

Cavalry and Armor Functional Training: A Return to the Core Competencies That Make Our Maneuver Force Dominant

by LTC Andre L. Mackey

During multiple conferences, summits and task-review boards, a common theme arose among leaders at the Maneuver Center of Excellence: our maneuver force needs to return to training the core competencies and re-emphasize precision gunnery and the fundamentals of reconnaissance and security. During the past decade, Army leaders prioritized efforts and resources for training counterinsurgency operations, knowing that most of their combat operations would center on COIN and not on combined-arms maneuver. That COIN focus necessitated our full attention and influenced the way a generation of Soldiers trained and prepared for operations. Along with the associated non-deployed activities, senior Army leaders now recognize that many critical combat skills of the maneuver force have atrophied and need a re-energized training focus.

The institutional-learning process associated with our return to execution of combined-arms maneuver includes shifting to decisive-action rotations at the combat training centers and to re-energizing our functional training base. Many of the courses that ensure we successfully regain our combat skills are available within the MCoE's Armor School. To ensure Soldiers and leaders attend the appropriate courses, course managers and commanders within the institutional force need to ensure operational-force commanders are fully aware of all schooling opportunities and the intended training audience.

This article will inform readers of available Armor and Cavalry functional courses, explain their purpose and describe the population each course trains. Starting with the Cavalry Leaders' Course, this article will also highlight the Army Reconnaissance

Course and the various master-gunner courses. The overall objective is to increase understanding of and attendance in these critical courses. (*Editor's note: Separate articles on the CLC and ARC are also available in this edition. MG courses will be featured in a future edition.*)

Third Squadron, 16th Cavalry Regiment, 316th Cavalry Brigade, conducts all Cavalry and Armor functional courses (CLC, ARC and various MG courses) at Fort Benning, GA.

CLC

CLC is the only course in the U.S. Army focused on training troop-level leadership in Cavalry organizations. It is open to officers and senior noncommissioned officers assigned to any type of Cavalry squadron. Chapter 10 of Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3 states that 19A "officers assigned to a Cavalry organization after completion of [a captain's career course] **must** attend the Cavalry Leader Course."¹ We want to ensure as many leaders as possible attend CLC, not only 19A officers.

To meet eligibility, you must be an officer in the Army or Marine Corps with the rank of first lieutenant (promotable) through lieutenant colonel, and you must have graduated any captain's career course. Also, you should be on orders for assignment to a reconnaissance Cavalry organization. Warrant officers (aviation, field artillery, military intelligence) in the ranks of chief warrant officer three through five who are serving in reconnaissance units on staff or in aviation units are also encouraged to attend.



The NCO audience is sergeants first class or above who are graduates of the Battle Staff Course and are assigned as, or selected to be assigned as, a reconnaissance/Cavalry troop first sergeant, squadron operations sergeant or operations sergeant major.

Our instructors conduct CLC over 15 training days with an emphasis on understanding reconnaissance and security fundamentals in addition to the tactics required to conduct reconnaissance and security operations at troop level in support of unified land operations. The premise behind instructing and developing planning proficiency at troop level is that a professional understanding of the roles of the commander and first sergeant directly correlates to planning proficiency at the next higher level (squadron and brigade) as S-3s, executive officers and operations NCOs or operations sergeant majors.

Figure 1 shows CLC class progression with a daily focus, and is the same for the resident or mobile-training-team course iterations.

ARC

ARC focuses on scout-platoon-level leadership and has a greater emphasis on the execution of reconnaissance and security operations in the field. DA PAM 600-3 states, "ARC is required for all [19A-Armor] lieutenants assigned to a Cavalry or reconnaissance platoon regardless of the platform the unit utilizes." ARC's primary target audience includes section leaders, scout platoon sergeants and scout platoon leaders.

The prerequisites for ARC are:

- **Active Army/Marine and Reserve Component commissioned officer** (second lieutenant through captain) **and commissioned allied officers** – (1) who are assigned (or will be assigned) to a reconnaissance unit; (2) who are in Career Management Field armor (19), infantry (11), engineers (21), aviation (15), military intelligence (96), field artillery (13); and (3) who have successfully completed their branch's Basic Officer Leadership Course.
- **Warrant officers** (warrant officer one through chief warrant officer three) – (1) who are assigned (or will be assigned) to a reconnaissance unit; and (2) who have completed Warrant Officer Candidate-Aviation training.

