Chief of Armor Hatch:
Developing Future Comprehensive Strategy

The conflicts of the last decade suggest an ongoing change in the nature of war. Imagery from the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh border conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijani and the ongoing war in Ukraine, for example, tend to highlight the role of sensor technology and long-range precision fires. However, while the innovative use of new and emerging technology demonstrates the availability of new tools for waging war, it does not eliminate the need for opposing forces to meet in combat. Nor does it invalidate the importance of Cavalry to see, find and shape the battlespace to enable maneuver units to achieve points of advantage from which to inflict shock and destruction upon their enemy.

Nevertheless, realizing these effects consistently on tomorrow's battlefields necessitates updates to small-unit doctrine and the Armor Training and Standardization Strategy 2030 (Armor 2030) to reflect an understanding of emerging technologies and their effects. Fortunately, the recent publication of Field Manual 3-0, ***Operations*** – with its clear description of the multidomain environment and how the Army will conduct large-scale combat operations – provides an anchor point for these modifications.

The ability to mass our combat power at positions of advantage requires that we preserve those forces in the defense and on the move. The enemy is increasingly effective at finding forces using optical, thermal, electronic and acoustic detection systems (from phone interview with retired COL John Antal Dec. 6, 2022). These intelligence-collection assets then facilitate the employment of precision fires to reduce the combat power of friendly forces, preventing their transition to an offensive posture. As an armored force, we need to understand our own masking limitations in those four areas. Updating how we camouflage and dampen the noise of our vehicles, reducing our electromagnetic signatures and decreasing the persistent use of radios will allow us to minimize the chance of enemy detection.

First, we need to understand how we look to the enemy. Soldiers and leaders at the small-unit level cannot effectively address weaknesses until they clearly understand how the enemy sees our friendly forces. Second, we need to consolidate the lessons-learned from home-station training and combat-training-center rotations and distribute them to the force. Communicating these lessons-learned allows the armored community to reiterate and refine these techniques to degrade the effectiveness of our adversaries.

Defensive operations allow our units to build combat power and transition to offensive operations, maneuvering forces into a position of advantage to deliver precision fires against our enemies. Preserving our forces requires us to plan dispersed and with reduced signatures, quickly disseminate orders, consolidate converging forces and move directly into the fight. To do so, maneuver leaders must understand how the enemy will use emerging technologies to identify our forces on the move and reduce our combat power prior to direct engagement. Clear understanding of how units will maneuver through various domains to meet the enemy is critical to preserving the force. Reacting to enemy reconnaissance elements and contact across all domains is critical to limiting the effective targeting of our forces. Once friendly forces have maneuvered to the position of advantage, our ability to overwhelm the enemy through fire and maneuver ensures mission success.

As the Maneuver Center of Excellence and the U.S. Armor School develop plans to update training and doctrine, the operational force can influence those documents by communicating small-unit innovations across the force. Units attending combat-training-center rotations and conducting home-station training allow young Soldiers and leaders to develop tactics that address some of the challenges discussed in this article. Publishing those findings allows leaders and planners to engage in discourse further encouraging experimentation across the force. Continued iteration is vital to developing the best tactics and doctrine to be used by the Maneuver Center of Excellence and U.S. Armor School.

Innovations to our tactics that account for emerging technologies allow us to update doctrine and the Armor Training and Standardization Strategy 2030, so we are prepared to meet the challenges of the modern battlefield. Understanding how our enemies see and target our combat power, updating our tactics for preserving the force and training to ensure we can maneuver to a position of advantage will allow us to win in close combat in the future. Developing a comprehensive strategy for updating our training environments, small-unit tactics and

doctrine requires leaders from across the Army to share lessons-learned in training and engage in discourse to meet the challenges of future combat.