

Gunner's Seat: NCOs: Setting the Conditions for Victory!

The 2019 Maneuver Warfighter Conference at the Maneuver Center of Excellence is focused on preparing our Soldiers and formations for large-scale combat operations (LSCO). This edition of **ARMOR** ties into that focus with the theme of "Gain the Initiative." Once a unit is prepared for LSCO, its first job when called upon is to gain the initiative to engage and destroy the enemy on our terms. Armor noncommissioned officers (NCOs) need to understand that our role in setting the conditions to gain the initiative begins in our formations long before the first Soldier is deployed and the first shot is fired.

Multiple ways that demonstrate officer empowerment to the NCO Corps basically mean that NCOs are entrusted to set the conditions so their unit can gain the initiative. First and most critical in setting the conditions is being the foundational blocks of positive leadership we all learned at the Basic Leader's Course. This includes knowing your Soldiers and ensuring they are on a path to success. It also means taking time to assess Soldiers' strengths and weaknesses and having a plan of action to both sustain and improve them. Understand their personal challenges to ensure they and their families are prepared for time apart, and prepare them for the rigors the Armor Branch thrives on. Doing these things engenders trust and camaraderie among unit members, which is critical to building an effective team.

Concerning training, it is the NCO's primary responsibility to ensure our tankers and scouts are trained in both warrior tasks and drills and their military-occupation specialty's individual tasks at their respective skill levels. NCOs should understand how to leverage installation-training-support facilities and other enablers to enhance individual and collective home-station training in preparation for combat-training-center rotations and operational deployments. The Army provides an accessible, detailed and comprehensive consolidated reference for leader, individual and collective training in the Army Training Network to facilitate doctrine-based training and increase readiness and lethality across the Armor force.

In planning for future operations, officers are the primary leaders who generate the operational orders that facilitate a unit's ability to gain the initiative. NCOs assigned to the staff are encouraged to provide relevant and accurate input during the execution of the military decision-making process and the orders-generation process. Although Hollywood won't make a movie about the staff in action anytime soon, a cohesive officer-NCO staff team is just as critical to a unit's success as anything else is.

Across all three areas, NCOs are the commander's primary workhorse to build our unit's readiness and lethality. Oftentimes, the tasks associated with building readiness are least glorious to accomplish but most critical. These include maintenance, inspections, accountability, developing unit-level standard operating procedures and other critical processes that allow a unit's smooth operation. None of these tasks are inherently difficult; however, they all require vigilance and insights drawn from our years of experience. We must take pride and ownership in these actions to set the conditions for our units to be successful by gaining the initiative before and after first contact. The unit's success furthers Soldiers' pride in the unit; pride furthers success; and **PRIDE IS CONTAGIOUS!**

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Acronym Quick-Scan

LSCO – large-scale combat operations

NCO – noncommissioned officer