

## A Student's View of the Armor Captain's Career Course

Dear Sir:

I received several responses to the article that I coauthored with CPT Slider, "Refocusing the Lens," in the July-August 2002 issue of *ARMOR*. When I wrote the article, the intent was to illustrate the theory of supporting Gauntlet-type training scenarios; specifically, how Gauntlets could augment the current Armor Captains Career Course (ACCC) curriculum, not to justify Gauntlets as stand-alone training or the backbone of ACCC.

The last draft I saw of the article did not include the portion about the Combined Arms Battle Command Course (CABCC); it merely addressed integrating Gauntlet-type scenarios into ACCC. In fact, when I signed the release to print the article in *ARMOR*, I did not know that my coauthor had added a CABCC portion and substantially changed the article.

For the most part, I agree with the letters sent in rebuttal to "Refocusing the Lens," as illustrated in my following letter.

Before arriving at Fort Knox for the ACCC, I expected my experience to be like other Army schools — not very intellectually challenging and full of PowerPoint-driven instruction. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I can honestly say that my experience in ACCC was beneficial far beyond my expectations. The small group environment allowed our instructor to increase our critical thinking abilities. I learned a great deal about Army doctrine, but most importantly, the small group methodology taught me how to apply what I learned.

I feel that ACCC truly prepares future commanders by focusing on creating a leadership mentality in its graduates. However, the Armor School does not intend to maintain ACCC's current small group methodology. Initial plans for the Armor School's move to the CABCC focuses on the need to incorporate experience-based training into the Army's Officer Education System. Experience-based training like the Gauntlets executed at the Armor School provide great training opportunities to some students. However, Gauntlet training should not be the focus of a course designed to prepare future company commanders. In its current design, CABCC is broken into three phases, 4 weeks of distance learning (DL) via internet, a 4-week resident portion, and a 2-week combat training center portion.

From a student's perspective, I would like to illustrate the benefits of the small group instruction methodology versus the Armor School's proposed CABCC.

The primary concern is CABCC's reliance on DL to teach the fundamentals of Army doctrine. The second and third order effects of DL's substandard learning process (relative to the current small group format) nega-

tively affect the overall value of a course like CABCC. Secondly, Gauntlet-type training for the second phase of CABCC cannot provide all students with the repetition necessary to make the training universally beneficial. Lastly, the current outline for CABCC does not allow sufficient time for developing a group dynamic capable of fostering truly free intellectual discussion as in the current ACCC.

At my first unit of assignment, I focused on maneuvering and maintaining my tank platoon and, of course, gunnery. I learned some task force-level doctrine as the support platoon leader and battalion S4, but I certainly was not conversant in Army doctrine after I left. It was not until I reached my classroom in the ACCC that I began to truly understand the essential doctrine of our Army and how it applies to company-level operations. The course began with a headlong charge into the military decisionmaking process (MDMP) and intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) covering both processes in (agonizing) detail. Although this portion of instruction was not enjoyable, complete repetition (three times each) of these procedures paid great dividends later in the course as we pared them down to fit our rapid decisionmaking during various field exercises and Gauntlets. Learning the basics allowed us to decide what was important for a given situation and where to assume risk.

My experience in ACCC illustrated that the means were absolutely necessary to achieve the desired end. Relentless discussion on doctrine, the MDMP, and IPB provided the baseline knowledge, allowing our class to tackle difficult situations that eluded cookie-cutter solutions. This kind of intellectual infusion is not possible through DL. The ability of a teacher to constantly challenge students daily is defeated through DL, yet CABCC's method of instruction expects that incoming students will internalize these difficult, yet fundamental, concepts through computer classes.

Although the quantitative results of a completed DL course, such as test scores, may indicate that the student has learned the required tasks; qualitatively the DL student cannot display the same level of understanding as students in a well-structured resident course with handpicked instructors. A good illustration of this is the recent public debate on the validity of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The SAT uses a standardized format of multiple-choice questions (similar to DL tests) to determine the academic abilities of high school students applying for college-level courses. Several studies have shown that performance on these types of tests have no correlation to actual performance in college courses. Likewise, it is unlikely that DL tests will indicate anything about an officer's knowledge of Army doctrine. At best, DL tests will show the Army who is good at taking DL tests. Additionally, one study shows that students taking standardized multiple-choice format tests use "surface-level" cognitive abilities while deep cognitive ability

goes untested. Both the SAT and the ACT were forced to offer a written portion in an attempt to mitigate some of the criticisms of their old formats.

