

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

In the Summer 2020 issue of **ARMOR** magazine, CPT Nicholas M. Charnley wrote an article titled, "Why Cavalry Officers Should Have Their Own Branch." The article articulated many well-researched points and made an argument for the development of an independent Cavalry Branch. However, there are many reasons why Cavalry officers should not have an independent branch.

CPT Charnley highlighted the Army's dependence on non-organic assets at the brigade and division levels. It is true that the conventional Army depended on a great deal of surveillance and observation equipment as well as on Special Operations Forces to collect valuable intelligence during the counterinsurgency-driven global war on terror. However, the Army acknowledged and is adjusting the force structure to address the importance of reconnaissance and security (R&S) at echelon; it knows surveillance alone will not suffice during large-scale combat operations (LSCO).

According to Joint Publication 2-0, reconnaissance is "a mission undertaken to obtain, by visual observation or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of an enemy or adversary, or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic or geographic characteristics of a particular area." Field Manual (FM) 3-55, **Information Collection**, distinctly describes the difference between "surveillance" and "reconnaissance." Reconnaissance is active in nature, while surveillance is passive and continuous. Therefore the active nature of reconnaissance usually includes human participation, and it often requires units to maneuver and fight for information. Due to this distinction, it is illogical to divorce cavalry units from maneuver.

Armor captains attend the Maneuver Captain's Career Course (MCCC) because it provides the foundational knowledge required for all maneuver captains before they go to their follow-on assignments. Those assignments could be in infantry, armor or cavalry units, and in any of the three brigade combat team (BCT) structures.

The Maneuver Center of Excellence and the U.S. Army Armor School (USAARMS) have multiple functional courses that are not only available but encouraged and often mandatory for Armor officers to attend after attending MCCC.

CPT Charnley also highlighted the lack of focus in the Infantry Basic Officer Leader's Course (IBOLC) and Armor Basic Officer Leader's Course (ABOLC) on R&S. This is true; however, the intent of those courses was never to build leader proficiency at R&S tasks. Following ABOLC, lieutenants attend the Scout Leader's Course (SLC). Following MCCC, captains attend the Cavalry Leader's Course (CLC). These courses are designed to build proficiency at R&S tasks. The requirements from U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) and the Armor Branch make it very clear that these courses are not voluntary and nest with existing professional military education (PME). Furthermore, FORSCOM guidance dictates that all lieutenant colonels selected for Cavalry squadron command must attend CLC if they have not in the past.

CPT Charnley implies that there is BCT inequity at CLC; that is an outdated and inaccurate assumption. CPT Sweeney (co-author of this letter) served as a CLC instructor 2018-2019; during that time, he instructed Cavalry leaders in the ranks of staff sergeant to lieutenant colonel. Every small group had an equal mix of Soldiers assigned to armored brigade combat teams (ABCTs), infantry brigade combat teams (IBCTs) and Stryker brigade combat teams (SBCTs), as well as many leaders from security-force assistance brigades. Also, an ABCT requested one of five mobile training teams (MTTs) executed in that timeframe.

CPT Charnley also highlights inconsistencies among the courses. While there may be some differences among Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader's Course (which falls under the Airborne and Ranger Training Brigade in the Infantry School), CLC and SLC (which fall under the 316th Cavalry Brigade in the Armor School), this is a result of different audiences' requirements for these courses.

The 3rd Squadron, 16th Cavalry Regiment Squadron, of the 316th Cavalry Brigade at Fort Benning, GA, trains and certifies all CLC and SLC instructors. FM 3-98, **Reconnaissance and Security Operations**, is the foundation for their knowledge and curriculum. Furthermore, instructors from both courses attend all certification teaches for prospective instructors, which are led by the squadron command group. While there is a slight difference in

experience between students who are brand-new lieutenants or young staff sergeants (SLC) vs. captains and first sergeants (CLC) as far as level of understanding and detail is concerned, there is no gap in the doctrinal understanding among the instructors of each course. These courses build on the doctrinal knowledge that officers and noncommissioned officers receive during earlier PME. SLC and CLC produce proficient cavalry leaders ready to operate in armor, infantry or Stryker BCTs.

