

# COMMANDANT'S HATCH

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## Mastering the art of mobile, protected, precision firepower

Battle handover from BG Thomas James is complete – thanks to him for his distinguished service to our branch as the 46<sup>th</sup> Chief of Armor. It is truly a distinct honor and privilege to serve the Armor force as the 47<sup>th</sup> Chief of Armor and commandant of the Armor School. Stoked to be here! Looking forward to leading the great team of Armor and Cavalry leaders and Soldiers at Fort Benning as we continue to develop agile and adaptive Soldiers and leaders who are competent in combined-arms maneuver and reconnaissance and security skills.

In this article, I would like to touch on two points: one, there is now and will always be a need for armored and reconnaissance forces in our Army, and two, I want to provide a quick Armor School update.

Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates said Feb. 25, 2011, that "... The need for heavy armor and firepower to survive, close with and destroy the enemy will always be there, as veterans of Sadr City and Fallujah can no doubt attest." We absolutely agree. As such, it is my belief that we as a branch must focus on emphasizing that Armor and Cavalry are imperative to the Army's application of combined-arms maneuver in unified land operations.

In the combined-arms fight (which we must always strive for), our unique contribution is providing mobile, protected, precision firepower to ensure success on the battlefield. Although relatively simple in concept, combined-arms maneuver takes much study and practice to master. Once we make contact with the enemy, we must isolate him both physically and psychologically to bring the full weight of the combined-arms team to bear against him in an unfair fight. At its essence, combined-arms maneuver requires that our armored forces provide protective and devastating cover fire so our infantry brothers can maneuver across all types of terrain – open, restrictive and urban – to gain a foothold and fight through the last hundred yards to defeat the enemy.

The lethal application of combined-arms maneuver described above requires that we remain experts in our profession and mindful of our history, particularly the history that Armor Soldiers are writing today in Afghanistan and Israel. In speaking with some of the Ma-

rine tankers returning from southern Afghanistan, they inform us of tremendous contributions they bring to the fight there, mostly without fanfare. During a recent trip to visit the Israeli Defense Forces, it became very apparent that they have applied the lessons from 2006 in Lebanon. Follow-on experiences in Gaza (as recently as June 2012) prove that vehicles offering mobile, protected, precision firepower are critical for success against all threats. The Israelis are unambiguous advocates for the application of combined-arms maneuver in all fights and in all types of terrain.

History tells us that our adversaries will always seek ways to counter and mitigate our strengths with the assets they have at hand. Examples of this from across the globe dictate the necessity to maintain a balance of all types of forces – armored, Stryker, infantry and reconnaissance/security – to remain superior on any land battlefield. While some consider the future of conflict to be uncertain, we can be absolutely certain that based on history, the only logical conclusion is that there will always be a role for Armor in the combined-arms fight.

To that end and in providing a brief update from my perch, we at the Armor School continue to work hard in developing agile and adaptive leaders and Soldiers for the modern battlefield as combined-arms warriors. Since July 2012, we are conducting mounted maneuver training on Fort Benning's Good Hope training area. The synergy created by being at Fort Benning and part of the Maneuver Center of Excellence with the infantry is amazing, and we continue to look at ways to take advantage of this. We are currently integrating tanks into Infantry Basic Officer Lieutenants Course by having captains from the Maneuver Captains Career Course issue operations orders to the lieutenants and then exercise mission command while the lieutenants maneuver on the ground. Sometimes this is the first experience these captains have ever had with tanks, and they learn a great deal!

Whereas this issue is dedicated to the concept of mobile, protected, precision firepower, we have not forgotten our reconnaissance troopers and formations. We will discuss their vast contribution to the combined-arms fight in future issues as we prepare for the Reconnaissance Summit in March. Also, we will host our first

Gainey Cup to determine the best scout squad in the Army in the first quarter of 2013. More to follow.

At the Armor School, we continue to develop the future generation by implementing innovative training techniques from the 2015 Army Learning Model in courses like our Army Reconnaissance Course for Reconnaissance Leaders and our Blended Rotational Interactive Training Environment for our mechanics. These innovative courses have recently received accolades from key leaders throughout the Army and, more importantly, from the Soldiers and leaders who have undergone the training. We are listening to your feedback and have taken steps to reduce the Mobile Gun System Master Gunner Course from 16 weeks to 8.5 weeks, thus making it easier for our Stryker Brigade Combat Team commanders and command sergeants major to send great noncommissioned officers to this critical training. Please keep sending us your perspective on the quality of Soldiers and leaders you get from our courses. This linkage to the force for suggestions on improving our courses at the Armor School – along with our own ideas to make the courses more rigorous – is critical to maintaining relevance and to giving you the Soldier or leader you can be proud of and that our Army deserves.

Bottom line, we continue to do all we can in creating aggressive, agile, adaptive Armor and Cavalry Soldiers who understand that they are part of a combined-arms team and are committed to lifelong learning and to our profession. These are exciting times to be a leader, Soldier or trooper in Armor and Cavalry. Remember, it is the *elan* ... the spirit of Armor and Cavalry ... the ability to think and act independently and decisively ... that makes us a different breed. I am very proud to be in it and part of the team!

Forge the Thunderbolt!