Proponents of the DL methodology will argue that, unlike the old SAT format, written exams will be included in a robust DL program like Phase I of CABCC. Through this methodology, soldiers will remain at their home station to complete their DL coursework and remain under the same chain of command. Thus, the student feels (and *has*) little or no accountability to the ACCC distance-learning instructor who is in another state or maybe another country! Inevitably, soldiers are going to remain loyal to their chain of command. When the battalion commander needs Captain Smith for a tasking, do we really expect Captain Smith to tell him "no" because he needs to finish his distance learning courses? Probably not, and young officers who are used to "making it happen" will find it very easy to circumvent the DL method of teaching by using tests printed out by soldiers who have already taken the course. This is already a fairly common practice in National Guard and Reserve units where officers have commitments to their chains of command, as well as their civilian jobs. Similarly, I know several stories of soldier's spouses completing on-line courses for the soldier to get promotion points. Bottom line — completing DL becomes an end achievable *without* the desired means — resulting in a lower standard of training for the rest of the CABCC program.

Learning doctrine is just like learning a foreign language. Full command of a new language takes a great amount of time, study, and eventually immersion in the culture. The DL portion of a course like CABCC cannot replicate the student's immersion into the doctrinal culture found in the ACCC small group format. Learning doctrine [through DL] is like trying to learn a foreign language from listening to a series of tapes, or reading books without ever actually working within the culture. Imagine a captain arriving at a Division G3 plans section with all the doctrinal understanding of a "See Spot Run" children's book. The resulting plans are likely to be confusing and far from efficient.

In ACCC, the small group classroom immerses the student into the culture of Army doctrine daily over an extended period of time, allowing students to become more conversant in the Army's crucial vernacular. So, if doctrine really is the "basis for curricula in the Army Education System" why does CABCC relegate doctrine to a medium that does not promote full and comprehensive understanding? Captains deserve to arrive at their follow-on assignments better prepared than what CABCC seems designed to offer.

During the 2002 Armor Conference, a TRADOC developer of DL programs declared that the DL methodology was "validated" by the National Guard and Reserve DL ACCC program. It would be interesting to see a

comparative analysis of what a resident ACCC graduate knows versus what a DL graduate knows. How do you quantify leadership ability? As long as history has been written, humans have tried to define what makes a great leader different from a good leader. The reason we still do not have a definitive answer is because leadership ability is not quantifiable. Like a great surgeon, the aspects of a person that make them a great leader are intangible. I would not want a surgeon who learned the fundamentals of his profession by DL to operate on me. Likewise, I do not want a commander who learned doctrine through DL appointed over me. DL is an overly simplistic approach to developing leaders for the most complex and difficult human undertaking — combat.

Developing the group dynamic to feed stimulating debate among the small group takes time. Initially, the discussions in my class were reserved and probably too respectful of others' opinions. By the sixth week, however, everyday was like walking into a firefight. Through daily contact in class, at PT, playing sports, and the occasional stable call, our group of 12 captains became a tight-knit group infinitely aware of each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Additionally, our small group instructor's somewhat fanatical attention to properly using doctrinal terms was quickly absorbed by our class. Anyone caught using terms such as, "sweep," "mop-up," or "fix and punch," to describe a tactical situation was immediately subjected to 30 seconds of strenuous exercise. By the middle of the course, everyone in our class spoke the same doctrinal language — greatly streamlining our delivery of orders, and the ability of our subordinates, peers, and superiors to understand our intent.

Everyone shared ideas as we generated our own think-tank guided by our small group instructor to ensure we didn't get too far off the mark. This free-flowing intellectual melee afforded me the ability to learn how to apply tactics, techniques, and procedures through the experiences of others. Most importantly, it allowed me to think critically about how I wanted to do business as a company commander and discuss these issues at length with other military professionals. DL cannot replicate the intangible learning experiences afforded by the ACCC small group format that develop the student's critical thinking ability.