The U.S. Army does not need and should not create a Cavalry Branch. As stated earlier, cavalry units need to understand the tasks, capabilities and limitations of the formations they support to be effective. Their leaders are better suited to execute LSCO after attending broader PME for their respective branch before attending the specialized R&S courses. Instead of seeking to separate Armor officers with their branch, the Armor Branch continues to emphasize the key functional courses for leaders going to cavalry organizations. USAARMS continues to enhance the learning experience for students and uses outreach/MTTs to expand the knowledge of these courses in the operating force.

**MAJ DEMARIUS THOMAS
CPT TIMOTHY SWEENEY**

Dear Editor,

I have mixed feelings about what has been happening with Armor Branch in the last 10 or more years. I'm amused that my hunch from more than a decade ago that the Army may once again need divisional-cavalry squadrons seems to have turned out to be correct. At the same time, I'm disappointed that so much of the expertise I/we formerly took for granted has been lost.

I'll start off by saying that MAJ Nathan Jennings did Armor and Cavalry a great service in his article, "Reconsidering Division-Cavalry Squadrons, Part IV" (*ARMOR*, Spring-Summer 2019 edition). Since "what's past is prologue," I should say that I came up through a light divisional-cavalry squadron: 1st Squadron, 158th Cavalry Regiment, Maryland Army National Guard. We were the divcav for 29th Infantry Division (Light). By my reckoning, that formation has been extinct in Maryland and all across the Army for 12-plus years. To spare you from having to wipe the dust off an old table of organization and equipment (TO&E), I can tell you that in the beginning, we had two air troops, an aviation-maintenance troop, a ground troop and a headquarters and headquarters troop. Being a glasses-wearer and an Armor officer, naturally I was in the ground troop (A/1-158 Cavalry). Initially we had OH-58Cs and AH-1F Cobras.

Although I was in the unit in the 1990s, this was essentially a Vietnam-era task-organization and would have sounded familiar to anyone who had been in uniform in the 1970s. Even so, when we got the ground troop working with one of the air troops, it was a highly effective task-organization. The aircraft would identify the "big things" (vehicles, large troop movements), and we in the ground troop would identify the "little things" (dismounted infantry or provide detailed reconnaissance). Doctrinally we would screen or provide reconnaissance along the 20- to 25-kilometer front or flank of our light division, and our training and organization enabled us to do that. Being light, we didn't want to engage an enemy directly but preferred to use the General Support 155(T) howitzer battery from the division artillery (for which we would usually have priority of fire) or the Cobras. And it was good.

One of the "lessons learned" from Operation Desert Storm was that the 58s (I'm talking about the "C" model here, without the sophisticated sensors of the later "D" model) were too slow, lacked advanced sensors and couldn't keep up with the Apaches of an attack company. The Army aviation community, in its collective wisdom, decided to pull the 58s and replace them with Cobras. The old aviation warrant officers grouched because the TO&E change made their Vietnam-era tactics prohibitively expensive. By that I mean flying an aircraft low and fast above a tree line to draw fire while a gunship flew above to respond was no longer economically viable since no one really wanted to consider losing a Cobra. But I digress.

It was generally recognized by the late 1990s that the Cobra was a legacy airframe and needed to go. Active Army units would receive the light attack helicopter (LHX) while the Guard would get Apaches, with its modern optics and avionics packages. Then two things took place generally in the same timeframe. First, the LHX program was cancelled (largely due to a failure by the Army to manage its requirements and what aviators wanted the aircraft to do, in my opinion). Second, 9-11 happened, and the Apaches (which we had been slated to receive from 101st

Airborne) were suddenly no longer available. I was hoping we'd get the OH-58D, but I suppose there weren't enough to go around. Without aircraft to form a ground/air team, the light divcav was no longer viable.

Despite equipment shortages, the death knell of the light DivCav squadron was the transformation the Army went through in the 2007/8 timeframe. Two changes came into play that required us to hang up our spurs and Stetsons. The first was the Army's focus on brigades as the primary maneuver echelon (vice the division), which meant that assets formerly associated with divisions (such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) were now pushed to brigades. (A more thorough explanation of this phenomenon is presented in MAJ Amos Fox's article, "On the Employment of Cavalry," *ARMOR*, Winter 2020 edition). Second, the nature of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan didn't require divisions to fight as they had previously envisioned. This set up the "division troops" to be the billpayers for the slots now assigned to brigades, and *voila*, the divisional-cavalry squadron mission was erased.

