

## Chief of Armor Hatch

# Today's Ideas for Tomorrow's Armor Branch

*"However, technology itself is never the goal. It is always the means to achieving the goal. The real goal of sensing ... is not to collect exquisite sensors but rather to extend the reach and accuracy of human understanding. ... Better platforms may be a means to an end. But the real objective is ... to be able to understand, decide and act more effectively under highly dynamic conditions than our opponents." –Christian Brose, **The Kill Chain: Defending America in the Future of High-tech Warfare***

Throughout our military's history, adaptation has been an inevitable part of what we do. We know that resistance to change does not stop it from occurring; resistance only prevents us from having the impact of shaping our future. If not acted upon, we run the risk of allowing innovation to occur at our expense to benefit others.<sup>1</sup>

This sentiment is the central idea put forth by Christian Brose in his book, **The Kill Chain**, as it relates to the entirety of defense efforts. However, it is equally applicable when viewed through innovation and adaptation from an Armor Branch perspective. This thought is not to say that we as a branch are naturally resistant to new ideas. But it is to say that sometimes the best innovative ideas come from a wide range of experiences, and we should be open to all inputs.

In my previous **ARMOR** Hatch article, I wrote briefly about the breadth and depth of information needed to amass ideas for innovative solutions. Consider our latest initiatives, the armored-division cavalry squadron and the mobile protected firepower (MPF) company. The intent is to inform you of the direction our branch is heading and solicit your feedback on ways to employ both formations so we can act more dynamically in the future.

There are some fundamental changes coming soon to our doctrine. First, the Army is shifting focus from the modular brigade to the division as the unit of action. For the past couple of decades, our force structure focused on brigades conducting decentralized operations under the large-scale combat operations (LSCO) threshold. That construct no longer fits what we need as we look at global pacing threats. The Nagorno-Karabakh War, as I discussed in the Summer edition of **ARMOR**, indicates that in the future, we will need a force structure capable of quickly adapting to technological advances throughout the spectrum of multi-domain operations. As the conflict scale grows, so does our need for divisions to fight larger operations under a tactical corps fight.

The U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) commanding general hosted a reconnaissance and security (R&S) summit Aug. 28, 2019, which identified an Army requirement for organic, cross-domain R&S capability at all echelons, especially at the division-level support of LSCO. Also, the R&S summit identified the requirement to maintain organic brigade combat team (BCT) and battalion R&S formations.

As such, we developed the armored-division cavalry (DIV CAV) initiative to provide an R&S formation that could answer commander's critical information requirements as well as conduct security missions for penetration divisions. We also built it to enable the commander's decision-making within continuous, all-weather, cross-domain capabilities.

These specifications also led to the development of the armored-cavalry troop at the brigade level and reorganized the battalion scout platoons to the 6x36 configuration to ensure R&S capability at echelon. As of Sept. 1, 2021, the FORSCOM commanding general approved 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division to execute a pilot to test these concepts and inform the force starting in March 2022.

There may be a fear that the return of the DIV CAV might be a step toward the past. On the contrary, the DIV CAV will set the stage for further modernization as new robotics, electromagnetic and informational capabilities become available. Establishing this force structure now allows us to adapt in the future.

Part of the DIV CAV pilot is to look for advantages that will enable future innovation. Specifically, we want to hear your ideas on how we can adapt R&S operations given the proliferation of unmanned aerial systems and loitering munitions, as well as future additions with robotics, artificial intelligence, electromagnetic detecting capabilities and other technologies.

For instance, as we look at doctrinal implications of building penetration divisions, a consideration could be a greater focus on security missions for DIV CAV squadrons vs. reconnaissance. Your ideas will better help us develop the correct doctrine and policies for the future.

Another effort to ponder is the development of the MPF program. This tank is lighter than the M1A2 Abrams and intends to provide mobility, protection and direct-fire support for light infantry forces in infantry BCTs (IBCTs). Although pre-decisional, the idea is to equip each light-infantry division with rapidly deployable armored vehicles capable of providing immediate fire superiority on the battlefield to rapidly destroy bunkers and light armored vehicles so friendly forces can maintain operational tempo. Like our DIV CAV initiative, we want to hear from you on methods of employment as well as ideas for best practices for sustaining an armored vehicle within an IBCT.

