

Gunner's Seat: Adapting to the World's Growing Complexity

by CSM Alan K. Hummel

I will take this opportunity to formally welcome BG John S. Kolasheski to the team as he takes the reins as the 50th Chief of Armor. I look forward to working with him to continue the stewardship of the branch.

This Gunner's Seat will focus on the world's growing complexity that we continually ask our Soldiers to serve in. In recent months and years, we have seen so many changes in the world in which we serve and the ever-growing influence of non-state actors – for instance, the recent attempted coup in Turkey and the negative actions of other actors around the world. The influence of the Islamic State and the resurgence of both Russia and China only continue to obscure the picture of the future operational environment. The rise of non-state actors requires Soldiers capable of creatively and innovatively meeting those problems. This means that as an organization, the Army must continue to adapt and evolve to constantly meet the ever-changing threat our Soldiers may face. If the organization must continue to grow, then we must start to implement change at the institutional level to instill the skills that are required to win in the complex environment in which our Soldiers will someday find themselves.

We recognize that our armor leaders, crewmen and cavalry scouts will operate in these environments almost immediately after departing the Fort Benning training environment. That is why we focus our training to develop adaptive and agile leaders and Soldiers who are creative problem-solvers. To train and prepare our Soldiers to fully engage these problems, we have started to institute more innovative training such as integrating Senior Leader's Course (SLC) and Advanced Leader's Course (ALC) into training with Basic Officer Leadership Course and Maneuver Captain's Career Course students, and better aligning their follow-on schools, post-SLC and -ALC, before returning to their units. By sending SLC and ALC students to act as platoon sergeants and first sergeants, we better prepare them to rejoin the force with a deeper understanding of the abilities of their positions. This allows these noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to create and improvise solutions to previously difficult problems.

Nested with this concept, we also encourage and support sending these NCOs to the appropriate follow-on school that will bolster the individual's skillset, but at the same time, make them a more lethal and complete asset when they return to their units.

In addition to the training and education we provide to NCOs, we also continue to grow and evolve our basic-training programs to match the ever-changing needs of our operational forces. In taking this approach, we arm our NCOs and Soldiers with the confidence and competence to make an immediate impact within their units.

The intent of these actions is to develop NCOs and initial-entry-training Soldiers who possess a well-rounded skillset to increase capabilities to units throughout our formations. With that in mind, the Armor School is devoted to continuously evolving training to meet the operational force's mission requirement. Through these actions, Soldiers should leave Fort Benning with an understanding of what their role is and how to accomplish their tasks, leaving them more prepared to handle complex situations once back on the ground with their respective units. In creating a more confident and competent force, we establish a NCO chain that will be flexible and mentally agile enough to create innovative solutions for any and all problems they may face in the near future.