

# Thunderbolt Blast

Monthly Armor School Newsletter  
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## Armor School

**FRANKS AWARD.** The Armor School was proud to welcome GEN(R) Frederick M. Franks on 14 Dec 12. During the day, he visited a basic combat training graduation, led an LPD, was the speaker at an ABOLC graduation and addressed the Armor and Cavalry leaders on Fort Benning at our Stable Call. His visit reminded us of what a great and inspirational leader he is and why we annually present an award in his honor to deserving members of the Armor and Cavalry. As such, now through 31 Jan 2013, we are seeking your nominees for the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Frederick M. Franks Award.

The Franks Award is presented to a mounted active-duty or reserve officer, noncommissioned officer or DA civilian who has demonstrated a long-time contribution to the Army's ground-fighting and warfighting capabilities. The winner will receive the award during the 2013 Army Reconnaissance Summit. Please take the time to nominate a deserving candidate to receive the Franks Award as we honor those who serve the Armor and Cavalry community. For complete award criteria and more information, visit <https://forums.army.mil/SECURE/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=1849408&lang=en-US> or contact OCOA at [usarmy.benning.mcoe.mbx.armor-ocoa@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.benning.mcoe.mbx.armor-ocoa@mail.mil).

**PRIORITIZING ARMOR SCHOOL FUNCTIONAL TRAINING COURSES.** The Armor School commandant is asking for feedback on the potential impacts of functional-training budget cuts. TRADOC's priority is initial military training (IMT) and professional military education (PME), with functional training – such as the M1A1/M1A2 Tank Commanders Course – falling last. As a result, TRADOC funding reductions first come from functional training. TRADOC, in conjunction with the schools, developed a prioritized list of functional training. Schools have also been encouraged to find efficiencies by transferring some training to U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) and the National Guard Bureau (NGB). Two courses identified as candidates for transfer to unit training are the M1A1/M1A2 Tank Commanders Course and the Mobile Gun System (MGS) Commanders Course, which are currently taught at Fort Benning. In addition, the MGS Crewman Course and the Stryker Crewman Course are under consideration for transfer to an NG Regional Training Institute (RTI). We want your input on the potential training and readiness impact these options may have on your unit as we continue to develop unique options to ensure training effectiveness during a resource constrained environment. Point of contact is Louise Candelaria at [louise.a.candelaria.civ@mail.mil](mailto:louise.a.candelaria.civ@mail.mil).

**194<sup>th</sup> ARMORED BRIGADE: HOLIDAY BLOCK LEAVE.** Each year during the holiday season, the Armor School pauses training and sends our initial-entry training (IET) Soldiers on a two-week holiday block leave (HBL). The pause allows our cadre and training population the opportunity to enjoy the holidays and then return in the New Year ready to execute their mission. Obviously, two weeks is a significant disruption to the IET physical-training regimen, particularly for those trainees in the toughening phase of APRT. Our cadre and Musculoskeletal Action Teams (MAT) provide IET soldiers with personal workout plans to maintain fitness during HBL and minimize stress or injury when training resumes. In spite of these challenges, the 194<sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade will ensure that all warriors meet Army standards before graduation. Commanders of their first unit expect that Soldiers whose IET cycles included HBL will have a negative leave balance when they first arrive.

**316<sup>th</sup> CAVALRY BRIGADE: ABOLC FOLLOW-ON TRAINING STRATEGY.** Armor Basic Officer Leaders Course (ABOLC) graduates are physically fit, agile and adaptive leaders who are capable of

## From the Chief of Armor's Turret

As we close out 2012, this is a good time to update you on the key initiatives at the Armor School, to tell you what is coming in the New Year and to solicit your feedback on our initiatives.

- 1. Linking to the operational force:** We need feedback from the force so we can fight for the requirements you need and to ensure we're producing Soldiers and leaders with the right skill sets for your units. To foster this feedback, we've initiated this informative newsletter along with our points of contact. We are now also on Facebook and Twitter; join us there for the latest news affecting Armor, Cavalry and our combined-arms brothers.
- 2. ABOLC Armor and infantry integration:** Armor lieutenants should have an appreciation of what their infantry counterparts bring to the fight – and vice versa. We have initiated a program that gets lieutenants from ABOLC and IBOLC together for hands-on learning with each others' systems and to conduct combined-arms training. For example, in early December, infantry and Armor lieutenants conducted combined-arms training at the Selby Combined Arms Collective Training Facility to learn how to integrate tank, Bradley and dismount elements into their operations.
- 3. MGS master gunner:** We will conduct the pilot MGS Master Gunner Course beginning 21 Jan 2013. This will shorten the time that MGS MG candidates are away from their units by two months, allowing them to contribute more during



