



Figure 1. 19K one-station unit training trainees from Company B, 1st Battalion, 81st Armor Regiment, take a break during a turret training block of instruction. All 19K trainees receive an orientation to the different duty stations (tank commander, gunner and loader) inside the turret of the tank but receive thorough instruction pertaining to the duties of a tank loader. (U.S. Army photo by 1LT Alexander Muzyka)

Army's No. 1 Priority – People: Operationalized by U.S. Army Armor School

by MAJ Demarius Thomas

In his first message as the 40th Chief of Staff of the Army, GEN James C. McConville said, “People are always my [No. 1] priority. Our Army’s people are our greatest strength and our most important weapon system. Our people are our Soldiers, family members, Department of the Army civilians and Soldiers for Life (retirees and veterans). We must take care of our people and treat each other with dignity and respect. It is our people who will deliver on our readiness, modernization and reform efforts.”

Following this address, the Army released its “People Strategy,” which states, “We will build cohesive teams for the Joint Force by maximizing the talents of our people, the Army’s greatest strength and most important weapon system.” The U.S. Army Armor School (USAARMS) developed a plan of action to enable this vision.

The Armor Branch is the home of the best trained, best led, best equipped and most lethal tankers and scouts in the world. Armor Soldiers and Cavalry troopers thrive in conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty. They seek opportunities to seize, retain and exploit the initiative, and to preserve freedom of action for friendly forces while denying the enemy options. The Armor Branch achieves the aforementioned by, with and through USAARMS’ focus on people.

USAARMS is the catalyst that transforms civilians into the world’s best Armor and Cavalrymen and -women. USAARMS’ primary purpose is to support the operating force by providing training, doctrine and leader development to enable the warfighter to win in any environment. The school developed a campaign plan to create

unity of effort by outlining what must be done at the school to enable Army readiness and to prepare Soldiers and leaders for large-scale combat operations.

USAARMS enables the Chief of Staff of the Army's No. 1 priority by developing better Soldiers, better leaders, better mounted capabilities for the future force and branch advocacy to recruit the best and brightest civilians.

Develop better Soldiers

GEN McConville said, "No matter how much technology we develop, Soldiers will always remain the centerpiece of our Army. We equip people; we don't man equipment, and that philosophy will not change."

The transition from civilian to Soldier can be daunting. Therefore USAARMS implemented a 22-week one-station unit training (OSUT) program to aid the process. OSUT is an initial-entry program that transforms civilian volunteers into professional Soldiers; graduates become disciplined, fit, acculturated and combat-ready.

USAARMS creates better Soldiers by using two OSUT programs of instruction (Armor crewman and Cavalry scout) to specialize graduates. Graduates of both programs know how to be a part of a winning team, and they are ready to contribute to their unit's success on Day 1.

Men and women who graduate the military-occupation specialty (MOS) 19K OSUT have a high degree of knowledge pertaining to operations, gunnery skills and maintenance of the M1A2 main battle tank. They possess individual skills required to effectively acquire and engage targets with the loader's machinegun. They can assist the tank commander and gunner by scanning and identifying targets for engagement, and they can operate communication equipment and ensure it functions properly. They can also tactically maneuver their vehicle and identify covered and concealed positions to enable the crew to engage the enemy.



Figure 2. PVT Bassam Cozzo drives a tank simulator designed to replicate in real-time the look and feel of driving a tank in a combat. (U.S. Army photo by Patrick A. Albright, Maneuver Center of Excellence and Fort Benning Public Affairs)

The MOS 19D OSUT program creates Cavalry scouts who understand the fundamentals of reconnaissance and security. Graduates possess the individual skills required to navigate with stealth through terrain to close with and report on enemy units. They are proficient in the use of indirect fires and with analog and digital reporting systems. The 19D OSUT graduates also learn to serve as drivers for the Stryker and Bradley Fighting Vehicle. All OSUT graduates can accomplish the aforementioned to standard under adverse conditions.

Develop better leaders

A strategic outcome of the 2020 Army People Strategy is a professional Army. It says, “The Army is a profession, a highly expert, certified and credentialed force resulting from years of increasingly rigorous training and education. Its members are morally centered, retaining the trust and confidence of both the American people and each other. Army professionals are people of character, presence and intellect, committed to reflective practice and continuous learning. They share a powerful and enduring identity as lifelong members of the Army team.”

