

## Reinstating the Combat Tanker Badge Stirs Mixed Emotions

Dear *ARMOR*,

I have been reluctant to enter the debate regarding the combat and expert armor badges. However, after reading the article by CPT Shawn Monien, "Reinstating the Combat Tanker Badge," in the September-October 2003 issue of *ARMOR*, I decided to put my oar in the water.

In the January-February 1988 issue of *ARMOR*, Commander's Hatch, (an editorial primarily written by Majors Scott Rowell and Bob Wilson), I stated we were developing a Scout's "rite of passage." The Scout Badge (SCB) proposed to be similar to the Expert Infantry Badge (EIB) and concentrated on individual scout skills. I also asked for your input. We designed the badge, similar to the EIB, except it had a saber instead of a rifle and was red and white. The requirements for the SCB were considered more difficult than those for the Combat Infantry Badge (CIB), as we did not want it to be considered, under any circumstances, to be easy. The design and requirements were sent through channels to the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and the proposal was turned down, either by TRADOC or Department of the Army — I do not remember which because consensus could not be reached by the sitting four stars. We fought the good fight and lost, saluted, and moved on.

Turning the calendar ahead to 1991 following Desert Storm, as Director of the Desert Storm Study Group, it was my pleasure to interview soldiers and leaders after the conflict and discuss things that went right and things that needed improving. My personal focus was with senior leaders (battalion-level commanders and above) and members of my team spent much of their time with troops. One thing that was very apparent was the disparity in awarding combat badges. For instance, the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry did not have enough 19Ds to man their tracks. They were given 11Ms and 11Bs as substitutes for the scouts. After the war, the infantrymen were given CIBs and scouts serving on the same track were given handshakes. The letter from Todd A. Mayer, reprinted in CPT Monien's article, which states that mortar men in 4-64 Armor who never fired a shot received CIBs is another example of badges that were erroneously presented. When this type of information was presented to the DA General Officer Steering Group (GOSC) with a recommendation to create and award Combat Armor, Cavalry (Scout), and Engineer badges as they closed with, met, and destroyed the enemy, it was challenged by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, LTG Reno. When he stated it was not General Marshall's intent to give awards of this type to tankers, he was reminded that during WWII, Korea, and Vietnam it took 30 days of combat to receive a CIB. I also stated that I doubted General Marshall intended for infantrymen who rode around in Bradley Fighting Vehicles, mortar tracks, and busses to get them either. He relented. I am not trying to disparage our great infantry soldiers, but in my opinion, there are many others who fight and deserve equal recognition.

Once again, this went forward to the Chief of Staff of the Army and, once again, the four-star generals shot it down. I went to most of the division commanders who fought and to the two

corps commanders and they were either supportive or offered no objection.

It is also interesting to note that Armor officers were told they could not wear the Vietnamese Armor Badge, but all other branches wore whatever the Vietnamese gave them. I found it interesting that the late LTG Tom Kelly wore his as a member of the joint staff while being interviewed on an almost daily basis by the media during Desert Storm. We also used to wear gunnery qualification badges on our fatigues. When we went to BDUs, we were told to take them off. However, if one looks at the number of badges on the uniforms of other branches of the Army, none of this makes sense.

Let's dust off the 1988 study by Office of the Chief of Armor and resubmit. I doubt if anything has changed that much and this issue has been "studied" long enough.

THOMAS H. TAIT  
MG, U.S. Army, Retired

Dear *ARMOR*,

Plaudits regarding your article in the September-October 2003 issue of *ARMOR*, "Reinstating the Combat Tanker Badge." Your approach to the subject, including the research documentation, covered the entire matter.

When I rotated out of the 73d Tank Battalion in February 1952, many of us wore the Combat Tanker Badge, unaware that the badge was not authorized. As soon as we arrived stateside, we were ordered to remove the badge. Again, we believed that General Abrams would solve this problem as Chief of Staff of the Army, which he did not. Apparently, the Infantry types talked him out of authorization because they have always overlooked the fact that other Army branches serve on the battlefield.

