

The Evolution of an Infantryman

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Abstract

A Soldier's combat experiences will be known to him forever. I just scratched the surface of mine in this paper. My transition from Infantryman (11B) to Cavalry Scout (19D) would prove to be one of my toughest challenges, never mind the enemy. Mentalities proved to be different in the mechanized world as opposed to that of the airborne infantry. It included everything from the daily business of the unit to deploying the unit, and the task at hand, combat. The theatre of operations was certainly something to get used to as well. A year prior to deploying to Saudi Arabia, I participated in "Operation Bright Star," where my battalion jumped into Northern Egypt for a five day field problem. November in Egypt would not come close to the acclimatization needed for stepping foot in Saudi Arabia in August. These issues were just some of what I encountered during those seven months in the desert. They helped me develop into the Soldier, some say the leader I am today.

The Evolution of an Infantryman

Key events, people, and experiences in your life shape who you are and how you develop as a Soldier and a leader. I started with a good base to work from. I was an Infantryman in the 82nd Airborne Division for almost four years. As young Soldiers do, I was up for another challenge and decided to change my Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) from 11B to 19D. At that time, I had no idea what was about to unfold. I went to Ft. Knox, Kentucky to become a Cavalryman in March of 1990. In July, I was a Cavalry Scout with the Scout Commander's Certification Course under my belt. I had orders to Ft. Stewart, Georgia to be a part of the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized). As it turns out, I was assigned to the Division's Cavalry Squadron. I would be leading the charge, wherever we charged.

My first encounter with the unfamiliar was my first sergeant. He was a plump man in his mid-forties who seemed confident, but it was obvious he didn't run in the mornings other than to his coffee cup. He gave me a quick once-over; I caught him looking at my left shoulder looking for a Ranger tab. I did not have one, but I did have a good base to work from. After I processed the S-1 shop at the squadron headquarters, we went out to his car and he gave me a ride to troop headquarters. He told me to draw my TA-50 in case we get called to war tomorrow. I was used to the 18-hour deployment sequence and thought I knew it all. I said, after chuckling to myself, "roger first sergeant," as a good Sergeant, E-5 should do with his new most-senior NCO in the troop. It was official; I was now in A Troop, 2nd Squadron, 4th U.S. Cavalry, the lead division maneuver asset to the "Victory Division's" Commanding General, Barry McCaffrey. I

was assigned as the 2nd platoon leader's M3A1 Cavalry Fighting Vehicle as his gunner later that day.

The first thing after physical training the next day, I went to the Central Issue Facility (CIF) to get my equipment. Upon completion, I went up to my barracks room and threw it all in the middle of the floor and turned on the television. CNN was reporting that Saddam Hussein had breached the boarder of Kuwait with his Republican Guard and was threatening to do the same with Saudi Arabia. It was 2 August 1990. I knew we would be going. It all made sense to me now. Perhaps the first sergeant knew something, maybe not, but the desert camouflage on the armored vehicles was something I had not seen before. Ft. Bragg was the airborne, and I was a very sheltered infantryman. My eyes were opening a bit wider to the "big picture" now. Soldiers in the unit were called back from leave even before our alert the next day. I expected to be wheels up in 18 hours, but to my chagrin, it took about two weeks to get it all moving. I was in the mechanized world now. Instead of grabbing my rifle and radio and putting on a parachute, we would be putting two combat loads on each of our Bradleys and putting them on the rail head. They would go from Ft. Stewart to the port in Savannah to be loaded on ships from the merchant marine. I was learning quickly that the airborne was just one small piece of the Army. I made things happen. I knew my business, but I didn't know what I didn't know. One of my first lessons was how to put Bradleys and tanks on flat bed rail cars. Things started getting serious. It was an easy task for a well trained and rehearsed crew, but I was new and knew nothing about the Soldiers driving these vehicles. Thankfully, a Soldier is a Soldier and we got the job done. After we got

them railed, we marched to the personnel holding area and given orders not to touch the phones, but we could sign out and see our family. This seemed to be par for the course; I was not yet used to the way things were done here. In any case, I did get to see my girlfriend and made her my fiancée. Our platoon sergeant asked for single volunteers to ride the boats over with the equipment after we got back that weekend. The leadership asked for volunteers from the pool of single Soldiers due to the unknown threat of the Iraqi navy. I volunteered, but didn't have to go. Later that week, we received the word to stage out of Hunter Army Airfield. Everyone who had families in the immediate area was able to see them again; shortly after, we left for Savannah.

