

# Chief of Armor's Hatch: Preparing Armor Branch to Thrive

I want to open by stating what a distinct honor it has been to serve as the 50<sup>th</sup> Chief of Armor. I cannot begin to adequately express my gratitude to the Soldiers, leaders and civilians of the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) and the Armored Force for their dedication, steadfast support and counsel.

In 1990 the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) published *The Musicians of Mars* to emphasize the most critical synchronization tasks for maneuver units to be successful on the battlefield. This document demonstrated the importance of synchronizing and integrating available combat power and how this inclusion of combined arms and joint enablers creates a harmony that, when present, sets units and armies apart.

This publication was updated in 2016 as *The Musicians of Mars II*, demonstrating the continued importance of harmony in today's operational environment. More so than at any other time since I have served, this harmony remains key to our Army as part of a joint, multinational and interagency team to "win in a complex world."

Since the original publication, the Army has continued to embrace combined-arms integration and, in bringing the Armor and Infantry Branches together at the Maneuver Center, set conditions for it to become a permanent fixture in our doctrine and how we fight. For the past 10 months, I have had the privilege to be a part of this team and represent our branch. The U.S. Army Armor School and organizations across the Maneuver Center, in partnership with the operational force, have worked hand in hand with units and commands throughout the Army to ensure that our training, doctrine and force development efforts are fully in line with the needs of the maneuver force, supportive of our sister branches and in overall harmony with the Army.

To take advantage of these opportunities and ensure the branch is prepared to thrive in a rapidly changing operational environment, we have implemented several significant undertakings I would like to highlight:

- **Branch training and leader-development strategy.** The Armor Training and Leader Development Strategy, published in March, provides a comprehensive guide for the training and education of Armor and Cavalry leaders to negotiate complexity and win on any battlefield. It is provided to complement and supplement unit training and leader-development guidance documents and strategies. It outlines the Armor School's vision, mission and key tasks, and how the institution – in partnership with the operational force – builds personnel and training readiness through a series of planning, training, maintenance, operations and assessment focuses. It can be found at <https://www.benning.army.mil/Armor/content/PDF/2017-2018%20Armor%20Training%20and%20Leader%20Development%20Strategy.pdf?23MAR2017>.
- **Soldier and leader education.** A critical underpinning of our branch training and leader-development strategy remains professional military education (PME) and functional/platform courses. The Armor School is committed to providing current, relevant and doctrinally based PME and functional-course education and training to every 19-series Soldier in the Army. We want to prepare you to carry out your responsibilities when assigned to your formations, so please let us know if we need to recalibrate our efforts – your feedback matters. Also, leaders, consider sending some of your best back to Fort Benning to be small-group instructors and course instructors to assist us in sustaining a culture of professional excellence within our branch.
- **Cavalry Warfighters Forum.** The Cavalry Warfighters Forum provides an Army-wide venue for reconnaissance and security (R&S) stakeholders to collaborate and share information about observed trends and updates to current doctrine, organization, training, materiel development and education efforts affecting the conduct of R&S operations at echelon and across all formation types. It is hosted by MCoE's commanding general and has the U.S. Army Forces Command commanding general as the senior mentor.
- **R&S handbook.** To assist maneuver commanders in planning and executing R&S training and operations, the Armor School developed the *Commander's Reconnaissance and Security Handbook*. Authored by 316<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade and slated to be published by CALL in May 2017, the *Commander's Reconnaissance and Security Handbook* offers a ready selection of doctrinal guidance, direction, observations and techniques for commanders, leaders and staffs at the levels of brigade combat team and below to use to conduct R&S training and operations. Many leaders from across MCoE, CALL, the combat-training centers and the operating force provided input to create this publication to accompany Field Manual 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations*.
- **Soldier 2020.** Our Army and branch are best served by ensuring we have the right Soldier serving in the right assignment. In accordance with Office Secretary of Defense and Headquarters Department of the Army direction and policy on opening previously closed branches and military-occupation specialties (MOSs) to

females, the Armor School began integrating female leaders and Soldiers into the Armor Basic Officer's Leader Course and initial-entry training. This effort expands the available pool from which to fill our ranks while maximizing the opportunity for each Soldier to realize his or her potential and contributions to our Army and nation. Once complete with their required training at Fort Benning, these Armor and Cavalry Soldiers will be assigned to 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry divisions. If you have any female noncommissioned officers or senior specialists interested in reclassifying into the 19-series MOS, please let us know.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to the 51<sup>st</sup> Chief of Armor, BG David Lesperance, and his wife Kelly as they join the MCoE and Armor School team. A proven leader, I am confident that BG Lesperance will lead the branch and Armor School with distinction.

In closing, it has been an honor to serve you. I leave Fort Benning inspired by and confident in the future of our officers, noncommissioned officers, Soldiers and branch, and our ability to fight and win anytime, anywhere and under any conditions of battle.

We are the Army's combat arm of decision! Forge the Thunderbolt!

**BG JOHN KOLASHESKI**  
Chief of Armor/Commandant  
U.S. Army Armor School

### **Acronym Quick-Scan**

**CALL** – Center for Army Lessons Learned

**MCoE** – Maneuver Center of Excellence

**MOS** – military-occupation specialty

**PME** – professional military education

**R&S** – reconnaissance and security