The Infantry, during World War II and Korea, lost some 85 percent killed and wounded, and I am certain that the Vietnam figures are close. The Combat Infantry Badge is not the Combat Casualty Badge, but rather recognition that the wearer participated in ground infantry combat, just as the Combat Tanker Badge would indicate that the wearer participated in combat in an armored vehicle. Armored vehicles, while nearly impervious to small arms fire, stand on top of the enemy's priority target acquisition list with all sorts of goodies for destroying armor.

If and when the Combat Tanker Badge is finally adopted, it will not be retroactive, but at least young lads will happily received theirs. I wear my Combat Tanker Badge at the occasional memorial service. With the proliferation of medals and ribbons for this and that, the time has arrived for the Combat Tanker Badge.

F.W. HEALY  
SGM, U.S. Army, Retired

Dear *ARMOR*,

I must disagree with the September-October 2003 article "Reinstating the Combat Tanker Badge." The only reason Captain Shawn Monien could give for authorizing a Combat Tanker Badge was to, "get that warm feeling of seeing a distinctive insignia or strive to be the next person to

sew it on." While I applaud Captain Monien's attempts at justifying a distinctive badge to recognize the efforts of the armor and cavalry communities, I'm afraid he'll have to do better than that.

First, there is a very good reason why only infantry, medical service corps, and Special Forces personnel rate a distinctive combat badge. They are the only branches whose mission on the line is performed without the benefit of several inches of steel and ceramic armor. While I confess that other branches do serve directly at the front, only the aforementioned branches serve that mission without the benefit of some type of mechanization (armor, artillery, or aviation) or the luxury of returning to the rear area once the mission is complete.

Second, I served in the field artillery for 3 years before taking a commission in the aviation branch. Not once did I hear a fellow artilleryman or officer lament that he didn't have a badge recognizing his efforts on the line. Ironically, the field artillery could actually make this claim since historically gunners have served on the line with the infantry. As late as the Vietnam War, artillerymen were engaged in direct fire cannon missions at the enemy!

I have yet to read where the JAG Corps, Transportation Corps, or other support branches have demanded a unique combat service badge. I would have been more receptive to Captain Monien's article had he proposed an Army-wide combat service badge. Sergeant Graves (the NCO mentioned in the article) like all of us (excluding females), had a choice when he enlisted in the Army. His choice was armor; he could have easily chosen infantry. It is sad that Sergeant Graves was neither proud of his unit's combat service patch or his Bronze and Silver Stars for valor. Many a soldier has returned home in a flag-draped coffin with less, and I'm sure their families were very proud of their service.

Finally my uncle, a Marine infantryman who served in Vietnam, does not wear a Combat Infantry Badge. But, I can assure you we are just as proud of his service and understand the sacrifices that he made back in the 1960s. It is tragic that Mr. Graves did not feel same about his son's service, but that is between him and Sergeant Graves.

I can only image the amount of hostile fire I will draw from my friends and associates in the armor and cavalry communities, but the truth is only the infantry, combat medics, and Special Forces deserve this unique recognition. Gentlemen, you may fire when ready!

JAYSON A. ALTIERI  
MAJ, SAASS  
Maxwell AFB, AL

## Snipers Require Special Skills

Dear *ARMOR*,

As an infantryman, I was mildly astonished to see *ARMOR* feature snipers on its cover (July-August 2003). Maybe others were as well. However, under some circumstances, it could be a topic of importance for mechanized infantry and armor units. I remember the World War II battle for Ludwigshaven, Germany. The terrain around Lud-

*Continued on Page 51*

## LETTERS from Page 3

wigshaven is as flat as a pancake. The massed 88mm anti-aircraft guns defending the city from air attack merely lowered their barrels and placed fire on the armored vehicles coming at them. We were told that one attacking tank battalion lost 25 tanks to the 88s before the surviving tankers called off the attack. In that manner, the massed 88s defeated the attacking 10th, 11th, and 12th Armored Divisions. During circumstances such as these that cause armored unit attacks to stall, snipers could become important to an armored unit.

