

# COMMANDER'S HATCH

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## Some Farewell Thoughts

As I complete my tenure as the Chief of Armor, I would offer these few thoughts for your consideration as you move on to positions of greater responsibility. After thirty years as a mounted soldier, they represent my perspective on what is important for the future of the mounted force.

Armor is the decisive force on the battlefield because of the skill, courage, intellect, creativity, and spirit of our soldiers. Equipment, no matter how sophisticated or deadly, will never replace the power that well-trained, well-led soldiers bring to the fight. We must train them to be aggressive, yet cognizant of the value of human life. We must teach them how to think, not what to think. And we must give the general guidance they need to accomplish the mission with the latitude to perform to their full potential. Nothing will smother the mounted force faster than centralized leaders who are afraid to operate with frag orders. Our job as leaders is to set the conditions for success. We must be technically and tactically competent, and we must be focused on selfless service to country, not on careers. It is far more important to end military service as a focused, dedicated, enthusiastic major than to be a colonel bitter over not getting brigade command.

While information age technology is both necessary and appealing, we are paid to close with and destroy the enemy. Technology will help us do that better, but it is no substitute for the warfighting spirit of our soldiers and leaders. In the future, leaders will have

to work hard to instill in their soldiers the intense desire to move to the sound of the guns. Armor and infantry soldiers are a unique breed. They have to go where no one else wants to go. They must go where the battle rages, where danger and death are real, where fear has to be controlled just to survive. Mounted soldiers have to think quickly while fighting their vehicles, which are moving at high speeds over rough terrain, sometimes in the dead of the night, through blowing sands and/or driving rain storms. They have to do all this knowing that, in the end, they may face serious wounds or death.

Decisive battles in the future will not be fought by technologists in white lab coats using precision guided munitions to attack targets that are miles away. The preliminaries to decisive operations may be fought that way, but the ability of the U.S. Army to dominate the enemy will hinge on close combat, just as it always has. Closing with and destroying the enemy will depend on mounted soldiers and leaders who have the courage, skill, and desire to look the enemy in the eye and take him down. In the flood of technology, and the many advantages it brings, we must not lose the warfighting spirit that has characterized the mounted soldier throughout history.

While leaders today have many warfighting skills to master, some of which we are now just beginning to understand, leaders of the future will have to be as comfortable working with advanced technology as they are with a radio or a compass. The decisive battle-

field will require leaders who are creative, innovative, and versatile. Yet we have no institutional or unit training that teaches these subjects. We will have to find ways to teach ourselves those skills. Leaders will find it necessary to be masters of digital architecture, tactical internets, and a host of other equally complicated applications. Tactics, techniques, and procedures for digital operations will be different from those in practice today. Therefore, while mastering the present, leaders must keep one eye trained on the current developments that will transition to future capabilities. Leaders must read, talk, and think about the implications of future warfighting now to be ready later.

The ability to communicate thoughts, ideas, concepts, and instructions will separate truly great leaders and units from the rest. In the final analysis, success will depend on your ability to formulate a vision (end state, concept, or intent) and communicate it on a personal level while setting the conditions which make open communication among the members of your unit not only possible, but imperative. Cohesion and team building are impossible in an environment where communications are restrained. A centralized leader will certainly achieve short term results, probably very quickly. But ultimate success rests on the contributions of everyone in the organization. Everyone won't contribute unless they feel free to speak their minds without fear of retribution or reprisal. A high perform-

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ing unit works at the speed of every brain in the organization. Active listening is very difficult, especially so for young leaders eager to be in charge. Take a moment to listen to your NCOs and soldiers. They often have something important to say.

The final point has to do with an understanding of the resource environment in which the Army will operate for the next several years, barring an unforeseen war. It is wishful thinking to believe that the Army will return to a time where there are enough soldiers and dollars to accomplish every task. The future will be full of hard choices. One of them will be the decision to either bunker in and wait for better times or to plan for success. Choose the latter. The key to planning for success is first to define it in writing, then to build the steps necessary to achieve

it. No matter what the process is, and I think Army Performance Improvement Criteria (APIC) is better than the others, each of you will have to spend an enormous amount of time figuring out what it costs to perform each element of your mission. Unless you know specifically what each activity costs, you will never be able to trade off inefficient or unnecessary activities for those that are critical.

These are interesting times. There is much to learn and much to do. Exciting things. Take a second along the way to enjoy life. Your time in the military will be over all too soon, and none of you will want to look back on your service and say it wasn't a fun, productive, pleasant time in your life. There is more to the Army than constant work and worry. Find the time to discover what those things are.

### ***MG Harmeyer Selected As New Chief of Armor***

Major General George Harmeyer, a Vietnam and Desert Storm veteran with more than 30 years service in Armor and Cavalry units, was to assume command of the U.S. Army Armor Center on 29 October. Previously the commander of Seventh Army Training Command, he has also served as V Corps chief of staff and as assistant commander of the 3d ID (Mech).

He commanded 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Div. during Desert Storm, and was a troop commander and S3 Air in the 4th ID during the Vietnam war. Much of his career has been focused on training, as commander of the Operations Group at the NTC and at the training support division of the ODCSOP, the Pentagon.

His introductory "Commander's Hatch" will appear in the January-February 1997 issue of *ARMOR*.