

Thunderbolt Blast

Monthly Armor School Newsletter

Vol. 1, Issue 2 SEPTEMBER 2012



Armor School Lines of Effort

SHAPE THE FUTURE FORCE. The TAA 15-19 cycle approaches the CSA approval phase in October, with force-design updates (FDU) affecting all BCTs: increasing to three maneuver battalions, converting the BSTB to a brigade engineer battalion, reducing the tactical wheeled fleet and converting the fires battalion to a 3x6 design. Other FDUs increase distribution capabilities in the SBCT and FA capabilities in the IBCT. This month, eight BfSB commanders and staffs conducted a workshop at Fort Leavenworth to assess FDUs to cover BfSB capability gaps. Initial results both indicate marked improvements in the BfSB and will support a corps/division commander workshop and subsequent presentation to the CSA in October. Finally, the Armor School accepted the task to be the proponent for the AMPV, which will replace all M113-variants at brigade and below.

Armor Schools

194th ARMOR BRIGADE. We've made changes that will result in our 19D OSUT graduates being more proficient in the systems they are most likely to operate. After reviewing 55 hours of M3 instruction and balancing against OSUT graduates' likely assignments, we recognized that less than 15 percent of our 19D population will be assigned to a Bradley Fighting Vehicle (BFV) during their initial enlistment and none will be assigned as a BFV gunner. As a result, we decided to stop live-fire familiarization with the 25mm and M240C. All 19D OSUT graduates will still receive the M3 crewman additional skill identifier (ASI). This reduction of the 20-level gunnery tasks will allow us to focus more on "light scout gunnery" and achieve greater familiarization with the M249, M240B and M2A1 weapons systems in mounted gunnery.

316th CAVALRY BRIGADE. In response to commander and CSM requests and unit training requirements, the Master Gunner School developed a stand-alone 8.5-week MGS Master Gunner Course. The first course runs from Jan. 23 through March 26, 2013. Graduates will receive the R8 ASI and be able to assume duties as an MGS master gunner.

NCOs must complete the following prerequisites prior to attending: (1) Volunteer for the course. (2) Be interviewed and recommended by battalion/squadron commander. (3) Possess the rank of SGT(P) to SFC. (4) Possess the 19K MOS prior to attending the course and have received MGS baseline training verified with a R4 SQI. (5) Have one year's experience as an MGS vehicle commander (waiverable). (6) Have 10 months remaining service commitment. (7) GT score of 105 and a CO (combat) score of 110. Either GT score or CO score may be waived by 5 points, but not both. (8) Qualify as a vehicle commander on Gun Table VIII within 12 months (Active) or 24 months (National Guard) (waiverable). (9) Pass the Vehicle Commander's GST as stated verbatim in ST 3-20.13-2 (Stryker Mobile Gun System Gunnery).

From the Chief of Armor's Turret

"In war, the objective of a commander is to accomplish victory at the smallest possible cost and loss, and the means whereby he attains his objective in the field is by developing mobility through protected offensive power. He strives to attain freedom of movement and action through combining a variety of arms. ..." —COL J.F.C. Fuller, *Infantry Journal*, May 1927.



Emphasized repeatedly during the 2012 Maneuver Conference, our business is all about combined arms, and armored forces are a primary component. We must continue to tell the rest of the Army and Joint force about the unique contributions that Armor and Cavalry bring to the fight.

I'm reminded of something a senior mentor often told me: "to learn something new, read an old book." This recently rang true again after seeing the JFC Fuller quote and then rereading GEN Don Starry's *Armored Combat in Vietnam*. His points on employing mechanized forces in Vietnam are applicable to today's experience. The U.S. did not employ armored forces soon enough in Vietnam because of flawed assumptions about the French experience with armor and about the terrain and trafficability in Vietnam.