Snipers must have three key military skills:

- The ability to bring direct fire on the enemy using pinpoint accuracy at long range.

- Field craft, which is the ability to move silently, exist in the field and not be seen, and identify a camouflaged and concealed enemy.

- Positional awareness when in the zone of direct fire. Positional awareness makes one aware of the view the enemy has of you and your position. Positional awareness includes reacting to all the interacting variables of the battlefield, including a kind of calculus, for as one battlefield condition changes all other battlefield conditions change. With positional awareness one survives the direct fire close battle, and does so in battle after battle. Sergeant York of WWI fame was a skilled sniper. York's sniping skills gave him the positional awareness that made it possible for him (and the few men with him) to avoid becoming casualties when essentially all other men in their battalion were lost.

Audie Murphy was also a sniper. His positional awareness made it possible for him to survive battle after battle in a division that had more casualties than any other division in WWII. Murphy earned his Congressional Medal of Honor in a battle where he used a .50-caliber machine gun as a sniping weapon.

No discussion of sniping is complete without mentioning the fabulous sniping done by Marine Sergeant Carlos Hathcock during Vietnam. In one instance, Sergeant Hathcock used a .50-caliber machine gun (in the single shot mode) to obtain one-shot kills at a range of more than 2,000 yards.

Men who are not skilled shooters tend to lack positional awareness. They tend to be fearful about situations that are not dangerous, and at the same time, they fail to discern other situations that are very hazardous.

During WWI, the 37mm gun was developed for the specific purpose of sniping at enemy machine gun nests. At other times during WWI, a "French 75" field artillery piece was manhandled (pushed by a crew of soldiers) into a front line position and used as a sniping rifle.

During WWII, LTC Benjamin Thurston, commanding officer of the Third Battalion, 376th Infantry, 94th Infantry Division, Third Army, was such a good marksman that he picked up a German (K-98 7.92mm) bolt-action rifle and did some sniping at a distance of 1,000 yards. On another occasion, he set up and very effectively used a 57mm antitank gun as a sniping rifle. (The 57mm gun was the standard antitank gun for infantry units in WWII.)

The Germans used the 88mm gun as a sniping weapon. WWII newspaper reporters found our

apprehension of being shot at by an 88 very hilarious, but in German hands, the 88-mm gun was a very effective sniping weapon.

Using the definition of sniping as long-range, pinpoint accuracy in direct fire, an example could be presented that an 8-inch howitzer was used as a sniping weapon in WWII. (It was used to remove an enemy observer from a church steeple when no other available gun would effectively do so. And, yes, I know that howitzers are not guns). The WWII 105mm and 155mm howitzers were "area" weapons and were sloppily inaccurate; whereas, the towed 8-inch howitzer was capable of deadly, long-range accuracy in the direct fire mode.

In Korea, according to one report that I read many years ago, the 90mm tank gun was used as a sniping rifle (probably printed in *Infantry*).

So, what kind of gun does a sniper use? Whatever he chooses to use. It should be noted that on average, it takes about 5 hits with .30-caliber bullets to stop a man. I am acquainted with one soldier who was hit by two .30-caliber (7.92mm) bullets and did not know that he had even been hit until hours later. I had a platoon sergeant who had three 9mm (.38-caliber) bullets across his chest and was able to fight his way out of the jam he was in. So what kind of gun does a sniper use? Again, the answer should be, "whatever he chooses to use." In an armor unit, every tank gunner should be mentally prepared to use the tank gun as a sniping rifle (or give it to a sniper who will). Every crewmember of a Bradley should be prepared to use the 25mm gun as a sniping weapon or to give it to a sniper who will.

