

# LETTERS

## Guard Units Face a Squeeze, Too

Dear Sir:

Recently, *ARMOR* published an article by Captain Michael A. Kelley, TXARNG, concerning the incompetence of officers in the Texas National Guard. Captain Kelley went on to say that armor funds for tank training should be put into the active duty ranks, "WHERE IT BELONGS — WITH THE REAL TANKERS."

As a senior NCO, I believe it is our duty to teach and train our young people, enlisted or commissioned. If the abilities of our junior officers fall short, we carry a lion's share of the fault.

The National Guard is fortunate to have in its ranks many former active duty soldiers. They bring with them skills, knowledge, and experience we greatly appreciate and use in the 16 hours a month, two weeks a year that we have to train our soldiers. Unfortunately, on occasion we get people who hold the Guard in contempt from the onset. They make excuses to not attend drill, make little attempt to prepare for classes, and are more interested in advancement than caring for the soldiers for whom they are responsible. Yet, they expect to be put in command positions based solely on the fact they were an active duty soldier.

As for the funds Captain Kelley suggests should be transferred to active duty, there is very little in the way of funds for anything. Of the 118 M1 tanks at Fort Drum, New York, 80 have been mothballed because there is no money for parts.

Consequently, all units have to share what we have, and take great pains to keep them maintained and operating — in that's all we're going to get.

In armories, platoon sergeants come in on their own time to set up training, with training aids they have to make or buy out of their own pockets.

In order to provide an operational tank for the crews to train on, one maintenance section, after waiting a year for a hydraulic tank to be repaired, took it to a civilian welder and paid for it themselves.

Because there is only enough money for one training session per year per man, officers and NCOs have to attend leadership schools without pay in order to be able to accompany their soldiers on their two-week training.

One third of our soldiers drive more than 100 miles round trip to attend drill and still have to fight with employers to give them time off, risking being fired.

If this is the way it is with us, it has to be the same everywhere.

So, you see Captain Kelley, we need people like you. We need you to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

SFC PATRICK D. SIMS  
"D" 1/127th Armor  
NYARNG

## Book Review: Another Opinion

Dear Sir:

LTC(P) Hertling's review of *Into the Storm* in the May-June issue of *ARMOR* was not as informative as it might have been. As a civilian with no Army experience whatever, I rarely feel qualified to comment on current affairs in the military profession, but as a researcher for another publication (*MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*), the bafflement and annoyance I felt at the reviewer's comment that "...many will return to it as a reference work" must be communicated. The publisher has presented the book in the format of a work of fiction; General Franks' name appears in tiny print under Tom Clancy's on the jacket, as if he were a consultant rather than the writer of much of the text, and his career the subject of all of it. Worse, it is also completely without an index, which is unforgivable in these days of computer typesetting. If General Franks hoped this book would restore his reputation with the interested proportion of the American public, he may be disappointed, because his editors have not done well by him.

General Franks does make it clear where he stands on the matter of operational doctrine, however. At the end of the section on VII Corps operations in the Persian Gulf War, the reader will be aware as never before just how many synonyms exist in the English language for the word "synchronization."

JOHN FLUKER  
New York, N.Y.

## Reactions: The May-June Issue

Dear Sir:

In his letter "Second Thoughts on New Ideas" (May-June 1997, pp. 3, 52), MG John C. Faith "hopes" the Louisiana Maneuvers people are paying attention." The Louisiana Maneuvers Task Force chartered in 1992 by GEN Gordon Sullivan and GEN Fred Franks ended its work in June 1996. It had served its purpose by imparting momentum to the continuing series of experiences that will propel the Army into information-age warfare. Army Chief of Staff GEN Dennis Reimer released a message in the spring of 1996 summarizing the accomplishments of the Louisiana Maneuvers Task Force (1992-96).

I was delighted to read LTC Jim Walker's "Vietnam: Tanker's War?" (May-June, pp. 24-30). I am among the many who probably owe their lives to the gasoline-to-diesel engine conversions he describes in "Equipment: Blessing and Nightmare." While a platoon leader in 3d Squadron, 4th Cavalry (25th Infantry Division) my M113 was twice hit by RPGs. Once on 19 Feb 68, and again (a different vehicle) in July of '68. Both RPGs entered in the fuel storage area in the left rear. On neither occasion did my track catch fire. I have always suspected that my track was chosen as a target because it sported two radio antennas rather than one.

