

Gunner's Seat: Proficiency and Stability

The success of our combat formations starts with training to proficiency and the stabilization of our platform (Abrams, Bradley and Mobile Gun System) crews and scout squads. This success can only be accomplished if leaders exercise talent management at echelon. With the competing requirements for manpower in both the generating and operational force, this is easier said than done, but it can be accomplished if all leaders take ownership of managing talent in their respective organizations.

At the platoon level and below, platoon sergeants must ensure that our staff sergeants and sergeants are assessing their Soldiers fairly and in accordance with Army regulations and approved policies when determining their potential – that they aren't just deciding "he or she is not ready" month after month. If a Soldier or noncommissioned officer (NCO) is not showing the potential for continued service or advancement, use the tools available (bar to continuation of service and counseling) to either motivate the Soldier to correct his or her deficiency or to prepare to start the next chapter in his or her life as a member of the civilian workforce. First sergeants must ensure that platoon sergeants have the required documentation on hand to justify saying "no" when reviewing the promotion rosters and, if needed, override the platoon sergeant, sending the Soldier to the promotion board if documentation does not exist.

At the company and battalion level, first sergeants and battalion command sergeants major must also leverage the tools available to stabilize master gunners (MGs), Bradley/Abrams gunners and commanders. These tools include:

- In Military Personnel (MILPER) Message 18-146, Human Resources Command (HRC) gave first sergeants and battalion command sergeants major a tool to stabilize MGs for 18 months after graduating a platform-specific MG course.
- In MILPER 18-237, HRC gave first sergeants and battalion command sergeants major a tool to stabilize gunners and vehicle commanders in the lead-up to, during and immediately following deployments, rotational training and combat-training centers.
- In MILPER 18-359, HRC gave commanders additional stabilization guidance and options.

Also, command sergeants major and first sergeants must ensure NCOs are being boarded and prepared to attend their scheduled professional military education courses. The current shortage of 19-series sergeants and staff sergeants is hindering the plan to update Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-25 to change tank commander/squad leader time from 18-24 months back to 24-36 months, which is critical to build platform and scout-squad leader proficiency in our combat formations.

With key leaders and crews stabilized, unit home-station training can progress farther and yield more lethal crews, squads and combat formations. However, stabilized crews and improved training are not the sole responsibility of the unit. The Armor School, with amazing support from the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning, is changing our programs of instruction across the board so that Soldiers, NCOs and officers return to or arrive at their units ready to start training at crew or higher echelons – instead of needing to learn the basics. First sergeants, please review your GAINS to ensure your inbound Soldiers' additional-skills identifiers match your unit's needs. The Armor School and the Armor Branch at HRC maintain very open and productive lines of communication with leaders at all levels to ensure we are fully nested with the vision and needs of our field commanders at all levels.

It is the Armor School's mission to provide trained and ready Soldiers, NCOs and officers to the operational force and to develop Armor Branch-specific policies to aid in leader development and talent management. What I ask the armor NCOs out there to do is to capture your best practices and systems in writing and share those with the rest of the armored community through **ARMOR** magazine. Please send in articles discussing your best practices and products for executing talent management and readiness management. These will be published in the **ARMOR** edition handed out at the 2019 Maneuver Warfighter Conference. Highlighting success builds pride and **PRIDE IS CONTAGIOUS!**

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(Editor's note: The edition the command sergeant major is referring to is the Summer edition. Suspense for manuscripts is May 15.)

Acronym Quick-Scan

HRC – Human Resources Command

MG – master gunner

MILPER – military personnel

NCO – noncommissioned officer