We arrived at the hangar they assigned us; the key leaders began to draw up contingencies upon our arrival. It was a scary time; I thought a lot of the planning was way off base, but who knew what was in store for us. The worst case scenario was to fight as we disembarked from our transportation---a Northwest Airlines Boeing 747. That would have been hard to do as we were traveling in compliance with the airline safety guidelines. We had to travel without the bolt carrier group in our M16A2 rifles. There wasn't any 5.56 millimeter ammunition in sight either. We junior NCOs put two and two together; we were not going to fight our way off the aircraft. Thankfully we wouldn't have to.

After a couple of days at Hunter, our number came up; we prepared to move. We were manifested by platoon and boarded the aircraft. The Northwest crew was very supportive, but somewhat solemn, as if they knew we would be the tip of the spear in our sector. During the trip, I tried to get to know the crew I thought I'd cross the boarder

with. That was my platoon leader, my driver and my loader/observer. At that time, I was short one crew member. We maintained a light hearted disposition during the trip, trying to think of anything but combat in a land most of us had never really thought twice about, let alone seen before. It was a long ride; we awoke to the bright sun light as it beamed into the windows of the 747. We gazed outside at the desert sand and the occasional shiny cast of light reflecting off the intermittent water sources 35,000 feet below. The pilot began to speak and told us we would begin descent in about 20 minutes. He gave us a weather update: sunny, and dry with an ambient temperature of 120 degrees. The tarmac at the airfield would be 135 degrees.

After we landed, the doors opened and we felt the change in temperature immediately. It was like a wool blanket had been thrown on us. We got up, secured our gear, and headed for the door. Most of us pulled out our Ballistic Laser Protective (BLP) eye-wear as it was the closest thing we had to sunglasses. It was some of the brightest light I have ever seen. We took buses over to some awnings near the port and told that we needed to drink six liters of water a day to survive. It sounded like a lot of water at the time, but we didn't have any problems with the desire to do it. We were quickly introduced to our incentive for a good night's sleep. We had to build our own tent city and it had to be done before we did anything else. A few units from the 82nd Airborne Division were there before us, but they had not left yet, so we had to put up our own shelter and fill our own sandbags. This would lead me to another quick lesson. Soldiers may be Soldiers, but every one of them is different in some way. I was the NCOIC of our sandbag detail. Some of the Soldiers in the unit were screwing around while on the

detail, not making use of the time wisely. I told them to quit fucking off and fill sand-bags; they began to mock me. They picked up their entrenching tool and filled them so fast, the dust started flying. After about three bags, I told myself, “Ok, Miller, chill out; this may be a long deployment.” I never apologized for it, but I did make a change in my disposition. Not everything had to happen right now. I felt that if I kept that mentality, I’d be in a friendly fire incident before it was all said and done. The rest of the detail went without incident, and I was known as the new guy, who no one knew---yet.

We completed the detail; the next task was to get settled in for a week while we waited on our Bradleys to come into port. We did the mundane tasks like guard duty and “shit burning detail.” We played Spades and eventually got the word our vehicles would be in the next day. I sent my driver to join the detail to drive the vehicles from the boat to the motor pool. The rest of us went down to the fenced area where the motor pool was supposed to go. Everyone began to focus as if we were going to load up and establish our screen line after our initial Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services (PMCS). We didn’t expect to see big dents, scratches and dings on our vehicles, but that is what we saw. It wasn’t enough to make them non-mission capable, but it did reflect the hurried fashion the vehicles were loaded. This was another little bit of imagery I used to make sure we took our time and did things safely during this deployment, what come may. We pulled them inside the fence, continued with our checks, and continued to bond. By evening’s end, we were able to get our Bradley PMCSd and parked on line in our motor pool. Our crew returned to the troop area to eat chow. We received the word we would be putting them on Heavy Equipment Transport Trailers (HETT); Soldiers

would be riding double-decker buses up to a debarkation point. Our drivers rode in the cab with the truck drivers with a loaded 9mm pistol. The truck drivers weren't bad; some needed convincing to stay on task and get our vehicles to the right area. Our buses got stuck a few times in the desert; we became quite proficient in pushing the bus. The trip took all day, but we eventually got the M3A1s and the Cavalrymen in the same place. Our platoon consolidated and moved out to its initial screen line position.