I'm also pleased to see Jim Walker recall our field expedient use of spare track blocks,

steel PSP, and chain link fence to cause enemy antitank weapons to pre-detonate before reaching the vulnerable parts of their targets. These ingenious field modifications also saved lives and remain part of the lore of armor. They may be useful again someday if our soldiers should face an enemy as tough as the VC/NVA, who would fire an RPG from 50 meters or less.

ROBERT FAIRCHILD  
COL, ARNG (Ret.)  
Hampton, Va.

## Putting the New Ration Heater In Historical Perspective

Dear Sir:

Well, kiss my grits! "Desert Storm established the unmistakable need" for the capability to heat water and rations in and around armored vehicles. Mr. Larry T. Hasty, I know nothing of your background or experience in Armor, except your winning the Isker Awards (congratulations) for work in fielding the Mounted Water Ration Heater, or MWRH, but sir, I'll wager George Washington's cavalry was avidly seeking a way to boil water in 1776. I'll throw in my seat at Fiddler's Green if Genghis Khan's boys weren't establishing an unmistakable need or a way to heat their rice as they rode around the Great Wall.

We used to have something called OVM (on-vehicle materiel) on tanks that included a little pump-up Coleman stove. The intended use of this neat little piece of equipment was to (you guessed it) heat water and rations. I think it was called a Tank Crew Stove (TCS). I will tell you that it didn't get much use because if you used it and didn't get it really clean, you could flunk a Command Maintenance Inspection (CMI) or the Annual General Inspection (AGI). So what did we do from the plains of Texas to the far reaches of the world? We built fuel-fed fires in our helmets or C-ration cans; we drained water from radiators; we put rations on the transmissions of the tanks or manifolds of the trucks. I kept telling my stupid tanker friends that if we worked hard enough and demonstrated enough need, the Army would give us, in FY97, an MWRH.

BOB SHAMBARGER  
LTC, Armor/Cavalry (Ret.)  
Alma, Ark.

## There's Need for Refresher Courses Tailored to Armor Enlisted

Dear Sir:

I have completed the required five hundred hours of correspondence courses to max that area of promotion criteria. During these long hours of study I noticed that the Armor branch of the U.S. Army doesn't have the same expanse of studies as the Infantry branch.

*Continued on Page 50*

# LETTERS *(Continued from Page 3)*

---

There are no refresher courses for the 19K or 19D like there are for the 11M, 11C, 11H, and the 11B. The Armor curriculum is geared more for the officer than the enlisted. I ask, why are there no courses related to the duties and tasks for a cavalry scout or a tank crewman? Why are there no courses for the NCOs to become more familiar or reinforce skills needed to lead and maintain the multi-million dollar equipment and vital manpower of the armored forces?

True, there is the PLDC Preparation Course, Infantry Weapons Specialist Course, Civil Disturbance Course, to mention a few available to Armor enlisted men without writing the school of origin permission to take and receive credit, or being told to just take the subcourses.

It would be nice to see the, "19D Cavalry Scout Course," "The Armored Crewman Refresher Course," and NCO refresher courses

to the related fields. If need be, take courses from the other school areas of the Army Correspondence Course Program that are part of the METL or "skill tasks" and compile them into a course. Generate a new curriculum for the Armor enlisted soldiers so that they, too, can get knowledge, course credit, and promotion potential like the rest of the branches within the U.S. Army.

SGT WILLIAM C. BROWN  
HHC, 1/118th Inf Bn  
218th Inf Bde

## **How to Find a Friend**

Dear Sir:

I'd like to pass along some good information for your readers about how to find your old

military comrades on the Internet. Veterans with internet access can get help at the following website:

[www.army.mil/vetinfo/vetloc.htm](http://www.army.mil/vetinfo/vetloc.htm)

Anyone who has an addition or correction to the site, or who would like to be listed as a point of contact may get in touch with Ben Myers, P.O. Box 6019, Lake Worth, FL 33466-6019, or email at:

[Vet\\_Locator@prodigy.com](mailto:Vet_Locator@prodigy.com)

In addition, an index of web pages containing information about the military and military organizations is available at the following location:

[www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil)

BEN MYERS  
1SG Retired  
Tanker/Cav