

Gunner's Seat: Training the Armored Force in the COVID-19 World

A lot has changed across the country and globe since the last Gunner's Seat article was published in the Winter 2020 edition of **ARMOR** magazine, but one thing that hasn't changed is that our adversaries continue to operate to undermine the sovereignty and strength of our country and our allies, both covertly and overtly. Our ability to deter threats is truly based on any country or non-state players understanding that Armor Soldiers are still prepared and stand ready to defend our country, our allies and security partners at any time and place. This ability is built on the foundation that our Armor Soldiers and leaders at all levels are proficient in their warrior tasks and battle drills and in their appropriate skill-level tasks. This foundation is then built upon with stable and proficient combat-platform crews and scout squads, which builds lethal platoons, companies and battalions.

Even in the Coronavirus-19 world, this truth has not changed. In fact, it should be clearer than ever that the world is a dangerous place, and excuses for a lack of readiness are not forgiven. Even with social distancing and wearing of masks, officers and noncommissioned officers must continue to be creative when planning and conducting training. An example is that, if simulators are closed due to virus spread, then find an open piece of ground outside on which to conduct section and platoon maneuver walkthroughs. Another example may be that, if Soldiers are sheltering in place, leaders can print out sections of the tank- and scout-platoon manual and use digital conferencing to have a discussion about what they read or to correct how they would react to a tactical problem.

It may not be ideal, and some will call it a waste of time, but it is training, and most Soldiers will appreciate the effort leaders put into it as long as it is based on doctrine and is tactically sound. Not only will I guarantee units will be better at collective training and maneuver, but NCOs will be better postured to succeed and excel at the Advanced Leader's Course and Maneuver Senior Leader's Course if the fundamentals are taught, even if by rudimentary means. Which was how all our predecessors did it before simulators came into play as a training resource; it reminds me of the saying, "What was old is new again!" Remember: individual, crew/squad and platoon training doesn't always have to be mind-blowing and complex to be effective at getting after the fundamentals – we just need to be creative.

Finally, it is with a heavy heart that I write that this will be my last Gunner's Seat article, as I pass off the duties and responsibilities of the Armor School to CSM Tony Towns. I will be retiring this fall and starting the next chapter for Team Muhlenbeck. It has been an honor to serve as a Soldier and NCO in the world's best Army for the last 28 years, and I am blessed to have served as the command sergeant major of the Armor School. CSM Towns comes to the school headquarters with an array of experiences, is a stellar leader of character and a passionate Armor NCO, and I know he will continue to push the school forward into the future.

Change brings new energy, new energy continues to enhance organizational excellence, excellence builds pride and **PRIDE IS CONTAGIOUS!**

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