

## Chief of Armor Hatch

# Armor Standardization and Training Strategy 2030

Today the Armor Branch remains focused on the transition to execution of multidomain operations in a large-scale combat operations context and on the modernization of equipment and organizations with parallel doctrinal updates. These actions are occurring simultaneously with the sustainment of a high deployment tempo. Moreover, the Armor Branch does not possess the luxury of time or a period free of military crises abroad, underscored by the recent Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the ongoing war in Ukraine. Potential adversaries continue to evolve their own capabilities with the focused purpose of offsetting traditional American supremacy in every domain and across the range of military conflict.

The collective impact of these developments lies in a changed operational environment in which battlefield success derives from small-unit expertise. Army Chief of Staff GEN James McConville noted that “small units need to be able to operate on their own, and if they are not masters of their craft, they are not going to be able to do that.”<sup>1</sup> High-performing battalions, companies and platoons, however, need skill mastery among the individual Soldiers in these units. For Armor, this goal will be achieved through the Armor Standardization and Training Strategy (Armor Strategy 2030).

This strategy resulted from a self-assessment of the Armored Force over several years, analysis of performance at successive Sullivan and Gainey Cup competitions, and the III Corps Lethality Study. Collectively these efforts highlighted the need to improve platform expertise, including lethality and maintenance, at Soldier level. Despite the existence of proven and established doctrinal procedures and standards governing these areas, they have not been uniformly applied, resulting in great variance in unit combat effectiveness and readiness.

Therefore the Armor School began a comprehensive evaluation of the training provided to Armor and Cavalry personnel. The school identified a need for a holistic strategy to deliver Soldiers and leaders who are experts in their craft for the Army of 2030 and beyond.

Foundational to the Armor Strategy 2030 is the establishment of a system that standardizes the implementation of a readiness-level (RL) progression. This is based on Aviation Branch’s Air Crew Training Program standards for crewmember integration. RL progression creates an operational training path through periodic written and hands-on testing by crew position that is documented and travels with Soldiers throughout their careers.

Master gunners will act as the instructor and training-standardization officer for their units. They will conduct and log evaluations of gunners and commanders and facilitate the transition of a Soldier’s consolidated records from unit to unit.

The excellent article in this publication by LTC Dan Cannon and LTC John Nimmons (“Readiness-Level Progression: Certifying Expertise in Lethality as a Subset of the Armor Standardization and Training Strategy 2030”) serves as an excellent primer on the nuances of this subject. Dan and John describe the interdependence of training, leadership and education, and discuss how refinement in some aspects of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities and policy will support the strategy’s implementation. The article also addresses the lessons gleaned from the Aviation Branch’s flight-activity categories while implementing our own focus on the four fundamentals of mounted maneuver: shoot, move, communicate and maintain.

We are already beginning to implement changes that support Armor Strategy 2030. The 194<sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade will soon begin graduating basic trainees already licensed on their platforms, and it is preparing for future implementation of the 19C program of instruction in October 2024. Captains are currently auditing the Master Gunner Course so critical lesson plans and skills can be included in Basic Officer Leader’s Course, Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Education System professional military education and Maneuver Captain’s Career Course. In response to an Armor School request, the Ordnance School is developing advanced 15-level maintenance tasks to facilitate greater involvement by armored crew in the routine maintenance of their platform.

Standardized training that focuses on the individual Soldier will build expertise that can be passed down and measured from generation to generation within our community. Commanders will know that their NCOs are not just experts themselves but are capable of training and coaching their Soldiers. Our goal is to build **mastery** in

armored warfare by focusing on continued development of expertise, built upon multiple repetitions under various environmental and combat conditions.

III Corps has volunteered to pilot the RL progression effort of the Armor Strategy 2030. The 316<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade and 3-16<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron are developing the products that will certify our leaders at Fort Benning and in III Corps. The pilot will begin in early 2023, lasting six to nine months, providing III Corps personnel the opportunity to innovate and stress the process we have created. In the same year we will use data from the Gainey Cup to evaluate squad and individual Cavalry skills tied to reconnaissance and security missions..

Looking forward, we expect to use both the Gainey and Sullivan Cup competitions to help assess skill mastery and the impact of Armor Strategy 2030.

The Army's Armor Strategy 2030 is a comprehensive approach for producing and sustaining expert Armor and Cavalry soldiers, NCOs and officers for the Army of 2030 and beyond. This strategy focuses on training and certification standardization of Soldiers and leaders across all military-occupational specialties within the Armor Branch. We plan to publish the Armor Training and Standardization Strategy 2030 in the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2023 with immediate implementation.

Ultimately this will build a depth in expertise that will take our mounted warriors and Cavalrymen into 2030. As this initiative progresses, we will continue to draw lessons-learned from the operational force to ensure the Armor Strategy 2030 remains effective. This is our moment to drive a way forward to ensure we occupy a position of advantage in 2030.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Train Small Units for Big Wars: Gen. McConville," *Breaking Defense*, March 16, 2021, on-line article accessed Aug. 12, 2022, at <https://breakingdefense.com/2021/03/train-small-units-for-big-wars-gen-mcconville/>.

## Acronym Quick-Scan

**NCO** – noncommissioned officer

**RL** – readiness level