

Letters

Services' chevrons confusing

As military operations become more and more joint, we in the Army find ourselves frequently interacting with NCOs and enlisted troops from other services. All services have certain differences – not just the way we do things, but also in the way we look. This could cause confusion in critical situations. I would like to suggest [some ways] to reduce that confusion. NCOs of the Army, Marine Corps and Air Force should all wear the same pattern of chevrons and should wear them in the same place on their uniforms.

I would propose that all three services use a pattern of chevrons based on ours, with three arched chevrons above and a maximum of three rockers below those. Under my proposal, each service would keep details that would provide their insignia some uniqueness. The Marine Corps, for example, could keep its crossed rifle pattern. And the chevrons of each service would be of a different color on the dress uniforms – gold for the Army, scarlet for the Marine Corps and white for the Air Force.

The other part of my plan would require all NCOs in these three services to wear their chevrons in the same place on their uniforms. Collar or sleeve does not matter as long as it is the same for every service.

With this proposal, Soldiers would be able to read the ranks of airmen and Marines at a glance, rather than trying to puzzle it out and remember what five chevrons means on the Air Force uniform, and what three up and four down means on a Marine's uniform. This would make working with NCOs from the other services easier on joint operations. We already have plenty of means of telling each other apart – the Marines' digital camouflage, the Air Force's use of blue rather than black on its insignia, our berets, and, of course, the service patches we all share in common.

Precedents exist for my proposal. The insignia of officers is the same for all three services. And I believe our fellow service personnel in the British Army, the Royal Air Force and Royal Marines do something similar to what I propose – all wear the same pattern of chevron.

*Staff Sgt. Dennis Coslett
St. Paul, Minn.*

The right idea on rank

I heartily agree with the idea of new rank insignia design that was proposed in the "Letters" portion of your April 2003 edition. I have thought in the past that a revamping was in order and this sounds like just the ticket. I am just a solitary sergeant, but I feel I am not alone in saying this is an issue that has past its due. I would like to see what the opinions of others around the

Army are in relation to this, and if the stigmas of tradition and complacency can be placed aside for progress and improvement.

Everyone keeps telling me how this is a new Army with a new philosophy and a more cutting edge approach to everything. Some days I question how that could possibly be true when I see how everyone holds on so tightly to the outdated and the obsolete. If Soldiers, especially NCOs, could get behind this and affect a change in the rank we wear on our collars I think it would help put a totally new look on the face of the Army today.

I could comment on the officer rank insignia, but I'll withhold my critiques for a time better suited to fighting that battle. Us enlisted folks have enough work to do in our own house.

Sgt. Maj. Osvarado Vasquez was just about to expound on a topic that interests me, but opted not to as it would have been "another article."

Could the *Journal* get him to favor the NCO community [with] some further discussion on the "NCO" vs. "Sergeant" debate?

*Sgt. Matthew Gregory
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Suggestions seem extreme

I am writing in response to the letter in the April 2003 issue of the *NCO Journal* from Sgt. Maj. Osvarado Vasquez. While I agree that the Army rank structure could use some minor change, Sgt. Maj. Vasquez's recommendations seem a little extreme in my opinion. The over-abundance of chevrons and arcs in a revised rank structure would be just as confusing as the 1950s-era specialists/NCO structure.

Traditionally, the entry-level enlisted grade in all services has been devoid of rank insignia. Since few are in the E1 pay grade for more than a few months, I see no problem with there being no rank insignia for this grade. Drawing on my prior service in the Marine Corps (I have been with the Missouri Army National Guard for nearly 10 years), I believe the Army should eliminate the rank and insignia of specialist (E4). By the time a Soldier reaches the grade of E4, [he] should be able to lead other Soldiers if necessary. If they are not mentally and physically at that level, perhaps they aren't ready for the greater pay and responsibility that go along with the grade. Therefore, all E4s should be corporals.

Borrowing a concept from both our Marines and the British Army, I wouldn't mind seeing our Army utilize the rank of lance corporal. The Army currently has three ranks of privates. Wouldn't it be a better motivator for a young Soldier to move from E2 to E3 and no longer be a private? The current rank insignia could remain the same with only the title being changed. I have no problem with the chevron/arc Private 1st Class insignia.