

Ready Today/Preparing for Tomorrow

In November, the Armor School published our Armor 2030 strategy and program of instruction (POI) guidance to the Armor School and Maneuver Center of Excellence stakeholders to drive the efforts of the branch as we re-balance the force to account for the incorporation of the 19C military occupational specialty as well as possible future force structure changes. These foundational documents will guide the transformation of the branch during not only the next year, but it will also create a framework to adjust and guide the branch to ensure we remain always ready today while preparing for tomorrow.

One of the Armor School's foundational tasks is the training of Armor and Cavalry Soldiers and leaders. From the transition of civilians to tankers and scouts to the refinement of our professional Noncommissioned Officers, Armor School POIs shape the force of today and tomorrow. This fall we collectively worked through a comprehensive POI review to ensure all courses are integrating lessons of the modern battlefield and are resourced to produce Armor and Cavalry Soldiers who are proficient on the tactical employment of their close combat platforms and all the associated readiness tasks required to bring these lethal machines to bear against an enemy. We will ensure we integrate dispersion, camouflage, react to air attack, management of electronic warfare signatures, counter-unmanned aircraft system tactics, techniques, and procedures (both passive and active) and related actions into lesson plans by the end of fiscal year 2024. We will ensure our Soldiers and leaders understand maintenance procedures, from the basics of preventative maintenance services and checks through troubleshooting minor faults. We are committed to providing trained Soldiers to the operational armor force who are ready to operate on the modern multi-domain battlefield today through 2030 and beyond.

This approach to training and leader development is critical as we look at the more lethal, unpredictable operational environment combined with our Army's focus on warfighting against peer threats. Armor 2030 captures the non-negotiable requirement to maximize the branch's ability to field ready forces ... not simply a few units at a time. Our formations must be capable of immediately responding to crises and sustaining our efforts over time. Armor and Cavalry formations must continue to operate with the lethality, speed, audacity, and tempo that maximizes the cost imposition potential on our enemies through the rapid application of combined arms approaches. Therefore, our collective challenge in a phrase is - Ready Today/Preparing for Tomorrow. The imperatives of maximizing immediate warfighting readiness and the sustained delivery of ready combat power over time describe our present challenge. While we must remain ready for combat at any given moment, we must also transform our formations to set the conditions for future operations and to integrate emerging technologies at a more rapid pace. These imperatives – ready today/preparing for tomorrow – create the balance that our efforts as the Armor branch must achieve to ensure our consistent warfighting readiness.

At the 2023 Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA) Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C., GEN Randy George, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, expressed we could be over-servicing our equipment, placing a load on formations that have very little time.¹ On Nov. 8 and 9, the Armor School hosted a services review for the M1 Abrams and M2 Bradley fleets, to ensure the continued readiness and lethality of these platforms and formations. The Armor School partnered with representatives from Program Executive Office Ground Combat Systems (PEO-GCS), the Abrams and Bradley Product Managers (PdM), U.S. Army Tank-Automotive & Armaments Command, and senior subject matter experts from across the Army's armored brigade combat teams (ABCTs) to critically review our fleets' maintenance requirements. The major recommendation out of this group of experts was to align service intervals to the Army's Force Generation Model by shifting current Abrams semi-annual service tasks to eight months, current annual tasks to 16 months, keep current bi-annual tasks at 24 months and merge the M2 Bradley's current semi-annual and 12-month annual service tasks. These changes will provide commanders and units greater flexibility and time to balance services with unscheduled maintenance requirements without appreciably increasing risk to Soldiers or the platforms. As a proof of principle, the Armor School will test this concept starting in January 2024 to start providing feedback to Army senior leaders without incurring additional risk to our high demand U.S. Army Forces Command ABCTs. We expect all to go well and anticipate laying the groundwork for a widespread opportunity for the operational force to become masters of maintenance.

There are 16 manned ABCTs equipment sets in the active component and the Army National Guard. Based on the Armor School's current picture of M1A2 SEPv3 Abrams fielding and production projections, we will continue to

have M1A2 SEPv2 in service well beyond 2030. This fact, paired with the fact that the Abrams was anticipated to have depot-level maintenance every 10 years led us to partner with PEO-GCS and the Abrams PdM to develop a course of action to restore and extend the life of our M1A2 SEPv2s to ensure the readiness and lethality of these formations throughout the platform's lifecycle.

Efforts to start the restoration of the M1 Abrams fleets and critically examining services are just a couple of the ways we are changing how we think about transformation. As part of the Armor Branch's efforts to increase lethality and expertise in ABCTs, the Office of the Chief of Armor is submitting a proposal for Master Gunner (MG) Special Duty Assignment Pay (SDAP). This request is for qualified Abrams and Bradley master gunners serving as a master gunner or operating within the scope of a master gunner in modified table of organization and equipment/table of distribution and allowances assignments. We believe approval of MG SDAP is an investment in talent and will provide one of the crucial incentives to sustain expertise and lethality as the branch continues to transform for 2030 and beyond.

As we look at 2030 and beyond, one of the major conceptual challenges is thinking about the impact robotic, unmanned, and artificial intelligence assisted systems will have on the future battlefield. At the Armor School, we agree that while the tools of the battlefield may change, the purpose of the Armor force will remain its ability to crew and employ mobile protected firepower. The focus of the Armor School will remain first on ensuring the Armor force is manned with the most proficient Armor and Cavalry Soldiers in the world. With this purpose in mind, we are working diligently in partnership with the Maneuver Capabilities Development and Integration Directorate to design formations that excel at fighting as all-weather close combat, combined arms forces that defeat enemy forces. And as technology matures, we will create formations that will allow commanders to make first contact with an unmanned robotic platform or sensor. In October, the Armor School participated in the second Human Machine Integration Summit. With this summit and moving forward, the Armor School will participate in the design and persistence experimentation of formations that execute machine-enabled maneuver and operate and excel at multi-domain operations.

As I continue to engage with the Soldiers and leaders from our Armor and Cavalry formations throughout the Army, I remain amazed by the work you continue to do in support of our nation. There is nothing more transformative than the strong, cohesive teams our Armor and Cavalry Soldiers and leaders are building every day in the operational force. At the Armor School, we will continue to do all we can to provide the trained Soldiers and leaders who will ensure you can be ready today, while preparing for tomorrow.

Forge the Thunderbolt!

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Notes

¹ GEN Randy A. George, The Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition 2023: Army Senior Leader Press Conference, Washington D.C., Oct. 10, 2023.

Acronym Quick-Scan

ABCT – armored brigade combat team

MG – master gunner

PEO-GCS – Program Executive Office Ground Combat Systems

PdM – Product Manager

POI – program of instruction

SDAP – Special Duty Assignment Pay