

Growth of the Armor School: Fort Benning Graduates First Women Armor Officers

by Keith R. Boydston, Fort Benning Public Affairs

Posted Dec. 2, 2016

Capping off 19 weeks of intense training on tank-platoon weapon systems, combined-arms maneuver and security tactics, 65 officers, including the first 13 women, graduated yesterday from the Armor Basic Officer Leader Course.

“Today’s gender-integrated graduation represents an important personal and organizational milestone,” said BG John Kolasheski, Chief of Armor and Armor School commandant. “[But] it also demonstrates our unwavering commitment to train and educate the right Soldiers for the right job so they and their organization can fight and win anytime, anywhere and under any conditions of battle.”

The 95-day course prepared young Armor officers to lead a mounted platoon by ensuring they are physically fit, mentally agile, technically and tactically proficient, and capable of directing the decisive operations of a combined-arms team.

“I am proud to be an Armor officer and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to earn my place in an Armor community that values equality and fairness,” said one of the first woman graduates of the course.

“This experience has made it plain to me that a more integrated Army is a more talented Army, and a more talented Army is a more ready Army,” said a graduate and future scout.



Figure 1. One of 13 women Armor officers graduates Dec. 1, 2016, from the Armor Basic Officer Leader Course at Fort Benning, GA. (U.S. Army photograph by Patrick A. Albright)

During the training, the students received the foundation needed to plan offense, defense and reconnaissance-and-security operations. The first phase of the course ended with a week of marksmanship focused on the M4 rifle and M9 pistol.

“We are professional, competent Armor officers who are prepared to lead platoons in a talented, integrated Army,” said one male graduate and future tanker.

The officers conducted training on the Abrams M1A2 Tank and the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, learning the technical aspects and the weapon systems. Students also demonstrated their skills through a gunnery-skills test and through other simulations.

The Soldiers then conducted an Abrams and Bradley live-fire exercise and ended the training phase in the Close-Combat Tactical Trainer, where they ran simulated tank-platoon missions in preparation for mounted-maneuver training.

“I am an Armor officer who recognizes that equality makes us stronger, diversity makes us better and talent knows no gender,” said another graduate and future scout.

After completing a competitive-maneuver exercise, the course closed with a four-day combined competitive-maneuver exercise that tested the officers on all aspects of leading a mounted platoon.

“Now more than ever you’ll find an Army that values small-unit leaders like the ones you’re about to become,” said retired LTG Guy C. Swan III, former commanding general, Army North/Fifth Army, and keynote speaker for the graduation. “You’re well trained, well prepared and ready to do it.”