

Ed. Note: The following reaction was written after the riots surrounding late '97's elections in Bosnia suggested another viewpoint.

HMMWVs Lack the Firepower And Protection for Bosnia Role

by LTC Michael Prevou

While I appreciate LT Byrom's article for adding to the professional debate about the future of armor, I disagree with the assertion that the up-armored (M1114) HMMWV should be the mainstay of operations like Joint Endeavor/Joint Guard in Bosnia. Based on recent experience, mixing units with HMMWVs and heavier Bradley IFVs and Abrams tanks appears to have merit.

Furthermore, I am concerned about the tone of this and other articles that advocate efficiencies over combat effectiveness. With the future of armor in the post-Cold War scenario in debate, will we grasp at quick fixes or develop a vision and a long-term solution?

While the up-armored HMMWV is great to patrol the countryside and perform administrative tasks, like weapons

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site inspections, identification of election polling sites and diplomatic missions with local officials, they are not, and should never be considered a suitable substitute for the Abrams and Bradleys of our cavalry organizations. Remember, the cavalry wasn't sent to Bosnia just to conduct the administrative tasks LT Byrom lists in his article; they were sent to compel the reluctant Entity Armed Forces (EAF) into discontinuing war and subsequently demobilize and reorganize. Events in Brcko during the week of 8 September 1997 would prove the HMMWV advocates wrong in assuming it is great for Peace Enforcement Operations. When faced with an angry civilian demonstration — troopers from TF 1-77 AR and their attached MP company were not feeling very safe as the unruly crowds surrounded HMMWVs, walked and climbed over them, and blocked their exits with civilian vehicles and carts.

Many of us in the Armored Corps agree that we need a light armored vehicle that can perform on both ends of the spectrum of conflict — a vehicle that gives us greater versatility while allowing us to deploy early and offer a credible deterrence. Many vehicles have been recommended and many tested, and while we don't know what the answer is, those who have been on both ends of the spectrum know it is not the HMMWV. Our frustrations, born in the cancellation of the AGS and slow development timelines of the FSV, are causing us to grasp at straws.

Having worked with the HMMWV since when the Army first took receipt of this outstanding vehicle, I have experienced it in every imaginable terrain, from desert sands, to the forests of Germany, to the mountains of Bosnia and in between. It is a workhorse, and in earlier days I would have been one of the first to argue that it was a suitable recon, and maybe even combat, vehicle. My experiences since leaving the training grounds of the 9th ID and the NTC have taught me different. The HMMWV is great transportation, and while the OPFORs enjoy great success with it at our CTCs, it is not a suitable replacement for our anti-armor or reconnaissance vehicles. We cannot, as responsible leaders, continue to put our armored and cavalry troopers in harm's way, in a less than suitable platform, for the sake of budgetary constraints.

As LT Byrom stated, the up-armored HMMWV is an excellent vehicle for peacekeeping operations like Able Sentry in Macedonia, or multinational ob-

server operations in the Sinai, but it has limited utility in peace enforcement operations like JOINT ENDEAVOR/JOINT GUARD. Its disadvantages far outweigh its advantages in lieu of combat vehicles. To overcome some of these disadvantages, units in 1Bde/IID maintained two sets of vehicles, HMMWVs for the administrative patrols as well as tanks or BFVs for more robust needs. Under the Chapter 7 mandate for Bosnia (vs. a Chapter 6 for peacekeeping operations) the application of military force or the threat of its use compels compliance to the Dayton Accords and sets conditions for diplomatic and civil efforts to reach long-term solutions. Peace enforcement, as outlined in FM 100-23, *Peace Support Operations*, "may include combat action." The up-armored HMMWV does not have the firepower or protection to compel a would-be-rival into complying with the type of restrictions/requirements we have imposed on the EAF. The EAF comply because they are fully aware that we can roll a platoon of M1s or Bradleys up to their cantonment gate, destroy every weapon system in the compound, and they can't do a damn thing about it. This is precisely why force planners included a heavy (BFV/M1A1) task force with the 2 ACR for their deployment to Bosnia.

Other nations have experienced similar problems with their light, wheeled recon cars. These vehicles are not intimidating. Crowds quickly surround the HMMWVs, trapping the crew inside. They block exit routes with other vehicles or debris and have literally climbed atop the vehicles. The windshields, lights and mirrors are usually the first targets of bricks and bats. On one occasion, the crowd actually attempted to overturn a HMMWV with crew inside. To escape the rock-throwing crowd, the XM1114 crew had to back out down a long street. Mirrors gone, the driver could not navigate the maze of rubble behind them — only the selfless courage of a young trooper climbing into the open hatch, exposed to the crowd's wrath, guided the vehicle backwards. Had there been bullets, rather than stones, flying in Brcko, the outcome would have had much more serious consequences. Although the doors and top hatch do lock, the crew-served weapon is left exposed and unattended once the crew is inside. The crowd gathering around has a physical and perceived moral ascendancy over the trapped crew. Not so with a Bradley or Abrams, or even the larger wheeled vehicles used by some of our coalition partners. Crowds keep their distances and crews can safely operate from an open

protected position. Their physical height over the crowd and ability to negotiate obstacles increases their flexibility.

I am also concerned with LT Bryom's excessive focus on "budgets, fuel efficiency, low wear and tear of roads, and protection of infrastructure." Where has the Warrior Spirit gone? Are we breeding a generation of leaders more concerned with management functions than warfighting? Where is the understanding that the Army's mission is to fight and win the nation's wars if deterrence fails? Our mission in Bosnia is about deterrence — and we best deter by demonstrating our unequaled military capability! While resourcing the force is important, junior leaders at the pointy end of the spear should not be worried about such things. Leave the budgets and infrastructures to those staffers who help commanders "manage" resources. The warrior ethos is gradually being replaced by the cost-conscious, cautious, and careerist attitude being reinforced today.

Armor is losing ground to other branches that have adapted better in the new post-Cold War environment. The warrior ethos is falling victim to the zero-defect mentality of efficiencies over effectiveness and don't make waves. While many of our senior leaders tout our success in the Persian Gulf, and decree that we will sacrifice all else for the heavy force mantra, we give up the characteristics that made cavalry and armor the decisive arm of our forebears. We have sacrificed our flexibility, and now we grasp at interim solutions when we should be launching a campaign to cure the problem and retake the high ground. We must have a vision for the future of Armor and Cavalry in the 21st century, and an aggressive program to attain it.

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