

LETTERS

Master gunner deserves tab

Dear **ARMOR**,

Drill sergeants, recruiters, sappers, Rangers, jumpmasters, Pathfinders and many other specialty skills receive some form of tab or badge that identifies who they are and what special skills they bring to the fight. Why is the master gunner not given the same?

Many of the people who wear these special skill tabs/badges do not even perform the duties in line with the skills they have learned after a certain timeframe. For instance, drill sergeants and recruiters receive identification badges for their tours of three years of service in that respective line of duty, and they are rightfully earned. However, master gunners will serve in positions in-line with their training at various levels for the rest of their military career.

The title of master gunner is not easily earned, and the execution of the skills obtained can be as equally demanding. In all aspects of gunnery training, the master gunner bears many burdens, and with great proficiency and professionalism, he handles them with decisive and clear action. I currently serve as my battalion's master gunner, and the hours I contribute to my unit's success are no less than that of a recruiter or drill sergeant. If I get promoted and serve as a platoon sergeant, I will once again be called upon to serve as a "Mike Golf" at some level upon the completion of my tour as a platoon sergeant.

The skills a master gunner possesses are no less than that of any other specialty in the Army; I believe the demanding training that goes along with that skill deserves more recognition. The master gunner is the linchpin of all aspects of gunnery training, and he should be recognized just as equally as any other special skill in our Army.

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Bring back the armored cavalry regiment

Dear **ARMOR**,

My compliments to CPT Joshua T. Suthoff and CPT Zachary S. Byrnes for their can-

did assessment, "Validating the R&S Squadron and the Future of Reconnaissance." (April-June 2012 edition, **ARMOR** magazine) They have "been there, done that," and they report that it doesn't work. From their experience, they offer interesting solutions, but I suggest that these are only "band aids" to a doctrinal mess that needs to be dumped into the ash heap of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command failures.

The reconnaissance and surveillance squadron of the battlefield surveillance brigade is essentially a headquarters and headquarters troop commanding two brigade recon troops (each with only two scout platoons) lashed together with an utterly incompatible long-range surveillance company. As a mounted force, the entire squadron has only four scout platoons with no combined-arms capability (the added 60mm mortars hardly count) and, in fact, is barely more than a company. Lacking heavy weapons, it is suited only for "sneak and peak" reconnaissance, while its heavy, cumbersome mine-resistant vehicles negate any such capability.

The LRS company has no functional tie-in with the scouts other than (in someone's imagination) the scouts possibly acting as the quick-reaction force to rescue them if their location is compromised. Good luck with that!

The authors suggested redistributing the LRS platoons, one to each of three R&S troops, but that won't work either since they cannot keep up unless they are mounted in similar vehicles. Granted, more mounted infantry is a reasonable idea, but that's not what highly specialized LRS platoons are for.

The authors envision the R&S troops and LRS company being chopped up and sliced to combatant commands. Yes, that's a likely use of a "corps asset," but is loaning a scout platoon or two to a division commander really worthwhile?

How the newly minted BfSB is supposed to tie in an R&S squadron alongside a military-intelligence battalion is beyond the scope of the article, and I dare say that I haven't a clue! But the obvious solution is to end this charade. Eliminate the BfSB outright and assign the MI battalion directly to the corps. Assign the LRS company as a separate corps or theater asset. Ideally, resurrect the heavy armored cavalry regiment before all its institutional memory is lost. Failing that, at least replace the R&S squadron with a conventional armored cavalry squadron –

with all the combined-arms combat power it commands.

Next, I wish to assess retired U.S. Marine Corps LTC Robert W. Lamont's "Brigade Combat Team 2020." (April-June 2012 edition, **ARMOR** magazine) I understand what he is trying to do to improve the brigade combat team, but the proposal is doomed to failure, misconceived from the start by TRADOC's conflation of "modularity," "flexibility" and "commonality." The author states that according to the Army's capstone manual **Operations**, a single large fixed formation cannot support the diverse requirements of full-spectrum operations and that future BCT structure must work in the context of their roles in accomplishing the joint task force's intent. That is nonsense. Not the author's statement, but the Army capstone he cites! If a division lacks the required diverse assets, how can a mere brigade expect to have them unless it is tailored for the mission, as would be the division?

The heavy BCT is neither flexible nor tailorable. It comes with only one-each tank and mechanized battalion equivalent, commonly organized into two balanced tank/mech task forces. The newly structured "cavalry squadron" is added as a sop to have a doctrinal third maneuver element, but it lacks combat power to accomplish such a role.

