

# Rejoinder

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Gouré and McCormick cite two significant deficiencies in my argument: I do not understand the nature of the *blitzkrieg*, and I fail to recognize the limitations of existing PGM. They maintain that my analysis 'denies the very essence of *blitzkrieg* which has, from its conception, been the *combined-arms approach*', but that is not an accurate description of my argument. I make it perfectly clear that combined-arms operations were a necessary ingredient for a successful *blitzkrieg*.<sup>1</sup>

The basis of our disagreement is that Gouré and McCormick do not recognize the limited role of combined-arms operations in the *blitzkrieg*. The key ingredient in the *blitzkrieg's* success is the deep penetration, which paralyzes the defence and leads to ultimate collapse. The attacking forces effect a deep strategic penetration by following the path of least resistance into the enemy's rear.<sup>2</sup> Speed is of the essence for the offence since the defender is attempting to shift his forces so that he can contain the attacking armour columns. The offence seeks to thwart the defender's efforts to throw up additional defensive barriers by literally outrunning the defence. Appropriately, a high premium is placed on avoiding battles where infantry and artillery are used in direct support of the tank. Such combined-arms operations necessarily slow the attacking forces. Instead, the *blitzkrieg* seeks to create situations where the all-tank armour brigade can operate independently to effect a deep strategic penetration. Describing the German *blitzkrieg*, the noted armour expert, Richard Gorkiewicz, points out:

The whole tempo of operations was geared to the speed of tanks and not that of the foot-fighting infantry.

*The success of the panzer division was thought – and proved – to depend on the firepower of the tank brigade and the speed with which it attacked. The rapid tempo of the attack gave a minimum of time to hostile defences and the concentration of the tank brigade on a narrow front ensured their*

saturation at the point chosen for the breakthrough.

*Normally the organic motorized infantry, or panzer grenadiers, followed closely at the heels of the massed tanks, their task being to mop up resistance by-passed by tanks . . . (My italics).<sup>3</sup>*

It should also be noted that artillery was assigned a very minor role in the German successes of World War II, in the Israeli victories, and in the writings of B. H. Liddell Hart and J. F. C. Fuller.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, contrary to the claims of Gouré and McCormick combined arms doctrine has not 'played an important and successful part in Israeli ground doctrine'. In addition to the minor role they assigned artillery, the Israelis placed little emphasis on using infantry to support the attacking armour forces, until they were confronted with the widespread use of PGM in the 1973 war. Indeed, the Israeli Army closely approximated Fuller's vision of an 'all tank' army.<sup>5</sup>

Concerning the Israeli *blitzkrieg*, the authors argue that Sharon's 1967 victory at the Abu Agheila-Umm Katef crossroads 'correctly mirrors actual Israeli thinking and capability in the area of combined arms operations'.<sup>6</sup> This is not so; and Luttwak and Horowitz, to whom they refer in the accompanying footnote, point out that during the 1967 war 'the prevailing tactics' were those employed by Israel Tal's armoured forces.<sup>7</sup>

In Tal's division, the tank battalions acted as the 'mailed fist' whose task was to open a breach in the enemy defences; mechanized infantry forces followed in their wake. . . .

This 'conveyor-belt' system allowed the spearhead tank battalions to advance continuously. . . . It is this 'linear integration' that explains the apparent disappearance of the infantry as a front-line combat force. The infantry did fight, but only in the wake of the tank battalions.<sup>8</sup>

As Israel quickly discovered in 1973, the proliferation of PGM increases the need for greater reliance on combined-arms operations. As described in my original article, this will result in a slowing down of the armour columns seeking to effect a deep strategic penetration; such a

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development would be the death-kneel for the *blitzkrieg*.

Finally, the authors claim that the Soviet Union has not only 'perfected' the *blitzkrieg*, but that she has 'taken the doctrine of *blitzkrieg* a step farther.' There is no evidence that the Soviet Union has perfected the *blitzkrieg*, much less that she has improved the strategy. In fact, there is ample evidence that the USSR actually doubts whether she could effect a *blitzkrieg* in a future war.<sup>9</sup> One of the principal reasons for this pessimism is that she recognizes that PGM have greatly enhanced the defence's capability to thwart a *blitzkrieg*.<sup>10</sup>

The second charge is that I underestimate the limitations of PGM. As Gouré and McCormick correctly point out, PGM have certain limitations, as do all weapons. However, the key issue is how important these limitations are. The heart of their case is that I have misinterpreted the lessons of the 1973 Middle East War. According to Jeffrey Record, 'of the approximately 3,000 Arab and Israeli tanks destroyed or damaged... at least 80 per cent were knocked out by other tanks.' Such an analysis is misleading. First, the Israelis who destroyed or damaged approximately 2,000 Arab tanks, did not rely on PGM to counter the Arab offensives in either the south or the north.<sup>11</sup> On the Arab side, the Syrian offensive on the Golan Heights placed little reliance on PGM to assist the masses of armour that they

employed against the Israeli side.<sup>12</sup> If meaningful lessons concerning PGM are to be drawn from the 1973 War, attention must be focused on the southern front, where the Egyptian troops used massive quantities of PGM.

