



# Armor in the AFP

by Lt. Col. Gamaliel L. Manikon

A COMIC strip once appeared thus: A guy was arguing with his four buddies. "Look, fellows," he began, "I can tell you at least *three* reasons why I can't play poker with you tonight. First, I haven't got the money..."

"Never mind the other two..." they cut him short and moved hurriedly away.

The foregoing anecdote just about sums up the opinion generally prevailing in our country today about armor in the Armed Forces. Even when military men themselves talk about armor, whether from platforms as classroom strategists, tacticians, or logisticians of imaginary divisions, corps, armies or army groups, during "hush-hush" conferences, or just plain, good, old-fashioned "bull sessions," the conversations normally "bog down" along similar pattern and usually expressed in terms of such quasi-questions as:

"Where is the MONEY going to come from to buy the tanks, maintain them, and worst yet, to run those 'gasoline drinkers'?"

Now, in the "army instructional" parlance, "that," indeed, is a good question. For, undoubtedly, even to the ordinary taxpayer of our country, armor is seemingly understood in terms of emotional declension, viz.,: Tanks ("Gee") ...Gasoline ("Oh...oh") ...MONEY ("OH... NO... &@").

Fortunately, the question of national defense and the regional mutual security commitments of our country is not so simple as the "poker game" in the foregoing anecdote; unfortunately, also, the "four buddies" cannot just "hurry away" this time as "they" did because, like the guy who "haven't got the money," that, too, is as much their problem.

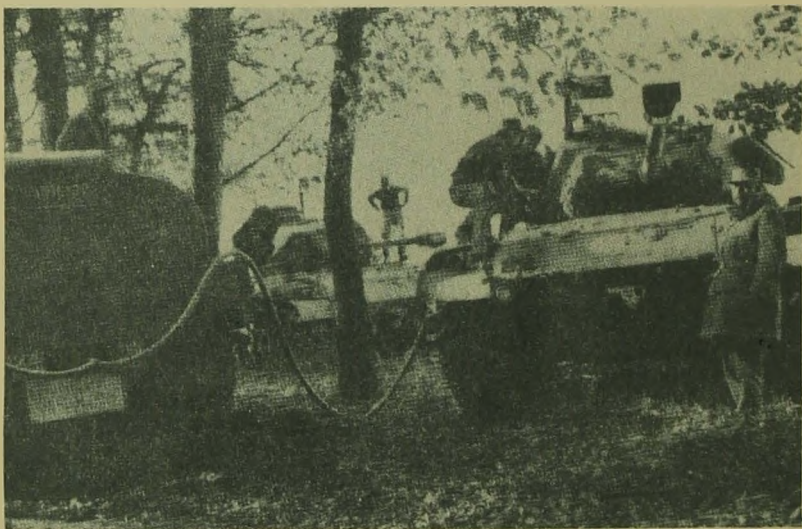
Current universal thoughts and concepts of warfare can still be evaluated to mean that, jet air-

craft, guided missiles, or thermonuclear weapons, notwithstanding, the need for a well-knit and balanced ground forces team of combined arms is more than ever essential. And, it is very exhilarating to note that in our armed forces the "team" idea has been well-entrenched. The other day, while visiting three unit headquarters, I experienced a proper sense of smallness as I saw behind each of the Adjutants' tables the "chart" of a "chairborne pencil-pusher" with the caption below emblazoned in bright, cardinal red clearly designed to attract the attention of "heretics," thus: "They, *TOO*, serve the AFP."

The question, however, whether the "team" that is spoken of in

our armed forces is that of the "combined arms" is still quite problematical. Modern armies today regard their "Armor" as "THE COMBAT ARM OF DECISION" and, despite the limitations of their stringent national economy and geography, they manage, somehow, to incorporate very substantial armored units in their organizations. Such is generally true in those armies which are either aided by, or allied to, the United States. It is comforting to note that the concept of armor has been allowed even feeble pulsation in our armed forces and that, at long last since liberation, it augurs well that it is being slowly aroused from that lethargic state, with the activation of the Armored School in the Phil-

*Tank crews of BCTs use "milkers" for rapid refueling of combat vehicles to supplement jerry-cans as a means of keeping assault battalions running.*



