

194th Armored Brigade Perspective: Year in Review

ARMOR magazine: What do you see as the most important part of your mission?

COL Dawson A. Plummer, 194th Armored Brigade's commander: The 194th Armored Brigade transitions civilians into Soldiers starting at reception, one-station unit training (OSUT) and advanced individual training (AIT) while maintaining a state of readiness and quality of life for our officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), Soldiers, civilians, families and the surrounding community. The most important part of our mission is training and preparing volunteers to become scouts, armored crewmembers and Abrams or Bradley vehicle maintainers for the operational force.

The brigade works to achieve this mission by ensuring that we train to standard the critical tasks the operational Army expects its newest team members to possess. Referring to feedback from the combat-training centers, brigade-combat-team leadership and guidance from the Office of the Chief of Armor, we have established a detailed training path for all our trainees. This path instills our Army Values, Warrior Ethos, military-occupation-specialty (MOS) competencies and a winning spirit into every Soldier we produce. We continually refine this training to account for emerging trends in the strategic environment and requirements from the operational force.



Figure 1. COL Dawson Plummer speaks at his change of command ceremony June 24, 2020. (Photo by Markeith Horace, Maneuver Center of Excellence Public Affairs photographer)

ARMOR: What initiatives are you implementing in 2021 or 2022? The near future beyond this?

COL Plummer: The brigade takes leader development very seriously. It is our position that every officer, NCO or Soldier assigned to our formation leaves here armed with the institutional knowledge necessary to effectively contribute to the operational force. We want units to be excited about receiving a Soldier from 194th because they know that individual has a wealth of knowledge, is highly trained and is proficient in all facets of their job. We inspire, develop and train!

Using Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-25 and the Soldier's Professional-Development Model, and through performance counseling, the individual's leader helps identify windows of opportunity to attend functional courses. Typically, in the first year Soldiers will attend courses that certify them to do their primary job such as the Common Faculty Development Instructor Course. In the second year, we look at getting the Soldier into a school

the proponent encourages them to attend such as master gunner. In the third year, the Soldier has an opportunity to attend a school of his or her choosing. Many choose to attend Airborne, Ranger or other highly competitive schools. We have a great relationship with the other brigades on the installation, which helps to enable these opportunities for school attendance.

ARMOR: What initiatives are you implementing in 2021 or 2022? The near future beyond this?

COL Plummer: The next five years will not dictate how the brigade functions. At its core, the mission of training will remain the same; however, emerging trends in the strategic environment could shape the content of what we train. For example, the rising use of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) may facilitate the need to train how to employ our own drones while conducting counter-UAS. These systems are only a few examples of how technology could influence our training path.

The greatest challenge for the organization is attracting and retaining quality cadre to execute our program of instruction (Pol). We are working to counter negative perceptions of serving in a Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) organization by recruiting high-quality personnel with a passion for teaching, coaching and mentoring to effectively produce the highest quality Soldiers we can. We also conduct deliberate messaging about the opportunities that exist here on Fort Benning, GA, through our multiple social-media platforms that highlight cadre success.

ARMOR: Besides the coronavirus-disease pandemic (COVID-19), what are the unit's greatest challenges? Can you solve them in the next five years?

COL Plummer: One of the challenges, other than COVID-19, we've faced this year is the elimination of the former reception and integration process known colloquially as "the shark attack!" The need to establish trust in leaders from Day 1 led to the elimination of this legacy process for receiving trainees into their training units. Instead of intimidation and degradation, the cadre use motivation, inspiration and teamwork to accomplish a collective task.

Our first initial-entry training event now known as "the Thunder Run" emphasizes team-building rather than bullying or hazing as the cornerstone of the soldierization process. This new method was unpopular with many veterans and active duty, including some of our own cadre. After months of conducting "the Thunder Run," cadre and drill sergeants now have a greater appreciation for the teamwork and cohesion this new event fosters within our trainee population.

Significant consideration and effort is placed on right-sizing the length of our Pol for the 19D and 19K training populations. Over the last year we transformed both the legacy 15-week Pol for 19Ks and the legacy 17-week Pol for 19Ds to 22-week Pols. This enabled more time to hone MOS-specific skills in the AIT portion of OSUT. Going forward into Fiscal Year 2022, there is a tremendous amount of work for the brigade to find just the right fit that preserves the value of the MOS-specific training at a cost-effective benefit to the Army. MOS proficiency will not be sacrificed in these efforts.

Since the armored force's move from Fort Knox, KY, 194th Armored Brigade has remained stalwart in our Army's mission of training and preparing volunteers to become scouts, armored crewmembers and Abrams or Bradley vehicle maintainers for the operational force. The 194th Armored Brigade continues to stay steadfast in that mission to produce the finest-quality Soldiers for our nation. Battle hard!

COL Dawson Plummer commands 194th Armored Brigade, U.S. Army Armor School, Fort Benning, GA. Previous assignments include TRADOC capabilities manager-Armored Brigade Combat Team and Reconnaissance, Fort Benning, GA; chief, Technology Strategy Division, Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Agency J-8, Pentagon, Washington, DC; branch chief, Capabilities and Design Directorate, Fort Benning; commander, 1-81 Armored Battalion, Fort Benning; and commander, Brigade Special Troops Battalion; 1st Armored Division; Camp Taji, Iraq. COL Plummer's military schooling includes National Defense University's National War College (master's degree in strategic policy), School of Advanced Military Studies (master's degree in military arts and science, resident Command and General Staff College, Combined Arms Staff Services School, Armor Officer Advanced Course and Armor Officer Basic Course. He holds a bachelor's of science degree in mechanical engineering from Tuskegee University and a master's of science degree in mechanical engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology. His

awards and honors include the Bronze Star Medal (two oak-leaf clusters), Meritorious Service Medal (three oak-leaf clusters) and Ranger Tab.

Acronym Quick-Scan

AIT – advanced individual training

COVID-19 – an abbreviation of “coronavirus disease 2019”; the abbreviation was created by the World Health Organization

MOS – military-occupation specialty

NCO – noncommissioned officer

OSUT – one-station unit training

Pol – program of instruction

UAS – unmanned aerial system