

Armor Branch Update: #GoArmor! The Annual Recruiting and Assessment of Officer Talent

by Alex Turkatte

The U.S. Army Armor School is tasked annually to support branch-specific education for cadets of the U.S. Military Academy (USMA) and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). This tasking includes annual evaluations of nearly 7,000 cadets for their potential to branch into Armor. This annual program is referred to as #GoArmor!

Branching background

In 2012, the Office of Economics and Manpower Analysis (OEMA) at West Point, NY, began an officer-talent-based accessions program based on the May 2010 Officer Corps Strategy Series¹ publication known as *The Green Pages*. This new talent-management accessions initiative started with USMA cadets who would commission in Summer 2013, replacing the previous order-of-merit-list branching process.

Armor talent priorities²

As part of the talent-management initiative, 20 talent priorities were developed by OEMA for the evaluation of cadet potential for each branch. Of the available talent-category options, the Chief of Armor selected the following six talent priorities as key indicators for which a cadet would be best suited for Armor:

- **Mentally tough** – Stress-tolerant and emotionally mature. Performs well even under extreme psychological duress.
- **Physically fit** – Physically tough, gritty and tenacious. Performs well even under extreme physiological duress.
- **Technologically adept** – Understands and comfortably uses the latest technologies.
- **Problem-solver** – Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task.
- **Innovative** – Creative, inquisitive and insightful. Easily identifies new solutions and catalyzes change.
- **Communicator** – Precise, efficient and compelling in both written and spoken word.

Armor cadre with USMA and ROTC are encouraged to recommend cadets seek to improve their scores in these six Armor talent priorities. High talent scores in these six talent traits will help influence branch board panels, who review cadet records to determine the cadets' level of potential to branch into Armor.



Figure 1. Soldiers from 1-16 Cavalry load a C-17 from the New York Air National Guard for airlift to USMA as part of the annual Branch Week event in August 2020.

USMA and ROTC outreach

For more than 10 years, the Armor School has supported branch briefings during annual USMA Branch Week and the ROTC summer events, currently named ROTC cadet summer training. In support of these efforts, an M1A2 SEP V2 Abrams, M1127 Stryker Reconnaissance Vehicle and a Bradley Fighting Vehicle (BFV) are transported annually to both events. (Note that the Infantry Branch has been required to use the BFV for its branch display for the past two years, instead of just highlighting its light dismounted branch focus.)

During 2020 and the coronavirus pandemic, virtual branch briefings were established for ROTC and USMA cadets using Blackboard and Microsoft Teams applications. More video briefings and Armor officer testimonials were developed for posting on social media and the Armor School Website to help educate cadets on Armor. This effort was highly successful through the assistance of brigade combat teams submitting their videos for inclusion in these Armor Branch products, which are uploaded to the Armor School Webpage as well as to the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service.



Figure 2. CPT Gabriella Katz discusses the Armor Branch with cadets at USMA during the annual Branch Week event in August 2020.

Cadet evaluations

Conducted simultaneously with summer branch-education efforts, the Office of the Chief of Armor (OCA) conducts in-depth analysis and evaluations of more than 1,000 USMA and 6,000 ROTC cadets. Through individual cadet data provided by OEMA, all cadets are scored for their potential to branch Armor using the following information:

- Cadet talent priority scores (as discussed previously);
- Cadet branch choice for Armor;
- Cadet personal statements;
- Cadre evaluation statements;
- Interview conducted with HireVue application and questionnaire form;
- Military, academic and physical grade-point average; and
- Army Physical Fitness Test or Army Combat Fitness Test.

These seven items are used to create an initial Armor preference score of the cadet's potential. A score of 3 is "most preferred" for Armor; 2 is "preferred"; and 1 is "least preferred." Once this initial score is created, a panel of Armor leaders reviews all information and votes to retain or change the preference score for each cadet. The panel is also charged to ensure Armor Branch accessions are in line with Army diversity goals in accordance with Army

Regulation 600-20 and Army guidance.³ Although the cadet's final branch choice is a significant factor during branching, the Armor preference score provides the Army G-1 with critical information to finalize all branch determinations.

#GoArmor!

There are several benefits to the officer branching process to ensure the best talent is selected to join Armor. Although the Officer Candidate School (OCS) on Fort Benning, GA, is not yet a part of this education and talent assessment process, OEMA is in direct coordination with OCS leadership for future developments.

In closing, through the help of leaders sharing the Armor story, the Army can continue to educate and assess cadets for the continued success of our Armor Branch.

Alex Turkatte is a military human-resources specialist with OCOA at Fort Benning, GA. His previous assignments include 420A human-resources technician (as chief warrant officer 3), U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command G-1/Adjutant General, Fort Monroe, VA; Headquarters U.S. Army Europe, Heidelberg, Germany; secretary general staff, Headquarters V Corps/Combined Joint Task Force-7, Baghdad, Iraq; 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta Human Resources Troop, Fort Bragg, NC; and S-1, 3-12 Infantry (Mechanized), Baumholder, Germany. His military schooling includes Defense Civilian Emerging Leader Program, Warrant Officer Candidate School, Adjutant General Warrant Officer Basic Course, Airborne School and Jumpmaster Course.

Notes

¹ Officer Corps Strategy Series, May 2010, Wardynski, Lyle, Colarusso.

² Armor talent priorities 2021, <https://www.benning.army.mil/Armor/Cadet-Branching/>.

³ Memorandum, "[Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)] [Fiscal Year 2021] Guidance to Branches for Selecting Army Officer Candidates in the [Department of the Army] Regular Army Branching Alignment Model."

Acronym Quick-Scan

BFV – Bradley Fighting Vehicle

OCOA – Office of the Chief of Armor

OCS – Officer Candidate School

OEMA – Office of Economics and Manpower Analysis

ROTC – Reserve Officer Training Corps

USMA – United States Military Academy