

# Thunderbolt Blast

Armor School Newsletter

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## Armor News



**ARMOR AND CAVALRY GALLERY OPENS.** The National Armor and Cavalry Gallery opened at the National Infantry Museum Dec. 12. The gallery contains artifacts and displays from throughout Armor and Cavalry history. It provides guests with an overview of the branch's role in American military history.

The grand opening will be held Jan. 30, 2014.

(Pictured) The M3 Stuart Light Tank and Mounted Cavalryman exhibit in the National Armor and Cavalry Gallery at the National Infantry Museum.

**FRANKS AWARD PRESENTATION.** LTG David G. Perkins, commander of the Combined Arms Center, presented retired COL Clinton J. Ancker III with the 2013 Frederick M. Franks Jr. award for his "demonstrated improvement in mounted warfare, specifically in the area of survivability, lethality, maneuverability and mobility."

(Photo) Clint Ancker, ret. COL, the 2013 recipient of the Frederick M. Franks Award.



## Armor Branch and OCOA Personnel Notes

**WHAT'S IN A NAME?** Until recently, if you were assigned to a Cavalry squadron in a brigade combat team (BCT), you were part of a reconnaissance, surveillance, target-acquisition (RSTA) squadron. The original RSTAs were assigned to the interim BCT, now known as the Stryker brigade combat team (SBCT). As of 2013, the naming convention for Cavalry units was random across the BCTs. The armored BCT had an armored reconnaissance squadron (ARS) that had three reconnaissance troops with two recon platoons each. The SBCT had a RSTA squadron with three Cavalry troops consisting of three recon platoons each. The infantry BCT, whether designated airborne or not, had a reconnaissance squadron made up of two motorized reconnaissance troops containing three scout platoons each. To combat this confusion, the commander of the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) submitted a request July 8, 2013, to restore all the Cavalry formations back to *Cavalry squadron*, *Cavalry troop* and *scout platoon*. The TRADOC commander approved the request approved Sept. 11; effective FY14, all MTOE documents have been changed to reflect the standardized naming convention.

**FY14 OFFICER SEPARATION BOARD.** Details of the FY14 Officer Separation Board (OSB) were recently announced in MILPER messages 13-356 and 13-357. The OSB is an integral part of the

## From the Chief of Armor's Turret

On Jan. 10, 2013, the international community watched as Al Qaeda militants captured the city of Konna, Mali. After capturing Konna, militants began their move south along the Niger River, intent on capturing the capital city of Bamako. Swift action was necessary to prevent the terrorists from taking over the capital. France and Chad responded with Operation Serval, a three-phase operation to block, drive back and clear the country of Al Qaeda. The French effectively synchronized the employment of special forces, air force, navy, aviation, airborne and armored units to rapidly close with and destroy their enemy despite the austere conditions (more than 4,000 French and Chadian soldiers).

Operation Serval reinforced the need for mobile protected firepower (MPF) with strategic mobility. The French achieved this goal primarily through their employment of the *Vehicule de l'Avant Blindé* (VAB), a wheeled infantry fighting vehicle capable of providing MPF through its stabilized 25mm x 137mm main gun. (See "Early Lessons from France's Operation Serval in Mali" by MG Olivier Tramond and LTC Philippe Seigneur, *ARMY* magazine, June 2013, [http://www.ansa.org/publications/armymagazine/archive/2013/06/Documents/Tramond\\_June2013.pdf](http://www.ansa.org/publications/armymagazine/archive/2013/06/Documents/Tramond_June2013.pdf)).

MPF is the ability to effectively traverse restrictive terrain, provide for the safety of the crew through its armor protection, and simultaneously provide lethal capability to effectively engage and destroy troop, hardened, and light armor targets at extended ranges with precise direct fire. Since the Sheridan's retirement, light and airborne infantry formations have lacked organic MPF. MG John W. Nicholson Jr., com-



Army's drawdown plan and is based on congressionally mandated strength reductions to meet directed endstrengths by FY17. The captains' OSB will convene 4-20 Mar 2014, with Regular Army officers in the considered population having a date of rank (DOR) to captain from 30 Jan to 14 Jul 2012. The majors OSB is scheduled to occur 22 Apr-13 May 2014, with officers in the considered population having a DOR to major from 2 Oct 2008 to 29 Apr 2013.

The OSB will review an officer's performance in the Army Military Human Resource Records (AM-HRR), which will include access to the restricted portion of the AMHRR, the officer record brief (ORB), the official photograph and OERs, including masked reports. A Code 19 "HRC directed" OER will be prepared for captains who have not received an OER in the last 180 days prior to 1 Mar 2014, unless the officer is receiving another mandatory report – such as a change of rater or annual report – with a thru date between 2 Sep 2013 and 31 Jan 2014.