leading platoons in any Armor or Cavalry organization. To further prepare lieutenants and to maximize training opportunities available at the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE), 2-16 Cav developed a follow-on training strategy to ensure that officers may attend assignment-oriented training (AOT) in accordance with DA PAM 600-3, **Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management** (01 FEB 10), and prioritized by first unit of assignment. The Squadron has developed three phases of follow-on training available for lieutenants:

- The first phase is reconnaissance-focused training (Army Reconnaissance Course (ARC) and Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leader Course (RSLC)). Lieutenants assigned to an Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) or Stryker BCT (SBCT) are prioritized to attend ARC, while those assigned to an Infantry BCT are prioritized to attend RSLC. Opportunities exist for many lieutenants to attend both courses, depending on their timeline.
- The second phase is assignment-specific training. Lieutenants assigned to SBCT formations have the opportunity to attend the Stryker Leader's Course, while lieutenants assigned to ABCTs will be given the opportunity to attend the Mechanized Leader Course or Tank Commander's Course. IBCT (ABN) lieutenants will attend Airborne School during this phase.
- The final phase is functional training. During this phase, lieutenants may attend Ranger, Air Assault or other schools available at Fort Benning that prepare them for their next assignment. The Squadron has had great success ensuring that up to one-third of each ABOLC class has a chance to attend Ranger School, with priority going to those lieutenants assigned to IBCT or SBCT formations.

This three-phased approach to follow-on training ensures that lieutenants maximize training opportunities before reporting to their first unit. The foundational training lieutenants receive at ABOLC, coupled with the training opportunities available at the MCoE, enables the Armor School to provide the Armor and Cavalry force with tactically and technically proficient lieutenants, immediately ready to assume their platoons.

## TRADOC Capabilities Managers

**TCM-SBCT: GROWING MGS CREWMEN.** MGS operator new-equipment training (MGS OPNET) is ending. All nine SBCTs have received at least one, and in some cases two, OPNETS. Leaders are now responsible for training and certifying their own MGS crewmembers to award the R4 Additional Skill Identifier (ASI). SBCTs are experiencing greater than 85 percent turnover in 19Ks, so incoming personnel need to be brought up to speed quickly. TM 9-2355-321-10 is the resource leaders need to accomplish this task. Chapters 1-5 cover familiarization of components, principles of operation, equipment description and use, operations in usual conditions and operations in unusual conditions. Chapter 8 covers maintenance. These chapters provide the basic tasks on which platoons need to focus. Master gunners (with commanders' guidance) must develop and execute a training plan that ensures all crewmen complete live-fire prerequisite training IAW DA PAM 350-38 and culminate training with a crew live-fire qualification exercise. Upon crew qualification, commanders should award the R4 ASI. POCs at TCM-SBCT are SFC Philemon Jones, [philemon.f.jones@mail.mil](mailto:philemon.f.jones@mail.mil), or Jackie Cooper, [jackie.r.cooper.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:jackie.r.cooper.ctr@mail.mil).

**TCM-ABCT: DOCTRINE, ORGANIZATION AND FORCE MODERNIZATION.** TCM-ABCT led the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) and Capabilities Development and Integration Directorate (CDID) team that visited 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division in Korea to conduct an mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) proof-of-principle survey 7-14 Dec 12. The team visited 2 CAB, 210 FiB and 1 ABCT, and conducted panel discussions and surveys with operators, sustainers, leaders and staff to identify MRAP suitability on the Korean Peninsula. Areas of emphasis during discussions included use of the MRAP as a mission-command-on-the-move (MCOTM) node, MCOTM desired capabilities, MRAP attributes and constraints, how MRAPs were used and supported, and how MRAPs performed during field exercises. The outcome will identify doctrine, organization, training, leadership and education, personnel and facility (DOTMLPF) considerations for potential future fielding. For more information, contact Ron Kuykendall, [ronald.d.kuykendall2.civ@mail.mil](mailto:ronald.d.kuykendall2.civ@mail.mil), (706) 545-9872.

