

THE 1997 ARMOR CONFERENCE

A Look at the Armored Force's Role as a Full Spectrum Force of Decision and How Units are Meeting Today's Diverse Training Challenges

As has been the tradition since 1949, the United States Army Armor Center and Fort Knox is hosting the annual Armor Conference in conjunction with the meeting of the United States Armor Association. The conference, originated 48 years ago by past Armor School Commandant Major General William Livesay. It serves as an excellent opportunity to bring together the leaders of the armored force in order to disseminate information and discuss current issues impacting on our rapidly changing profession. It is likely that over 800 personnel will attend this year's gathering, with representatives from our nation's defense industry, numerous allied countries, the Marine Corps, Department of the Army civil service, along with the Army's Active Duty and Reserve Component forces. This year's conference is being held from June 3d through the 5th and carries the theme, "The Armored Force - A FULL SPECTRUM FORCE of Decision."

For the past few years, the Armor Conference has focused primarily on emerging technologies and how the new generation of equipment, combined with digitization initiatives, is impacting the future of armor's doctrine, training, and force structure. This year, Fort Knox's Chief of Armor, Major General George Harmeyer, has brought a new focus to the conference. Instead of looking at factors internal to the armored force that will change the way we do business, the Armor Center is looking externally to today's global situation, and examining how the mounted force is facing the current task of training for an ever-growing diversity of missions across the crisis spectrum while retaining its high-intensity warfighting edge.

Since the United States military's involvement with Operation "Restore Hope" in 1992, we have found ourselves faced with a variety of missions across the globe, unlike anything faced since our constabulary role in post-World War II Germany. In addition to being prepared to intervene in a major theater of war, as seen in Desert Storm, the men and women who comprise the

armored force have been facilitating the transition to peace between warring factions, assisting with famine relief, restoring democracy, and often aiding states suffering from natural disasters. How the mounted force trains effectively for all of these contingencies is the topic of this year's gathering. Key leaders from the armor and cavalry forces involved in these and other operations will be present to provide informative briefings on their units' involvement and how they met the challenges of a previously non-standard mission. Time has also been set aside to look at what the Armor Center and Combat Training Centers are doing to help train the force in this new age of armored operations. Finally, as we examine the future of the armored force, leadership from the EXFOR will brief the outcome of the long-awaited March '97 Advanced Warfighting Experiment at the NTC.

The shift in the Armor Conference's focus can be traced back to the arrival of Major General Harmeyer at Fort Knox as the Chief of Armor. His presence has brought a renewed interest in the armor and cavalry institutional training and training development ongoing at the Armor Center, and throughout the force. This interest has served as the driving force for the 1997 Armor Conference's theme. His experiences with command from troop to brigade, coupled with his command of Operations Group at the NTC and service as the commander of 7th Army Training Command in Grafenwoehr, Germany, have given him an insight that is critical in training the present armored force. The Armor Conference is one key means by which he can assist units with the training challenges they face in preparing for today's broad range of requirements.

The 1st Cavalry Division serves as an excellent example of a unit confronted with this full spectrum of challenges. Since Desert Storm, soldiers from its ranks have returned to Kuwait three times, including the recent contingency deployment when Iraq deployed troops near the border of Kuwait. Back in the States, the division has gone through

numerous NTC rotations, while managing to execute gunneries and situational training exercises at all echelons. In the summer of 1994, 1,350 of its soldiers found themselves fighting forest fires in Idaho and Montana.

Meanwhile, cavalry soldiers in the 10th Mountain Division have faced a separate, almost non-stop, lineup of missions during the past four years: rescuing hurricane victims in Florida, feeding the starving masses in Somalia, and helping secure democracy in Haiti for the return of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Soldiers responsible for training the force are faced with the same challenges. The Combined Maneuver Training Center (CMTC) in Hohenfels, Germany is maintaining a tempo of 10 brigade rotations. There, soldiers comprising the OPFOR and OC Teams are challenged with training the "blue" force units on all types of tactics, techniques, and procedures, from the diplomatic skills involved in convoy and checkpoint operations, to the myriad of tasks involved in a task force deliberate attack. Additionally, the 7th Armor Training Command, responsible for CMTC and the Grafenwoehr Training Area, has just resumed gunnery training at the Taborfalva Training Area in Hungary for units rotating out of Bosnia. With the U.S. Army at its smallest size since the end of World War II and its operational missions up by 300 percent, it is likely that such a high tempo of diverse missions will be seen by more of the armored force in the future.