Once we got into position that night, our guidance was to set up a radio watch with a dismounted local security team per section. At first light, all Bradley Commanders (BC) went over to the Platoon Sergeant's vehicle to have a leaders' huddle. They came out of the meeting knowing we needed to reposition and tie in with our sister platoons. Eventually, we were virtually on-line with overlapping fields of fire with about 500 to 800 meters between vehicles. The rest of the 24th ID(m) would fall in behind us 10-15 kilometers to our rear.

I made good use of this time; we trained! I was the platoon leader's gunner as a newly assigned, green Cavalry Scout. I was dangerous to my platoon "as is." I needed to undergo a lot of crew training on the 25mm Bushmaster, 7.62mm coaxial machine gun, and the Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided (TOW) missile launcher just to get any-thing down-range. We had a pretty extravagant communications system; I wasn't accustomed to it. The former gunner and I, hit it off pretty well, thank God. He squared me away on the systems in the turret; I became quite good by the time we moved back to occupy our squadron assembly area. For good measure, I had the driver educate me on the nuances of driving the M3A1. It was easy to stall if you didn't use enough

throttle while pivoting. The platoon established a six pack penalty if you got caught stalling your vehicle. If you got stuck in the thick mud of a dry lake bed and you called someone to pull you out, the vehicle commander received a case. We trained a lot, sitting there on the first screen position; we were getting to be a lot more confident.

Our first movement order came down to our platoon 40 days into our screen occupation. My crew was really motivated to leave the middle of the desert, even if it was to go to another position in the middle of the desert. We moved back about 125km, getting a good view of the Saudi Arabian countryside. For the first time, we saw an Oasis, grass, and other people other than the ones we watched driving down Highway 8. We consolidated with everyone else in the troop; we haven't seen these guys for over a month either. It was a good reunion and it didn't seem so desolate anymore. The platoon was issued Bedouin tents and given guidance to combine them to make squad tents. It was a nice enough accommodation for a five-man Bradley crew. We received General Purpose (GP) Medium tents a couple weeks later. One was more than enough for a Scout Platoon. Our Troop AA was a place to concentrate on platoon collective training and unit cohesion at the troop level. A big advantage to having the whole squadron in the same proximity was the access to the chapel and the ability to have regular chapel services. We had a squadron choir and Bible study; once you stepped into the chapel tent, our worries seemed to fade, at least for a couple of hours. Our spiritual fitness seemed to enhance our ability to do our jobs confidently and cohesively.

Our unit Command Sergeant Major treated us like his own sons. He made it possible to have a large spread for Thanksgiving and Christmas. He made arrangements

for the former Ms. Georgia to come to our assembly area and take part in our holiday talent show. She was a sight for sore eyes; we supplied her with a unit t-shirt so she wouldn't be in the wrong uniform. She didn't wear a size small, but she got one. It certainly was nice to see an American civilian who supported us. The food and the entertainment helped with morale, especially after we were told we'd rotate back to the states on the sixth of December. That date came and went; rumors really played with our heads. First-line leaders and sergeants were the glue that held things together at platoon level. We worked at staying busy both training and improving our positions. One day, we went out looking for rocks to fill a hole 30x10x3 feet to use as a drainage bed for our field showers. I'll never forget spending all day in the hot sun doing that. It was a tremendous amount of work, but the showers worked like a charm!

New Year's Eve, my crew drew an outpost security position. We took our vehicle out on the perimeter about three kilometers outside the gate. We pulled security and radio watch all night. I used this time to build crew esprit-de-corps by pulling out some sparkling grape juice my girlfriend sent me. I had two bottles; when the clock struck midnight, we popped the "cork" and drank it as if it was the finest champagne. The feeling of brotherhood struck me like a 2X4 on the side of the face. I had brothers for the first time since my days at Ft. Bragg. I had a team here; one to take to combat. My crew, to this day, still remembers the light-hearted event in an otherwise dark and dull night. We would return early in the morning in a pretty good mood. The next day, we got word that we would be moving up to the division assembly area by the end of the week. Three days later, we were called out on line, packed and ready to go. We mounted up and

moved north in a traveling “V” formation at a pretty quick pace. Once we got to where we were going, the troop took up a box formation, CFVs facing outward with the troop headquarters in the center. Although this signified getting closer to combat, leave it to Soldiers to entertain themselves. A sergeant from the platoon sergeant’s crew had an opportunity to build upon the morale of the fellows yet again.