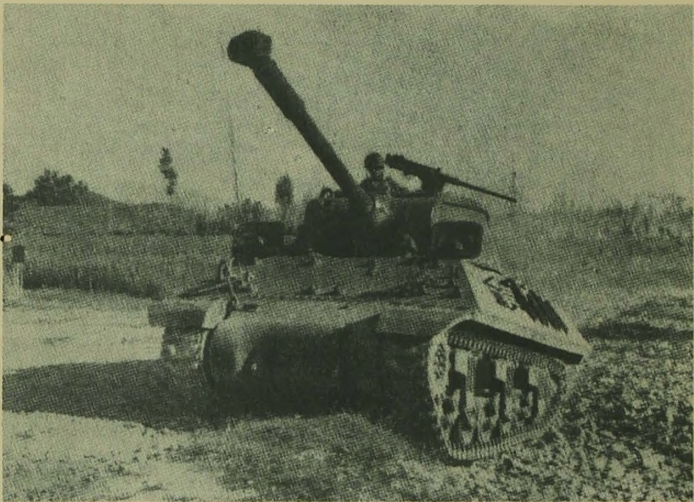
ippine Army School Center of the Philippine Army Training Command.

The Armored School was activated effective 16 July 1955, by Section II, Par. 1, General Orders No. 369, GHQ, AFP, with station at Ft. Wm. McKinley, Rizal, and thereby also allotted six officers and six enlisted personnel. About a year ago, there existed a so-called "Department of Armor" in the now de-activated "Ground Combat School." This department handled the armored instructions in the Ground Combat School and actually conducted what might be considered as the first formal armor officers basic course in the history of the AFP. Twenty-two company grade officers of the infantry, cavalry, and the constabulary are recent graduates of the 16-week armor basic course. Meanwhile, realizing the need for and importance of, emphasis in combat arm branch schooling, then PASC Superintendent Col. Dionisio Ojeda, currently AFP G-3, proposed, and eventually obtained, the approval for the deactivation of the Ground Combat School and, in its place, the consequent activation of the now existing three separate and independent schools of the combat arms, namely: The Armored School, The Artillery School, and The Infantry School.

By purpose and natural design, the Armored School is to be organized and operated in similar pattern as the famous US Armored School at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. As to be expected also,

the local Armored School will probably depend heavily upon MDAP assistance and material support to really make it a going concern even for the modest plans blueprinted for its existence.

The original mission of the Armored School is to provide branch training to company grade officers so that they will have adequate working knowledge of the duties and responsibilities pertaining to company grade officers of tank, armored infantry, and armored reconnaissance units. Simultaneous with activation planning, expenditures not only for the installation of the school facilities, but also the operation of two armor officers basic courses, each with an enrolment of 25 company grade officers, during the fiscal year 1955-56, have been considered. And, by about mid-October this year, the first regular armor officers basic course will commence. Latest GHQ directives, however, propose to amend the School's original mission by providing that, for the current fiscal year, it will also conduct at least one class of 14 weeks' duration to be known as the Armor NCO advanced course. Furthermore, plans and estimates are now being mulled for the opening during the next fiscal year, 1956-57, of courses of instruction designed to emphasize the training and instruction of enlisted personnel and officer armor specialists. Thus, it is anticipated that next fiscal year will probably make possible not only



*Driving instruction tests the driver's skill and the teamwork of the crew.*

the regular armor officers basic courses, but in addition, also: (1) armor officers communication course; (2) armor NCO advanced course; and (3) armor EM communication course.

To undertake its mission, the Armored School is currently organized into an administrative branch and an academic branch. The administrative sections, under the control and supervision of the school secretary, are the: Personnel and Administrative Section, Academic Records and Reports Section, and School Supply Section. The various academic and instructional activities, operations and responsibilities are grouped under the Academic Branch with the Assistant Com-

mandant as Chief. It includes also the Command and Staff Department; Communications Department; Weapons and Gunnery Department; Automotive Department; and General Subjects Department. The eight officers currently assigned, to include the Commandant, bear the brunt of handling the major portion of instructional activities which, in the case of the projected first regular armor officers basic course, will be conducted for 16 weeks, or a total of 704 instructional hours, and consisting of 134 subjects ranging from the whole gamut of such subjects as organization and principles, to small-unit armor tactics, techniques, and command and staff procedures, through