Much like today in Afghanistan, the U.S. Marine Corps led the way with tank employment in Vietnam. Army planners only took notice when the 25th Infantry Division, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment and 1st Infantry Division leadership insisted on bringing armored vehicles. These insightful leaders studied combat reports and AARs and saw a clear role for armored vehicles.

Armor Branch and OCOA Personnel Notes

CGSC SELECTION. The Army recently released several documents explaining the way ahead for ILE. Starting with the MAJs selection board in October, Year Group 2004 officers (YG+10 model) and beyond will be boarded for both promotion and for ILE. The ILE board will immediately follow the promotion board, with DA G-1 publishing ILE board results in March 2013. Officers selected will rank-order their ILE preferences, and a Human Resources Command panel will slate officers for their resident program. Officers not selected will complete ILE through distance learning. Currently Armor Branch has 228 officers from Year Groups 1999-2003 that require both the common core and advanced operations course (AOC) to complete ILE (MEL 4). We have 72 resident seats for academic year 2013-2014. The remaining 156 Armor officers will be required to complete their MEL 4 qualification through distance learning. It is important to stress that "regardless of how they complete ILE, all officers will continue to be competitive for promotion, selection for command and other centralized selection processes." (ALARACT 262/2012). All ORBs will simply state "MEL 4 Complete," and promotion boards will be given guidance to not discriminate for Year Groups 1999-2003. Officers serving more than 12 months in an Armor major's key developmental position, or those serving for 12 months deployed in an Armor major's key developmental position, may apply for AOC constructive credit. To attain MEL 4 qualification, they must also complete the common core course through distance learning. We will discuss this option with the chain of command to ensure we are doing the right thing for the officer.

MAJ Bryan Logan, the MAJs assignment officer, will be contacting officers in Year Groups 1999-2003 directly to discuss their options. The Army G-1 sanctioned a panel of Army senior leaders, and they developed an order-of-merit list for officers in Year Groups 2001-2003. Based on this OML, 72 officers will be offered a resident or satellite seat for academic year 2013. If any of these officers decline their seat, they will not be given an option to defer to the next academic year. Armor Branch will offer that seat to the next officer on the OML. Please don't hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns.

MASTER GUNNER STABILIZATION. Prior to sending a Soldier to the Master Gunner School, contact Armor Branch to ensure the Soldier is not pending an assignment. If he is then the unit must submit a DA Form 4187 requesting an operational deletion. Upon course graduation, the unit can request stabilization for the Soldier (up to 24 months). -LTC Shawn Vail, Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate (EPMD), shawn.michael.vail@us.army.mil, (502) 613-5667, DSN (502) 983-5667.

COMMAND LIST INTEGRATION (CLI). In our current state, DA will probably promote 19D20/19K20s on the CLI roster to SGT even if the Soldier lacks a promotion board appearance. Unless the unit commander denies promotion-list integration prior to the 15th of the month, the Soldier will be eligible for promotion (if he meets time-in-grade and time-in-service requirements). Commanders must scrub their monthly AAA-117 (Enlisted Advancement Report) monthly. Soldiers previously removed from the CLI will reappear on the AAA-117 every 90 days. -LTC Shawn Vail, EPMD, shawn.michael.vail@us.army.mil, (502) 613-5667, DSN (502) 983-5667.

SPC/SGT PROMOTION BOARDS. Commanders are not recommending enough Skill Level 1 Soldiers for promotion to Skill Level 2. Currently, 0 x SPC(P) remain on the promotion list. Because there weren't enough boarded SPCs in September, the Army promoted non-boarded Soldiers on the CLI to SGT. Currently, there are 3,610 Soldiers eligible for a SGT promotion board. Of those, 712 are on the CLI and only 104 appeared before a board. To maintain a healthy promotion roster, units should continue to board promotion-eligible Soldiers. -LTC Shawn Vail, EPMD, shawn.michael.vail@us.army.mil, (502) 613-5667, DSN (502) 983-5667.

