projection operations that are certain to be the wave of the future.

We need light, strategically mobile armored vehicles that are capable of operating in a logistically austere environment. We do not have such armor now, nor were we going to get it with the miserably conceived Armored Gun System, nor do we have, as far as I know, a serious initiative to develop or otherwise obtain such armored vehicles. Why is this? Why are we the only army in the world without armored cars or wheeled light armored vehicles? I submit that the rest of the world is not wrong in their appreciation of the utility of light armor. I believe it is Fort Knox's view — that the only bona fide armored vehicles are track-laying, 20-70 ton behemoths, capable of shooting it out with some alleged Future Soviet Tank — that is narrow-minded. However limited the role of light armor in the confines of the Fulda Gap, the wide ranging battlespaces of the CNN, force projection age scream for armored vehicles which are both strategically and tactically transportable to, and logistically supportable in, the hot spots of the world on a moment's notice.

What would a light armored wheeled vehicle offer the force in terms of capability? The list includes traditional armor virtues:

- Mobility, both strategic and tactical, enhanced by fuel economy and high operational

readiness rates, meaning a small logistics tail, which also serves to increase strategic and operational maneuver capability.

- Armor protection against small arms, the principal Third World threat.

- Firepower. A modest turret supporting a 25mm Chain Gun, coax machine gun, and thermal sight, especially if stabilized, would dominate most any Third World fire fight. TOW and mortar variants would round out a combined arms team.

- Shock effect against poorly armed opponents.

- Ground reconnaissance over large areas with great speed.

- High powered, mobile radios, capable of calling in fire support from whatever sources are available.

The vehicle should not be designed to defeat a heavy armor threat. First of all, adding such a requirement would, as we discovered with the AGS, increase weight and cost and decrease strategic and tactical mobility, defeating the very purpose of the vehicle. The fact is, most potential adversaries have no modern armor capability. What modest capabilities they possess can be defeated by a combination of lightweight anti-armor weapons and fire support called in with tactical radios — this was how the Marines defeated the Iraqi armor thrust at Khafji. If the enemy possesses sophisticated heavy armor, then our task force could always deploy Abrams to defeat it. The U.S. armed forces already possess a plethora of tank-killing systems and is in no need of yet another.

The absence of a light armored vehicle has in the past, and will in the future, hurt Army operations. Grenada is a textbook example of the efficacy of small amounts of armor in Third World environments. While the 82d lacked armor and was pinned down on the airfield taking casualties, a small Marine armored force overran the northern 4/5 of the island, including the capital city. In Mogadishu, soldiers died because no armor was available to rescue them. Our fine infantrymen on rapid deployment missions deserve armor fire support that can deploy with them.

Even our own armor scouts and battalions are disadvantaged by our failure to provide them an adequate reconnaissance vehicle. The scout HMMWV is a failure. No real armor; no turret; inadequate, add-on optics — the HMMWV was designed as a utility vehicle to replace the jeep, not as a scout car. Our scouts routinely lose the battle in training exercises because they don't have a vehicle capable of detecting the enemy before the enemy detects them. We can do better.

On page 7 of the April 1997 issue of *Soldiers*, I am appalled to find a story about the Military Police Corps' new Armored Security Vehicle. Wheeled, armored, and with turret-mounted weapons, the vehicle is in fact an armored car which an armored scout or cavalryman could use for any variety of missions. It looks remarkably deployable, ideally suited for providing armor support in Third World en-

vironments. I'm sure the vehicle has its limitations, but it also clearly affords capabilities not found elsewhere in the Army inventory. I am ashamed that the MPs are growing to fill the need we in the Armor community failed to meet. Task force commanders in need of light armor or ground reconnaissance can now call their Provost Marshal rather than their cavalry and armor commanders. Have we given away our seat at the table?

And as the MPs slap us in the face, what are we doing in the Armor Force to prepare for future missions? If *ARMOR* is any indicator — nothing! This magazine has become devoted to military history, extolling the pioneers of armor between the wars, reveling in WWII armor exploits, congratulating ourselves on the mature armor doctrines of the Cold War period, and then propagandizing us regarding high-tech heavy force warfare in the coming century. Rarely is an article in the magazine controversial or thought-provoking. (The letters are often worthwhile, however.)