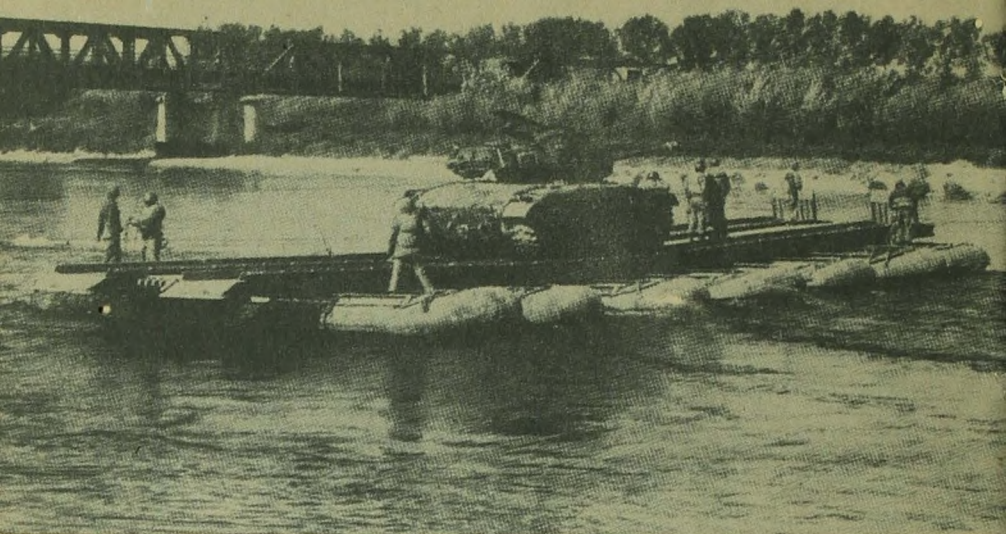


*The armored personnel carrier provides protection from small arms fire as well as from shell fragment while delivering infantrymen and firepower into combat areas.*

tank driving, and finally combat service firing and gunnery and field exercises.

Because of the very flexible setup of the Philippine Army School Center nowadays, plus the obvious limitations in personnel and facilities of the Armored School, much needed and extremely essential support and assistance by way of instructions are invariably requested and obtained from such other schools as: The Command and General Staff School, which will handle about 15 instructional hours consisting of seven subjects concerning classes of supplies and armored logistics; the Ordnance School, which will handle about 45 instructional hours consisting of 17 subjects concerning main-

tenance, servicing, evacuation and repairs; the Engineer School which will handle 7 instructional hours consisting of 3 subjects concerning advanced map reading, mine warfare, field fortifications, and armored engineer support; the Intelligence School, which will handle 11 instructional hours consisting of 5 subjects concerning basic intelligence subjects, recognition training and enemy order of battle; and the Artillery School, which will assist in the instruction of preliminary gunnery principles. Pursuant to current policies, the Infantry School conducts the so-called common Ground General Course of 5 weeks' duration of 220 instructional hours, and which are attended by



*Crossing of rivers by means of pontoon rafts requires skillful teamwork which is attained only by constant practice. Nole troops crossing a stream in the photo above.*

all the students of not only the armor basic course but of the basic artillery and infantry courses as well. Finally, by way of school troops, the 301st Medium Gun Tank Company (Sep) has also been activated and, even with its obsolete armored vehicles and dearth of organization equipment, the Armored School can expect due assistance from the unit not only in small unit tactics training, but also, of more importance, in the matter of armored communications, tank driving, combat service firing and field exercises. In line with the aforementioned policy of the PA School Center, even at this early stage of its existence, the Armored School has already been looked up to by other schools as a source of potential armor instructors. Classes in various armor subjects have been

handled by the instructors of the Armored School to the Advanced Infantry Class at the CGSS, the Advanced FA Class at The Artillery School, the SRC, the Signal School, and the common Ground General course at the Infantry School.

Incidentally, in matters of specialists branch training, all the eight officers presently assigned with The Armored School have undergone their respective share of armored education. Seven are graduates of the Armored School, US Army, Ft. Knox, Kentucky, viz. : two are graduates of the advanced course; one graduated from the associated advanced course; two are graduates of the associate armor COC; and the two are graduates of the recently concluded Armor Officers Basic Course at the defunct Ground

Combat School. By way of professional experience and services, they, too, have had their modest share as veterans of the last World War, the Korean War (three were members of the 10th BCT, one of the 20th BCT, and another served with the 2nd BCT), and the Huk campaign. Among the enlisted personnel, two are also graduates of the Armor NCO Course and Armor EM Communication Course, at the Armored School, Ft. Knox, Ky., and another is a graduate of the FA Weapons Maintenance Course at The Artillery School, Ft. Sill, Oklahoma.

The Armored School comes into being already saddled, as it were, with natural handicaps. We have mentioned that about armor

in general, the problem is financial. There is no doubt that the cost of such enterprise for the Armed Forces will at once appear astronomical in terms of our national resources and economy. So much so that to argue in favor of armor for our Armed Forces would certainly be like swimming against the strong current and undertow of popular opinion and beliefs. The best way to tackle the question, therefore, is to restate the proposition negatively, thus avoiding a head-on collision with such extremely great odds: Do we need armor in our Armed Forces for the sake of national security and mutual defense treaty commitments? If so, how much of it do we need?