- **NCOs** – (1) who have successfully completed Advanced Leadership Course and (2) are assigned (or will be assigned) to a reconnaissance unit.

As of Nov. 1, 2012, graduation from ARC awards an additional skill identifier of R7. This ASI will also be retroactive and apply to all graduates of the Armor School's previous reconnaissance courses: Scout Platoon Leaders Course and Scout Leaders Course. The 3rd Squadron, 16th Cavalry Regiment, is currently working with the Office of the Chief of Armor to assign the R7 ASI to modified table of organization and equipment positions in all reconnaissance formations, regardless of platform, to formalize the requirements for all section sergeants, senior scouts and scout platoon sergeants.

ARC implements Army Learning Model 2015 and is the premier course at the MCoE for integrating adaptive Soldier leader training and education (formerly known as outcomes-based training and education). This physically and mentally demanding course produces a Cavalry professional who possesses the following:

- A higher understanding of the commander's information needs;
- Improved ability to plan and execute reconnaissance-and-security missions at the platoon level;
- Competence with supporting assets (indirect fire and aviation);
- Confidence at problem-solving; and
- Competence in mission-context problem-solving.

Figure 2 shows the course progression for ARC. Third Squadron conducts nine ARC classes annually, each class with a maximum of 64 students. The ideal composition of each class is an approximately equal mix of officers and NCOs.

MG courses

The Cavalry functional courses strengthen our Army's ability to gain and maintain contact with the enemy by producing reconnaissance-and-security leaders capable of operating within the commander's intent and by providing maneuver commanders

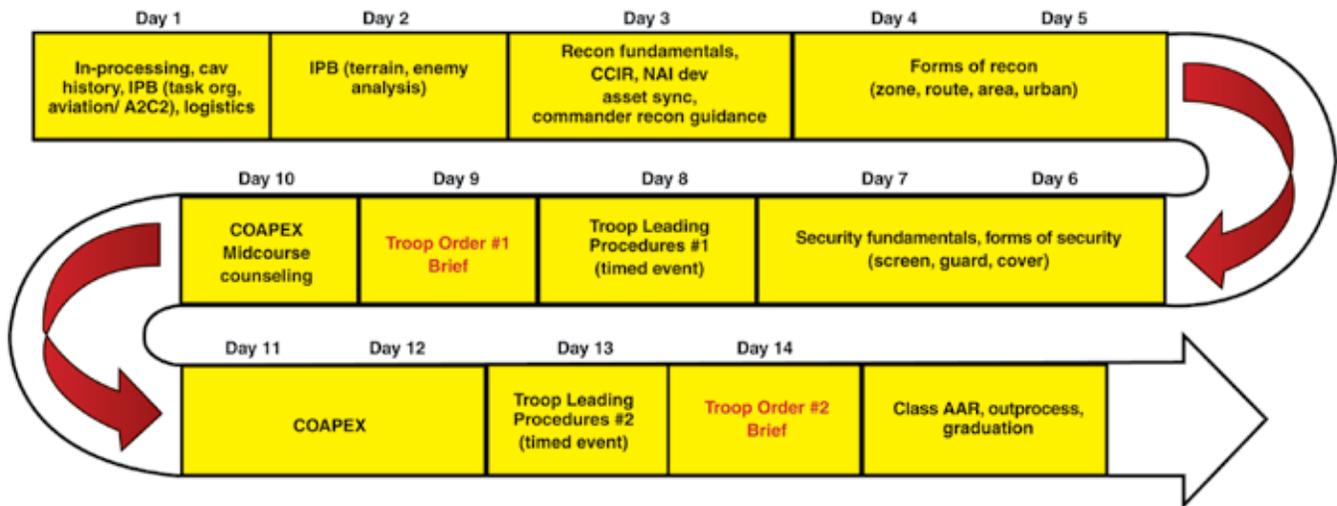


Figure 1. The daily focus of CLC's class progression is the same for the resident or mobile-training-team course iterations.