The next morning, we were given the word to take off our Chemical Protective Over Garments (CPOG) that we’ve been wearing the previous month and burn them. We were to get our new CPOGs out of the vacuum sealed wrapper and put them on. Again, this was a signal we were to punch the boarder soon. The platoon sergeant’s gunner thought we needed a chuckle, so he went down to the troop headquarters and pulled the XO’s boxer shorts off his make-shift clothes line. He came up to our burn pile and threw them on. This was a hilarious gesture because we all new these aquamarine boxers with orange sharks on them had more baths than anyone in theater. The XO came out to retrieve his Desert Camouflage Uniform (DCU) and his prized boxer shorts, we all hid our laughter like mischievous kids hiding something from their parents. We pulled out our M-19 binoculars and watched the show. He was at a loss, looking high and low, behind the MRE boxes and around the side of the tent. No boxers; they burned like paper though!

The next couple of nights, the platoons pulled guard and scanned their sectors with 25% at one time. It wasn’t until I pulled watch the third night; things began to unfold. I looked at the horizon with my Night Vision Goggles (NVG) and saw it light up.

I scanned the sky and saw aircraft flying at a tremendous altitude firing cruise missiles from their bomb bays. I deduced they were B-52s flying at 45-50,000 feet firing those missiles. I went over and gave my platoon sergeant a shake and let him know. He let the Troop Commander know; the rest of the troops found out shortly after that. My guess was pretty close to the truth.

The next morning, I noticed a few lines of resolution had burned out of my thermal sight on my Bradley. I replaced it at what turned out to be our last maintenance stop. We kicked out nine kilometers south of a town named Nisab. The town was at the far western corner of the Neutral Zone and changed hands between the Saudis and the Iraqis nearly every year. It was flying an Iraqi flag over it as we pulled surveillance on it for two days. Our platoon was given a Fragmentary Order (FRAGO) to execute a dismounted reconnaissance for defilade positions just three kilometers south of the town. We had been scanning the area for a couple of nights and saw dismounts all over the place out there. The platoon leader picked me to be the patrol leader and gave me one man per crew for the patrol. At the time, the platoon had little dismount experience, but I made up an Operations Order (OPORD) to instill confidence in them. I gave them a few hours to let it soak in and demanded a brief back while I did the Pre-Combat Inspection (PCI).

The tactic worked; we moved well and more importantly, undetected. We moved the six kilometers through the desert without incident. We guided our platoon into their defilade positions as quietly as a Bradley could move. First thing in the morning, I had my observer, who was also an excellent artist, draw the town of Nisab as he saw it. We

got the word to fall back to our original hide just after he finished the sketch. We got it back to the S-2 Intelligence Cell. It would prove to be helpful in our move across the boarder the next day. One of the buildings turned into a registered target for the division's first Copperhead round down range. Our Copperhead Lasing Team (COLT) lit the target and the artillery battery let one loose. The round was spot on; it was the start of my part of the war.

The next morning we were told to synch everything down, do Pre-Combat Checks (PCC) and get ready to move---It wouldn't be long now. The next day we waited for the rest of the division to line up, and we surged forward. The ground war started---I was 23 years and 1 day old. The first stop, I had the crew remove the seats in the back and strap them to the outside. It made it a lot easier to move around if we needed to load TOWs in a hurry; that decision would prove to be a good one. We pushed forward; our Combat Reconnaissance Patrol (CRP) was a section of two lead CFVs about five kilometers to our front. They got stuck in the Euphrates River Valley, but didn't get the word of the traffic ability of the route to the commander until half the troop was stuck. That's 9 of 18 CFVs; half the troop's combat power! My platoon was still moving in its entirety, but got sliced out to the 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor to act as a flank screen for them instead of the frontal screen for the division as originally planned.

By nightfall, we moved almost 200 km and set up in a Herring Bone formation with about 100 meters between vehicles. It made it easy for the refuelers to tailgate with us and replenish us with fuel and oil. At first light, our tiger-striped CFVs blended well into the desert brush and dark sand in the area. It looked just like an Army commercial.

Our platoon didn't stay there for long; we pushed out to our next position, an under ground ammunition storage bunker. We arrived, established a platoon blocking position, and dismounted to clear the area. There was evidence of an attack by a Multiple Rocket Launching System (MLRS) on the ground we were walking on. Unexploded Ordinance (UXO) littered the area and was slightly covered by the sand. They looked like metal baseballs. I told my wingman to be careful; it wouldn't take much to set them off. We didn't need to be hurt or killed by our own munitions. Our over watching mounted elements made sure the enemy didn't pop out from the bunkers as we cleared the tents. Thankfully, there wasn't much to report. It looked like Iraqi soldiers departed the area a few days prior to our arrival. Perhaps they escaped the barrage of MLRS; maybe the survivors policed up the dead and headed north.