I would suggest that *ARMOR* focus on the very real conflicts that engulf the world, and the wide spectrum of armored battle found in those conflicts. *ARMOR* should also debate the critical decisions facing Armor Branch during these truly revolutionary times in military affairs. The magazine should be forward looking, providing the intellectual and practical underpinnings for a redirected and revitalized Armored Force.

I remain convinced that armored warriors can prove themselves decisive on a great many battlefields throughout the world. However, we must have more versatile vehicles and organizations if we are to be effective in the full gamut of conflict. A vital and aggressive Armor Branch will enhance our national security. The Armor Center and *ARMOR* magazine can do a better job in keeping Armor Branch in the vanguard of the Nation's land forces.

STEPHEN L. MELTON
LTC, Armor
Professor of Military Science

ARMOR Needs a Forum For "Out of the Box" Thinking

Dear Sir:

As a recent re-subscriber to the magazine, I want to congratulate you on its growth. It was refreshing to see some challenges to systemic compliance in the form of MAJ Vandergriff's article on OPMS and MG Bautz' reminder that it's high time to return to principles, from the top down. There is a degree of sameness, though, that seems to have perpetuated itself over the years — fat tanks, big guns, and technical orientation.

Armor now, and for the foreseeable future, faces and will face unparalleled challenges. Among them are operational relevance in a much changed global geography, deployability as a part of a strategic combined arms team, and demonstration of any real grasp of

the meaning of the "information revolution" to forces, leaders, and the art and practice of war. There seems to be a lot of bandwagonitis — too little real jousting.

What suggests itself is providing a forum for thoughtful, not axe-grinding, men and women in, or interested in, the Armor Force to express "out-of-the-box" views. One means might be to have a "Cavalry Journal" section in each issue. My notion is to recapture the spirit of open discussion and argument of that revered periodical, perhaps omitting Patton's improvements to the saber and the like.

We have a lot of good minds out there. We need 'em all! Time is past due to give their thoughts exposure to the force rather than letting them atrophy from disinterest, poor politics, or the other Halon extinguishers of the "system."

BG (Ret.) JOHN KIRK
Lakewood, Wash.

Beef Up Armor Platoons, Don't Reduce Their Size

Dear Sir:

I read LTC Kevin C.M. Benson's article, "The Armor Battalion After Next: A Modest Proposal," with great interest. It seems ironic that while the Infantry School is examining the re-expansion of the rifle squad, the base infantry unit of maneuver, back to 11 men from its current 9 men, a noted Armor/Cavalry thinker calls for the reduction of the tank platoon, the base armor unit of maneuver.

I must weigh in against his proposal for a number of reasons. By reducing the platoon to a mere three tanks, he would eliminate the flexibility of the tank platoon to conduct split-section operations, a likely method of employment in a MOUT environment. Since infantrymen think about MOUT extensively, to include use of tanks, and it is quickly becoming the most likely terrain for future conflict, this is a not an inconsequential consideration. With only three tanks, someone does not have a wingman, likely the platoon leader. Without someone directly responsible for the tank platoon leader's security while he orchestrates the fight from the front, he is now forced to revert to a pure "command and control" role toward the rear, slightly out of harm's way. We now realistically reduce the tank platoon to only two effective engagement systems. Finally, while I am personally not a big "battle calculus" fan, if we take tank casualties, one tank destroyed or otherwise out of the fight reduces the platoon to 67% strength. Most units call for reconstitution at 70%, the point where units consider themselves combat ineffective.

I propose a return to the five-tank platoon. Additionally, in keeping with LTC Benson's desire to reduce the number of tanks in a battalion, let's go to two tank platoons in a company. This will still give the company twelve tanks, two less than now. Now we also have

two robust platoons, both capable of split-section operations and able to absorb some casualties, instead of three weak platoons. The platoon leader still does not have a wingman, but he does not need one. He can fight as part of the "heavy" section, the main effort, or he can revert to a more traditional "command and control" posture, slightly offset and in slightly less danger, but still have four effective engagement systems.

