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JOURNAL

A Combined Arms Response to "Death of the Armor Corps"

By *SWJ Editors*

Journal Article | Jun 1 2010 - 4:36pm

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by Major James Smith and Major James Harbridge

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Since the emergence of Counterinsurgency (COIN) as a strategy in 2004, it has gained widespread acceptance both within and outside of the military. It has gained so much acceptance that it has essentially become Army dogma. Most writing on the subject is overwhelming supportive. However, one officer has stood out because he has dared to write articles that question COIN. Colonel Gian Gentile has been the one dissenting voice in the Army. He has used well researched and written historically based articles that question COIN as an underlying strategy of the Army. He has called for a return to core competencies of our various branches.

Colonel Gentile looks beyond the fifty and one hundred meter targets and sees targets that look more like conventional military adversaries with armor and artillery instead of insurgents with machine guns and improvised explosive devices (IED's). Whether or not one agrees with his assessments and suggestion, his work is terribly important to the Army because it does not toe the party line. In fact, when Thomas Ricks published his list of the top voices in *Foreign Policy* magazine, Colonel Gentile was the only one who was not pro-COIN. His opinion is imperative or else we might all drink from the COIN Kool-Aid and relive the days of Active Defense where Army doctrine was the result of one man and debate was discouraged. We are familiar with the result of how that doctrinal era turned out. Sadly, Colonel Gentile seems as if he has finally given up, gathered his pistol and canteen and ventured off to Fiddlers Green. In his most recent article, *The Death of the Armor Corps*, Colonel Gentile seems to be complaining that no one is listening. Gone are the well thought out historical examples, and they are replaced by incomplete contemporary examples. The result is a product that appears to stubbornly refuse to accept that what makes our military great is our ability to adapt and innovate while still retaining the ability to relearn our core competencies. As former company and troop commanders, we thoroughly enjoy the musings of Colonel Gentile, thus we have four simple reasons why Colonel Gentile should get back on his conventional horse, buckle his chinstrap and continue his charge for the combined-arms high ground.

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Major James "Jimmy" Smith and Major James Harbridge are currently serving as instructors in the Defense and Strategic Studies Major at the US Military Academy, West Point. Major Smith is an Armor Officer and Major Harbridge an Infantry Officer. Their intent here is to provide a Maneuver officers perspective. Both have served in combat, commanding a company or troop-level unit.

About the Author



SWJ Editors

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