As Brose points out, innovation for the sake of innovation will take us nowhere, nor will it make us more competitive or lethal as a branch. However, both the DIV CAV and MPF allow us to restructure our force for the future. The future is bright, but challenges lie ahead, and we must begin the professional dialogue now.

I encourage you to expand your range of knowledge on robotics, artificial intelligence and other new technological innovations and apply those studies to new ways to employ DIV CAV and MPF. Your ideas will inform changes to our doctrine, organizations, training and policies. In the end, our goal is to find the right ideas and technology that enable a competitive edge for our Army of the future.

**BG THOMAS M. FELTEY**  
Chief of Armor/Commandant  
U.S. Army Armor School

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Christian Brose, *The Kill Chain: Defending America in the Future of High-tech Warfare*, New York, New York: Hachette Books, 2020.

## Acronym Quick-Scan

**BCT** – brigade combat team

**DIV CAV** – division cavalry

**FORSCOM** – (U.S. Army) Forces Command

**IBCT** – infantry brigade combat team

**LSCO** – large-scale combat operations

**MPF** – mobile protected firepower

**R&S** – reconnaissance and security

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## In case you missed these articles ...

**ARMOR** authors have furnished some food for thought on armor and cavalry over the past few years. A sampling:

- MAJ Nathan Jennings' four-part examination of division cavalry's history and future: "Reconsidering Division Cavalry Squadrons Part I," Summer 2018 edition; "Reconsidering Division Cavalry Squadrons Part II," Fall 2018; "Reconsidering Division Cavalry Squadrons Part III," Winter 2019; and "Reconsidering Division Cavalry Squadrons Part IV," Spring-Summer 2019.
- MAJ Amos C. Fox's "On the Employment of Cavalry" and "On the Employment of Armor" in Winter 2019 and Winter 2020 editions, respectively.
- "A Different Approach to the Scout Squad for the Mounted Force" by LTC John Horning, CPT Jake Kelly, SFC Brian Andrade and SFC Brian Ellis, Fall 2019.
- SGT Christopher Broman's three articles on reconnaissance: "Implementing Quadcopter Unmanned Aerial Systems into Reconnaissance Platoons," Fall 2019; "Reforge the Broken Saber: Evolving the Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Cavalry Squadron to Win the Recon Fight (Part I)," Summer 2020; "Reforge the Broken Saber: Evolving the Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Cavalry Squadron to Win the Recon Fight (Part 2)," Fall 2020.
- From 2020: "Robots and Reconnaissance: We May Never Be Stealthy and Deliberate Again" by COL J. Frederick Dente and CPT Timothy Lee, Spring 2020; "Army Modernization in Next-Generation Vehicles

Will Change the Battlefield” by by MAJ Cory W. Wallace, MAJ George M. Morris, MAJ Scott Stephens and MAJ Shawn D. Pardee, Spring 2020; “The All-Weather Reconnaissance and Security Asset: The Cavalry Scout” by CPT Nathan Sitterley, Summer 2020; “At the Forward Edge and Beyond: Lethality and the Armored Brigade Combat Team” by MAJ(P) James Burnett and MAJ Jeff Feser, Fall 2020; “Mobility, Shock and Firepower for Light Armor-Infantry Operations: Past, Present and Future” by CPT S. Scott Diddams, Fall 2020.

- From Summer 2021 edition: “Armored Brigade Combat Team Modernization” by Marco J. Barrera, SFC John A. Roberson and SGM (Retired) Carl Johnson; “Soldier-Centric Design and Combat Vehicle Modernization” by COL Warren Sponsler; “Infantry, Armor Work Together on Mobile Protected Firepower” by COL (Retired) Christopher Stone.
- In this edition: “A Force-Management Approach for the Division Cavalry Squadron” by MAJ Greg Marsh and “Resurrecting 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment” by LTC Cole C. Pinheiro.