**TCM-BfSB: BATTLEFIELD SURVEILLANCE BRIGADE (BfSB) UPDATE.** The structure and capabilities of the BfSBs in support of Army 2020 continues to evolve. Army Chief of Staff (ACoS) GEN Ray Odierno has directed the development and analysis of two potential courses of action (COAs) for organization(s) responsible for collecting intelligence on the future battlefield. COA 1 is the development of a new reconnaissance and security (R&S) organization based on a SBCT or ABCT. COA 2 is augmenting an existing SBCT or ABCT with specific organizations / capabilities harvested from the existing BfSBs to perform the R&S mission. While these COAs appear almost identical, they will differ in operational control, structure and capabilities. In accordance with guidance from MG H.R. McMaster, MCoE commanding general, the MCoE Capabilities Development Division (CDD), with TCM-BfSB in support, will be coordinating two "how to fight" seminars in February and March 2013. These seminars will look at everything from the BCT structures, R&S mission-essential task list (METL), training and potential fiscal impacts to determine which COA would likely best serve the Army's R&S needs. The seminars' goal is to develop the information that will be briefed to the ACoS, which will lead to a decision on R&S's future and the organization that must execute it as a part of Army 2020. The POC for more information is LTC Eric Lowry, [anthony.e.lowry@mail.mil](mailto:anthony.e.lowry@mail.mil), (706) 626-2444.

their units' train-ready phase.

- 4. Getting scouts under armor:** We are exploring a short-term solution to get our scouts under armor using existing Bradleys as well as a longer-term solution. For the IBCT scouts, we are still looking to determine the right platform, but acknowledge that the HMMWV and M-ATV are not suitable. Our TRADOC capabilities managers (TCMs) are working to develop the best course of action until we find a suitable platform.
- 5. Reconnaissance Summit 2013:** This year's Reconnaissance Summit is currently scheduled 6-8 March. We have sent out "save the date" invitations to all invitees; we will send official invitations following final TRADOC approval. If invited, please consider attending as we are looking for valuable input to inform the development of reconnaissance gaps and recommend solutions across DOTMLPF for all BCTs.
- 6. Sullivan Cup 2013:** The next Sullivan Cup Best Tank Crew competition will be in 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter FY13. Look for more information this spring, as we will begin planning soon.
- 7. Gainey Cup 2013:** The Gainey Cup Best Scout Team competition is 1-5 March 2013. We have invited a team from each division and separate BCT, along with three ARNG teams, to compete.

Finally, I'd like to wish everyone a happy holiday season and, as always, thank you for your service in the past year. Please take a moment to remember our brothers and sisters who are not at home and keep them in your thoughts. If you are with family, please enjoy the time, as we all know how precious that is. 2013 holds a lot of promise for the mounted force – so come back from the holidays recharged, refreshed and ready to roll.