The argument could be made that these intangibles will be present in the second (resident) phase of CABCC. Yet this phase is only 4 weeks long, and is designed to keep officers *out* of the classroom and engaged in several iterations of Gauntlet-style training. As stated above, it took our small group about 6 weeks to create the group dynamic that allowed for truly beneficial group discussion, and most of that time was in the classroom or on TEWTs around Fort Knox. Gauntlets are great tools to amplify specific lessons discussed in the classroom and

greatly add to the overall training experience. Gauntlet training is not suitable as the basis of training for a course designed to prepare future combat company commanders like ACCC, however.

The lack of a coherent group dynamic coupled with the failings of DL will likely result in relatively unproductive training events during Phase II of CABCC. As stated earlier, the ability of Gauntlet-type training to simulate reality gives this training value. Unfortunately, realism is hard to manufacture when the preponderance of soldiers in Gauntlet training are young, inexperienced lieutenants who have never been in line units. Likewise, the young captains who have had the limited chances to discuss doctrine with their mentors and peers will find themselves in command positions while simultaneously trying to learn all the things they don't remember from their DL class. So, instead of "hitting the ground running," these Gauntlets will be mired in teaching the basics to everyone involved without allocating time for lengthy after action reviews or periods of discussion. Even Ranger School spends time in the early stages of the course instructing students on the basics of infantry tactics in a classroom environment.

While a student in ACCC, the most valuable and effective medium for learning tactics and applying doctrine was the small group classroom. I participated in six Gauntlet training events, and although each was valuable in some respect, none of them were particularly realistic. Most of my Gauntlets were with Armor Officer Basic Course lieutenants in simulators or HMMWVs in a 5x5 kilometer training area. During all six iterations of Gauntlet training, I acted as company commander only 4 times. On one occasion, I was in a classroom with a radio to talk to other ACCC students in a classroom playing the *TacOps* computer game. The second time, I was a company commander for only 10 tanks manned by West Point Cadets (here at Fort Knox for Mounted Maneuver Training) for a total of 8 hours. The third time, I was a commander for a terrain walk with AOBC lieutenants. Finally, I commanded 18 AOB lieutenants (after 5 days in their course) and 4 ROTC cadets in a MOUT exercise that lasted 1 hour. I can hardly call these events realistic training.

There were many lessons learned in these scenarios, but having discussed similar missions at length in the classroom prior to execution greatly increased the intellectual dividends. Some things were best illustrated in the field, especially difficulties in command and control. Nevertheless, without classroom discussion to build our knowledge of Army doctrine, the lessons of these exercises would have been largely missed. The value of experience-based training completely depends on its ability to simulate realism. I feel that these experiences by themselves did not contribute to my development as a leader in any truly substantial way. The most valuable learning tool for future company

commanders like myself in the schoolhouse environment is the small group classroom that encourages lively intellectual debate and expands the lessons learned in Gauntlet training. If we want our prospective company commanders to have more experience-based training, I suggest increasing the amount of live-fire training in TO&E units to develop experienced lieutenants who will become future company commanders.

The CABCC assumes too much by centralizing its doctrinal instruction around DL. Students will arrive with a wide variance of doctrinal knowledge resulting in a student body incapable of communicating their intent efficiently. The CABCC design further compounds this deficiency by focusing on Gauntlets that are unrealistic and underresourced. Experience-based training is certainly valid, but training soldiers in unrealistic experiences will reinforce improper techniques necessary to achieve success during each Gauntlet with little applicability to real combat situations.

The Armor School should be applauded for focusing its efforts on developing commanders that are competent in combat situations. Yet the proposed CABCC methodology detracts from a future commander's understanding of Army doctrine in an attempt to force artificial experiences that do not mimic the realities of combat or even real training in TO&E units. For our future company commanders to fully contribute to the lethality of the future U.S. Army, they must have a firm grasp of the Army lexicon — doctrine. The Army cannot build on officers with a weak foundation in doctrine, no matter how many experiences they have.

CPT WILLIAM H. GOIN IV  
Fort Knox, KY

### **Never Deploy Just One Tank With Tank-Infantry Team**

Dear Sir:

I am a fairly new member of the Armor Association but I am an avid reader of your fine publication. As a Vietnam Marine tanker, I read with great interest the extremely well-written article by the three active duty tankers entitled "Armor and Mechanized Infantry in Built-Up Areas" in the September-October 2002 issue. The Marine tank that I served on as a crewman participated in the fighting during the Tet Offensive of 1968 in Hue City. I, therefore, feel that I have a modicum of experience in real-life urban combat to make a few comments.

