

A Way of Improving Training and Readiness Oversight

by CPT Timothy Sweeney and LTC Brennan Speakes

As the Army develops new ways to fight and win in large-scale combat operations, the U.S. Army Armor School (USAARMS), in conjunction with the U.S. Army Infantry School, is developing options for brigade and battalion organizational redesign to increase lethality. Combined-arms battalions (CABs) bring an effective mix of armor and mechanized-infantry forces to challenge and defeat our adversaries. Although squad manning is limited, mechanized infantry prove critical on the battlefield with an armored brigade combat team (ABCT).

With that in mind, USAARMS proposed that Career Management Field (CMF) 19 Soldiers man the Bradley Fighting Vehicle (BFV), while CMF 11 Soldiers surge to man all dismounted-squad capabilities within a mechanized-infantry company. CMF 19 Soldiers have the best skill set and enable CMF 11 Soldiers to focus on their specified dismounted-infantry tasks and drills. We believe this concept would increase lethality and readiness today and into the future.

Lethality

The ABCT employs vehicles to close with and destroy the enemy. A BFV is not an armored personnel carrier or a place to store gear. In the Armor Branch, vehicles are our mindset and mounted lethality is our profession; every CMF 19 assignment is on a vehicle. During the current 19D One Station Unit Training-Transformation Course, cavalry-scout trainees receive 263 hours of BFV training over the 22-week training plan.

This begins a career of experience in our mindset. Armor and cavalry Soldiers and leaders are trained to be experts on our platforms and consistently prove that we are through our expertise on vehicles. Mounted maneuver is not a secondary task for us; we have technical expertise on our platforms, we love our vehicles, and we have the longevity to continuously learn how to employ them.

On the other hand, the infantry squads in mechanized formations provide essential combat power on the ground where the commander deems necessary. The infantry squads do not exist just for local security but have specified collective tasks that support the CAB rifle company's mission-essential task list (METL).

The individual and collective tasks listed under each of the offensive and defensive tasks includes tasks completed by both mounted and dismounted elements. Examples of dismounted tasks for "conduct an attack – company" (Table 1) include "Engage targets with an M249 machinegun using an AN/PEQ-15 aiming light" and "Engage targets with an M240B/M240L machinegun." As outlined in the Combined-Arms Training Strategy METL listing, it is also important to note that the collective and individual tasks below the company level are identical in both rifle companies assigned to infantry brigade combat teams (IBCTs) and ABCTs as shown in Table 1.

Name	Number
07-CO-1092	Conduct an attack – rifle company (IBCT)
07-CO-1272	Conduct area security – company
07-CO-9003	Conduct an area defense – company
55-CO-4830	Conduct expeditionary deployment operations

Table 1. ABCT rifle company METL.

Dismounted squads in the ABCT rifle company are not just support, just like the BFVs of the mechanized force are not just support. Both elements maneuver together toward an objective, and both are essential to the lethality, mobility and flexibility of the formation.

Adjusting the BFV crew would benefit the Army by encouraging specialization and reducing training burdens while increasing lethality. A single military-occupation specialty (MOS) could be expected to serve as experts on mounted maneuver in the ABCT, Stryker Mobile Gun System (MGS) organizations and future mobile protected firepower

organizations. This specialization would alleviate the lack of specialization that often occurs when personnel transition from one BCT type to another.

Simultaneously, the infantry personnel assigned to an ABCT would specialize in the key individual and collective tasks associated with their dismounted operations. The formation would be better trained and better enabled to fight and win as a combined-arms team by having masters of each mindset, skill set and mission set, rather than one MOS trying to master multiple complex missions and tasks. The latter means lower proficiency on all tasks and lower ability to sustain readiness of equipment.

Readiness

The benefit of having dedicated CMF 19 personnel to crew platforms in ABCT formations is a renewed focus on maintaining the fleet. If the BFV crews are specially trained for that skill set and platform, maintenance will improve. When the unit conducts command maintenance, the crews conducting maintenance will be specially trained on that platform and will have continuous career experience in maintaining vehicles, rather than intermittent assignment opportunities.

Currently, CMF 11 personnel can transition back and forth between light-infantry formations and mechanized formations, leading to noncommissioned officers serving in ABCTs or Stryker BCTs for the first time as a staff sergeant. Conversely, CMF 19 personnel remain in the same BCT type from staff sergeant to command sergeant major. This provides more time for them to learn and perfect their trade.

Increased priority and specialization in maintaining tracks will lead to higher operational readiness (OR) ratings across the fleet. Infantry squads will also have continuous experience focused on the equipment that support their operations and will improve their lethality as the critical dismounted element in their formations. CMF 19 and CMF 11 personnel will also be able to execute combined training, incorporating expertise and repetitions across both of these forms of maneuver, directly leading to increased lethality. Both the infantry squads and BFV crews will have Soldiers and leaders trained and experienced in the maneuver and maintenance of their forces.



Figure 1. A U.S. Army MGS system Stryker variant belonging to the Quickstrike Troop, 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, fires at several targets during a week-long gunnery range at the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, Feb. 14, 2019. The gunnery was the culminating event for their multi-month training progression. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Timothy Hamlin, 2nd Cavalry Regiment)

Recommendations

The conversation of training a specialized MOS for crewing vehicles in mechanized formations has been ongoing since the Infantry Branch eliminated the 11M MOS in 2000. The ABCT's infantry squads do not exist simply for local security around their vehicles; every ABCT mission requires dismounting those squads at a critical point to achieve mission success. ABCTs are lethal and accomplish the mission when armor, cavalry, infantry, fires and engineers work together in concert and capitalize on the relative advantage offered by each subordinate formation.

Increased specialization among the BFV crews and dismount squads will directly lead to increased OR rates and overall readiness. These specialty crews and squads will be more ready, more lethal and thus more capable of using all assets available to challenge and defeat any threats from our adversaries.



Figure 2. An infantry team leader from 2nd ABCT, 1st Cavalry Division, yells commands during the combined-arms live-fire exercise Feb. 6, 2019. (Photo by MAJ Carson Petry, 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs)

Conclusion

We conclude that providing CMF 19 Soldiers rather than CMF 11 Soldiers to crew positions in BFVs provides increased lethality and reduces a lack of specialization in ABCTs while allowing CMF 11 personnel to continue to master their skill set.

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Acronym Quick-Scan

ABCT – armored brigade combat team
BCT – brigade combat team
BFV – Bradley Fighting Vehicle
CAB – combined-arms battalion
CMF – career-management field
IBCT – infantry brigade combat team
MCCC – Maneuver Captain's Career Course
METL – mission-essential task list
MGS – Mobile Gun System

MOS – military-occupation specialty
OR – operational readiness
USAARMS – U.S. Army Armor School