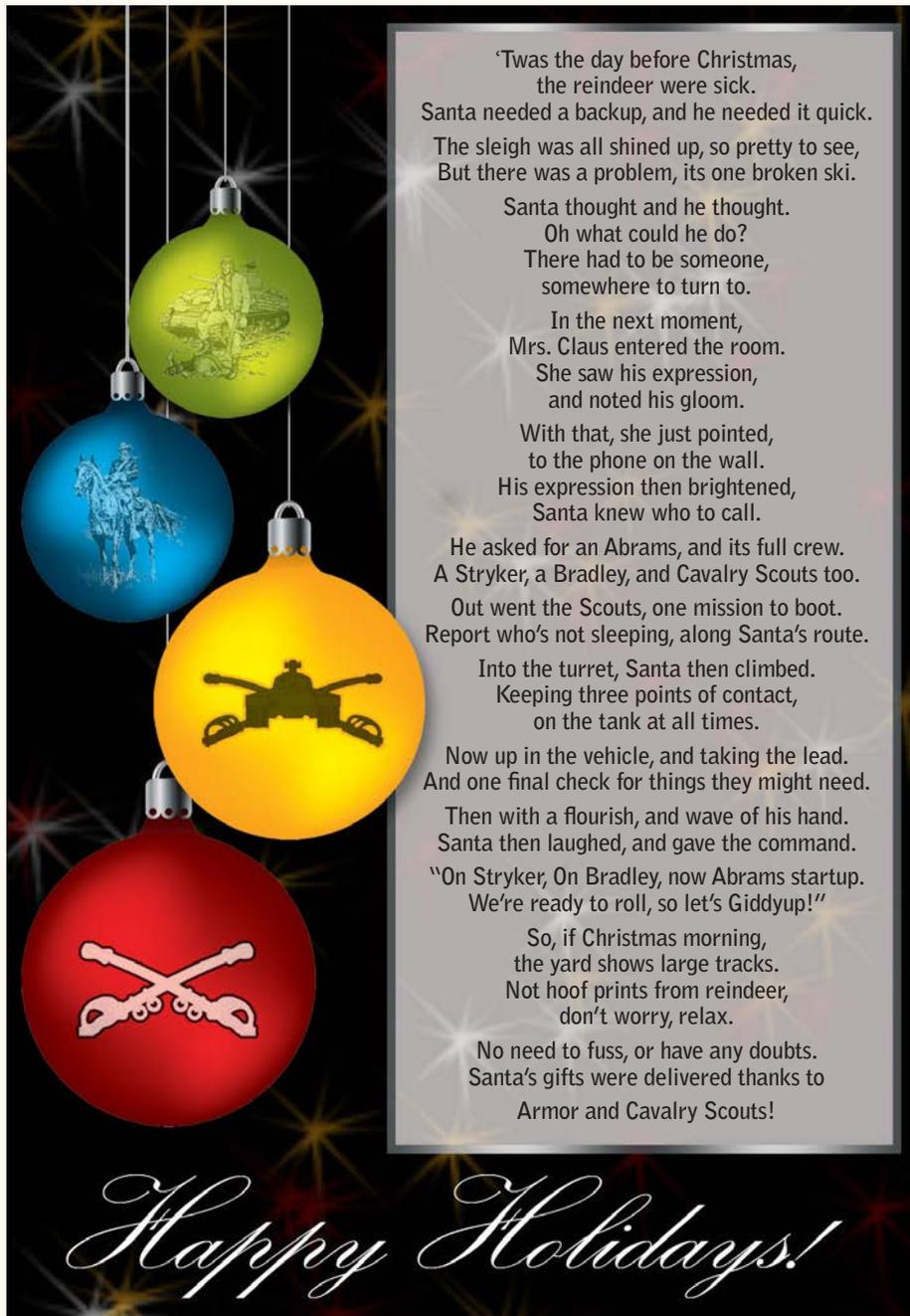
Giddyup! 47

## From the CSM's OP

As we enter the last few weeks of 2012, let us not forget all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice this past year. We will never forget them or their Families. And to all those deployed in harm's way, we wish you the safest and happiest of holidays as you serve this great nation. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your Families as they celebrate with heavy hearts in your absence.



It has been a good year to be a Cavalry trooper and Armor tanker. Many unknowns await us all next year, but the best of the best will be up to the test. We are all blessed to be Americans, honored to serve,



'Twas the day before Christmas,  
the reindeer were sick.  
Santa needed a backup, and he needed it quick.  
The sleigh was all shined up, so pretty to see,  
But there was a problem, its one broken ski.

Santa thought and he thought.  
Oh what could he do?  
There had to be someone,  
somewhere to turn to.

In the next moment,  
Mrs. Claus entered the room.  
She saw his expression,  
and noted his gloom.

With that, she just pointed,  
to the phone on the wall.  
His expression then brightened,  
Santa knew who to call.

He asked for an Abrams, and its full crew.  
A Stryker, a Bradley, and Cavalry Scouts too.

Out went the Scouts, one mission to boot.  
Report who's not sleeping, along Santa's route.

Into the turret, Santa then climbed.  
Keeping three points of contact,  
on the tank at all times.

Now up in the vehicle, and taking the lead.  
And one final check for things they might need.

Then with a flourish, and wave of his hand.  
Santa then laughed, and gave the command.

"On Stryker, On Bradley, now Abrams startup.  
We're ready to roll, so let's Giddyup!"

So, if Christmas morning,  
the yard shows large tracks.  
Not hoof prints from reindeer,  
don't worry, relax.

No need to fuss, or have any doubts.  
Santa's gifts were delivered thanks to  
Armor and Cavalry Scouts!

and I am humbled to be among the midst of  
so many fine young Soldiers. That has an extra  
special meaning for me, as I now have a  
daughter in the Army.

To all – Merry Christmas and Happy New  
Year!

Armor Strong!

Thunderbolt 7



#### Upcoming Events

1-5 March 13 - **Gainey Cup**

6-8 March 13 - **Recon Summit**

TBD Fall 13 - **Armor Ball**

Late Aug/early Sep 13- **Sullivan Cup**

#### 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>

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