Officers in the considered population should conduct a professional self-assessment of their AM-HRR to ensure the appropriate documents are present and consistent throughout. Officers are encouraged to review the OSB MILPER to ensure they are aware of pertinent dates such as OER submission deadlines and MyBoard File closure dates. Officers should address concerns with their file to immediate supervisors, mentors or assignment officers.

## Armor School Soldiers

**316<sup>TH</sup> CAVALRY BRIGADE: MASTER-GUNNER STRATEGY UPDATE.** The master-gunner initiative continues its work to gain efficiencies in both the tank and Bradley master-gunner courses. The commandants met during the last quarter and determined that the endstate for the initiative is to enhance both courses by comparing best practices and identifying commonalities. This decision led to the creation of the Master Gunner Working Group. The group is comprised of Active and Reserve Component subject-matter experts for both the tank and Bradley courses. Its purpose is to compare, contrast and identify best practices within the courses, modules and lessons. The group's goal is to determine if the commonalities are similar enough to reach each course's goals and, if possible, combine instruction. B Company, 1-29 Infantry, is currently analyzing the training methodology of course structure and is comparing surface-danger-zone lesson plans. After the primary instructors' first briefs, the company will examine ballistics/firing tables, M240 and TADSS; the primary instructors from each class will be required to compare, contrast and brief recommended changes to each lesson plan. Once we have completed the individual instructor portions, the working group will move to the team-level briefs with training methodology on "plan and conduct" and "unit training plan." These two areas of emphasis will be the most in-depth and difficult analysis conducted due to the length and difficulty of instruction. The working group's goal is to provide the force with professionals who are experts on their specific platform for both maintenance and training management.

**"WARRIOR CHALLENGE" SCOUT SKILLS TEST (SST).** 19D Cavalry scouts are trained on all Skill Level 10 tasks at the Armor School to develop a solid foundation of scout skills and to become successful in any reconnaissance unit. To evaluate their knowledge of scout skills and their ability to retain information, Soldiers are tested at the "Warrior Challenge" SST. The SST consists of nine stations, including testing on the AT-4, M203 grenade launcher, M240B machinegun, modern demolitions, radio procedures, night-vision goggles and first aid. The stations are located at different points in a field environment. Soldiers are divided into squads and must use their land-navigation skills to locate each testing station. Upon successful completion of each task, Soldiers receive a "go" and navigate to the next station with their squad. The increase in technical competence throughout the "Warrior Challenge" SST will serve Soldiers well in future training events and possible deployments as 19D Cavalry scouts. Also, successful completion of this test provides new troopers with a sense of accomplishment and pride in the U.S. Cavalry, and it provides new troopers' first units of assignment with a proficient trooper who immediately contributes to their team.

## TRADOC Capabilities Managers

**TCM-SBCT: MOBILE GUN SYSTEM (MGS) BATTERY-BOX MAINTENANCE.** There have been five MGS auxiliary battery-box fire incidents reported since July 2008, but the most serious of these was in September 2013, when an MGS caught fire at Yakima Training Center, resulting in total loss. The evidence during the 15-6 investigation indicated that the source of the fire originated from the auxiliary battery box, an MGS-specific item. Loose or missing battery-terminal covers may have contributed to the fire's cause. Army Test and Evaluation Command assesses the auxiliary battery box incidents as a safety hazard that requires mitigation. Program Manager (PM) SBCT is staffing, and will release, maintenance/training procedures in a ground precautionary action available at <https://tulsa.tacom.army.mil> as an initial mitigation measure. PM-SBCT is also conducting an engineering assessment of the battery box to potentially develop a materiel solution to further reduce the hazard. MGS crewmen and maintainers must ensure proper procedures are followed and all parts are serviceable when conducting maintenance on the battery boxes. Proper procedures are outlined in TM 9-2355-321-10-6, Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services (PMCS). Please contact SFC Philemon Jones, TCM-SBCT, at [philemon.f.jones.mil@mail.mil](mailto:philemon.f.jones.mil@mail.mil) or (706) 604-5701 for more information.

mander of 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, said this about MPF: "The idea of having mobile protected firepower that can be delivered by air – either air drop or air land – and get into the fight immediately enables us to retain the initiative we gain by jumping in. But if all we're doing is jumping in and then moving at the speed of a World War II paratrooper, we're going to rapidly lose the initiative we gained by conducting a strategic or operational joint forcible entry. But, if we instead get a force on the ground that's mobile and has firepower, we can retain that initiative and achieve decisive results against the enemy."

