

*CSM Miles S. Wilson
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army Armor School*



The Scout Platoon of 2020

The Army is known as a regimented, disciplined and uniform organization. We have regulations, manuals, tables of organizations and allocations, and the Uniform Code of Military Justice to ensure we all look and act alike. Standard operating procedures; tactics, techniques and procedures; and Center of Army Lessons Learned notices ensure that even down to the lowest unit level, we as an Army operate very similarly. So what happened to the scout platoon?

I enlisted as a 19D in 1986. I was trained on the Cavalry Fighting Vehicle in one-station unit training. My first platoon in Germany consisted of six CFVs and 30 scouts. My second platoon at Fort Hood, TX, was the same thing. I had to successfully pass all Bradley gunnery skill tasks just to get into the Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course. I attended the Bradley Master Gunner Course and commanded a CFV in Desert Storm. I followed that up with a rotation to the National Training Center in February 1992.

Twenty years and a whole lot of history later, the Army has no less than five different scout platoons.

On the surface, an armored brigade combat team reconnaissance squadron and a combined-arms battalion's scout platoons look identical, but a closer look shows a difference in the NCO allocations. These two platoons have three Bradleys, five humvees and 36 Soldiers. A Stryker BCT's scout platoon is four Stryker reconnaissance vehicles and 23 Soldiers. An infantry BCT's scout platoon is six humvees and 24 Soldiers. Finally, the scout platoon in a battlefield surveillance brigade is six humvees and 18 Soldiers. We all know that scouts are very resourceful and that the Army wants flexible, agile Soldiers with a depth of experience. But the preceding differences make it very hard for a young 19D to develop into a true subject-matter expert NCO.

We at the Armor School are the proponents for change to bring uniformity to Army scout platoons. We feel all scout platoons should be six vehicles and 36 Soldiers. We concur with the Stryker RV for SBCTs, the Bradley for ABCTs, and we definitely do *not* concur with any scout

deploying in a humvee. Platforms will always be different among the different BCTs, but having two different platforms in one platoon is crazy. Especially when scouts are asked to do their job in a highly vulnerable wheeled vehicle around everyone else in highly survivable armored tracked vehicles.

The infantry squad went through this same dilemma not long ago. GEN Martin Dempsey, the 37th Chief of Staff of the Army, made the decision that an Army infantry squad was nine Soldiers. Pros and cons for a nine-man squad exist, but decision made – move on. We feel that needs to happen now with the scout platoon. Once we have the platoon set, we can then debate and decide what a scout section, squad and team look like. We look forward to your thoughts and recommendations.

Let us also never forget those who have paid the ultimate price and can no longer be with us, and all those great Americans currently serving in harm's way.

Forge the Thunderbolt! Armor Strong!