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## Mobile, Protected Precision Firepower – Our Responsibility

We in the Cavalry and Armor force know what we offer, what we are capable of, and the amount of death and destruction we have inflicted on our enemies the last 10-plus years. Those feats, as well as our ability to operate, think and act independently and decisively, have not gone unnoticed by senior leaders of the Army and Defense Department. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, current Army Chief of Staff GEN Raymond Odierno and MG H.R. McMaster, commanding general of the Maneuver Center of Excellence, are all on record as passionately expounding on the past exploits and future need for an armor force that can survive, close with and destroy the enemy.

What the platform will be, how many there will be and in which component our Army's armor force will be in are all issues affected by many things – sequestration, election turnover and determining exactly what the "enemy" is going to look like in 2020. These issues are well above the average Cavalry and Armor leader's level. But there are a couple of things we can do all the way down to the platoon level that will set the armor force up for success as we shape the Army of 2020. These two things are the Army Reconnaissance Course and Master Gunner Course.

I grew up in the Army as a 19D, reconnaissance specialist. I can understand how many of our 19D SSGs and SFCs in the operating force feel when they hear the term "ARC." The point of this course is not to qualify or certify you as a "cavalryman" able to conduct all types of reconnaissance with a single look at a map

and a quick shot of an azimuth. However, ARC develops your level of fundamental skills and makes you a more adaptive and agile leader.

GEN Odierno laid out eight leader expectations in his document, "38<sup>th</sup> CSA Marching Orders." I'll make note of these five:

- Learn, think, and adapt;
- Balance risk and opportunity to retain the initiative;
- Build agile, effective, high-performing teams;
- Develop bold, adaptive and broadened leaders; and
- Communicate – up, down and laterally; tell the whole story.

ARC is designed, taught and executed to get after all these. It is imperative that we in the cavalry force embrace and support this course. The time your noncommissioned officers will be away is more than worth it. We have received nothing but positive feedback from both graduates and their unit leadership. For more information, I highly recommend you visit the ARC Webpage at [www.benning.army.mil/Armor/316thCav/content/pdf/ARC.pdf](http://www.benning.army.mil/Armor/316thCav/content/pdf/ARC.pdf).

For our tankers, we have to put a focus and priority back on the Master Gunner Course. Armor units at all levels have put precision gunnery on the shelf over the past 10 years as we used the tank less and less in Iraq and simply left them at home station when deploying to Afghanistan. As the subject-matter expert for all weapon systems within the unit, the master

gunner advises and assists the commander in the development, execution and evaluation of all combat- and gunnery-related training.

The 316<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade currently conducts the M1A1, M1A2 and MGS Master Gunner courses. The M1A1 course rate is dropping as the Active Army transitions to a fully M1A2 force. The number of M1A2 master gunners in the Army is dropping as we lose qualified NCOs to attrition and course seats go unfilled. We need first sergeants, command sergeants major and commanders to start identifying the right NCOs and then train and mentor them for attendance. Right now it takes completion of one of the M1 courses and the MGS course to be a qualified MGS master gunner. Feedback from the Stryker community said it was not beneficial to keep their NCOs away for more than 16 weeks; we listened and in January 2013, 316<sup>th</sup> Cav Brigade will conduct the first 8½-week standalone MGS master course. Again, I highly recommend you seek more information at [www.benning.army.mil/Armor/316thCav/content/pdf/m1a1a2.pdf](http://www.benning.army.mil/Armor/316thCav/content/pdf/m1a1a2.pdf).

We here at the Armor School welcome your feedback and ideas; value your dedication to training and leading our troopers and Soldiers; and appreciate your service to the nation!

Let us also never forget those who have paid the ultimate price and can no longer be with us, and all those great Americans currently serving in harm's way.

'Til we all ride again.

Forge the Thunderbolt! Armor Strong!