A further proposal is, instead of eliminating D Company, convert it into a LAV-equipped cavalry troop. Now, you have a superb reconnaissance capability with a fidelity for sustained operations the scout platoon never could achieve. Place the battalion mortars in this organization since they most likely get used in support of the scouts, anyway.

I question the combining of the battalion XO and the S3 into the X3. Are we really saying that we can have one man do both jobs? Most majors have enough on their plate trying to fulfill one of those jobs. They are both tough jobs. Furthermore, when does he sleep in a tactical operation? Or in garrison, for that matter? While the battalion staff needs reduction, a total elimination of the staff, especially the operations, plans, and training staff, is probably unrealistic.

CHRISTOPHER M. COGLIANESE
CPT, Infantry
Ft. Campbell, Ky.

LAV Unit Would Fill Gap Left by Disbanding 3/73 AR

Dear Sir:

The disbanding of the 3/73d Armor in 1997 has left the 82d Airborne Division, the world's premier large reaction force, in a situation where it has no organic, air-droppable, armor (or protected gun system) capability that can be inserted with the rest of the division by parachute. If you have a secure airfield to bring in armor, you'd send the 3d ID in the first place; if you need to secure that airfield, you may need armor on the ground with the initial assault force.

Is there a possible solution that does not require starting from scratch to give the 82d what it needs: mobile shock capability with cannon firepower that does not require a secure airfield to land? I believe so, and it exists now.

I'd build a wheeled light cavalry squadron around the GM Light Assault Vehicle (LAV) and several existing variants, currently used by the USMC. I'd use the Panhard VBL (Vehicle Blindee Leger or Light Armored Vehicle) for the smaller vehicle needs of the squadron. I'd base unit trailers, including those outfitted as work spaces for command/staff functions, on the Italian TANGRAM concept of enclosed amphibious trailers. The LAV and VBL are

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amphibious, so the need for bridging is greatly reduced for the squadron. I'd use turreted, breech-loaded 120mm mortars for all squadron indirect fire support, an LAV variant with the 75mm ARES dual-feed automatic cannon in the cavalry platoons, and the Piranha variant with the 105mm cannon for armor platoons. The LAV-AD provides mobile air defense cover for the airborne force.

The squadron could be structured like a standard armored cavalry squadron or based on a concept of individual platoons under a single headquarters being parceled out as needed, with the mortar, engineer, ADA, and various support platoons remaining under the single headquarters. The cost of the wheeled vehicles is far less than tracked vehicles in both initial and life cycle, and the weight factor makes it very attractive for airborne operations. Appliqué armor can be added if needed, either before the operation or once on the ground.

I have long advocated the use of wheeled vehicles for light armor, and have long been worried about the lack of amphibious capability at most levels of the Army. Adopting this concept might solve two problems that the 82d faces, and give the Army some food for thought at the same time.

LARRY A. ALTERSITZ
LTC, FA, USAR
Westville, N.J.

(For a similar view, see "Global Cavalry," in this issue. - Ed.)

Using What We Have Until New Developments Mature

Dear Sir:

LTG D.S. Pihl's comments in the Nov-Dec '97 issue about my article, "The M1A2 Abrams: The Last Main Battle Tank?" (Jul-Aug '97), are puzzling, to say the least.

He says, "...the analogy is not there, i.e., ships to tanks." This is an amazing statement, considering the facts. Both the battleship and the main battle tank are heavily-armored, gun-armed, combat vehicles designed primarily to do battle with others of their own kind.

The terminology is the same, i.e., both ships and tanks have hulls, decks, turrets, sponsons, etc. Even our basic tank formations were copied directly from naval warfare.

Second, General Pihl points out that "...you need a mix of both chemical energy and kinetic energy warheads..." Although it is far from certain that this present truism will still be valid in 2020, at no point in my article did I advocate one type of warhead over the other. While current self-guided missiles, e.g., Javelin, Longbow Hellfire) do have CE warheads, LOSAT shows that KE missiles are well within the realm of possibility.

