

# Thunderbolt Blast

Armor School Newsletter

Vol. 3, Issue 5

NOV-DEC 2014



## Armor School and OCOA

**OCOA: GEN (R) Donn A. Starry Writing Competition.** The US Army Armor School and Cavalry & Armor Association (CAA) have just announced the 2015 General Donn A. Starry writing competition. The competition will evaluate and recognize outstanding writers from across the Army who demonstrate clarity and vision about the future of the mounted force.

Articles for 2015 will address the topic: **How do we evolve armored warfare expertise across doctrine, organization, training, and material to defeat a dynamic enemy operating in uncertain and complex environments?** Writers will be an Active Duty/National Guard/Reserve Soldier, Department of the Army Civilian, Retired/Veteran. The Soldier or Civilian does not have to be in the Armor Branch. Participation confirmation is due NLT 28 FEB 15 with article submission due NLT 3 APR 15. The winning author will be recognized during the 2015 St. George Armor Ball at Fort Benning, GA on 24 APR 15. <http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/starry/>

**OCOA: FY15 Selection Boards.** The FY15 MSG selection board, scheduled to convene on 10 February 2015, will consider eligible Soldiers in the rank of SFC thru CSM. The FY15 SFC selection board (scheduled to convene in June 2015) and the SGM training and selection board (scheduled to convene in September 2015) will consider eligible Soldiers in the rank of SSG thru CSM.

**OCOA: The Frederick M. Franks Award.** The Frederick M. Franks Award is presented by the U.S. Army Armor School to active or reserve component officers, warrant officers, noncommissioned officers, or Department of the Army Civilians, regardless of branch or occupational specialty. Consideration includes the nominee's long-term contributions to the ground combat and warfighting capabilities of the U.S. Army and the transformation of the mounted force to fight and win in unified land operations. Consistent with the example set by the award's namesake, any Soldier in the Army may recommend another Soldier or civilian for this award. The suspense for submission of nominations is 27 February 2015. The awardee will be recognized during the St. George Armor Ball in Columbus, Georgia on 24 April 2015. For more information on the Franks Award, see the Office of the Chief of Armor (OCOA) website at: <http://www.benning.army.mil/Armor/OCOA/>.

## Armor Branch Personnel Notes

**OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE (OPMD): New DA PAM 600-3.** The Army has updated DA PAM 600-3 for all officers. These updates affect all armor officers' career paths. Chapter 9 outlines the specific career path for Armor officers and we encourage all to read and become familiar with the changes. Some of the main changes are KD time for Captains and Majors in generating forces as well as operating forces. Other changes of note are all Armor Captains will attend Cavalry Leader Course if they have not prior to MCCC. Armor Branch is currently reviewing and conducting analysis of the changes and possible impacts they will have on the Armor community.

Check the Amor Branch website for the latest updates and contact information for your assignment officer. <https://www.hrc.army.mil/Officer/AR%20Officer%20Home>

## From the Chief of Armor's Turret

Happy New Years! It is my distinct honor and privilege to serve as the 49th Chief of Armor and I look forward to both the opportunities and the challenges that lie ahead. As we move into this historic year, the 75th Anniversary of Armor Branch, the Armored Force will again be at the core of our Army's strategy and way forward.

After the first 60 days, I've had the opportunity to talk with a range of Armor leaders from across the force. My goal as the Chief is to bridge our efforts at the Maneuver Center with the needs of the Operating Force. To achieve this, we need to have a shared understanding of where we are and where we need to go. We are in a transition period coming out of 13 years of war, and regaining a mastery of Decisive Action fundamentals is both necessary and an Army priority.



As we look to focus our efforts on mastering the fundamentals, we need to ensure we have defined what those fundamentals are; the Maneuver Center is developing a Maneuver Leader Development Strategy for the force to review and move toward a unity of effort. As an anchor point, the mission of Armor provides clear guidance on what our role is: to close with and destroy the enemy by fire, maneuver and shock effect. Some may argue we have an identity crisis but I am confident that our mission statement is very clear on our role in the combined arms fight. We need Armor leaders to reinforce this point.