We were almost 30 hours into the division's movement across Iraq. We received a report from the aero scouts of enemy soldiers moving across a large culvert a few kilometers east of our positions. We rallied the section and pulled out of our defilades to investigate. My gunner acquired the enemy in his sights within a few minutes. We pulled up on the near bye berms for cover and dismounted everyone in the section but the driver on my CFV and the gunner on the section leader's vehicle. There were 74 personnel total. These Iraqis were surrendering in compliance to the leaflets dropped by the Air Force north of the boarder. There was one Republican Guard officer who spoke English with a platoon-sized element of enlisted men, and a few women fleeing to the south. The "Victory Division" was moving so fast, they told us to destroy all enemy equipment, administer any necessary first aid, and tell them to go north because our

intelligence people didn't have the time to process them correctly. We complied, mostly because all they wanted was better treatment than the Iraqis would have given them. There was one amputee, so we patched up his stump with an abdominal dressing and gave the group a litter to help carry him.

The rest of my crew collected up 15 AK-47s and the rest of their military equipment and threw them all in the bed of their truck. We put a thermal grenade on the engine block and one in the bed of the truck to melt the equipment down to the ground. We told the Iraqi officer to take charge of the other 73 people and help them move their injured man north until our rear echelon could meet up with them. They wouldn't have moved without a dangling possibility of help from our follow-on force. We pulled away as the vehicle began to burn and the equipment began to melt. We had to go on to our next mission. As we rounded the corner of the mound, I looked back at the group we just left behind. They dropped the man on the litter and fled to the south. I shook my head and hoped he would get some attention soon.

Our platoon moved for about eight hours until we hit the next phase line. It happened to be a six inch oil pipe set up to transport oil just inches above the desert floor. It was a very robust material; it didn't give when a CFV was driven across it. We pulled up on it and stopped the troop on line. Behind us two kilometers were our squadron trains and another ammunition holding area. Our squadron leadership decided to get an engineer section to help destroy what was in it. They lit it off and gave us a fireworks show that evening. Unguided missiles flew out of the holes as we ducked for cover. There were a couple of missiles that tumbled end-over-end between my CFV and my

section leader's vehicle. That was a bit too close for comfort. The quote "idle hands are the devil's tool" immediately came to my mind. Fortunately again for us, the engineers completed the task without loss of life, limb, or eyesight to anyone in the unit.

The next morning, we formed up as a troop and prepared for a raid on an airfield. We were going to be the first in order of movement and expected a company sized element of T-55 and Type 59 tanks. We lined up with nine CFVs abreast and a tank company from one of the division's tank battalions behind us. I was now on crew rotation as a loader in the back of the Bradley. We started our Pre-Combat Checks (PCC) and noticed our TOW launcher was short one round. We had a few minutes, so I told the gunner to go to the "TOW load" position. As he brought the erected launcher over to the crew hatch, I popped the lid to the load position. It slammed into the launcher and got stuck. My observer and I both tried to jimmy the crew hatch loose of the launcher. The power in the turret would not budge. I told the gunner to go manual and work it with the wheels to free it up. After a few minutes and a lot of sweat, we finally freed it and got the TOW loaded. We were all sweating it, because we hadn't had a lot of time and we could have done it before we got lined up for the raid. We got the green light to execute movement across the objective within a minute after we were ready.

We moved up on the airfield scanning for targets. There was a company of T-55s, but to our surprise, there wasn't a single one manned by anyone. They were all in hull down defilades lining the edges of the strip facing each other. They looked like they were freshly painted and ready for a V.I.P. visit. The runway had tires strewn all over it to deny anyone from landing on it and/or to make it look like it had craters if we were

taking satellite pictures of it. We wouldn't fire a round in anger here. Our engineers got another demolition mission though. After that mission, we received a FRAGO to establish another screen line along the power lines north of our position. We would spend the night there.

Our platoon established a screening position just south of the power line with a road to our right. There was a bridge about 500 meters to our right front. My observer and I went out to clear the underside of the bridge. We just wanted to make sure there weren't any bad guys hiding up in the underside of the bridge camped out to move on us during the night. It took about ten minutes to determine it clear; we returned to the track. The rest of the day, we monitored traffic on the road to our right, rearranged our load plan, and got some shut-eye.