When I was stationed with 5th Tank Battalion at Camp Pendleton in 1967, our tank crews trained extensively with the infantry (albeit they were usually non-mechanized) to work as a tank-infantry team. I am very glad to read that not only the U.S. Marine Corps, but the U.S. Army again feels that this is a

Continued on Page 40

## LETTERS continued from Page 4

viable combat tool and that it is training to hone this edge of their sword. However, it interests and worries me that these fine men have written "For extremely restricted terrain, the breach force might have one tank and one Bradley, plus dismounts with MCLC and engineers as a redundant means to breach." I realize that the authors go on to say that the support force of the remaining tank and Bradley will be kept in reserve, but in my humble opinion, you never, ever deploy a single tank, especially in a built-up area. From my perspective, Marine tankers never deploy an individual tank (ever). From past experience, the few times that someone forgot this cardinal rule, and only one tank was actually sent out with a small amount of infantry, disaster usually was not far behind. I know from personal experience that when the enemy ambush occurs, the infantry have a lot more to worry about than defending a "big, noisy rocket propelled grenade magnet." Tanks tend to defend each other the best. If this is a cost-cutting maneuver, let me assure you that the loss of lives and equipment will not be worth the "savings" today.

The other comment that I would like to make has little to do with this article, but it has a lot to do with the effectiveness of the current tanks available for combat today. In my opinion, the M1 Abrams tank is not fully equipped to fight massed enemy troops. The M1's main gun ammunition was designed to fight the armor of the Soviet Union on the

plains of Central Europe. The U.S. Army designed the tank to strictly employ antitank ammunition. To my absolute amazement there are no antipersonnel rounds available (yet). In Vietnam, we served on M48A3 medium gun tanks that had the following main gun ammunition: high-explosive, white phosphorous, canister, and flechette for antipersonnel, plus high-explosive antitank and shot for armor. It is my understanding that the current planners have finally seen the light and are developing a canister (antipersonnel) round for the M1's main gun. This will make the M1 even more desirable to use in the tank-infantry team.

JOHN WEAR  
New Hope, PA

*General Dynamics – Ordnance and Tactical Systems was recently awarded the development contract for the XM1028 120mm canister round for the Abrams tank. Second quarter, FY05 is the expected delivery date of rounds to U.S. Forces Korea. – Ed.*

### Heavy/Light Integration in MOUT

Dear Sir:

I read with great interest the article in the September-October 2002 issue of *ARMOR* about heavy/light MOUT integration ("Armor and Mechanized Infantry in Built-Up Areas!"

by CPT Rouleau, SFC Wyatt, and SFC Barcinas). I would offer the following comment for consideration on this subject: Read the USMC's MCWL X-File 3-35.37, which can be found at <http://www.mcwl.quantico.usmc.mil/>. You will note that the Marines have done much the same sort of thing, thereby saving time and effort "reinventing the wheel." Also, you may find that even the graphics are extremely similar to what was published in your journal, further suggesting room for joint collaboration.

CPT P. DRAKE JACKSON  
2-310th Regt (TS)  
Devens, MA

*In the text of the above-mentioned article, the authors address adapting TTPs from the U.S. Marine Corps' Project Metropolis. We received a request from CPT Rouleau, asking us to specify that the graphics used in the article "were altered to reflect Army operations, but the base was partially provided by the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, Quantico, VA, Project Metropolis AAR 1999." Unfortunately, the information was received too late to publish. – Ed.*

### More on the Pentomic Division

Dear Sir:

"Keeping the Sword Sharp" by MAJ Harold M. Knudsen (*ARMOR*, Sep-Oct, pages 12-

16) was interesting and thought provoking, but the author's description of the Pentomic Division of the 1950s is incorrect, having one too many echelons.

The post-WWII Infantry Division had three regiments. Each regiment had an HHC, service company, tank company, heavy mortar company, and a medical company, and three infantry battalions. Each infantry battalion had an HHC, three rifle companies, and a weapons company.

The Pentomic Infantry Division had five "battle groups," each comprising an HHC, five infantry companies, and a combat support company. With about 1,300 soldiers, the "battle group" was somewhere in-between a battalion (917) and a regiment (3,774) in size.

Still, the remainder of the division was quite conventional, with a divisional HHC, tank battalion, recon squadron, engineer battalion, signal battalion, DIVARTY brigade, aviation company, and division trains (transportation battalion, ordnance battalion, medical battalion, quartermaster company, and band).