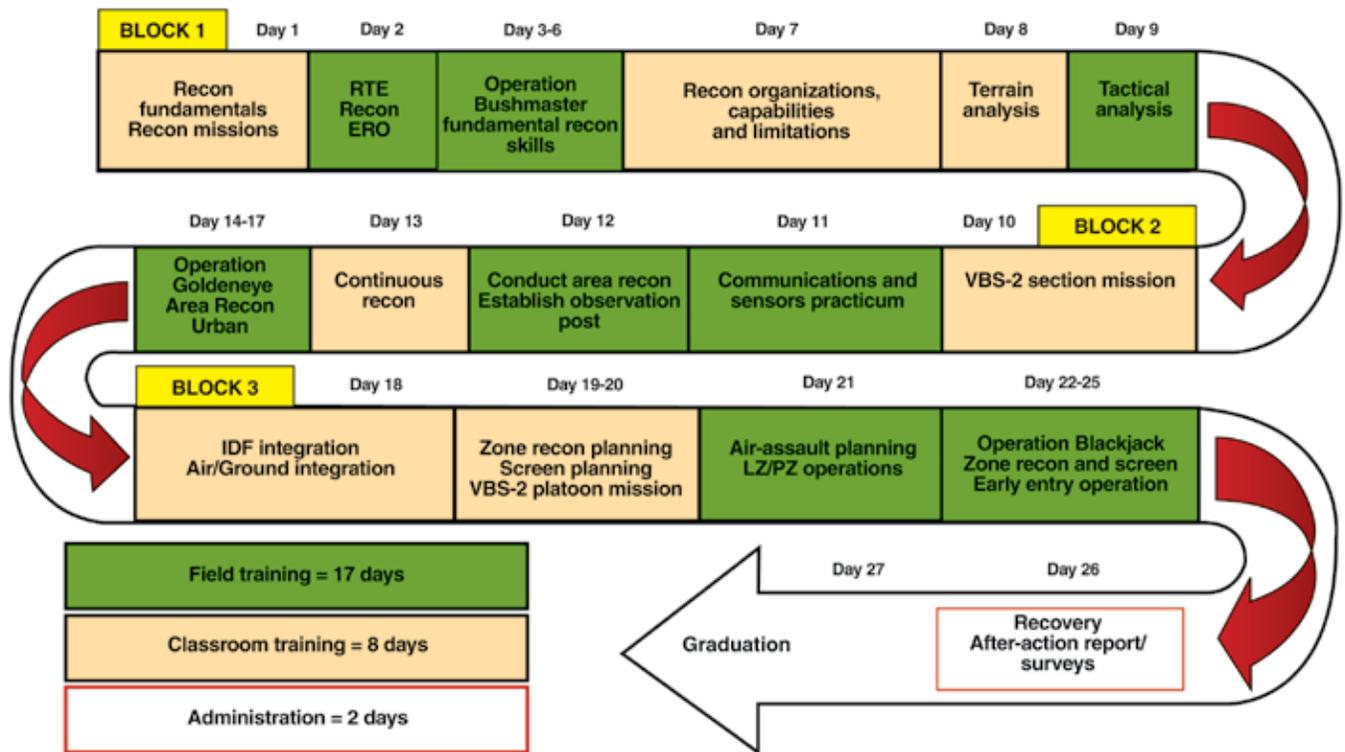


Figure 2. ARC's course progression. Third Squadron, 16th Cavalry Regiment, conducts nine ARC classes annually.



