

## Chief of Armor Hatch

# Armor Standardization and Training Strategy 2030

*“True intuitive expertise is learned from prolonged experience with good feedback on mistakes.” -Daniel Kahneman*

Readiness and expertise remain foundational to our lethality as a branch. However, the real question that must be asked is, “In what way must we focus our expertise and readiness?”

It is true that over the past 20 years, the atrophy of large-scale combat skills led to a decline in lethality. After the **III Corps Lethality Study**, the consensus among leaders to rectify the problem was a focus on improving our approach to gunneries. While improving the Integrated Weapons Training Strategy (IWTS) was a significant step in the right direction, Armor units across the force still fail in platform proficiency as demonstrated through an inability to meet basic gunnery, training and maintenance standards.

After feedback and observation from across the force, the root of the problem comes from a lack of uniform adherence to existing standards, systems and processes. While we have quality, proven standards, they are not universally followed for a number of reasons. To name a few, fluctuating operational-tempo requirements, inadequate master-gunner (MG) manning and an increased latitude afforded to commanders to determine training requirements created inconsistencies with our overall approach to lethality and expertise.

**The Armor Standardization and Training Strategy 2030** focuses on a systematic approach that codifies the necessary structures and enforcement mechanisms that are needed to standardize training and leader development within the branch. Our strategic framework links standardization across training requirements and leader development to build expertise in mounted warfare. As part of the initial concept development, we categorized the big ideas into near, mid- and far objectives (illustrated in Figure 1) as we move toward 2030. Future work across the Maneuver Center of Excellence over the spring, summer and fall of this year will incorporate working groups to build detailed plans that codify our objectives, with the endstate being the implementation of a pilot program.