Ironically, follow-on studies noted that losing a single battle group to a nuclear strike resulted in a loss of 20 percent of combat strength, whereas losing one of nine battalions resulted in a loss of only 11 percent (go figure!). Also, a personnel management problem was that there were no command slots for infantry lieutenant colonels.

The armor division was never converted to "Pentomic" and remained essentially unchanged. Eventually, sanity prevailed and all divisions came under the Reorganization Objective Army Division (ROAD), which is based on the WWII armor division's "combat command" structure and the precursor of the subsequent DIV 86, Army of Excellence, and Force XXI organizations employed today.

CHESTER A. KOJRO  
LTC, AR, USAR (Ret.)

## Correction

In the article, "Army Accepts First Stryker MGS," back cover September-October 2002 edition, we erroneously listed the commander's .50 caliber "machine gun" as main gun. We apologize for any confusion.

## Death Traps Complements Read of Irwin's Book

Dear Sir:

I would like to add some observations about *Another River, Another Town* by John Irwin, which was reviewed by SFC Miller in the July-August 2002 issue of *ARMOR*. Irwin's memoir reveals that he participated in a unique episode of armor history, which is set in context when his book is read along with *Death Traps* by Belton Cooper. Cooper's book provides the "big picture" surrounding the events which Irwin experienced.

Irwin (on page 82 of his book) recounts how he and his tank crew received a slightly used "Super Pershing" as a replacement for their Sherman, which had fallen victim to a Panzerfaust. By this time (post-Battle of the Bulge) the 90mm-equipped Pershing had been introduced into the ETO, but the unique version he and his crew received, the M-26A1E2, was something very special indeed for its time. The E2's 90mm main gun was 70 calibers long, producing a muzzle velocity of 3850 fps. Along with its heavier armor and other features, the Super Pershing was able to more than evenly take on a King Tiger, although one wonders at how it was successfully maneuvered through the small towns of Germany without denting its muzzle brake.

Belton Cooper served as a liaison officer for the ordnance battalion of the 3d AD to the forward deployed combat commands/task forces of the division. He helped prepare the Super Pershing for deployment and introduced it to its first crew (page 280 of his book). Cooper's principal duty was to coordinate the collection/recovery, repair, and ultimate return to service (if repairable) of battle damaged tanks and other vehicles of the 3d AD. What happened all too often when a Sherman encountered any German tank of later vintage than a Mark IV or an 88mm AT gun probably inspired the title of his book. His account gives graphic illustration to the saying "amateurs talk tactics, professionals talk logistics." Additionally, Cooper's book (unlike Irwin's) includes a section of captioned Signal Corps photographs that illustrate the events he recounts. For the price conscious, Irwin's book should be available as a "trade paperback" next year, while Cooper's book is already available.

CLIFFORD R. BELL, JR.  
Analyst, National Imagery  
and Mapping Agency  
Washington, DC

## From a Tank Commander's Eyes

Dear Sir:

As a tank commander at the National Training Center (NTC), I take great pride in playing a critical role in training U.S. mechanized forces. Each month, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment deploys to the vast training area with the sole purpose of being the best training tool in the world.

Each rotational unit differs in compositions, strengths, weaknesses, and experience. There is no doubt that each unit arrives at Fort Irwin prepared to, in old tanker terms, "kick ass and take names." However, for the opposing forces, we see the same mistakes rotation after rotation.

I would like to address BLUFOR's tendency to piecemeal into contact on offensive missions. Most unit commanders attack in the standard task force in column concept, and tend to stay away from the riskier task force abreast concept. However, with task forces

attacking in column, the OPFOR is able to fix, and most often destroy, the lead task force, retaining a significant amount of combat power. Often, the unit commander relies on this safer course of action, yet problems arise when this lead task force commits one company at a time. Understandably, the unit commander, in an attempt to preserve his own combat power, commits his lead (or breaching) company, who (per doctrine) commits one platoon to breach, with one platoon in a support by fire, and the other platoon waiting to assault through. In short, the problem is only one platoon attempts to penetrate either the advanced guard or breach an obstacle belt that is always overwatched by multiple combat systems, such as AT-5s, BMPs, and T-80s. One remedy for small-unit leaders is to attack with multiple platoons or companies. As with all breaches, this action must be closely synchronized with effective cross talk and must be rehearsed at home station. However, the more weapons systems placed on the OPFOR, the more likely the platoon, company, or task force will be successful. Thus, unit commanders can reinforce that success, rendering the OPFOR defenseless.