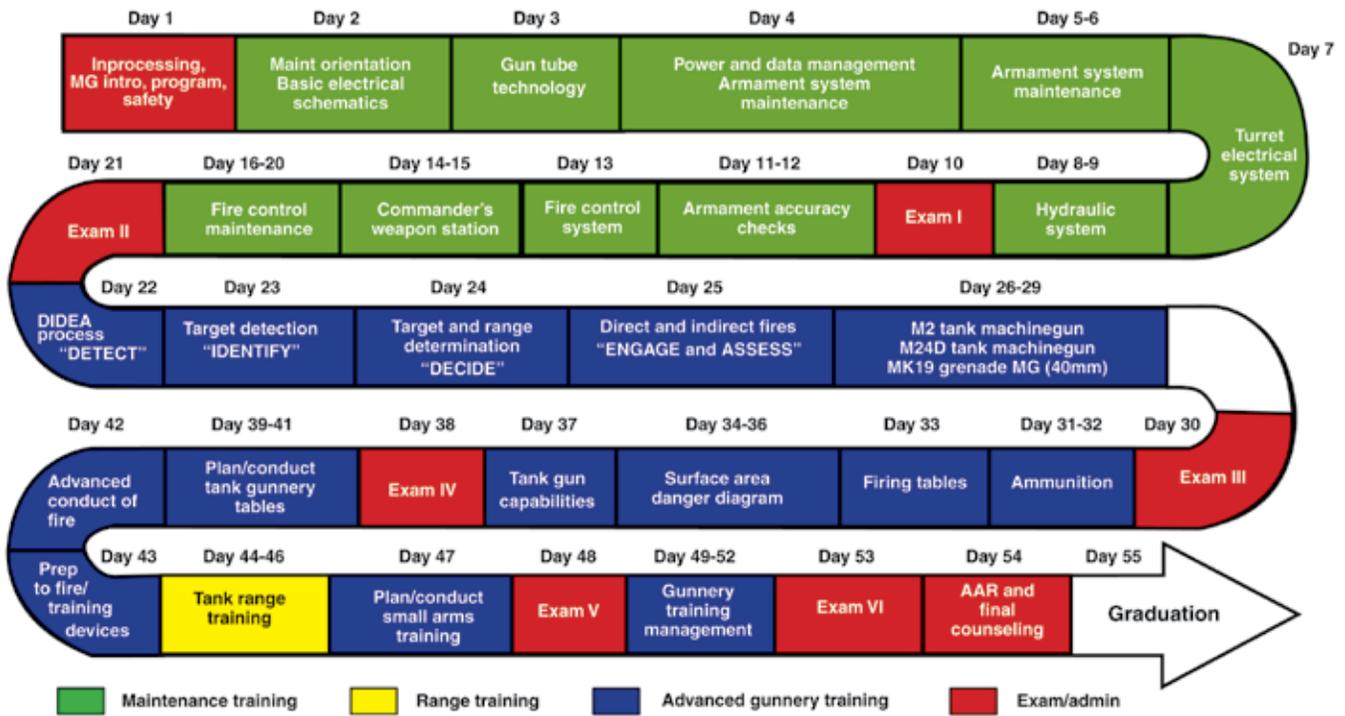


Figure 3. The Abrams K8/A8 MG courses' weekly focus.

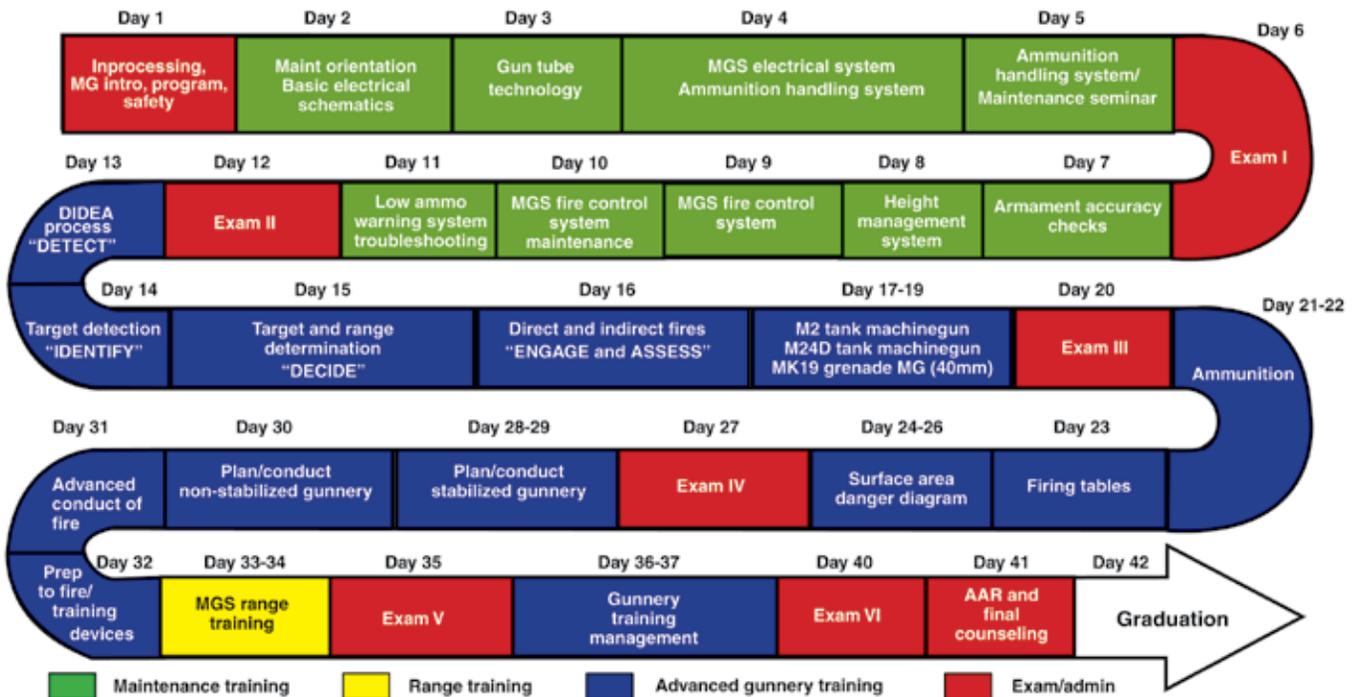


Figure 4. Course progression for the pilot R8 MGS MG course.

with the information they need to bring forces to bear at the decisive point in support of ULO.