Directly preceding the Armor Conference each year is another major event known as the Armor Trainer Update (ATU). The ATU is a two-day conference which focuses on the unique training issues faced by the National Guard and Army Reserve. The theme mirrors that of the Armor Conference, with today's Reserve Component forces faced with the distinct challenge of training to meet the diverse body of missions now assigned to the Active Component, while also being prepared to accomplish any task given by their

State Governor (in the case of the National Guard). This full spectrum of missions has been seen in recent years, with reserve soldiers serving as OCs for the 3d Infantry Division (then 24th Infantry Division) in Kuwait during Operation "Intrinsic Action," involved with drug interdiction throughout the U.S., and aiding with flood rescue and relief operations in Louisville, Kentucky this past March.

Presentations for the ATU will include the ARNG Force Structure and Force Modernization, the Total Army School System (TASS), the 49th Armored Division's recent Mobilization Exercise (MOBEX), and an update by the National Guard Bureau on the Quadrennial Defense Review just completed May 15th. It is expected that over 300 members of the National Guard and Army Reserve will be in attendance.

In conjunction with the Armor Trainer Update, the Armor Center's G3/Directorate of Training, Plans, and Mobilization will be conducting the 5th Annual External Unit Scheduling Conference. During this conference, Fort Knox will offer the post's available training resources for FY98 to the Army Reserve, National Guard, Active Army, and other military branches of service. The goal is to provide resources that will give commanders a broad range of training options and integrates simulation technology into their mounted force training strategy.

To help make this goal a reality, Fort Knox has completed over 50 million dollars of training facilities upgrades over the past 10 years. The quality of the Armor Center's unit training facilities is swiftly being realized by the force as evidenced by last year's External Unit Scheduling Conference. Two hundred and thirty-seven attendees representing 23 states and Canada participated, resulting in training at Fort Knox by external units in FY96 exceeding 270,000 soldier-training days and encompassing all components of the Army, with contingents from the Marines, Navy, Air Force, and Special Operations Forces. Some major resources that will be available at this year's conference are: the Mounted Warfare Simulation Training Center, JANUS with Observer Controller support, Battalion/Brigade Staff Trainer System (BSTS), M1 and M3 Thru Site Videos, M1 and M3 Unit Conduct of Fire Trainers (UCOFT), Tank Driver Simulators, and Maintenance Trainers, along

with live-fire ranges and maneuver training areas. This wide variety of resources offers units the opportunity to combine constructive, virtual, and live training into a successful training program. Knox's most recent addition is another state-of-the-art Table VIII range with more modernization scheduled in the coming years to include a Close Combat Tactical Trainer (CCTT) Facility which began construction late last year.

One of Fort Knox's most exciting additions to its training resources will not be available until next year's scheduling conference and stands as a testimony to the armored force's expanded role in today's military. It is the construction of an urban combat training complex. Groundbreaking is scheduled for this fall with the site ready for training in early 1999. The Mounted Urban Combat Training Site, a 13 million dollar training facility, promises to significantly improve the readiness of the mounted force by providing a state-of-the-art, computer-enhanced facility replicating the unique aspects of operations in a contemporary urban environment. Such a capability does not currently exist elsewhere in the Army. In light of recent peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and other related operations, the construction of this facility became a priority mission for Fort Knox. It is foreseen that the Mounted Urban Combat Training Site will be used in the Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, Basic and Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Courses, the Scout Platoon Leaders Course, and Armor Pre-Command Course. Once completed, it will contain all the residential, commercial, and government facilities of a small town, to include an embassy, junkyard, and underground sewer system. The special effects will entail reconfigurable collapsing buildings and bridges, burning cars, smoke, noise (guns cocking, dogs barking, running footsteps), and smart targets that react to movement.

Training units will be forced to deal with multiple tactical problems, such as road blocks, in confined spaces between buildings and impediments to traversing tank turrets. Access to the site will be possible via airborne, air assault, land, and water approaches. The cumulative effects will provide realistic challenges for soldiers and their leaders similar to that found now only at the combat training centers. It is intended that the site can be used in conjunction

with Fort Knox's JANUS facilities so that battalion and brigade staffs can be included in the planning, preparation, and execution phases. Also, there will be a comprehensive After-Action Review (AAR) capability to provide significant and worthwhile feedback on the spot. An 8x5 foot rendition of the Mounted Urban Combat Training Site will be on display throughout the ATU and Armor Conference.