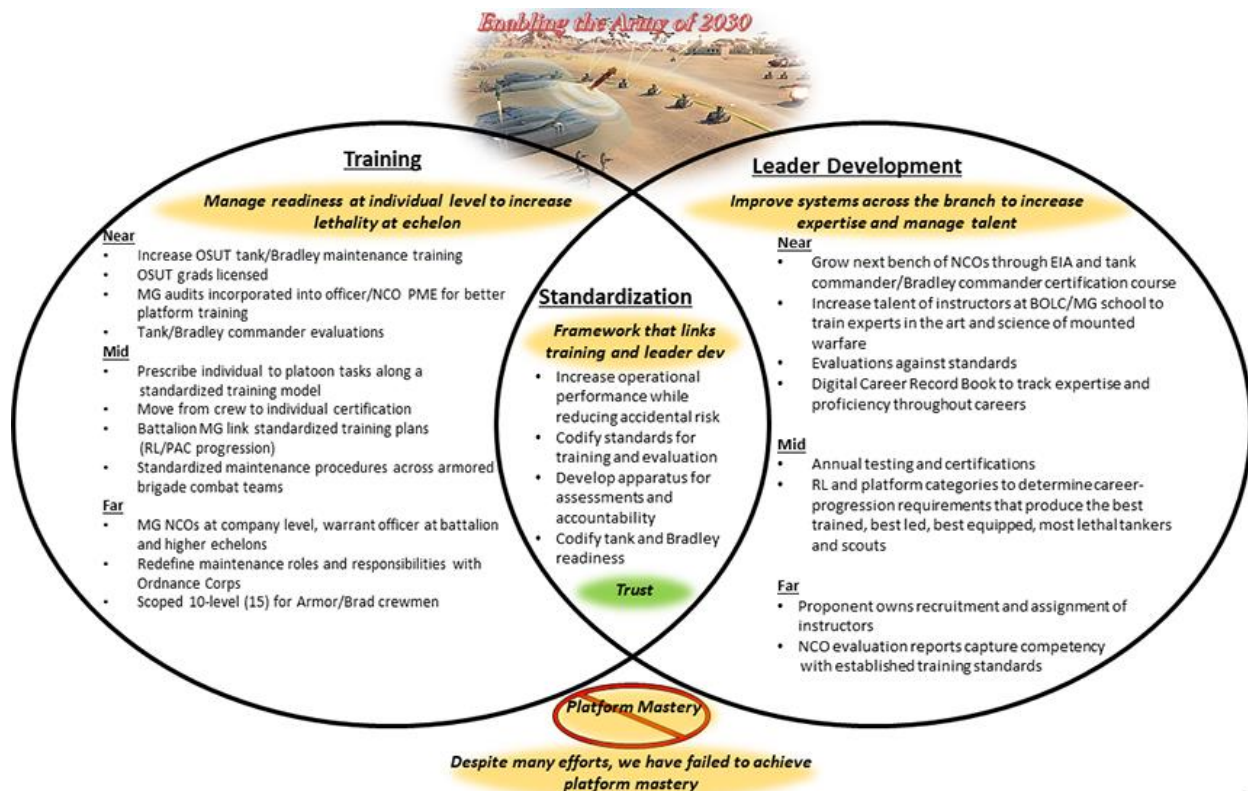


Figure 1. The “big ideas” – future goals categorized based on near/mid/far objectives for future planning efforts.

To start with, the U.S. Army Armor School is working with the Directorate of Training and Doctrine and 316<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade to develop overarching policies and manuals that will guide enforcement of standards. These products will range from adjustments to the IWTS to the development of a training circular (TC) similar to that of TC 3-04.11, **Commander's Aviation Training and Standardization Program**.

Other near-term efforts include building and implementing a tank- and Bradley-commander certification test for all tank and Bradley commanders. In early March 2022, 316<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade provided a draft of the tank-commander certification test, and the brigade is currently working on a draft Bradley-commander certification test for review.

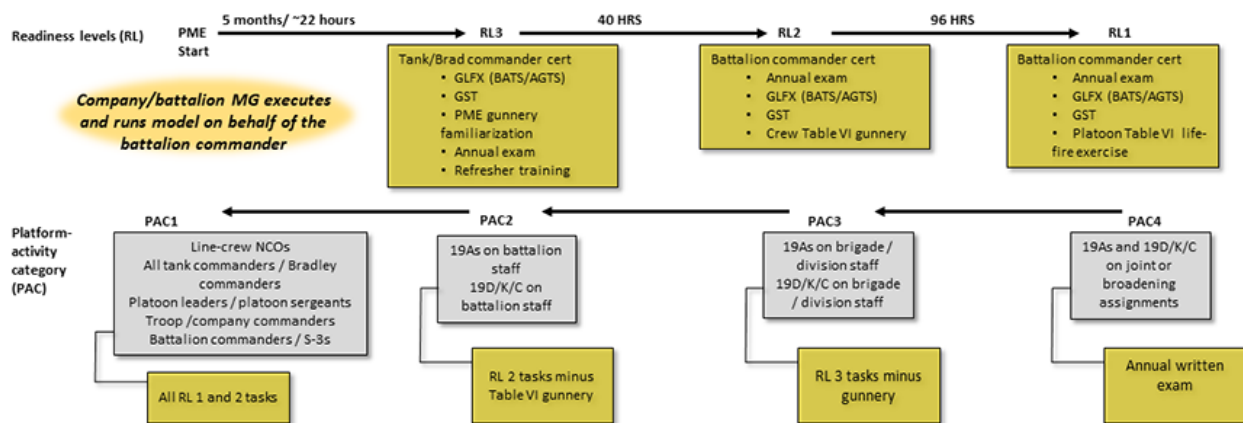
Both of these certifications will focus on written and physical demonstration of knowledge on each respective platform. We see the incorporation of these tests as a requirement for all tank and Bradley commanders at the completion of professional military education (PME) and before assuming duties at their units. We see the administrators of these tests as battalion- and company-level MGs, who will use them as part of an assessment to advise battalion commanders on the readiness of their leaders.

Other near-term objectives to increase expertise involve increasing one-station unit training (OSUT) tank/Bradley maintenance training and requiring all OSUT graduates to be licensed drivers.

Finally, we placed several recent Maneuver Captain's Career Course graduate captains in the MG course. Over the next year, they will help us identify and integrate key course components to address knowledge gaps with our company-grade PME. Their mission is advisory only; they will receive no badges. However, these officers will provide feedback to help us increase the knowledge requirements of our students on their platforms.

Based on their recommendations, we will look to revise our PME to deliver graduates who possess 1) a greater understanding of MG roles and responsibilities at echelon; 2) an increased knowledge of key technical aspects of vehicle systems; and 3) an expanded understanding of weapon and turret maintenance. By distributing this knowledge across the force, we will build the foundations needed for expertise.