Some initiatives that we have started in the past 60 days include a pilot Maneuver Leader

**OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE (OPMD): Broadening Opportunity Program (BOP).** The following BOP are still open for application. See the appropriate MILPER message for details and contact your Armor Branch Assignment Officer if interested.

- Army Cyber Command Scholarship: Suspense 30 Dec 2014/MILPER 14-243
- Arroyo Center Fellowship: Suspense 30 Dec 2014/MILPER 14-238
- CGSC Interagency Post MEL4 Fellowship: Suspense 30 Dec 2014/MILPER 14-246
- Army Congressional Fellowship: Suspense 30 Dec 2014/MILPER 14-241
- JCS/OSD/ARSTAF Internship: Suspense 30 Dec 2014/MILPER 14-251
- Gen Wayne A. Downing Scholarship: Suspense 30 Dec 2014/MILPER 14-244
- HQDA Harvard Strategist Program: Suspense 30 Dec 2014/MILPER 14-249
- MG (R) James M. Wright MBA Program: Suspense 30 Dec 2014/MILPER 14-247
- Olmsted Scholars Program: Suspense 30 Dec 2014/MILPER 14-252
- SOF Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies Fellowship: Suspense 30 Dec 2014/MILPER 14-239
- Performance Based-Graduate School Incentive Program: Suspense date: 2 March 2015/MILPER 14-340

**ENLISTED PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE (EPMD): SSD Concerns.** Gentlemen, we at HRC cannot over emphasize the need for Soldiers and NCOs to stay on top of their careers. The professional staff at HRC is always willing to help if you have any questions with DA PAM 600-25, the Maneuver Center website, OCOA website, and Armor Enlisted Branch website & Facebook as they pertain to Soldiers and their assignments. However, in this article I would like to draw your attention to the low SSD completion numbers, which affect NCO's ability to get promoted and make them susceptible to separation per MILPER message 14-313 for QSP.

NCO's have to complete SSD in order to get promoted. It is not an option. CMF19 Enlisted Branch is seeking Commands' assistance with the importance of this, and ask that you provide the opportunity and mentorship to your NCO's, ensuring healthy competitiveness between CMF 19 NCO's and their peers. Currently, there are 328 SFC's, or 32.4%, within CMF 19 not eligible for promotion to MSG during the February 2015 board. There are currently 332 SSG's not eligible for promotion to SFC in May 2015. For both boards, the number one reason they are not eligible is because of failing to complete SSD. As a comparison, 26% of SFC's and 29.5% of SSGs are currently not eligible for promotion Army wide. To underline the systemic problem, approximately 30% of ALC seats go unfilled due to the lack of SSD2 graduates Army-wide. If you have an NCO who has not completed SSD, they should have already received a letter from HRC. To close, we are always seeking ways to communicate our issues with you and seek your input and guidance on the issues that affect you and your Soldiers.

## Armor News



The cast of the World War II tank drama "Fury" Brad Pitt, Shia LaBeouf, Michael Peña and Logan Lerman, along with director David Ayer thanked Fort Benning Soldiers and families with a special screening of the movie. The cast also hosted a meet and greet with Armor and Cavalry Soldiers at McGinnis-Wickam Hall. Brad Pitt said "for us it is a very special day, and I hope we got a few things right for them," "This means more to me than anything, because these people give everything for their country, for our freedoms" Shia LaBeouf said.

Soldiers and Families on Fort Benning got a visit from World Wrestling Entertainment superstars as part of WWE's annual "Tribute to the Troops." Stars such as Hulk Hogan, John Cena and Dolph Ziggler toured Fort Benning's Abrams Tank Commanders Course and met trainees, while other stars signed autographs for families at the PX. "To see these guys here and know the sacrifices that they do for us every single day just fills me full of energy and love and happiness just to realize how hard these young people fight for us," Hogan said.