The author suggests adding a truck-borne infantry battalion and limited aviation lift assets to round out the BCT, making it "triple capable." That's a huge mistake at this low an echelon. Leg and mounted forces do not work well when armored combat maneuver is required. Regards "truck-mounted" infantry, consider the history of the failed "motorized infantry division" of World War II. Lavishly equipped, it was certainly mobile, but its maneuver ended with enemy contact. Worse, the proposed aviation assets are inadequate to airmobile and sustain an infantry battalion, so aviation support will be required anyway. Conversely, frequent smaller-scale (company and platoon) airmobile operations will rapidly disperse the infantry battalion, reducing its effectiveness from its main mission.

Finally, completely ignored in the discussion is the logistical supporting footprint of this expanded BCT and its rear-area security, or lack thereof. Let's say you maneuver those two armored/mech battalions, screened by the cavalry squadron, and surprise the enemy with that airmo-

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bile infantry assault. Who the heck is securing all those supporting assets and rear-echelon troops?

Instead, I suggest adding a second mechanized infantry battalion to round out the HBCT (one tank, two mech battalions), and I'd further suggest replacing the new cavalry squadron with an old-style armored cavalry troop instead. But the BCT is too small and already busy enough to have to deal with the addition of aviation assets, especially their logistical tail. Aviation should remain consolidated under higher echelon. The higher echelon, corps or Army, should then plan, command and control any such combined air and ground maneuvers.

Now for the "big picture" assessment: The real problem is that the Army screwed up when it went to modular BCTs, which are not and cannot be flexible response forces. We learned all this and solved it in World War II.

The division was the basic combat-manuever echelon. The infantry division was the general-purpose force. It was reinforced with battalions from Army: tank, tank destroyer, mechanized infantry, engineer, field artillery, air-defense artillery, transportation and other specialized battalions as needed for the specific theater and operation. Internally, it could tailor and slice off regimental combat teams, meaning the infantry regiment was reinforced with its slice of division-and-above assets of field artillery, antitank artillery, tanks and tank destroyers, plus whatever support was deemed mission-essential.

The armor division carried tailored task-organization yet further. It was built around a division headquarters, combat commands and a pool of tank, mecha-

nized and artillery battalions, plus whatever was attached from higher. The CCs were task-organized for each specific operation. Two CCs (CCA and CCB) maneuvered while the third, reserve CC (CCR) retained control of remaining and supporting units. Eventually, CCR was expanded to become a third, coequal CCC.

In effect, the armor division brought "combined arms" to what was previously an infantry corps or Army. With experience gained, the armor divisions' CCs were often sliced off and tasked to reinforce individual infantry divisions, broadening the integration of combined arms.

With better communications, combining arms at ever lower levels continued throughout the 1960s Reorganization of the Army Division force structure and through the 1980s Division '86, where battalion task forces and company teams were the norm. But with the 1990s Army of Excellence, the Army got tunnel vision. Leadership focused on fixed force structures as they struggled to reduce manpower and endstrengths. This regressed to an erroneous presumption of "fixed divisions" and the misguided dogma that only full "type divisions" could be deployed. The Army ignored that battalions and separate companies are already modular and tailorable. Instead it became enthralled with designing "universal" but permanent organizations. This ultimately led to the breaking up of three-brigade divisions into five separate modular BCT. Half a century's worth of proven success, ignorantly discarded!

This is LTC Lamont's dilemma. Dutifully following the Army capstone concept, he has no option for mission-tailoring the

BCT and so he tries to expand it into a general-purpose unit. At the "point of the spear" level, this makes sense, but it ignores the spear's short and stubby shaft. My suggestion is to instead replace the flawed shaft with one that gives that spear-point its strength and reach, its combat power, its very reason for existence.

Bring back the heavy ACR, the armored division with its heavy division cavalry squadron and the heavy separate brigade with its heavy cavalry troop.

Forge the Thunderbolt!

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ACRONYM QUICK-SCAN

- ACR** – armored cavalry regiment
- BCT** – brigade combat team
- BfSB** – battlefield surveillance brigade
- CC** – combat command
- CCA** – Combat Command-A
- CCB** – Combat Command-B
- CCC** – Combat Command-C
- CCR** – Combat Command-Reserve
- HBCT** – heavy brigade combat team
- LRS** – long-range surveillance
- MI** – military intelligence
- R&S** – reconnaissance and surveillance
- TRADOC** – Training and Doctrine Command