

Ready for the Next Fight: Armor Force Training Standards

It is an honor to join the United States Armor School and serve each of you and our branch as the 55th Chief of Armor. We thank our 54th Chief of Armor, BG Simmering, for his outstanding work over this past year. His efforts, along with your efforts, resulted in real readiness gains across the Armor Force. We are in better shape in terms of manning, maintenance, and training because of BG Simmering's leadership.

With this first opportunity to communicate to the Armor Force, we should consider one message: today's situation demands that the Armor Force reinforces and invests in its training standards. Here are some thoughts on this.

Today, we know the Armor Force operates at a high operational tempo. The pace of our operations is demanding, and this presents both opportunities and challenges. Our units execute tough training at home station, at the National Training Center, and on operational deployments. Our training strategies offer tremendous leader development opportunities: today's platoon leaders and platoon sergeants will draw upon their current experiences when, years from now, they lead battalions. Still, every Armored Brigade Combat Team feels the pressure of not having enough time. Every day, leaders in the Armor Force make hard choices on the many things that they must do, perhaps wishing they had just a little more time to do just a few things very well.

The demands for Armor Brigade Combat Teams persist, particularly after February 24, 2022. And the war in Ukraine has confirmed what we have known for some time: in our next war, we will fight on a battlefield that is transparent, extended in depth, and incredibly lethal. We must think hard about how the Armor Force will fight in the next war. Our Armor and Cavalry formations must be able to survive and accomplish the mission during periods where battles are characterized by heavy *attrition* and a more static battlefield. In other periods, the Armor Force must be able to move rapidly to exploit opportunities where *maneuver* gives commanders positions of advantage and holds at risk that which the enemy values. The all-arms Armored Brigade Combat Team delivers the decisive combination of mobility, firepower, and shock effect to fight and win on today's battlefield. In a dangerous world, there's no better place to be than in our Army's Armor and Cavalry formations.

With this in mind, it is clear that the Armor Force has begun to move the needle in a positive direction on its manning challenges. We have seen a remarkable turn-around in 19K recruiting. Two years ago, our 19K accessions were well below the target; this year we project to bring tankers into the Army at or above the target. Establishing the 19C Bradley Crewmember MOS is our first payment on a new investment in the Armor Force's mounted maneuver expertise. And while implementing the Army's new structure has created turbulence for our Scouts and Cavalry formations, it has also allowed us to reinforce manning in our ABCTs. Still, these positive developments come with a significant challenge: a lot of new Soldiers are joining our ranks, and they require training.

This trifecta – high operational tempo, the changing character of war, and manning turbulence – points to a singular imperative: we must reinforce and invest in the Armor Force's training standards. Here are some ideas on where we might start working on this:

- Drive increased lethality by implementing the new tank gunnery standard outlined in the new TC 3-20.31-120 (Gunnery: Heavy Tank)

- Set conditions for tough, realistic live-fire training by assessing our home station range capability gaps and then prioritizing resources to resolve these gaps
- Assist leaders in their efforts to prioritize training by clearly defining what our “fundamentals” are for tank platoons, scout platoons, tank companies, and cavalry troops
- Develop clear standards for maintenance training – both for operators and mechanics
- Develop clear standards for simulations training so that we can train better during maneuver and live-fire training
- Reinforce our current unit programs that incentivize and prepare candidates to succeed at the Master Gunner Course
- Improve our current crew gunnery training strategy to standardize how we track and maintain readiness across the four fundamentals of mounted maneuver: shoot, move, communicate, and maintain
- Adapt our current Armor Force training standards to drive tougher training (for example: night training, stress shoots, force on force repetitions as competition)
- Review our training standards and course outcomes at the US Army Armor School, with particular focus on NCOPDS, Scout Leader Course, and Cavalry Leader Course
- Enforce the standard for Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services, leveraging certification programs in our units and certification at every US Army Armor School course

Whatever you think of these ideas, it is what *you* think and do about training that matters most. The choices you make and the direction you provide to your teammates will be decisive in being ready for the next fight. The challenge is for us to reinforce our training standards. Start with your standards – define them clearly – and then move out to prioritize, plan, prepare, and execute tough training.

Again, it’s an honor to serve the Armor Force. While we should be excited about the opportunities that are out there for us in the coming months, we should also be clear-eyed about the challenges we face. Please know that the Armor School is here to support you in whatever you are doing – we are invested in your success. If there is ever anything that we can do to assist you, do not hesitate – just holler.

Forge the Thunderbolt!

BG Chad C. Chalfont
 Chief of Armor/Commandant
 U.S. Army Armor School