The Armor Basic Officer Leader Course (ABOLC) is a program designed to enable newly commissioned lieutenants to transition into the Army profession. The 19-week training program produces Armor lieutenants who are bold, aggressive, resourceful and adaptive leaders capable of leading tank and scout platoons in any environment.

ABOLC creates better junior leaders because the course ensures graduates can make decisions, direct, lead and assess operations effectively at the platoon level. Graduates are proficient in doctrinal, technical and administrative tasks associated with the tank platoon, and they are knowledgeable in the art and science of Armor and Cavalry formations, employing weapon systems and integrating assets to close with and destroy the enemy. They can also plan operations and analyze tactical situations, disseminate and filter information, and employ the full capabilities of the platoon’s equipment. Well versed in enemy organizations, doctrine and equipment, the ABOLC graduate can comprehend mission and commander’s intent during decentralized operations to fight and win on the battlefield.



Figure 3. SFC Joseph K. Bennett (left) orients ABOLC students to the terrain they will encounter during a platoon situational-training exercise (STX) using the newly installed Augmented Reality Sandtable (ARES) system. ARES combines the tactile nature of a traditional sandtable with digital terrain overlay on sand to promote interactivity and improve terrain visualization in 3-D. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Peckham)

USAARMS also has 13 functional courses designed to build leader (noncommissioned officers and officers) proficiency and develop professionalism. The programs of instruction range from technical proficiency to organizational planning. There are also courses designed to build platform mastery on the Abrams, Bradley and Stryker. Each functional course enhances student intellect and increases the capabilities of the overall force.



Figure 4. ABOLC instructor CPT Meaole Meaole (right, sitting on the stool) grades a student who is briefing his operations order to his classmates during Block 4, which is the final phase of training. During this phase, students develop and brief a tactical operations order and demonstrate their ability to control a platoon-sized element supported by indirect fire during an STX. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Scott Peckham)

Develop better mounted capabilities

“The time has come for transformational change to build the Army we need for the future [because] winning matters,” GEN McConville said during the 2020 Association of the U.S. Army annual meeting and exposition.

“When the nation calls on the Army, we don’t go to participate. We don’t go to try hard; we go to win. There is no second place or honorable mention in combat.”

USAARMS develops doctrine and works with the Army’s Future Command to develop capabilities of the future maneuver force and optimize capabilities (platform and organizational) for the mounted force. USAARMS assesses the use of technology in support of cross-domain maneuver through the expertise of Armor professionals. Technological improvements include ammunition upgrades, vehicle improvements, fielding and modifications to formations as well as total Army, joint and coalition interoperability.

USAARMS works through its Army capabilities manager (ACM) to integrate capabilities across the doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities and policy (DOTMLPF-P) enterprise to enable armor and cavalry formations to win on any battlefield. The ACM collaborates with stakeholders (Headquarters Department of the Army, Army Futures Command, U.S. Army Forces Command, program/product managers and U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command centers of excellence) to identify, develop, field and assess holistic solutions to maintain capabilities overmatch, conduct cross-domain maneuver and defeat any adversary during large-scale combat.

Branch advocacy recruits best, brightest

Another strategic outcome of the Army’s People Strategy is a ready Army. “The Army employs a range of technologies, incentives, programs and policies to identify the talents of its people and the talent demands of its organizations in timely, accurate and granular detail,” states the strategy. “This allows the use of data-driven analytical tools in its talent matching and alignment (employment and development) efforts, increasing overall workforce productivity. This granular data also drives a far more dynamic and accurate long-term workforce planning system, reducing unanticipated talent gaps and increasing overall Army readiness.”

USAARMS uses social media, person-to-person interaction and branch publications to attract the best and brightest civilians as well as to enable retention. These connect USAARMS to current Soldiers, college students, high-school students and citizens around the world. Social media enables USAARMS to “tell the Armor story”

through videos and short messages on social-media platforms. The Armor story communicates the history of the Army and the Armor Branch, publicizes achievements and informs civilians' decision to join the Army.

Person-to-person engagements on college campuses enable USAARMS to attract high-quality cadets and encourage students to join the Army's Reserve Officer Training Corps, while branch publications communicate news and achievements to the entire Army. Therefore USAARMS' recruitment strategies attract top-performing civilians, retain talented Soldiers and leaders, and enable the success of the total Army.

