

COMMANDER'S HATCH

The Armor Force: A Pre-conference Overview

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The theme of this year's Armor Conference, "ARMOR; Spearhead to the Future" is not simply a catch phrase devoid of meaning. It is an affirmation that the Armor Force's traditional pre-eminent role will be sustained into the foreseeable future across the spectrum of conflict. In this article, I want to preview the Conference theme with a broad overview of the status of the Armor Force and highlight some key directions.

General

On a given day, the U.S. Army has over 25,000 soldiers deployed to nearly seventy countries, keeping the peace and providing stability in a dangerous and unpredictable world. Our Army's tankers and cavalymen are doing their share and more. Tank crewmen and cavalymen are the most deployed military specialty in the Army today. From Bosnia to Southwest Asia, time and again the Army has shown that the most effective means to demonstrate the seriousness of U.S. resolve is to deploy an armored force. When tanks are on the ground, people take notice.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, we have implemented the most fundamental change in our Army since World War II despite fourteen straight years of declining buying power, yet we have kept the force trained and ready. I would be less than candid to say that the force is uniformly trained and ready. Due to constrained resources and the high tempo of operations across the globe, certain units have been unable to maintain the level of training and readiness of the deployed units. Despite signs that the trend towards resource reduction may be turning around, we should expect to continue a mindset of high OPTEMPO with very limited resources.

There is no secret that the key to continued success is people. Our principal readiness concerns are continuing to recruit, retain, and take care of our soldiers and their families. If we are unable to

recruit and retain enough high quality young men for the force, then we're not going to be able to sustain success.

Today, we have an Army that has become increasingly based in the United States, relies to a large extent on the National Guard and Army Reserve, and must be able to deploy anywhere, on short notice, with a decisive force. The Armor community has led the Army's efforts to train and equip the evolving force and to teach it how to think and fight in revolutionary ways.

Doctrine

A primary effort in doctrinal development is to refine incorporation of the digital effects on operations. As the 4th Infantry Division continues its effort, we continue to gather the TTPs associated with its exercises and incorporate them into doctrine for use by the rest of the Army. We realize that almost every Armor and Cavalry unit has some digitized equipment; the bottom line is that we write doctrine for everyone.

We expect to have *FM 71-3* in final draft as this edition of *ARMOR* gets to you, and we expect *FM 17-97* will be in final draft by August of this year. We are developing TTPs for the deployment of the three-company battalion task force of the Force XXI design. These TTPs will be tested during Force XXI limited conversion in the 1st Infantry Division and applied to the 1st Armored and 3rd Infantry Divisions.

Our doctrine needs to look at least as far forward as the technology that will be used to implement it. Enlisting force developer assistance in the draft of doctrine for new systems, like the Future Scout and Cavalry System and Mounted Warrior is one way we can achieve that end. Doctrine must be relevant and appropriate for the equipment to which it is applied. Input from the field is essential. I encourage broad input to electronic drafts we routinely post to the internet and also

a direct dialogue with the Armor Center folks here and when they travel out to Training Centers and the places where you are assigned.

Training

The changing global operational environment requires Army trainers to re-look how training can be most effectively and efficiently accomplished for the Total Army. We are pushing ahead with the support of TRADOC and the assistance of the Infantry School and the Reserve Component to articulate a Mounted Training Strategy (MTS) that meets the needs of the Total Army. The MTS seeks to maximize the potential of all training environments with a focus on individual, staff and unit proficiency in selected "core" tasks across the full spectrum of conflict. For more information about the MTS, see the Jan-Feb '99 "Commander's Hatch."

The overall capabilities of our weapons systems have outpaced the ability of our live-fire ranges to challenge them. We have designed the Digital Multi-Purpose Range Complex (D-MPRC) featuring expanded width and depth, incorporating the next generation targetry, and numerous technical innovations to continue to challenge our soldiers. The solution calls for a "holistic" approach that integrates live fire, maneuver, simulations, TOC training and after action review capabilities to train staffs, leaders, and units to use information dominance to attain precision maneuver as well as fires to shape the battlefield.

We increasingly recognize that the ability of Mounted Forces to fight in an urban environment is more important than ever. Although the Infantry School retains the lead on MOUT, our role in developing TTPs is increasingly important. The construction of a Mounted Urban Combat

Training Site at Fort Knox supports this effort. This state of the art facility will have links to the virtual and constructive training environment. It has drawn great interest from across the force to include our sister service; the United States Marine Corps.

The principles of the Eight-Step Training model underpin our training doctrine. I charge Armor trainers at every level to rededicate themselves to the application of this model. The thoughtful implementation of the Eight-Step model throughout the training cycle, especially the correct adherence to the doctrine for the conduct of After Action Reviews, cannot help but yield tremendous results.

The cornerstone of Armor's institutional training future is embodied in our concept for the University of Mounted Warfare (UMW). UMW is a plan for the future Fort Knox school house that fully supports the Classroom XXI vision by leveraging the power of information age technologies to include computer-based instruction, distance learning, and simulations training. It will allow us to train digital warriors using the same tools and Force XXI training products students will work with in their units of assignment.