As part of the readiness-level (RL) progression model, we look to increase the role of the battalion MG to become the standardization instructor and officer that links RL programs to standardized unit training plans from individual to platoon tasks (Figure 2). At its core, the RL progression model is the foundational structure for implementing the big ideas from Figure 1.



**Figure 2. Leader-development model comparison, potential Armor model. RLs are a way to track individual and collective crew readiness based on specific criteria with progression levels based on rank and position. This approach is similar to how Aviation Branch standardizes and tracks readiness. The final product will be incorporated into a digital-records system for Soldiers that will span their entire career.**

We are currently exploring ways to aggregate individual qualifications based on RLs to build crew qualification, allowing for greater battalion-commander flexibility in certifying crews and reducing the number of sustainment gunneries required to keep formations qualified. This does two things. The first is to better link PME requirements to expertise and knowledge needed upon arriving at a unit. Secondly, it will create a system across the branch whereby an individual who conducts permanent-change-of-station from one post to another can expect the same requirements, standards and standard operating procedures for qualification and certification. Doing so, we will

better manage talent, provide training stability at echelon and create a unified system for knowledge and expertise.

Looking long-term, as we implement initial changes, we will need a greater collective effort across the Army to achieve. For example, expanding expertise for 10-level tasks, or possibly creating a 15-level for armored crewmen, would require cooperation with Ordnance Corps. The creation of a branch-wide command maintenance standard which will include the standardization of the following:

- Global Command Support System-Army (GCSS-Army) proficiencies by duty position;
- GCSS-Army data tracked and reported at unit level; and
- Metrics for maintenance efficiencies.

Currently GCSS-Army is a data-driven system where trends at echelon are not tracked universally. We want to look beyond operational-readiness rates driven by the Status of Resources and Training Systems to create a system that better understands issues our platforms have. For example, creating systems to track common non-mission-capable faults, lead times for replacement and issues with vendor provided parts allows us to keep the force informed as well as provide better feedback across the Army enterprise as to the functional needs of our platforms.

As we link training to leader development, we want to identify talent and grow expertise. This will begin with growing the next bench of noncommissioned officers (NCOs) through use of Excellence in Armor (EIA) in OSUT and a tank commander/Bradley commander certification exam for the most qualified graduates. We are currently working with the Combined Arms Center to implement a Digital Career Record Book that links to existing Army systems of record, where individuals can track their certifications; gunnery scores; written annual exam scores; platform-activity category (PAC) based on current duty position; and future requirements necessary for them to advance in RL categories.

Ultimately, this system will allow us to better assess and distribute talent across the branch while also allowing us to balance quality of Soldiers and instructors across U.S. Army Forces Command and U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command positions.

Looking ahead, our working groups will continue to refine requirements over the coming months. Our goal is to conduct an RL progression pilot (depicted in Figure 2) by the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2023. I welcome your feedback and ideas as we continue to develop our strategy, as well as receiving the results of the pilot with select brigades in the future.

The ideas presented here represent a large shift from how we have previously operated over the last 20 years. However, as large-scale combat operations continue in Ukraine with significant changes in great-power competition in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is imperative more than ever that we as a branch seek ways to improve our knowledge and expertise of our platforms. I believe ***The Armor Standardization and Training Strategy 2030*** can get us there, and I am counting on you to help make it a reality.

Forge the Thunderbolt!

**BG THOMAS M. FELTEY**  
Chief of Armor/Commandant  
U.S. Army Armor School

## Acronym Quick-Scan

**AGTS** – Advanced Gunnery Training System

**BATS** – Bradley Advanced Training System

**BOLC** – Basic Officer Leader's Course

**EIA** – Excellence in Armor

**GCSS-Army** – Global Command Support System-Army

**GLFX** – gate to live-fire

**GST** – gunnery-skills test

**IWTS** – Integrated Weapons Training Strategy

**MG** – master gunner

**NCO** – noncommissioned officer  
**OSUT** – one-station unit training  
**PAC** – platform activity category  
**PME** – professional military education  
**RL** – readiness level  
**TC** – training circular