Third, although the XM291 would indeed deliver performance superior to the current main gun, it is another example of squandering precious resources on incremental, evolutionary development, when we should be working on leap-ahead, **revolutionary** concepts. However good it might be, the XM291 cannot overcome the limitations that are inherent to gun armament.

EM or ET guns — provided they ever make the transition from the laboratory to the field — will certainly be worthy candidates for FCS armament, but note that even the Western Design FCS concept in the Jul-Aug '97 issue incorporated self-guided missiles along with the EM cannon!

Also in the Nov-Dec '97 issue was a letter from James Agenbroad, pointing out that the recoilless rifle gunner on an M113 (see "Too Late the XM8," *ARMOR*, Jan-Feb '97) would be exposed to enemy small arms fire. This is true of the Australian APC shown in my article, but it would be an easy matter to install an ACAV-type armor shield to give the gunner some protection (see p. 7 of the Jan-Feb '95 *ARMOR* for a photo of an M113 with a recoilless rifle/gun shield installation as used in combat in Vietnam). It's admittedly far from a perfect solution to the problem, but it is the best of what can be had from hardware that's already owned by the Army.

As for the M901 ITV, it is not capable of airdrop. However...the ITV **does** have very interesting **potential** to be an airborne combat vehicle. Remove the awkward and ungainly "hammerhead" launcher, and attach a low-profile, four-tube launch assembly to the M27 cupola in the manner of the French AMX-10P HOT antitank vehicle. Armed with a mission-

specific mix of Javelin, FOTT, and MPIM/SRAW missiles, such a modified ITV could give parachute-deliverable fire support in a wide range of scenarios, without resorting to "obsolete" weapon systems like the 106mm recoilless rifle. As an added benefit, the gunner would have complete armor protection.

There have been numerous suggestions in these pages for XM8 alternatives, such as the LAV-105, and various light tanks. Unfortunately, all of these proposals would:

- Cost almost as much as the defunct XM8, and
- Require many years of test and evaluation before they would be acquired.

If there is enough money to buy LAV-105, Stingray, or other such vehicles, **buy the XM8!**

Despite its shortcomings, the M113/106mm is still the only option for a tracked, armored, air-droppable, fire support vehicle that costs almost nothing to implement — a fact that no one has yet been able to refute — so why not implement it?!

STANLEY C. CRIST
San Diego, Calif.

The Armor Branch Identity Crisis: Let's Focus on What We Do Well

Dear Sir:

There has been much discussion recently over Armor's relevance to the future of combined/joint warfare. Our branch is under attack, say some. We aren't forward-thinking enough. We aren't capturing critical technologies. The joint community and the American public no longer think that mechanized forces are applicable to the challenges of the next century. Even our own beloved Department of the Army has become more entranced with stand-off capability than funding a quality light/medium scout vehicle with adequate protection.

Many believe that the solution to our branch identity crisis is to convince the DOD hierarchy that we can adapt to the changing situation. Armor units are envisioned that are rapidly deployable and can go anywhere. They will be extremely lethal, but selective in targeting to avoid collateral damage. We will wrap our arms around future technologies and leverage them to our advantage, etc., etc.

This is wishful thinking. We can't be all things to all people. Why are we trying to camouflage what we are?

We, as a branch, encompass the heavy side of warfare. Mechanized units are not rapidly deployable. Armored warfare is a messy business with lots of collateral damage. We exist as a branch to close with and destroy the enemy, seize key terrain, and eliminate the enemy's will to continue resistance. We are about shock, rapid movement, firepower, and decisive action. We pride ourselves on our mental agility, detailed planning,

and violent execution. No one understands the combined arms team like we do. We are in the business of gaining intelligence through reconnaissance, and most importantly, doing something with that intelligence. Let's focus on the fundamentals.