Maintenance Course-- some will remember the old BMOC course we had-- which we want to begin in 3QFY15 for SFC-CPT in conjunction with their courses here at Benning but will also be an ATTRS course beginning in June. We are also working to re-establish a combat arms Battalion Maintenance Officer (BMO) position in our MTOEs. Additionally, we have submitted a coding request to HRC for re-establishing the Division Master Gunner position. These initiatives should assist in addressing gunnery and maintenance challenges across the force.

We are conducted the Critical Task Site Selection Board (CTSSB) for 11 and 19 series officers and appreciate the quality representatives sent by units and CTCs. My wingman, Chief of Infantry BG Jim Rainey, and I are working very closely to ensure the capabilities of our branches are nested and consistent, which will provide a much more coherent training and doctrine development strategy for the maneuver force.

CSM Clemens and I will be visiting units at homestation and at CTCs to engage with Armor and Cavalry leaders and Soldiers to ensure we have your input and concerns. If there are any opportunities or feedback, please reach out to us and we will put YOUR Maneuver Center and Armor School working on it. We look forward to seeing you on the objective!

FORGE THE THUNDERBOLT!

BG Scott McKean  
"49"

## From the CSM's OP

"When you need a tank, you need a tank!"  
-LTC Greg Reilly

That quote is not only true of the combat our tankers have borne witness to since World War I, but throughout every mission the Army may be called upon to perform in the future. As we enter 2015 (the 75th anniversary of Armor as a branch), it is important to remember that only a 19K Soldier can perform that function, and that every effort should be made to focus on the development and training of those unique Soldiers as tankers and experts on their tank and in combined arms maneuver warfare. The most important aspect of this is to get 19Ks back on tanks conducting the firing and movement portions of their job at the crew level until we have gained that expertise.



**HQ U.S. Army Armor School** 

	Chief of Armor	(706) 545-2029	<a href="#">BG Scott Mckean</a>
	Armor CSM	(706) 545-8169	<a href="#">CSM Michael Clemens</a>
	DCMDT	(706) 545-3815	<a href="#">COL John Hermeling</a>
	MGMT Staff	(706) 626-1406	<a href="#">LTC Joseph Jasper</a>
	ARNG Liaison	(706) 626-2306	
	Armor Historian	(706) 626-1491	<a href="#">Dr. Robert Cameron</a>
	OCOA Director	(706) 545-1352	<a href="#">George DeSario</a>
	OCOA SGM	(706) 545-7725	<a href="#">SGM Gregory Proft</a>
	OCOA (EIA, DRAPER)	(706) 626-TANK (8265)	<a href="mailto:usarmy.benning.mcoe.mbx.armor-ocoa@mail.mil">usarmy.benning.mcoe.mbx.armor-ocoa@mail.mil</a>
<b>ARMOR</b> magazine	(706) 545-2698	<a href="mailto:usarmy.benning.tradoc.mbx.armor-magazine@mail.mil">usarmy.benning.tradoc.mbx.armor-magazine@mail.mil</a>	

**194<sup>th</sup> AR BDE** 

	<b>COL Scott King</b>		<b>CSM Robert Tompkins</b>	
		<b>1-46 IN BCT</b>	LTC Matthew Scalia	<a href="#">CSM Richard Meiers</a>
		<b>2-47 IN BCT</b>	LTC Christopher Bresko	<a href="#">CSM Daniel Dennison</a>
		<b>30th AG (Rec)</b>	LTC David Welch	<a href="#">CSM Nyeedra T. Edwards</a>
		<b>1-81 AR</b>	<a href="#">LTC Anthony Bailey</a>	<a href="#">CSM Michael Belle</a>
		<b>5-15 CAV</b>	LTC Michael Birmingham	<a href="#">CSM Samuel Roark</a>

**316<sup>th</sup> CAV BDE** 

	<b>COL William Thigpen</b>		<b>CSM James Westover</b>	
		<b>1-29 IN</b>	LTC Richard Surowiec	<a href="#">CSM Ricky Fields</a>
		<b>1-16 CAV</b>	<a href="#">LTC Jeffrey Paine</a>	<a href="#">CSM Eric Littlejohn</a>
		<b>3-16 CAV</b>	LTC James Hayes	<a href="#">CSM Jason Detty</a>

