

In position at the starting point of the range, a Bradley turret begins scanning the range for targets. Bradley Fighting Vehicles from Alpha and Bravo Companies of the 116th Brigade Engineer Battalion, part of the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team (CBCT) engaged in gunnery practice on the Orchard Combat Training Center (OCTC). The OCTC is located in the desert between Gowen Field and Mt. Home Air Force Base in Idaho.

Returning the Focus to Being Masters of Terrain

Replacing 12B with 19C in the Turret

By Captain Jayden Pittmann

When picturing United States Army combat engineers, one might envision them emplacing complex obstacles to fortify a defensive position, employing demolitions to open lanes while assaulting an enemy, or developing engagement areas to help maneuver counterparts decisively destroy an opposing force. Each of these missions supports the core engineer functions of mobility, countermobility, and survivability across the formation. This ability to shape the operational environment to their advantage is what led to engineers being described as "masters of terrain."

Across armored formations, however, this skill is fading. Within these organizations, 12Bs, combat engineers, are told that maintaining their M2A4 Bradley Fighting Vehicle (BFV) and sustaining crewqualification status is the top priority, followed by training and building competence in engineer tasks and drills. While these tasks and drills are essential for readiness, requiring combat engineers to perform BFVspecific duties distracts them from training on 12Bspecific requirements.

To return engineers to being "masters of terrain," the modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) for armored engineer units must be updated to assign BFV operations specifically to 19Cs, Bradley fighting vehicle crew members. This change would improve overall competency in combatengineer tasks while simultaneously increasing BFV readiness and qualification scores across armored engineer formations.

In early 2024, the United States Army Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) announced a new military occupational specialty (MOS): 19C, *Bradley Crewmember*. According to Major General Michael Simmering (then Brigadier General and U.S. Army Chief of Armor), this MOS was created to provide dedicated crewmembers for the BFV and to "better combat performance, improve operatorlevel maintenance, and focus infantrymen on infantry tasks."[1] The Army identified that requiring infantry Soldiers to train and prepare for

dismounted operations while simultaneously maintaining and operating a BFV placed an overly broad burden on 11Bs, infantry Soldiers.

Combat engineers face the same challenge. 12Bs are expected to develop engagement areas, employ demolitions, emplace obstacles, construct fighting positions, and remain prepared to serve as reserve dismounted forces—all while staying current on BFV simulator training, studying for gunnery skills tests (GSTs), and conducting gunnery operations. Given this breadth of requirements, it is unreasonable to expect 12Bs to remain fully qualified and proficient in every area. Armored combat engineer units therefore require the same solution applied to infantry formations: assigning 19Cs to operate BFV turrets so 12Bs can refocus on the mission set they are trained to execute.

The United States Army identified a gap in skills and knowledge when non19Cs were tasked to operate BFVs. This gap became evident as the Army encouraged infantrymen, combat engineers, fire support specialists, and cavalry scouts with BFV or BFV master gunner experience to transition to the 19C MOS.[2] Within the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas, Division Master Gunner Sergeant First Class (SFC) Patrick Muir noted in an interview with *Army Times* that "having realistic expectations and time management helped crews focus on the basics, which improved their proficiency."[3] SFC Muir reinforced this point by highlighting improvements in GST performance: prior to the 19C implementation, only six crews achieved "distinguished" and 58 were "less than qualified," whereas after implementation, 31 crews achieved "distinguished" and only 21 were "less than qualified."[4]

The same knowledge and skill gap exists within armored engineer units, and results from the 19C integration in the 1st Cavalry Division indicate that adopting a similar approach would significantly improve BFV gunnery proficiency and performance. Assigning dedicated personnel to maintain, train on, and qualify with the BFV would further increase readiness across these formations. It would also reduce the disruption caused by frequent crew transitions, as 12Bs are routinely added to and removed from crews to support their development as combat engineers. Employing 19Cs in these roles would allow BFV operators to focus on equipment operation and maintenance—as their MOS dictates—and free 12Bs to concentrate on combat engineer training and proficiency.

