

Armor Branch's "Way Ahead" Advances on Four Thrust Lines

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Our branch is decisive and healthy, and remains at the core of America's ability to fight and win wars. In this, my final "Commander's Hatch" article, I want to give you a quick rundown on the state of our branch as it integrates with the Army's other branches to provide a decisive, combined arms war-fighting capability. Armor Branch is advancing along four major axes: the Objective Force, the Interim Force, the Legacy Force, and manning the Armor Force. All four avenues are extremely important to the Army and each of us.

The Objective Force

The Army is moving out in achieving its vision, and at the spear point is the Objective Force. Armor branch is, and will remain, deeply engaged in the Objective Force development process. The Objective Force represents a holistic approach to our future combat capability, and at the center of this effort will be the fielding of the Future Combat System (FCS). While we pursue science and technology solutions for the FCS, we already know the Objective Force's key operational concepts and we know the defining characteristics of the FCS. This system will:

- Be rapidly deployable
- Be combat capable off the ramp
- Have a decided stand-off advantage
- Possess lethal overmatch against future advanced armors
- Possess an advanced survivability suite that includes active and passive protection systems, networked lethality overmatch, signature management, dominant situation awareness, and that will leverage unmanned systems capabilities
- Achieve unsurpassed tactical and operational mobility
- Enable dominant situational understanding

- Operate with ultra reliability

The Objective Force's primary close combat formation will be the FCS Battalion, the unit of action for future Army operations. All of the Battlefield Functional Areas will be represented across FCS common platforms and will be found in the combined arms FCS Battalion. The Army and TRADOC are in pursuit of a prime directive to establish responsibilities and proponencies for the FCS Battalion. As always, Fort Knox and Armor Branch stand ready to take on any role in the combat developments process for the FCS battalion.

The Interim Force

Armor Branch has two major pursuits within the Interim Force: the Initial Brigade Combat Team and the Interim Cavalry Regiment. First is the IBCT. The IBCT is an infantry-centric combined arms organization supported by direct fire from 105mm Mobile Gun Systems (MGS).

The IBCT is optimized for small-scale contingencies in complex and urban terrain, but possesses the ability for full spectrum early entry force operations. All of the vehicles in this organization are built on the LAV III interim armored vehicle (IAV) common platform, and all possess superior situational awareness and understanding (SA/SU) capability. The IBCT is light enough to be strategically deployable and battlefield mobile, yet heavy enough to bring battlespace dominance into an austere theater.

The IBCT is built around the Combined Arms Company. The company contains three infantry platoons and an MGS platoon. This MGS platoon provides the close supporting assault gun fires needed to defeat enemy personnel, bunkers, weapon emplacements and medium armored vehicles. When needed, the mobile guns will punch structures open to support infantry operations in urban environments. With

each platoon containing three mobile guns, there will be a total of 27 mobile gun platforms in each IBCT. The MGS vehicles will be fought by 19K armor crewmen with an appropriate ASI.

Providing the eyes and ears for each IBCT is a Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RSTA) Squadron of over 400 troops, dominated by the 19D cavalry scout. This squadron has NBC reconnaissance capability, organic mortars, unmanned aerial vehicles, inter-netted sensors, and GSR capability. These systems, combined with the LRAS3 systems onboard the recce platforms, allow this unit to conduct sustained R&S operations over extended areas.

Clearly, Armor and Cavalry soldiers bring key competencies to the IBCTs and an assignment to one of these units is going to be an exciting and rewarding opportunity. We will be leading the way in these outfits and providing the heavy firepower and reconnaissance to ensure their success — the Armor community has reason to look at the emergence of these units with pride and anticipation. These organizations are good for our Army and our branch.

One initiative that we are continuing to work is the development of an Interim Cavalry Regiment which we hope will result in the near-term reorganization and re-equipping of the 2ACR. We refer to the design as the Second Interim Cavalry Regiment — 2ICR. While the Army has yet to give its final blessing to the 2ICR, through a blue ribbon panel process and in coordination with FORSCOM and XVIII Corps, we have constructed an operational and organizational plan for the organization. We are continuing to develop the framework for an organization that will be able to provide the full range of corps cavalry requirements. We see this organization as the harbinger for Objective Force cavalry. The 2ICR will be optimized for reconnaissance but will

include sufficient firepower to conduct security and economy of force operations. We envision that this unit will have a strong air and ground team that is capable of operating over a 90km by 60km battlespace. This unit will have embedded engineer, signal, MI, UAV and CSS support. It will employ Interim Armored Vehicles with a basic cavalry capability provided by a mix of recce and MGS platforms. You'll see more on this initiative over the next several months.