Another major event of the conference is the presentation of the General Frederick M. Franks Award, created by then Chief of Armor, Major General Larry Jordan in 1995. This year will be the third time the Franks Award has been bestowed. It recognizes an individual who has demonstrated a long-time contribution to the ground warfighting capabilities of the U.S. Army.

Nominees this year came from all sources of the Department of the Army, including active duty and reserve component officers, NCOs, and enlisted personnel; along with DA civilians. The nominees, endorsed by the first major general in their chain-of-command, were evaluated by a selection committee comprised of seven members that jointly represented the Officer and NCO Corps, National Guard, Army Reserve, and Federal Civil Service. Candidates were reviewed for a variety of superb duty performance characteristics during the preceding year or years which may include:

- Offering a vision for the future of the mounted warfighting force that significantly improved combat survivability, lethality, or mobility
- Developing an innovation in equipment, materiel, or doctrine that significantly enhanced the effectiveness of combat arms' mounted elements
- Exemplifying professional excellence in demeanor, correspondence, and leadership
- Displaying a love of soldiering

The traits were picked after the leadership characteristics of the awards namesake, General (Retired) Franks, who was instrumental in shaping our current Army. After the selection committee designated a recipient on April 30th, the results were forwarded to the Chief of Armor for final approval. The recipient will be presented his award on the final day. Last year's winner was Lieutenant Colonel Kevin B. Wall from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas for his

exemplary service as an instructor and course author for the Command and General Staff College Advanced Warfighting Course.

Throughout the conference, leading defense contractors will showcase equipment that will enhance the mounted warrior's ability to conduct operations across the globe. Over 125 separate displays are expected, with everything from conceptual models of future armored vehicles to the newest field boot available to the force. A highlight of the displays will be the new M3A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle, straight out of its reliability, availability, and maintainability (RAM) testing at Yuma Proving Ground in Arizona. The M3A3 is a product of United Defense Limited Partners and it is expected that the Army will purchase 266 of them over an eight-year period. If plans stay on track, the 3d Infantry Division should be the first unit to receive the vehicle in late 2000. Other notable exhibits should include the newly developed Command and Control Vehicle (one of six prototypes in existence), a display by the Military History Institute, and an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Mission Simulator. Additionally, the Armor Center's Mounted Maneuver Battlespace Lab (MMBL) will be conducting a demonstration of its TRADOC Brigade and Below Virtual Battlefield operations. Previously known as the Mounted Warfare Test Bed, the Virtual Battlefield was created to provide Fort Knox with the infrastructure necessary to conduct research and development in the areas of doctrine, training programs, training support packages, and hardware/software integration. Many technologies from the Force XXI Training Program will be demonstrated such as: Reconfigurable Combat Vehicle Simulators, laser communication via binoculars, the Staff Group Trainer, and C2V mock-ups with the Army Battle Command System.

The Armor Conference is for the entire mounted warfare community. It serves as a critical link in the information chain for providing the active and reserve component armored force and its civilian support structure with the most current news on what is happening in our profession. Its combination of presentations, demonstrations, and displays, along with numerous occasions for fellowship among attendees, provides for an exciting and informative three days. In his Strategic Plan, TRADOC Commander General Wil-

liam Hartzog states that "today's environment demands a global power projection Army capable of responding to the nation's needs across the full spectrum of operations... our focus is clear: train and maintain an Army capable of decisive victory on any battlefield." As 40 percent of the Army's combat power, the importance of the armored force in meeting that requirement is obvious. The 1997 Armor Conference will highlight the challenges faced in training today's armor and cavalry to meet this demand.

Notes

¹"Conference on Armor," *Armored Cavalry Journal*, Jul-Aug 1949, p. 25.

²"Armor Conference General Information Sheet," 1995-1996.

³Biographical Information Sheet, 13 Feb 97.

⁴Donna Miles, "Upping the Tempo," *Soldiers*, June 1995, p. 15.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Major Mike Belew, "Armor Trainer Update Agenda," March 7, 1997.

⁷Jim Hornback, "5th Annual G3/DPTM External Unit Scheduling Conference," February 1997, p. 1.

⁸Dean Sprague, "Training complex funds expected," *Inside the Turret Armor Conference Issue*, May 31, 1996, p. 21.

⁹Mounted Urban Combat Training Site Information Paper.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Nancy Probus, "Franks Award Message," 27 January 1997, pp. 4-5.

¹³General William Hartzog, "From the Commander," *Strategic Plan 1995*, p. II.