At 0200 that morning, my section sergeant picked up on a signature of a man walking to our front near the power lines. His gunner pulled over watch as he dispatched my crew to go investigate. We peeled off the screen line and went forward approximately one kilometer. My gunner scanned the area, but saw nothing. We called back to my section sergeant and he couldn't see anything else so we returned to our position. On the way back, we missed the hole in the fence. I didn't know it until we got back into our defilade. My driver had a hard time with the right turn into our position, but we made it. As soon as I dismounted, I went to check the track. I witnessed 200 meters of diamond chain-linked fence wrapped around my right track. It was a nightmare. It took the five of us about four hours to cut away the entire fence from the track. We readjusted the track tension and employed a sleep plan just as the sun began to rise.

There wasn't much going on the next morning, just searching vehicles coming up from the north out of Basra. We did encounter an elderly lady dressed in a black robe. There were some odd shapes protruding from her back. She turned out to have two AKMS rifles reverse-slung over her back. My section leader's crew confiscated them from her and we destroyed the stockpile before we pulled off the road later that day.

Once we left that location, we executed a reward passage of lines with a 1st Cavalry Division unit. We stopped about 20 kilometers north of Kuwait City to set up another troop "box formation" and went to 25% security to get some sleep. It wasn't until we did the forward passage of lines that my intuition of caution was triggered. Word came down from squadron headquarters that we were to travel north at night with our lights on to draw fire. This was a technique of recon-by-fire I was unaware of. As soon as night fell, that's exactly what we did. Thankfully, there wasn't any fire to draw and we survived the night. Once we got to our Limit of Advance (LOA), the troop picked up a static screen over watching an abandon BMP-1. There was another message relayed to us then. The war was over, the cease fire was signed!

We had to download all weapon systems and prepare to redeploy the same route we came into Iraq, just backwards. The nine CFVs we still had in the troop were already on line. We emptied our ready boxes into the abandoned BMP and melted her down to nothing. The BMP was subject to nearly 1800 rounds of 25 millimeter from the Bush-master main gun and about 7200 rounds of 7.62 millimeter from the coaxial machine gun. That BMP had no chance. After we downloaded our ammunition, we prepared to get into a division traveling formation.

We were tasked with over watching the big ammunition storage area demolition mission our engineers planted. The mission took most of the day; to this day, experts say this mission led to U.S. troops within a fifty mile radius getting symptoms later known as “Desert Storm Syndrome.” My section leader’s gunner got out of the Army after we got back; now he draws 30% disability due to the illness. As the 24th Division’s Separate Cavalry Squadron, we were also slated with the title of “first in, last out.” We did leave Iraq, but only after everyone else did. It was a bit of a lonely feeling, knowing the only ammunition we had left on the vehicle was strapped and bound with wire. It would have taken a real feat to get it uploaded while in contact. Of course, this is all hind sight now, but I’ve put a lot of lessons learned in my tool bag. My mistakes and both aggressive and conservative decisions from higher put us in a vulnerable position beyond what we, at that level, could control.

The title of my work is infantry based. It relays simply the transition from 11B to 19D was a long test. The mindset change was enormous. We achieve a mindset change through training. The cavalry sits back, evaluates and analyzes the battlefield and the enemy as it unfolds. His most casualty producing weapon is his radio, not a machine gun, not a Claymore mine. He is smart and elusive. He can hide a 13-foot tall CFV in a desert as flat as a pool table. He can report obstacles cutting a main supply route, and find a trafficable bypass. The hardest thing for me to learn was to be patient. Time is a cavalryman’s friend as long as he manages it correctly. As soon as I figured that out, we were submerged into the Global War On Terrorism (GWOT).

It is now my charge as a Sergeant Major in the year 2006 and beyond to limit our troops' vulnerabilities due to decisions made by higher. It will be my responsibility to take my experiences and transfer it into tactful advice to my commanders. The GWOT presents its own nuances. We are no longer fighting the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact nations; we are fighting terrorists who are not soldiers. They are not bound by law, but we are. As they adapt to our tactics, we must to theirs. Every MOS has soldiers kicking in doors and clearing buildings. In a few short years, our mindsets changed from specialists in a war with a very structured order of battle, to a war with virtually no order of battle. Soldiers of all ranks are learning to work with non-military, governmental agencies, foreign forces, and even the media. Expert power outweighs rank in many cases. Commissioned Officers are learning more about receiving advice from their noncommissioned officer counterparts. When the two gel together, it is a beautiful thing. We will win, but to demand instant gratification is too much to ask. My advice to the American people is along the same lines I give my soldiers. If you are on the objective, you are committed. Be committed, get the job done and get out, but don't reach for the barn door until the mission is complete.