Not assigning 19Cs to operate BFVs within engineer formations not only detracts from 12Bs' ability to train on combatengineer tasks and drills; it also forces unit commanders to make an uncomfortable personnel decision. That decision is whether to place squad leaders in the turret as the Bradley commander. Doing so provides the senior leader at that echelon with multiple communication methods and enhanced battletracking capabilities. However, it also confines the most experienced leader to the turret, limiting their ability

A 3rd Infantry Division Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicle drives off of a 497th Multi-Role Bridge Company, 92nd Engineer Battalion barge during a wet-gap crossing exercise on Fort Stewart's Pineview Lake Sept. 21. The engineers constructed barges to move an M1A2 SEPv3 main battle tank, a Bradley infantry fighting vehicle and the AMPV across the lake. Moving heavy equipment across a water obstacle is a critical task for the unit because it validates the Army's maneuvers capabilities and ability to close with and destroy an enemy.



to influence the fight outside the vehicle and tying them to continuous BFV operation.

Unable to participate in dismounted combatengineer operations, the squad leader loses the ability to control the squad, properly assess and refine ongoing tasks, and efficiently communicate progress to their leadership. Integrating 19Cs into combatengineer formations eliminates this problem entirely. With 19Cs consistently manning the BFV, the squad leader remains available to dismount with the squad. The squad leader can still communicate with the BFV crew to direct movement or fires, all while overseeing operations on the ground and fully applying the squad leader's expertise.

It is important to acknowledge that, compared with armored combat engineers, the United States Army fields substantially more armored infantrymen. For this reason, prioritizing 19C allocation to the infantry is logical; the Army's primary fighting force must remain properly manned and supported for sustained operations.

Some may argue that if manning, operating, and qualifying on BFVs is detrimental to armored combat engineers, then these units should instead be equipped with the ***armored multipurpose vehicle*** (AMPV). The AMPV requires a smaller crew, eliminates the need to complete and maintain gunnery qualifications, preserves Soldiertransport capability, and continues to provide uparmored protection. Transitioning to the AMPV would remove many of the distractions associated with the BFV while still enabling dismounted combatengineer operations during largescale combat operations.

While the AMPV may appear to be a feasible alternative for combatengineer units in theory, removing BFVs altogether creates more problems than it solves. Even with a smaller crew requirement, 12Bs would still be responsible for operating and maintaining a vehicle rather than focusing fully on the tasks and drills required of combat engineers. Armored combat engineers also frequently rely on their own organic suppression, concealment, and security—capabilities provided by the BFV's 25mm cannon, the tubelaunched, optically tracked, wireguided (TOW) missiles, and smoke launchers. Eliminating these systems would significantly increase the risk of combatengineer casualties during operations.

Removing these weapon systems would also prevent combatengineer units from augmenting infantry and armor formations during forceonforce combat. Although transitioning from BFVs to AMPVs may seem to address concerns about 12Bs operating BFVs, doing so would reduce combatengineer capabilities, diminish their overall effectiveness, and increase the risk assumed during combatengineer operations.

Combat engineers' priorities have always centered on providing mobility, countermobility, and survivability support to maneuver units. Assigning BFVs to conduct these operations in armored formations ensures that 12Bs can continue delivering this support during largescale combat operations; however, requiring 12Bs to maintain and qualify on this equipment detracts from their ability to do so. The Army identified a similar issue within armored infantry formations and addressed it by assigning 19Cs to operate the BFV, allowing infantry Soldiers to refocus on executing infantry tasks.

This change is equally critical for armored engineer units—not only to enable 12Bs to refocus on providing mobility, countermobility, and survivability support, but also to better develop personnel into true "masters of terrain" across any operational environment.

Captain Pittmann is currently a student at the Engineers Captains Career Course and holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering from the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York.

Endnotes

1 Davis Winkie, "Armor School Chief Hopes New Bradley Crew Field Will Breed 'Expertise,'" ***Army Times***, February 16, 2024, https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2024/02/16/armor-school-chief-hopes-new-bradley-crew-field-will-breed-expertise/.

2 Davis Winkie, "Army to Create New Armor-Aligned Bradley Crew Member Job Field," ***Army Times***, February 1, 2024, https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2024/02/01/army-to-create-new-armor-aligned-bradley-crew-member-job-field/.

3 Todd South, "New MOS, Training Sees Dramatic Improvement in Bradley Gunnery," ***Army Times***, August 5, 2025, https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2025/08/05/new-mos-training-sees-dramatic-improvement-in-bradley-gunnery/.

4 Ibid

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