

other benefits, would undercut the mobile, protected firepower available to joint-force commanders. For example, shifting armored BCTs into the Army National Guard to save money comes at the cost of the time required to train up and mobilize such forces. Similarly, eliminating some armored BCTs in favor of infantry units is deemed an acceptable risk in view of the money it would save. But these are false economies; a recent Rand analysis indicates that there is little cost difference in either case. Here, operational advantage should be our guide, a measure weighted in favor of armored forces.

Still others say that our advantages in communications, information and precision-strike technologies are so pronounced that we need not maintain armored BCTs as well. Yet, in the last decade of conflict, precision strike, for example, has been challenged by collateral damage and the enemy's ability to deceive, cover and conceal. While these technologies do excel at identifying and attacking targets, they are most effective when employed in combined-arms operations enabled by mobile, protected firepower.

## Looking ahead

The Army is changing. The future force will be smaller and regionally engaged; it must also be responsive and decisive, with a robust mix of capabilities and capacity sufficient to give pause to our adversaries, reassure our allies and, when called upon, deliver the punch that defeats our enemies and exerts control to prevent chaos.

While the future is uncertain, the potential for armed conflict with those who can employ modern weapons is real. Engaging in combat operations without an advantage in mobile, protected firepower makes the odds for the enemy far too even, as seen with Task Force Smith in Korea in 1950 and even Task Force Ranger in Somalia in 1993. Without the firepower, protection and shock effect of armored forces, combat operations are likely to be prolonged, resulting in far greater casualties and destruction.

Preserving the advantages conferred by mobile, protected firepower is not just prudent, it is essential.

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### ACRONYM QUICK-SCAN

**ARCIC** – Army Capabilities Integration Center  
**BCT** – brigade combat team  
**CGSC** – Command and General Staff College  
**IED** – improvised explosive device  
**JFCOM** – (U.S.) Joint Forces Command  
**OLC** – oak-leaf cluster  
**TRADOC** – (U.S. Army) Training and Doctrine Command