**199<sup>th</sup> IN BDE - ABOLC**

		<b>2-16 CAV</b>	<a href="#">LTC Dennis Atkins</a>	<a href="#">CSM Jerold Pyle</a>
---	---	-----------------	-----------------------------------	---------------------------------

**TCM**

<a href="#">COL Chris Wilbeck</a>	TCM-ABCT and TCM-Recon	(706) 545-1170	<a href="mailto:christopher.w.wilbeck@mail.mil">christopher.w.wilbeck@mail.mil</a>
<a href="#">COL Ed House</a>	TCM-IBCT and TCM-MC	(706) 545-2078	<a href="mailto:claud.e.house@us.army.mil">claud.e.house@us.army.mil</a>
<a href="#">COL Christopher Willis</a>	TCM-Stryker	(706) 545-5364	<a href="mailto:christopher.r.willis2@mail.mil">christopher.r.willis2@mail.mil</a>
<a href="#">COL Dan Goldthrope</a>	TCM-Soldier	(706) 545-1189	<a href="mailto:daniel.p.goldthorpe@mail.mil">daniel.p.goldthorpe@mail.mil</a>

**Armor School Links**

- MCoE:** <https://www.benning.army.mil>
- Armor School:** <https://www.benning.army.mil/armor/>
- Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/USAARMS>
- Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/USAARMS>
- ARMOR magazine:** <http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/eARMOR>
- Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/pages/ARMOR-magazine/122557661278366?ref=hl>
- Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/ARMORMagazine>
- Blog:** <http://www.earmorcontent.com/blog>
- USAARMS DIVIDS:** <http://www.dvidshub.net/unit/USAARMS#.Us1-TfuF2TM>  
<http://www.dvidshub.net/publication/563/thunderbolt-blast#.Us1-ePuF2TM>  
<http://www.dvidshub.net/publication/562/armor-magazine#.Us1-EvuF2TM>
- Fundamentals of Reconnaissance and Security:** <http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/fundamentals/>
- Maneuver Self-Study Program:** <http://www.benning.army.mil/mssp/>

Second is focusing on their professional development and promotion. We have to enforce our Soldiers' completion of the Structured Self Development at the appropriate levels and ensure that they are attending the requisite courses in the NCOCPD system in a timely manner. For too long, we have had a backlog of NCOs attending courses that are not only a requirement, but key to their growth as leaders.

Lastly is preparing the 19K specialist for the board and his responsibilities as an NCO. Too often, we continue to delay a Soldiers' appearance before a board because we do not feel that they are ready to be an NCO, but fail to properly counsel them or develop a plan to prepare them for the increased responsibility.

Additionally, as a branch, we must invigorate our gunnery programs. precision direct fires are the hallmark of the Armor Corps! This starts with the selection and training of potential Master Gunners, continues by energizing our SABOT academies and the reestablishment and enforcement of GUNSOPs, and concludes with the challenging scenarios and training from crew through platoon qualification live fires. None of these things are new and there will always be challenges to our ability to train whether they come in the form of budget constraints, time constraints, or impending deployments, but they are well within our collective ability to improve and have worked before. Twice in the recent past (Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom 1), our Armor Corps has been called upon to demonstrate that they are the masters of maneuver warfare. We were successful because of the abilities of our NCOs to train and lead Soldiers in peace and war. I encourage every command team to challenge their NCOs, empower them to accomplish their mission, and to hold them responsible for the result.

In closing both this column and the last Thunderbolt Blast of 2014, it is with great pleasure that I welcome BG Scott McKean. Coming to Fort Benning from an assignment with the 1st Armored Division, he is a proven warrior and dedicated tanker who brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience to the job. Throughout their time in the Army, he and his wife Kim have and will continue to have an impact on our Armor Force.

SCOUTS OUT!

CSM Michael Clemens