The Legacy Force

Our current armor force provides the nation with a strong and decisive war-winning capability. This force will continue to provide the bulk of our warfighting capability for at least the next 15 to 20 years, while we bring FCS battalions into the force. We will sustain our current force through selective upgrade and recapitalization. In this *ARMOR* Magazine is an article on the recently completed Division Capstone Exercise (Phase I) that highlights the enormous enhancements made to the 4th Infantry Division (see Page 44). The Ironhorse Division is the first step in the move to create a Counterattack Corps that will serve as the nation's decisive counterattack force for any major theater war. As the Counterattack Corps, III Corps will be modernized by FY05 and 3ID will be modernized by FY09. These forces will serve as the nation's premier counteroffensive defeat mechanism for the next 15-20 years.

Other formations within our current force are the Contingency/Containment and Reinforcing Forces. The elements of the Contingency/Containment forces will be linked to Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS) and serve as first deployers. The reinforcing forces consist of our Enhanced Separate Brigades and our ARNG mechanized divisions. These forces are absolutely critical for any sustained combat scenario.

While I have laid out the Mechanized Force Modernization Plan for you in the July/August 2000 "Commander's Hatch" article, I want to highlight some key areas again. First, we are upgrading the Counterattack Corps units with M1A2 SEPs and M2A3 Bradleys. Additionally, we are going to rebuild our Contingency/Containment force's vehicles, giving them M1A1Ds and M2A3 ODS. Both forces will have state of the art equipment. Both forces will remain extremely lethal and will retain overmatch capability against any force in the world. We also intend to outfit our

reinforcing forces with M1A1Ds and M2A3s to ensure their lethal overmatch capability.

We are aggressively pursuing other enhancements for our armor forces. We need items like the 120mm canister round and the Tank Extended Range Munition (TERM). The 120mm canister round is funded in the POM and will be essential in combat in close/complex and urban terrain. The TERM round is proceeding through the approval process and we will continue to work this issue. I cannot list every project that we are pursuing to make our force better prepared to support the nation's objectives, but let me list our priorities for the future:

1. Recapitalize through upgrade III Corps, three mechanized/armored divisions and 3d ACR with M1A2 SEP and M2A3 Bradleys.
2. Fully digitize III Corps with three divisions and 3d ACR.
3. Develop and procure munitions that dominate the expanded close combat "red zone."
 - a. 120mm TERM
 - b. M829E3
 - c. 120mm Canister
 - d. Maintenance of TOW II inventory
 - e. TOW fire-and-forget
4. Recapitalize through rebuild (M1A1D/M2A2ODS-D) the remaining mechanized Containment/Reinforcing Force (AC/RC).
5. Match APS with appropriate early entry containment force equipment.
6. Invest in adequate institutional, home station, and CTC training upgrades to ensure mechanized force readiness.
7. Ensure adequate obstacle reduction (Grizzly) and gap crossing (Wolverine) capability in III Corps.
8. Develop and procure long-range indirect fire system (Crusader) and munitions to enhance non-line of sight effects.
9. Study acquisition of recce platform to provide III Corps with inter-netted ISR/target acquisition capability.
10. Invest in operation and sustainment cost reducers (e.g. common engine, built-in diagnostics, reliability improvements).
11. Transform 2ICR to empower XVIII Corps with appropriate RSS cavalry capability.
12. Procure adequate battlefield recovery capability (Hercules) to outfit III Corps counterattack force.

Manning the Armor Force

By far the most important axis for our branch is the maintenance of our high soldier quality. The greatest technological innovations and the best equipment are useless without skilled soldiers, competent leaders, and cohesive/motivated teams. The DCX (Phase I) was just the latest demonstration of the quality and dedication found in the soldiers of our branch. Fort Knox is moving forward on its main training and leader development mission by pioneering some unique changes in the way we train soldiers. We have implemented Gauntlet training here at Knox that teams soldiers from different officer and NCO grades and skill levels into experiential-based virtual, constructive, and live training events. Our Armor and Cavalry OSUT programs are superb, and are improving almost daily.

We continue to pursue distance learning which allows soldiers away from the institutional base to reach back into the school house for the most current training and information. We are leading the way in providing training support packages and assisting field units in reaching their training and leader development goals. The Armor School remains committed to serving the field commander; we want your input and we need you to help drive the training here at the Center. Our soldiers and leaders are and will remain the centerpiece of our formations and we are dedicated to their training excellence.

Conclusion

Our branch is as decisive, healthy, and relevant today as it has ever been in its proud history. Armor soldiers and cavalry troopers have a bright future at the lead of the Army's warfighting formations, both today and with our future Objective Force. As I turn over the reigns of the Armor Center to the very capable hands of MG Steve Whitcomb, I want you to know that I have been honored to serve as your Chief of Armor and to represent you and the branch in the training and combat developments part of the Army. I thank each of you for contributing so much to the Armored Force, to the Army, and to the Nation.

FORGE THE THUNDERBOLT
AND STRIKE FIRST!