Doctrine

We must integrate the knowledge gained from the past 11 years of fighting into our doctrine. The MCoE is the Army's executive agent for maneuver doctrine at the brigade combat team and below, and our manuals serve as the foundation doctrine for fighting and winning across the range of military operations. However, ABCT Doctrine Branch cannot accomplish this mission in isolation; we require collaboration with Soldiers and leaders throughout the Army to produce high-quality manuals that contain the right content. Currently there are two maneuver manuals in final-draft development that should be posted for review in late October 2012. Please download and review them from the following links: FM 3-96, **Armored Brigade Combat Team Operations**, <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/folder/35703624>. ATP 3-90.1, **Armor and Mechanized Infantry Company Team**, <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/folder/35703637>. The ABCT Doctrine Branch solicits your feedback and comments on these manuals. Points of contact in ABCT Doctrine Branch are LTC Stephon Calhoun at stephon.calhoun@mail.mil and Bruce Moore at bruce.m.moore2civ@mail.mil.

In Vietnam, armored forces' mobile, protected firepower gave commanders flexibility, achieved surprise, proved decisive, increased tactical reach and staying power, and changed the enemy's battlefield calculus. Sound familiar? It should, since armored forces do the same on the modern battlefield, and this narrative must continue to be reinforced – through word and deed – to our brothers in arms. An example of this is that with the help of my wingman and Infantry School commandant, COL Dave Haight, we are soon publishing an article on the value of mobile, protected, precision firepower's value to the Joint force.

Finally, to the many senior leaders, officers, command sergeants major and "gray-beards," thank you again for your continuing support to our branch and Army who attended the Maneuver Conference. Your tremendous insights are a treasure and much appreciated by the mounted members of the Army profession!

Forge the Thunderbolt!

Giddyup! 47

From the CSM's OP

This second newsletter comes right on the heels of the Maneuver Conference, and I could fill many pages with all the great things that are going on in the Armor community. However, I'll focus on just a few essential items.

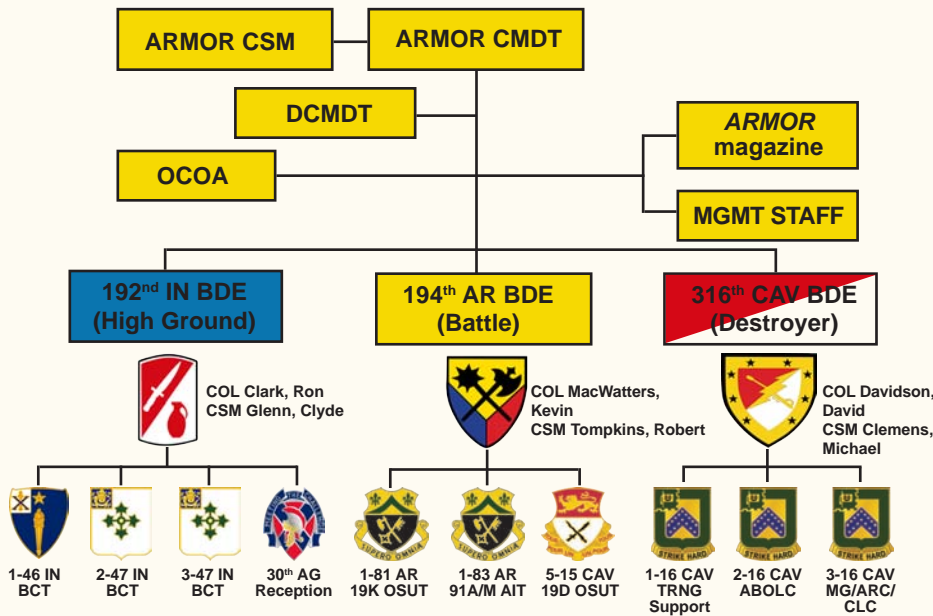
First, among the many Armor School initiatives for the coming year, I think the most exciting is that we will host the first annual Gaineys Cup to recognize the best scout squad in the Army. We've begun planning this competition, and it promises to be a great event. It will coincide with the spring Reconnaissance Summit, so please mark your calendars.