The fact of the matter is that the use of massive numbers of PGM by Egypt greatly influenced events on the battlefield until the Israeli troops crossed the Suez Canal.<sup>13</sup> The claim that the experience of the 190th Brigade is 'the only case available to support the PGM lobby' is not accurate. During the first two days (6-7 October) of the Egyptian offensive, Israel lost a staggering number of tanks.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the overall results of the abortive Israeli offensive of 8 October<sup>15</sup> as well as the battle of the Chinese Farm (16-18 October)<sup>16</sup> demonstrate the potency of the PGM-laden Egyptian defence.

Gouré and McCormick imply that I envisage a battlefield where a defence armed exclusively with PGM can successfully thwart an armoured offensive. However, I clearly stipulated that a defender must integrate PGM with other weapons.<sup>17</sup> PGM alone will not provide the means to thwart a *blitzkrieg*. Again, in the article, I emphasized that 'a defensive force on the modern battlefield will have to be mobile'.<sup>18</sup> There is no reason why NATO cannot employ highly mobile forces armed to the teeth with PGM. In a crisis, the deterrent value of such a force would be very high.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Those sentences read: 'This does not mean that close co-ordination between the various combat arms was eschewed by practitioners of the *blitzkrieg*. Certainly, combined arms operations were necessary during the initial breakthrough and for subduing those defensive strong-points which the main armoured force could not ignore'. Mearsheimer, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> For a short but excellent description of the essentials of the *blitzkrieg* see B. H. Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, Volume 1 (London: Cassell, 1965), pp. 164-165.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Ogorkiewicz, *Armour* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> See Fred K. Vigman, 'The Theoretical Evaluation of Artillery After World War I', *Military Affairs*, XVI (1952), pp. 115-118; F. O. Miksche, *Blitzkrieg* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1941), chapter 9; Ogorkiewicz, *Armour*, p. 122; Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975), chapter 18; Martin van Creveld, 'Two Years After: The Israeli

Defence Forces, 1973-75', *RUSI*, 121, No. 1 (March 1976), pp. 29-34; and Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, *The Israeli Army* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 217, 289-290, 368.

<sup>5</sup> See Luttwak and Horowitz, pp. 186-192, 289-296, 362-368.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 289-292, 371.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 292-295. Also see p. 363.

<sup>9</sup> For an excellent discussion of this matter, see Christopher N. Donnelly, 'Tactical Problems Facing the Soviet Army: Recent Debates in the Soviet Military Press', *International Defense Review*, 11, No. 9 (1978), pp. 1405-1412.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* Also see Phillip A. Karber, 'The Soviet Anti-Tank Debate', *Survival*, XVIII, No. 3 (May/June 1976), pp. 105-111.

<sup>11</sup> See the excerpt from Moshe Dayan's *Story of My Life* on p. 70 of my article.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> It should be emphasized that the use of massive numbers of PGM serves to mitigate the limitations identified by Gouré and McCormick. See footnote 20 of my article. Phillip Karber writes, 'What seems to bother Soviet writers about anti-tank weapons is less their specific technological characteristics than the growing density of their deployment'. Phillip A. Karber, 'The Impact of New Conventional Technologies on Military Doctrine and Organization in the Warsaw Pact', in *Adelphi Paper* No. 144 (London: IISS, 1978), p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Nadav Safran writes, 'In the morning of October 7 the alarming results of the fighting up to that point began to dawn on the Israeli command, along with the outlines of a grim picture of the general situation. Mendler reported that as of about 6 a.m. he had lost two thirds of the 270 tanks with which he had started'. Nadav Safran, 'Trial

by Ordeal: The Yom Kippur War, October 1973', *International Security*, 2, No. 2 (Fall 1977), p. 146.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150-153. See also Dayan, pp. 502-506 and Herzog, pp. 184-196. The attack by the 190th Brigade was part of this operation.

<sup>16</sup> Dayan, pp. 532-538. See also Herzog, pp. 208-230.

<sup>17</sup> I wrote: 'The thrust of this argument should not be interpreted to mean that the battlefield of the future will feature a defensive force of PGM-armed infantrymen pitted against an offensive force dominated by tanks and aircraft. Certainly, any successful defence against a *blitzkrieg* will require large numbers of tanks and aircraft, as well as some type of infantry fighting vehicle armed with a PGM.' John J. Mearsheimer, 'Precision-guided Munitions and Conventional Deterrence', *Survival*, Vol. XXI, No. 2, p. 70.

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