Perhaps I'm a bit cynical, but I don't think Armor's relevance to the broad spectrum of conflict is the issue here. Are we in revolutionary, vice evolutionary, times? Probably. Are roles and missions on the table? Of course. Witness the continuing Air Force/Navy debates on air superiority programs. Each service wants a piece of the sexiest new technologies and will take no prisoners in attempting to leverage more budget clout with the Congress. Should the Armor community be intimately involved in future combat technology? We are the combat arm of decision and desperately need to be at the forefront.

Unfortunately, the only way I can see Armor's relevance being fully demonstrated is through a conflict in which high-tech weaponry (standoff, stealth, etc.) fails to achieve the purpose. We are a technological society that prides itself on our gadgets. The American public has been sold a bill of goods that we (the military) can achieve any ends via non-risk (to us) weaponry. We all know that a determined foe is ultimately persuaded by M1A1s and Bradleys parading through his capital. Potential adversaries receive one message when the 82nd Airborne alerts; they receive a more pointed one when M1A1s roll onto ships.

Let's recognize our limits. Other services are successful on the PR front because they're in bed with large defense contractors who are located in certain states. One Sea-wolf submarine makes more waves (literally) than a whole fleet of FMTVs. As long as our large end-items don't register in the DOD top-ten of defense contracts, we'll lack budgetary pull.

We need to capture the intermediate objectives first. If we need to establish Armor's relevance to the Army or DOD, let's focus on consolidating mech, armor, and cav missions under the aegis of Armor Branch. Why should the USMC even exist anymore? Particularly their tank battalions? Should Infantry give up the mech mission to Armor and focus on LIC/SF/Ranger-type operations? My argument is that all mounted warfare direct fire should belong to the Armor community.

At the same time that we go after high-tech weapon systems of the future, let's focus on the present. Let's man our units at 90%+, even in the low-density MOSs. Let's swallow some appetite suppressants and reduce taskings, even cut programs to reduce the borrowed military manpower drain. Let's give money to training and insist that it occur. I've seen more discussion on CFC campaigns than troop-level training on some installations. We are mortgaging our present capability because we're chasing after the future.

We need to focus our efforts on getting land, bullets, time, and people down to the tank company/cav troop level. No commander I know currently commanding thinks he gets enough of any of these things. We have

made MTOE units the billpayer for other programs we can no longer afford.

Our leadership at the JCS and Army Staff levels are well aware of the usefulness of the main battle tank. I don't think heavy warfare is dead, and I don't believe most critical thinkers believe it, either. Fundamentally, I have to trust the senior leaders to make the correct strategic decisions. We in the "field" are called to focus on our METL missions. We ensure that when they call for the main battle tank, we're ready to put depleted uranium rounds into targets.

Until we can wrap our hands around the need for a new generation of main battle tank to combat a real, vice imagined, threat, we should focus on maintaining and training what we have. We can continue to fine-tune doctrine; integrate more fully into "joint-ness"; put money into R&D so we don't lose touch with technology; but we're called upon to be ready. Let's scale back our appetite and regain our focus.

MAJ MARK G. EDGREN
SXO, 1/2 ACR

Some Rules to Live By

Dear Sir:

While I read with great interest COL (Ret.) Paul Baerman's "Three Things I Learned in the Army," I wanted to share my guiding 20 principles that served me well during almost 30 years of service, much of it in Armor.

- Take care of soldiers and they will take care of you.
- Never stop learning.
- Let sergeants do sergeant's business.
- When in charge, take charge.
- If in doubt, don't.
- Bad news doesn't improve with age.
- Don't ask others to do what you won't do.
- Don't stifle initiative, reward it.
- It is more important to listen than to speak.
- Think execution, not results.
- Army is for 30, family is forever.
- Never sacrifice your integrity.
- Lead from the front.
- Be accessible.
- Maintain to train.
- Share your good ideas, accept those of others.
- Everyone can make a mistake, but not the same mistake twice.
- Manage your own time; if not, someone else will manage it for you.
- It is sometimes easier to apologize after the fact, than to ask for permission first.
- When it stops being fun, it is time to do something else.

ULRICH H. KELLER
COL, Armor (USA, Ret.)