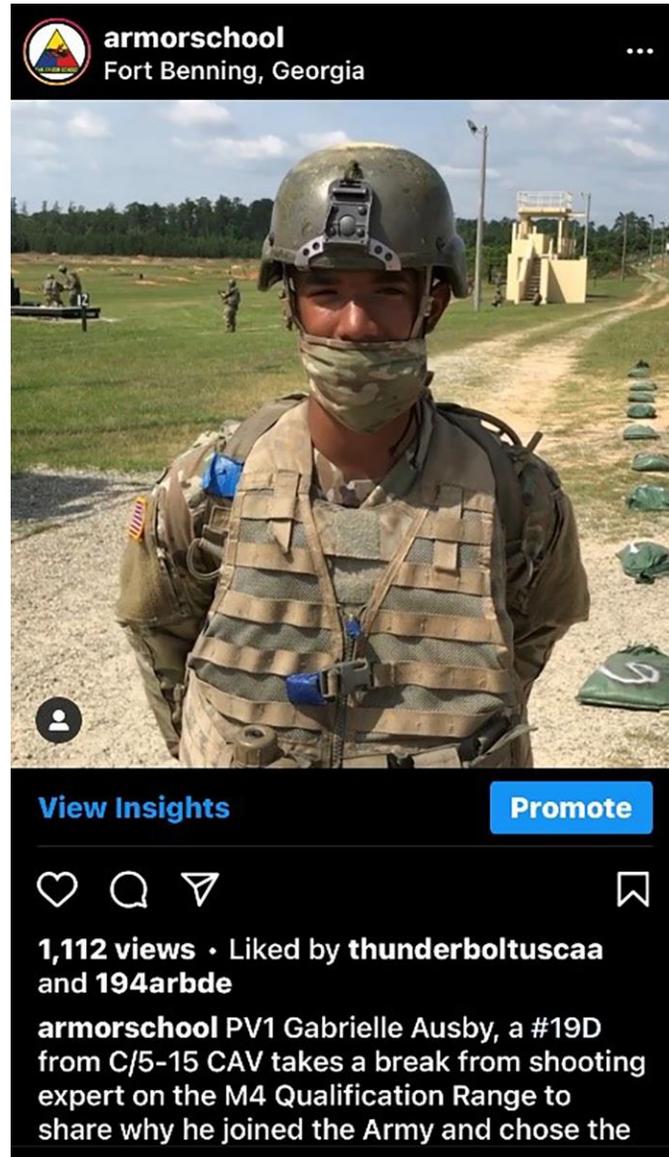


Figure 5. In this social-media post from USAARMS, PV1 Gabrielle Ausby explains why he joined the Army and why he chose to be a scout in the Armor Branch. (U.S. Army video image)

Conclusion

"No Soldier or unit will ever be sent into combat that's not highly trained, disciplined, fit and ready," GEN McConville directed.

USAARMS enables this directive through its campaign plan. BG Kevin D. Admiral, 52nd Chief of Armor and commandant of USAARMS, said, "[USAARMS] trains, develops, educates and inspires the world's most agile and

adaptive Armor and Cavalry leaders, Soldiers and formations to win in complex environments by closing with and destroying our nation's enemies using fire, maneuver and shock effect."

To achieve this goal and operationalize the Army's No. 1 priority, USAARMS focuses on people. It transforms civilian volunteers into disciplined, competent, confident Soldiers who are physically fit, proficient in the fundamentals and prepared to become valued members of the profession of arms (*develop better Soldiers*). It creates agile, adaptive, technology-savvy Armor/Cavalry leaders of character who are engaged problem-solvers prepared to operate in multiple domains to fight and win (*develop better leaders*). It integrates DOTMLPF-P solutions to enable modernization for the future force (*develop better mounted capabilities*), and it actively uses social media, publications and person-to-person engagements to attract talent to the branch and the Army (*Armor branch advocacy to recruit the best and brightest*).

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Acronym Quick-Scan

ABOLC – Armor Basic Officer Leader Course

ACM – Army capabilities manager

ARES – Augmented Reality Sandtable (system)

DOTMLPF-P – doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities and policy

MOS – military-occupation specialty

OSUT – one-station unit training

STX – situational-training exercise

USAARMS – U.S. Army Armor School