The institutional Officer Education System has witnessed broad and bold futures-based innovations. Last year, the Battalion Maintenance Officer Course was the first fully exportable institutional instruction offered on CD-ROM. In December of 1998 we started the first internet-based distance learning RC-AOAC course. The course has progressed into synchronous IDT internet training and will culminate into a third AT phase featuring synchronous simulations exercises. We are facing the challenge in our officer courses of reducing course length while sustaining instruction of essential competencies. The new 18-week course, renamed the Armor Captain's Career Course (ACCC), is one such example. Future courses to prepare digital leaders appear likely to require longer, not shorter, course length. In November of 1998, the Armor Center conducted a Digital Instruction Experiment (DIE) that will pave the way ahead for the future Digital-ACCC.

For institutional NCO training, our current effort has been a major rewrite of all CMF 19 NCOES Courses in FY 97/98. Armor Center's CSM Lady provided an excellent status report on NCO Academy developments in the previous issue of *ARMOR* magazine. Renovated classrooms, billets, and administrative facili-

ties along with installation of fiber-optic wiring in classrooms has postured the NCO Academy for enhanced training opportunities in a Classroom XXI environment.

Leadership

We are a small branch with a growing concentration in the Reserve Component and with more of a CONUS base than in the past. There is a great demand across the Army for the talents of Armor officers. This is a personnel management challenge, but is a compliment to the truly combined arms character of how we grow our officers. Many Armor officers, however, are not serving in key troop assignments as long as they should. Captain shortages across all branches are a key concern, but Armor has particular difficulty in meeting branch-qualified demands given our small size. Additionally, the Armor Force is required to fill a large number of AC/RC slots. Units and organizations have paid a price in increased turbulence, an increase in assignment "under-lap," and unfilled positions. The restructuring initiatives of CINCOS have provided challenges to NCO management parallel to those that the Officer Restructuring Initiative (ORI). In the schoolhouse, we have witnessed an unfortunate decrease in seasoned instructors, the ratio of instructors to students, and the experience level of our staffs.

Organization

The Armor Center is the Spearhead of the Army Experimental Campaign Plan (AECPP) to take us through Force XXI to Army After Next and beyond. A key component of this plan is a number of organizational design changes. The force design for Force XXI will eliminate a tank company from tank battalions, reduce mortar platoons to four guns, allow for six scout vehicles, and modify the HHC's CSS platoons. Already we are standing up and training Brigade Reconnaissance Troops in Europe. This organization will have two six-vehicle scout platoons with a Field Artillery striker platoon in direct support (DS). The "bubbled up" demand for 19D Scouts is a challenge. Divisional Cavalry Squadrons will pick up the NBC Reconnaissance Detachment from the current divisional chemical company organizations. A third axis of the AECPP has been added alongside the light and mounted axis. The Armor Center is the lead proponent in concept development and experimentation of what we term "Strike Force;" a rapidly deployable contingency force. The near-

term focus is on a HQ designed with world class C4I.

Materiel

Sustaining combat overmatch is a key component of the Army's modernization strategy. Planned Programmed Product Improvements (P3I) will be required to maintain this overmatch. Abrams Integrated Management (AIM) is the program for tank refurbishment. The program seeks to get the right, yet achievable mix over time of Abrams variants (M1A1, M1A1D, and M1A2s) with associated product improvements into the right units. The M1A2 will maintain an overmatch differential through the mid-term but the M1A1 capabilities will be overmatched in the near-term. Selected overmatch sustainment modifications have been identified for the M1A1 (FY 06) and the M1A2 (FY 12).

The Abrams tanks in the ARNG are the oldest in the fleet. A re-capitalization plan is needed to ensure the ARNG tanks maintain their survivability and lethality overmatch. Cascading tanks from the active component to the ARNG will provide the initial foundation; however, the ARNG needs to be fully integrated into the Army's Armored System Modernization Plan.

The Scout Strategy combines materiel fielding and development with the organizational and training changes already addressed. The materiel component will witness the near-term fielding of the M3A3 and up-armored HMMWVs equipped with LRAS3, laser range finders, and high resolution day TV. The Future Scout and Cavalry System is a concept vehicle that will have a multiple advanced sensor array, automatic acquisition and identification, advanced C4I and stealth features. We look to field the system in FY 07.

The Command and Control Vehicle (C2V), the replacement for the M577, is on track in terms of development but appears to be falling short in fielding. The Army's Procurement Objective (APO) is 102 C2Vs; however, a minimum of 130 C2Vs will be required for the First Digitized Corps.

Soldiers

I said at the beginning that recruiting and retaining quality soldiers is critical. Everyone is aware of the tough task that confronts all service recruiters in today's

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environment. Pressures to lower standards are great but the requirement for quality recruits in the Armor Force will increase rather than decline. The skills that NCO and Officer leaders require are challenging and diverse. We are currently holding the line on the quality of Armor recruits and our NCO corps is more highly educated than ever.

Conclusion

I don't have to remind any of you that we face challenges on a daily basis. It is essential, however, that we occasionally put things into perspective and remember the positives that will forever make ours the "Combat Arm of Decision." Armor and cavalry leaders have a responsibility to pass on to all newer members of the Force an appreciation for the "nobleness" of our profession. Army service, particularly as armor crewmen and cavalymen, has a uniqueness rooted in history and tradition. You can be deservedly proud of where the Cavalry and Armor Force has been, where it is now and where it is going. We have undergone the greatest transformation since World War II — and have done it better than any force in history. We are, and will continue to be, the Spearhead for the Army.

Forge the Thunderbolt!