I would also like to address the lack of focus placed on the OPFOR's antitank systems. Although, as a tanker, I would like to pride myself as the biggest and best weapons system on the NTC battlefield, the fact is the AT-5 systems are the major killers. OPFOR commanders keep these vehicles under their personal control at all times so that they can personally emplace them. This is a testament to their lethality. It is extremely important to remember that these systems are highly mobile and are hard to distinguish in the desert environment. It is also important to remember that these are the only systems in the OPFOR inventory with extended range beyond 4 kilometers. Therefore, these weapons systems should be number one in priority of targets. To counter their mobility, a possible remedy is to focus artillery fire on these targets, which are highly vulnerable to any indirect fire with the MILES II system. Also, units could give recon elements (BRTs and scouts) the secondary mission of destroying these systems. It is common for these mounted AT-5 systems to be credited with 10 or more confirmed kills in a simulated battle. The status of these systems has and will continue to make or break task force-sized elements.

Another observation is the lack of maneuver at the platoon and company level. Often these elements will remain in a picture-perfect wedge, which allows the OPFOR vehicle ample opportunity to engage. Also, these elements move too slowly, too predictably, and with little or no direct fire support. A simple solution is to break the rigidity of movement formations, and instead use the terrain with bounding overwatch, and focus on the section level (wingman concept). Common sense mandates that one cannot engage while being fired on. However, I have seen little of this in my experience at the NTC. I commonly see platoons moving in wedges toward obstacle belts, often avoiding broken

---

ground to maintain visual contact with all elements in the platoon. I rarely see vehicles using low or broken ground when a road is easily accessible. Platoon leaders and platoon sergeants must train tank commanders to use the terrain to their utmost advantage. This begins at home station when conducting training, and would make a dramatic difference in platoon and company success in the maneuver portion of the NTC deployment.

The lack of knowledge of the MILES system in BLUFOR units is yet another problem. MILES, whether we all like it or not, rules the NTC battlefield. MILES laser systems often lose their boresight after moving only a short distance. This cannot be helped; it is the nature of the beast. As a tank commander, I realize that failing to boresight rarely happens, despite officers often blaming unit failures on a lack of boresighting. However, I know that I will often verify the MILES boresight during movements, only to find the laser is nowhere near the sight. Many platoon leaders (OPFOR commanders) have felt the wrath of superiors due to this. A long-

term solution is to adjust the MILES system, perhaps by finding a better cradle to fit the laser. However, on our level, the short-term solution is to simply train tank commanders and gunners to verify each shot through the scope (if you have a loader, even better). This makes each round count, instead of wasting 4 to 5 rounds on each target.

We here at the NTC are neither liars nor cheats. We did not sell our souls to the Russians or the fictitious Krasnovia. Although, it hurts our pride somewhat, we do want rotational units to be successful. In the past few months, I have read a great amount of bickering in *ARMOR* about the OPFOR cheating and that we do not have the same commitments as other FORSCOM units. Addressing the first issue, I must quote my former squadron commander, LTC Timothy Norton, when he stated that "cheating in the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment is not tolerated in any way," and as a small-unit leader, I can attest to this fact. The NTC is extremely muddled due to the same commitments and maintenance issues that other units incur. We, too, have a red cycle, CTT, TCGST

training, gunnery, and are tremendously short on personnel. For example, my platoon has five tanks to maintain, along with a 2½-ton truck and a water buffalo, and until just recently, we accomplished this with 11 enlisted and one officer. We spend 2 weeks a month in the field, and so all of this training and tasking (including gunnery) are accomplished in 2 weeks instead of 4 weeks. We still use the Vietnam-era Sheridan tanks, visually modified to replicate the Russian T-80, which incur great abuse, month after month, year after year. We have no trained mechanics and parts are nearly impossible to come by. The old cliché of fixing a tank with lacing wire and green tape damn near holds true.

Some readers will understand my viewpoints, and others understandably will not. However, after two tours here, I have noticed the same trends time and time again. I am hopeful that some of my fellow tank commanders and small-unit leaders will take notice and file these observations away for future use. ALLONS!

JOHN D. VOCCIO  
SSG, USA