As our Army reshapes in the coming years there is one certainty: going forward, our Army will have fewer brigades. This reality mandates these brigades are more combat-capable than ever. With this in mind, the Armor School has dedicated itself to helping MG Nicholson and all of our infantry brigade combat team (IBCT) commanders close this vital capability gap. Together we will explore all avenues to ensure our infantry formations obtain MPF that offers scalable protection and that is air deployable in a combat configuration to assist in closing on the last 100 yards. We appreciate your input and thoughts on this capability gap, and as always, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at [leopoldo.a.quintas.mil@mail.mil](mailto:leopoldo.a.quintas.mil@mail.mil).

Forge the Thunderbolt!

COL Lee Quintas  
"48"


## From the CSM's OP

This issue of *Thunderbolt Blast* coincides with both a recurring discussion on providing mobile, protected, precision firepower to light-infantry formations and the opening of the Armor gallery at the National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center, which not only showcases the legacy of mounted warfare but also will hopefully grow to become the standalone National Armor and Cavalry Museum.









This discussion is both timeless and nested within current Army thinking, as evident by this section from Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 1, *The Army*: "The ability to prevail in ground combat becomes a decisive factor in breaking the enemy's will. If the enemy cannot be defeated from a distance using Army and joint capabilities, then Soldiers close with and destroy the enemy – room to room, face to face. This requires skilled use of combined arms, the ability to fight using all available combat power in complementary ways. Combined arms exponentially increases the effectiveness of Army units. If Army units cannot find, fix, close with and destroy armed opponents in any terrain; exploit success; shatter opponents' coherence; and break the enemy's will to continue the



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194<sup>th</sup> AR BDE 

	<b>COL Scott King</b>		<b>CSM Robert Tompkins</b>	
		<b>1-46 IN BCT</b>	LTC Matthew Scalia	CSM Eugene Dydasco
		<b>2-47 IN BCT</b>	LTC Christopher Bresko	CSM Daniel Dennison
		<b>30th AG (Rec)</b>	LTC David Welch	CSM Nyeedra T. Edwards
		<b>1-81 AR</b>	LTC Dawson Plummer	CSM Dean Lockhart
		<b>5-15 CAV</b>	LTC Michael Birmingham	CSM Samuel Roark

316<sup>th</sup> CAV BDE 

	<b>COL David Davidson</b>		<b>CSM Jeremiah Inman</b>	
		<b>1-29 IN</b>	LTC Richard Surowiec	CSM Ricky Fields
		<b>2-29 IN</b>	LTC Darren Jennings	CSM Curtis Arnold
		<b>1-16 CAV</b>	LTC Mark Brown	CSM Eric Littlejohn
		<b>2-16 CAV</b>	LTC Oscar Diano	CSM Bradley Feltman
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**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/ARMORMagazine>

**Blog:** <http://www.earmorcontent.com/blog>

**USAARMS DIVIDS:** <http://www.dvidshub.net/unit/USAARMS#.Us1-TfuF2TM>

<http://www.dvidshub.net/publication/563/thunderbolt-blast#.Us1-ePuF2TM>

<http://www.dvidshub.net/publication/562/armor-magazine#.Us1-EvuF2TM>

**Fundamentals of Reconnaissance and Security:** <http://www.benning.army.mil/armor/fundamentals/>

**Maneuver Self-Study Program:** <http://www.benning.army.mil/mssp/>

fight, then neither we, nor the joint force, will be decisive.”

Certainly in its infancy, the Armor Branch was viewed as a supporting arm to either precede the assaulting infantry and destroy enemy strongpoints, or to accompany the infantry providing direct fires as needed (beautifully exemplified by the new gallery exhibit displaying a Renault tank and a U.S. infantry squad overrunning a German trench line). During World War II and the Korean War, the fate of the independent tank battalion, despite training to operate and fight employing mass and shock effect, was often reduced to companies supporting infantry regiments – even as far down as one platoon per infantry battalion.

This trend continued into the early stages of the Vietnam War, where upon deployment from Okinawa in 1965, 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade not only took their organic “tank” company with them (D Company, 16<sup>th</sup> Armor) but, because of its inherent value, maintained it far past the Army’s decision to deactivate it. (Another well-crafted exhibit in the Armor gallery skillfully highlights the contribution of 16<sup>th</sup> Armor’s mounted warriors.)

We culminate with the deactivation of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 73<sup>rd</sup> Armor; in 1997, after seeing combat in both operations Just Cause and Desert Shield/Storm, this unit cased its colors, effectively ending the era of tanks assigned directly to infantry formations.

Currently the Army uses the Mobile Gun System to fulfill this capability in the Stryker formations but has recently re-energized the discussion of finding an armored gun for use in support of the airborne-infantry brigade combat teams, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and the Global Response Force. As we continue the dialogue with both an eye on our history and the potential impacts to our branch, I look forward to hearing our tankers and cavalrymen’s thoughts on what this vehicle or formation should be.

SCOUTS OUT!

CSM Michael Clemens

**Upcoming Events**

May 2014- Sullivan Cup

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