



Time to Rename King, Queen of Battle?



CAPTAIN GEORGE S. MIDLA

I must begin by stating that I have had my start in this great Army as an infantryman. My birth took place on the training fields of Fort Benning, Ga. I stood on one of those fields during graduation day in the summer heat, proud of my blue infantry cord that now wove around my shoulder. During this baptismal ceremony, I remember the infantry being referred to as the “Queen of Battle.” I have to affirm now that I never liked that title. No one wants to be second; no fighting man wishes to be affiliated with feminine overtones. Truly it would be better to be king.

I was informed that day that our artillery held this lofty position. Those cannon cockers were the true rulers. They set the stage for the battlefield. Able to change fire 180 degrees, raining their hell in all directions and reaching out miles from their positions. From their firebases they ruled as a king – firm, strong, and heavy-handed, if need be.

Up until recent years, I might have argued these statements concerning our artillery. Land is not owned until the infantry secures it, but I was able to experience the effects of indirect fire firsthand during operations in Afghanistan. Mortars shelled the company I was with for more than four hours; we had a one hour reprieve, and then were shelled for another hour before it subsided. We experienced what was equivalent to our 81mm mortars. Although this is a devastating weapon system, it obviously does not fire an artillery shell. I could not help but think about the human experiences during World War I when men were fired upon by the heaviest guns of the artillery. These were steel giants with barrel diameters of 12 to 15 inches that obliterated the battlefields of the Somme, Verdun, and Marne. The French produced one of the largest artillery pieces of this time period. Their railroad-mounted gun fired a 520mm round with a 600 pound explosive. With these types of charges, squads of men were killed and buried in a flash all by the same shell. Truly for them the artillery must have been king.

I am not writing this essay to support the artillery or infantry over this argument of who is king or queen. Warfare has changed. In my studies, I have come to realize what I consider to be the truth in this debate. That is the king of battle is surprise and its queen is speed.

In reviewing past battles from the Napoleonic, Mexican, Spanish American, American Civil and the Second World War, surprise and speed were crucial in the deciding factors in conquest, or their unattainable goal was offered as a reason for why a plan failed. It is the shock, the brilliant unexpected attack that startles and confuses a foe over which a force may get the upper hand in

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any battle even if greatly outnumbered. And now we consider speed. Speed is achieved when a force descends upon an opponent in lightning moves, to be on its adversary with eagerness at his weak point. The confusion and fear this fosters leads to a poor defense and no offense and ultimately victory. This idea although centuries old was perfected by the German Army during its strikes in Europe in the form of the *Blitzkrieg*.

Our battlefields are still evolving. Technological advances on how we wage

war, our equipment, weapon systems, and doctrine have attempted to keep up with the changing faces of our enemy. And with these many changes, surprise and speed are still maintained as the battle cry for our forces. We are attempting to process reliable information at a faster rate so that action can be taken swiftly. Developments in our personal equipment are being made so that they are lighter giving our troops the ability to maneuver quickly while on foot. The use of Stryker vehicles gets us into the fighting without delay with a lethality and maneuverability needed to support the actions of surprise and speed. Within hours we are able to air assault or parachute a battalion into regions not occupied before with murderous effects.

I did not write this manuscript to change history. The artillery and infantry have a long and glorious past both worthy of a mark of dignity. Considering our recent conflicts it now seems necessary to review these phrases as applied to our modern Army and its past history as well. This new use of these titles is to aid in the training of our future leaders, that is those individuals who are now just learning their profession. The importance of surprise and speed cannot be over stressed in our planning and conduct of a mission. In renaming them as king and queen, new leaders may better keep them in their thoughts as constant considerations during all phases of an operation.

With prompt success in battle ultimately comes the conservation of life and equipment. The preservation of our forces is paramount in continuing our attack on current and future opponents of our nation.

Captain George S. Midla first entered military service in 1982 as an 11B. He was commissioned in 1999 after completing the Interservice Physician Assistant Program. His assignments included serving with the 5th Special Forces Group, 3rd Special Forces Group, 2nd Infantry Division, and 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). CPT Midla currently works at Madigan Army Medical Center as a physician assistant and clinical perfusionist for the Cardiothoracic Surgery Service.