My interpretation of following combat orders comes from the way General Patton ran the Third Army. General Patton addressed every regiment in my division. As he told us, the commander says "what" he wants done, but at the squad level, we decide "how" it is done.

And so it should be with snipers. Officers may tell a sniper "what" to do, but "how" it is done should be the sniper's decision, and snipers should have the guns they want.

ROBERT P. KINGSBURY  
LTC, INF and FA, U.S. Army, Retired  
Rifleman for General Patton

### Scout Platoons Need Snipers

Dear *ARMOR*:

The article in the July-August 2003 issue of *ARMOR* by Captain Timothy Morrow, "Mechanized Snipers on the Force XXI Battlefield," hits the nail right on the head.

The light infantry, airborne, air assault, and Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) infantry battalions have already addressed the issues brought forth by Captain Morrow and have started to implement some of his suggestions. An example of this is using the .50-caliber sniper rifle in the Sniper's Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, and the introduction of the XM107 .50-caliber sniper rifle in the sniper squads of the SBCT. I agree with Captain Morrow that the scout platoons of the armor and mechanized infantry battalions do need snipers.

The current MTOE of a mechanized infantry battalion has one sniper team composed of two 11B

infantrymen in each of its three infantry companies. While moving these snipers to the battalion scout platoon is a good idea for training and employment, you are taking away a vital combat multiplier from company commanders who want to use their sniper teams to support missions. This also leaves a problem with the scout platoon in the one or two armor battalions in the brigade combat team that do not have 11Bs in their organizations from which to draw snipers. How do we address the sniper shortage in those elements?

I suggest leaving the 11B snipers in their present positions with the infantry company, and add six 19D cavalry scouts as a sniper squad to the scout platoons of the armor and mechanized infantry battalion. The squad can be organized as three 2-man sniper teams equipped with the M24 sniper weapons system (SWS) and M203, or like the snipers in the SBCT, in two 3-man sniper teams equipped with the XM107, M24 SWS, and M203. The three 2-man sniper teams would be organized with a staff sergeant as squad leader and sniper with a private first class as his sniper/spotter, a sergeant as senior sniper with a specialist as his sniper/spotter and the third team consisting of a specialist sniper with a private first class as his sniper/spotter. The 3-man sniper teams would be identically organized with one noncommissioned officer as XM107 sniper, one specialist M24 SWS sniper, and one private first class as security with the M203. All six positions would be B4 coded, the additional skill identifier for graduates of the Snipers Course. 19Ds are already authorized to attend the Sniper's Course run by the Infantry School at Fort Benning. The sniper squad leader would be responsible for training snipers, as well as employing or offering employment advice of the sniper teams to the platoon leader, S2, or the battalion chief of reconnaissance. The sniper squad leader of the scout platoon in the mechanized infantry battalion would also be tasked with maintaining a training plan for the snipers in the battalion line companies and may even have them attached to the platoon for training purposes while at home station.

Six 19D snipers configured in either the 2- or 3-man sniper team offer greater flexibility for deployment and mobility on the battlefield while still being supported by the six M1025/M1026 high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWVs) of the platoon. The armored force can use stay-behind operations as successfully as the light infantry and Stryker forces do today. The snipers from line companies, scout platoons, and/or a combination of both, can be used behind the enemy forward line of own troops or main battle area to impede, harass, and destroy the enemy, as well as maintain valuable hides and observation points to support any action by the armored task force by placing indirect fires and precision long range fires on the enemy while keeping the reconnaissance picture updated for the task force commander.

This increase in combat power will have to be supported by the armor community with an increase of 300 additional 19Ds. I do not see the cost of a few extra rifles, radios, optics, and personnel as something too prohibitive for such an increase in combat power and battlefield lethality for the mechanized warrior.

SSG BRENDAN F. KEARNS  
Tikrit, Iraq