

# Chief of Armor's Hatch: We Must Be Masters of Our Craft

Our Army's way of war is fighting as a combined-arms team composed of infantry, artillery, attack aviation, engineers and armor -- the combat arm of decision. "If the tanks succeed, victory follows." The quote on the cover of this issue from Heinz Guderian is just as true today as it was during the development of combined-arms theories during the interwar period between World War I and World War II.

Tank and scout platoons are essential in the execution of combined-arms maneuver and are a critical element of the combined-arms team conducting large-scale ground combat. That said, this point does not discount the role of other branches, all of which are absolutely required for combined-arms maneuver. I am emphasizing this point because we must be masters of our craft to enable the synergistic effect of combined-arms maneuver. This idea underscores the essence of what Armor Branch brings to the combined-arms maneuver fight – decisive action through mobility, firepower and shock effect.

A return to fundamentals in our core competencies does not mean that we are turning away from understanding all the elements of combined-arms maneuver. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that as an Army we can only understand how to fight as a combined-arms team if we first understand how to fight our own formation at its most basic building blocks: the tank, Mobile Gun System and scout platoon.

Armor Branch core competency resides in our armored formations. To ensure our effectiveness in training the fundamentals, we've restructured the Advanced Leader's Course (tank commander and scout-squad leader) and Armor Officer Basic Leader's Course to focus on increasing proficiency on formation-specific combat platforms and knowledge of troop-leading procedures, action and contact drills. This is an effort to get after formation-specific tactics, techniques and procedures and prime the pump on training readiness on the line.

I know we are nearing the tipping-point for collective expertise. We are seeing steady improvement in unit training management, combat-training-center rotation performance and operational deployments. As leaders gain experience in the force in executing operations in the decisive-action training environment, return to the institutional force and then subsequently back to the operating force, we see organizational experience and culture improving. We cannot let up, despite this initial success in improving our readiness. We must press on! Continue to get after your craft daily.

**Forge the Thunderbolt!**

**BG DAVID LESPERANCE**  
Chief of Armor/Commandant  
U.S. Army Armor School