

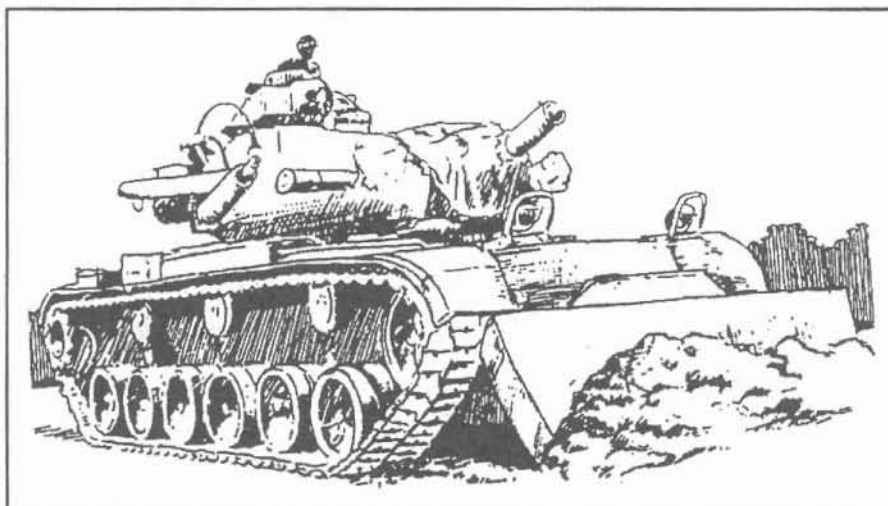
Death of the Combat Engineer Vehicle

By Command Sergeant Major Timothy B. Chadwick

It is official, the Army has declared that the combat engineer vehicle (CEV) will cease to exist throughout the Army inventory. When I heard the news, many emotions ran through me in a split second. I felt relieved of the burden of trying to maintain a piece of equipment based on a chassis system that the rest of the Army had retired. The second feeling was that of disgust—that the leadership of our Army finally agreed with us engineers about how painful maintenance of this system had become.

Several days passed before the last and probably most important emotion hit me head-on. Evidently it took that long to fully digest the impact of the loss of the CEV, without a replacement identified. I can only call this emotion fear. That's right, fear—that we are getting rid of a piece of equipment based on our inability to maintain it and not on an evaluation of its tactical requirement. My fear centers around engineer soldiers of the future and their need for a standoff demolition capability that only the CEV or a like vehicle can provide.

I am fully aware of the Army's research into a 120-mm gun round that will replace or closely resemble the capabilities of the 165-mm CEV round. Can that be done? You bet it can, but my concern doesn't center around the round itself. Why did we look at keeping the gun tube of the CEV so short? I believe that we recognized the need of a turret system for use in tight spaces, such as cities. That tactical possibility exists today and will continue to exist in the future. I tried to



remember how many times I personally saw tanks in urban areas with their gun tubes restricted or even stuck through building walls. I soon realized there were far too many times to count. So, how do we solve this problem in the future? I say that the solution must center around a turret system that resembles the one on the CEV.

I fully realize and agree that the current CEV is too difficult to maintain at the necessary operational readiness rate of our leaner Army. My primary concern remains that mechanical and monetary nightmares overrode our tactical need. Will we need the CEV in the future? You bet we will! I only hope that someone realizes it before a bloody nose forces its replacement.

So ends our love-and-hate relationship with the CEV. To all of the soldiers who manned the CEV, past and present, a hearty "well done!" is in order. You employed and maintained the system to the best of your abilities, and for that you deserve great credit. To the soldiers who employed the

CEV in combat, I ask that you voice your opinions about the need for a standoff demolition capability. Let's not wait for the need to arise in combat before we tell the leadership about our concerns. Soldiers' lives may rest with this lost capability. We must provoke a thorough evaluation of this possible need.

Again, farewell to the single piece of equipment I hated and loved the most of all others during my career.

CSM Timothy Chadwick currently serves as the command sergeant major of the 299th Combat Engineer Battalion (Mechanized), Fort Hood, Texas. He has served in every leadership position available to combat engineers. Previous assignments include three tours with the 7th Combat Engineer Battalion (Mechanized), Fort Polk, Louisiana; two tours in Germany, with the 82nd Combat Engineer Battalion and the 547th Combat Engineer Battalion (Corps) (Mech); and two tours with the 17th Combat Engineer Battalion (Mechanized), Fort Hood, Texas.