It is submitted that one cannot

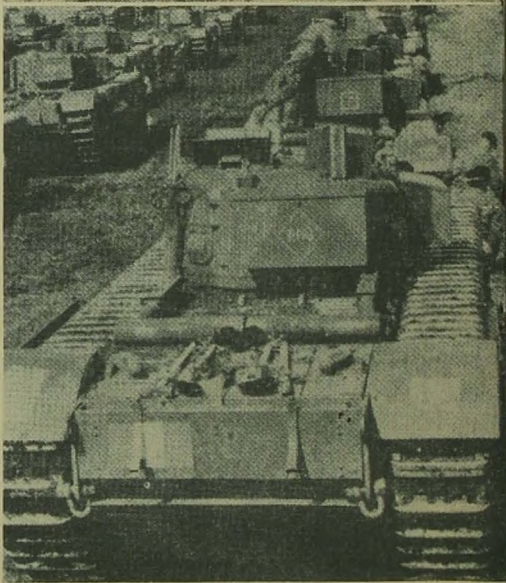
*Superior gunnery and skill in driving and communications are proven during gunnery field exercises. Proficiency in these and in coordination is not easy to attain.*



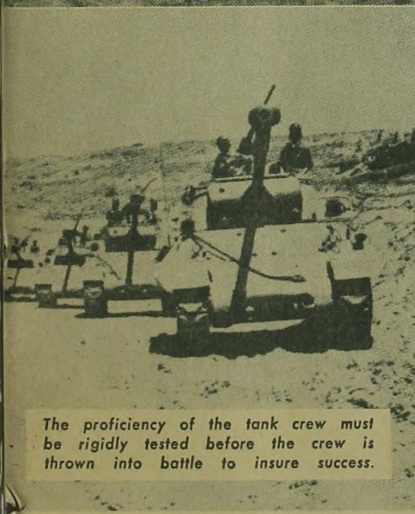
be blind to the implications that the institution of armored units within our armed forces organization will create, particularly in the financial side. For instance, one cannot hide the stupendous cost that some 20 multi-placed fixed wing aircraft and helicopters, 343 light, medium, and heavy gun tanks, 72 self-propelled tracked vehicle carriers, of 105-MM and 155-MM howitzers, 315 armored infantry personnel carriers, 2,421 radio units, 2,421 wheeled vehicles of all types, 42 assault boats, 110 2-ton ammunition trailers, and approximately 200 yards of widened steel tread-way float bridge, as among the several organic equipment of just one armored division will entail of the taxpayers' money. Add to this the salaries, allowances, rations, services and maintenance of some 880 officers, 179 warrant officers, and 13,704 enlisted men; the cost of the basic ammunition load alone of about 2,425,306.4 pounds or 1,207.1532 short tons ranging from caliber .30 individual weapons, to those of the tanks, the self-propelled howitzers, and the AAA AW weapons; and, the POL requirements, which consist of about 1,514,534.445 liters of gasoline in initial supply, 564,620.375 liters of gasoline for re-supply, and about 816,091.30 liters of gasoline needed to move the armored division in 100 miles, or a total of 2,895,246.12 liters which, translated into pesos and centavos and at the rate of P.12 per liter tax free, will cost about



*Tank crews prepare to mount.*







The proficiency of the tank crew must be rigidly tested before the crew is thrown into battle to insure success.

P347,429.53. It is not so much levity or naivete perhaps to claim that the whole annual budget of the Philippines will be just about enough to pay for the aforementioned estimated partial cost of only one armored division.

But lest we fall prey to careless imaginations, it is conceded even by such wealthy nations as the United States and Britain that an armored force is in fact expensive. Therefore, relatively speaking, to make the question of armor in our armed forces hinge solely on the question, so to speak. The important collaterals of this argument are certain historical facts, such as one of the famous utterances in Parliament of Sir Winston Churchill while the British Expeditionary Force was writhing in agony in the beaches of Dunkirk and when he mused amidst the pall of gloom then pervading the assembly and nation, thus: "The awful gap, reflecting on our prewar arrangements, was the absence of even one armored division in the British Expeditionary Force" (Underscoring, supplied). Or, the near tragedy that was the Pusan perimeter in 1950, when North Korean legions, invariably spear-headed not even by the table of organization armored units but in the majority of cases merely by small numbers of T34 Russian tanks, shattered through Allied lines and constricted our initially armorless forces within a spit of nearly another "Dunkirk."