Although each brigade combat team (BCT) gained its own cavalry squadron as its third maneuver battalion, could that squadron really function as cavalry in a brigade with only two maneuver battalions? If I remember correctly, the Army later went back and added a third maneuver battalion, which would then in theory free up the cavalry squadron to do reconnaissance and security (R&S) tasks for the brigade, but I'll leave it to others to fact-check me on that.

So how's that working out? The elimination of the divcav squadron was probably reasonable based on the situation at the time, but now that the Army's focus has returned to a near-peer conventional fight with divisions maneuvering in the field like in Desert Storm or the invasion of Iraq, it's time to reach for those spurs and Stetsons again. Every time I've done a division-level Warfighter-like exercise, the answer to the question of "Who are we going to use for the division's deep fight?" is to break up a maneuver brigade to use its battalions as substitute divisional-cavalry squadrons. I seem to recall from reading a manual where it says *ad hoc* teams conducting missions for which they're not well trained are high-risk operations.

While this approach works in a computer simulation, with "tie guys" who can reset the battlefield according to the needs of the training scenario, you can color me skeptical about this working with real people shooting real bullets. A division commander has the authority to use the brigade's cavalry squadron as his own. However, are BCT cavalry squadrons manned, trained and equipped for the job? Do the squadron's doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities align to support the division commander's mission? I think all of us know the answer, and it's not a "roger."

This is where MAJ Jennings' article does us a great service. In revisiting missions and organizations of divcav squadrons gone by, he's reminded me of things I thought I'd forgotten and spurred some more thinking about the problem. In the past I remember being envious of my separate heavy armored-cavalry regiment counterparts and their ability to fight for information, and also their ability to conduct guard-and-cover missions (the latter with augmentation). These are things we couldn't do in the light cavalry without a lot of help.

Looking ahead, what should a divisional-cavalry squadron be able to do? The squadron must be able to conduct R&S missions along the entire division front, flank or rear. On the defense, it must be able to screen. I submit that it should be inherently strong enough to guard without augmentation. On the offense, it must be able to conduct area, route and zone reconnaissance ahead of the division. On a limited basis, it should also be able to destroy high-value targets, seize key terrain and hold it for a short period of time to deny it to an enemy and enable division forward movement.

What might a current-day divisional-cavalry squadron look like?

- It will need to have ground and air components inherent to the task-organization. This might be a combination of wheeled and tracked vehicles on the ground and armed unmanned aerial vehicles or attack helicopters in the air.
- It will need to have adequate dismounted capability for detailed reconnaissance and to maintain a screen over a sustained period of time. It should maximize currently available and future reconnaissance and surveillance technology, including advanced night-vision gear and hand-held drones.
- It must be able to communicate securely across long distances and have command, control and communications tools which enable shared situational awareness and understanding across the squadron and up to division and higher.

- It will need to be able to fuse all-source intelligence, long-range fires, close air support and electronic warfare into a highly aware, lethal and united effort.

Moreover, we must continue to reinforce the lessons we have learned at great expense in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. The cav squadron must also be able to tap into and understand the “human terrain” through culturally aware leaders and 19D10s, or we will once again pay the price. The local people know things about the terrain and the adversary that a map, satellite photo or briefing from the S-2 can’t tell you. Based on the situation, we should enhance scouts with tactical human-intelligence teams, psychological operations or even civil-affairs Soldiers. Should that expertise be built in to future cavalry squadrons, or will we be forced into playing a pick-up game again?

If MAJ Jennings or someone else would like to know more about “the way things were,” there may still be enough of us old guys around to ask.

COL ANDREW D. GOLDIN

Acronym Quick-Scan

ABCT – armored brigade combat team

ABOLC – Armor Basic Officer Leader’s Course

BCT – brigade combat team

CLC – Cavalry Leader’s Course

FM – field manual

FORSCOM – (U.S. Army) Forces Command

IBCT – infantry brigade combat team

IBOLC – Infantry Basic Officer Leader’s Course

LHX – light attack helicopter

LSCO – large-scale combat operations

MCCC – Maneuver Captain’s Career Course

MTT – mobile training team

PME – professional military education

R&S – reconnaissance and security

SBCT – Stryker brigade combat team

TO&E – table of organization and equipment

USAARMS – U.S. Army Armor School