ULO execution requires delivery of overwhelming precision firepower from a mobile, protected platform. Technologically advanced platforms like the M1-series main battle tank and the Stryker Mobile Gun System require dedicated professional subject-matter experts to advise commanders from the company/ troop to corps level on all aspects of precision gunnery execu-

tion, crew training, range execution and tactical employment of these systems to ensure combat readiness of these formations.

For more than 30 years, MG courses have produced these experts for tank formations and, in the last few years, have developed the same rigorous course for the Stryker MGS community.

In a subsequent article, master gunners will highlight each of the courses offered (K8 for the M1A2 system-enhancement package tank, A8 for the M1A1 and R8 for the Stryker MGS).

The “snake chart” in Figure 3 provides a summary of the K8/A8 courses’ weekly focus.

The target audience for each of the M1-series MG courses are 19K sergeants (promotable) or staff sergeants who meet the following pre-requisites: at least six months as a commander on their specific platform (M1A2 SEP or M1A1), qualified on Gunnery Table VI within the last 12 months and a general-technical score of 105 (with a cut-off score of 110). A five-point waiver may be granted for either the GT or CO score, but not both.

Today the MG school trains at Fort Benning alongside their Bradley MG counterparts and, when possible, conducts training together where their respective classes converge. Current topics for these “convergence points” include machine guns, training management and surface-danger-area diagrams.

The MG school is also developing a stand-alone course to produce MGS MGs. This course eliminates the prerequisite of an 11-week long A8/K8 MG course, reducing the total training time from 16 weeks to 8½ weeks. The first pilot for this shorter MGS course is scheduled to begin Jan. 25, 2013.

Figure 4 provides the “snake chart” for the pilot course.

Conclusion

As the Army continues to re-orient its operational-force training efforts on core competencies, commanders and command sergeants major must redouble efforts to build the maneuver force’s ability to conduct reconnaissance-and-security operations and combined-arms maneuver. These mission capabilities will continue to become more critical as the Army shifts back to the execution of the full range of military operations. To succeed at these complex operations and overcome a somewhat at-

rophied skill set, the Army must develop a new generation of Cavalry and Armor leaders who have a firm grasp of the fundamentals that made the U.S. Army combined-arms organization an indomitable force. Simultaneously, the Army must retain the lessons of the past decade of COIN operations.

The 3rd Squadron, 16th Cavalry, and the entire Armor School stand ready to provide the operational force with the relevant, professional functional courses designed to train the world’s best Armor and Cavalry leaders. We have conducted in-depth reviews and continue to make adjustments to these courses.



LTC Andre Mackey commands 3rd Squadron, 16th Cavalry Regiment. Previous assignments include deputy G-3 for operations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Rapid Deployable Corps-Spain, Valencia, Spain; regimental S-3 operations officer, Regimental Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 16th Cavalry Regiment; and squadron executive officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 16th Cavalry Regiment. LTC Mackey’s military schooling includes Joint and Combined Warfighting School, Command and General Staff College, Combined Arms and Service Staff School, M1A2 Tank Commanders Certification Course, Armor Officer Advanced Course, Armor Officer Basic Course and Army Basic Airborne School. He holds a bachelor’s of science degree in physics from Ball State University and a master’s of science degree in military history from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Notes

¹ Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, **Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management**, Feb. 1, 2010.

Points of contact

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ACRONYM QUICK-SCAN

ARC – Army Reconnaissance Course

ASI – additional skill identifier

CLC – Cavalry Leader’s Course

CO – combat operations

COIN – counterinsurgency

GT – general technical

MCoE – Maneuver Center of Excellence

MG – master gunner

MGS – mobile gun system

NCO – noncommissioned officer

DA PAM – Department of the Army pamphlet

R&S – reconnaissance and security

SEP – system-enhancement package

ULO – unified land operations