Also, please note that we will be running our 8.5-week Mobile Gun System Master Gunner Course pilot in January. This will help our Stryker units get their master gunners to school and back into the unit much faster than before. Please contact your schools personnel to schedule your master gunners for the new course.

Finally, the Maneuver Conference provided a great opportunity to remember why we do what we do – to be around Soldiers and great leaders. I thoroughly enjoyed catching up with old acquaintances and making many new friends. As Thunderbolt 7, it was very humbling to see my predecessors and very valuable to get their thoughts on the present and future of our branch. Thanks to everyone who took the time to share their feedback with us.



The Armor School



We hope everyone had safe travels back your homes, posts, bases, camps and countries after the Maneuver Conference. Thank you again for your service, leadership and genuine care and concern for Soldiers and the Army.

Armor Strong!

Thunderbolt 7

Armor School Links

MCoE: <https://www.benning.army.mil>

Armor School: <https://www.benning.army.mil/armor/>

ARMOR magazine: <https://www.benning.army.mil/armor/ArmorMagazine/index.htm>



HQ USAARMS f			
Armor CMDT	(706) 545-2029	COL Paul Laughlin	
Armor CSM	(706) 545-8169	CSM Miles Wilson	
DCMDT	(706) 545-3815	COL Scott King	
NG Liaison	(706) 626-2306	LTC Scott Fowler	
MGMT Staff	(706) 626-1406	LTC Matt Boal	
Armor Historian	(706) 626-1491	Dr. Robert Cameron	
Operations NCOIC	(706) 545-0529	SFC Dustin Tomecko	
OCOA	(706) 626-TANK (8265)	email OCOA	
Excellence in Armor	(706) 626-TANK (8265)	email Excellence in Armor	
ARMOR magazine	(706) 545-2698	email ARMOR	
192 nd IN BDE f			
COL Ron Clark		CSM Clyde Glenn	
1-46 IN BCT	LTC Brown, Cale	CSM Dydasco, Eugene	
2-47 IN BCT	LTC Feger, Kyle	CSM Dennison, Daniel	
3-47 IN BCT	LTC Thompson, Travis	CSM Svenson, Todd	
30th AG (Rec)	LTC Kidder, Stuart	CSM Reddock, Earla	
194 th AR BDE f			
COL Kevin MacWatters		CSM Robert Tompkins	
1-81 AR	LTC Plummer, Dawson	CSM Lockhart, Dean	
1-83 AR	LTC McCoy, Jeff	CSM Wagner, Anthony	
5-15 CAV	LTC Koloski, Andrew	CSM Roark, Samuel	
316 th CAV BDE f			
COL David Davidson		CSM Michael Clemens	
1-16 CAV	LTC Brown, Mark	CSM Martin, Valmond	
2-16 CAV	LTC Diano, Oscar	CSM Feltman, Bradley	
3-16 CAV	LTC Mackey, Andre	CSM Williamson, Michael	
TCM			
COL Nicoson	TCM-ABCT and TCM-BFSB	(706) 545-2517	gary-nicoson@us.army.mil
COL House	TCM-IBCT	(706) 545-2078	claud.house@us.army.mil
COL Speights	TCM-Stryker	(706) 545-5364	elmer.speights3.mil@mail.mil

Coming Next Month

- OCOA Updates
- TCM Updates

Question of the Month

What is the No. 1 challenge that prevents training combined arms at home station?

Administrative note: discussions will be conducted on milSuite (<https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/usaarms-armor-force-discussi?view=discussions&start=0>), a collection of on-line tools and applications for secure collaboration, as access is limited to DoD CAC holders. Connect to the group by navigating to the milBook portion of milSuite, clicking on "Groups" in the top ribbon and searching for "USAARMS Armor Force Discussion."