



Virginia National Guard Soldiers from the 116th Mobile Brigade Combat Team conduct Infantry Squad Vehicle operator new equipment training on 14 November 2025 at Fort Pickett, VA. (Photo by Cotton Puryear)

ARMY TRANSFORMATION: *One Weekend a Month*

MAJ KYLE BENNETT
MAJ JEFFREY EDGAR

The brigade commander pointed at his boot. “The infantry moves on its feet,” he said. I had just been denied an insertion platform for my scout platoon. We simply did not have the vehicles available. By the time our scouts completed their infiltration and were “eyes on,” we would need to resupply and risk compromising our position. Even to a lieutenant beginning his first combat training center (CTC) rotation, the limitations of the dismounted infantry brigade seemed absurd. It took several days to move the brigade, even with external support. This was not the formation to win a large-scale combat operation (LSCO) fight. With the Army Transformation Initiative and the formation of the mobile brigade combat team (MBCT), infantry formations will now be lighter, more mobile, and more lethal.¹

In an August 2024 *Military Review* article, GEN James E. Rainey stated, “This Army must conduct current operations, generate ready forces, and transform simultaneously.”² This problem set presents a wicked challenge for all components of the U.S. Army, especially for its part-time forces. The National Guard is nominally funded for barely more than one month each year of training time, and the increased funding that comes from a large-scale exercise, CTC rotation, or

mobilization does not necessarily guarantee the participation of Soldiers whose primary job is not in the military. After action reviews and lessons-learned white papers from active-duty units routinely discuss the fast pace of this transformation, a problem that is only amplified by the 39 statutory training days of Component (COMPO) 2 units.

Over the next two years, the U.S. Army will undergo a significant transformation as 25 infantry brigades convert into MBCTs.³ Several active-duty units completed this conversion in the last 18 months. Two National Guard infantry brigade combat teams (IBCTs) have also converted: the 76th MBCT in Indiana and the 116th MBCT in Virginia.⁴

The remaining National Guard IBCTs face a unique challenge. They must harness their limited training time and resources to learn to fight as an MBCT before receiving MBCT equipment. National Guard IBCTs transforming to an “M” can take immediate action to prepare; they should initiate movement for gradual changes and must work with what they have.

Where Units Can Start Now

The first change in the transition to an MBCT is a cultural

shift. The MBCT concept is very different from the global war on terrorism paradigm of bloated organization and static, uncontested command and control (C2). The mobile brigade concept is summarized by light, rapid maneuver; unprecedented visibility of the operational environment and of the formation of the enemy; and a need for constant unit-level innovation. MG (P) Brett Sylvia, former commander of the 101st Airborne Division and the first unit to go through transformation in contact (TiC), said, “We are not an innovation [formation]. We are a warfighting formation that must innovate.”⁵

Elevate experts and innovators. The strength of the National Guard lies in its Citizen-Soldiers’ expertise across every industry and their real-world practical knowledge. MBCT conversion is an opportunity for commanders and staff to socialize their capability gaps to the rest of the unit, identify who has experience or interest in solving those gaps, and designate those individuals to innovate and train the rest of the force. Examples could include Soldiers with experience in 3D printing, machining or carpentry, or drone hobbyists. Successful innovation teams could expand into internal mobile training teams (MTTs) that could travel within a state or set up a centralized training location to cross-train multiple units in each line of effort.

Every Infantryman a Driver. The culture change to an MBCT should begin with drivers’ training. Infantry companies must adjust from three or four drivers in the company to every Soldier in the formation. Every infantry company needs to maintain a robust driver training program, with a violent emphasis on safety. This is common practice in Stryker and armored brigade combat teams, but for converting IBCTs, this will be an invasion of an already packed training calendar. Units should first focus on general licensing for all forms of high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs) and trailers. They will then be well-postured to receive the Infantry Squad Vehicle (ISV) fielding. Furthermore, the “National Guard-ification” of the MBCT conversion will see young Soldiers driving open-door vehicles at high speeds on open highways.

Every Infantryman a Mechanic. During Warfighter Exercise (WfX) 25-05, the 76th Infantry Brigade learned that the MBCT is highly mobile — until it isn’t. Damaged and destroyed ISVs proved difficult to repair and replace at scale in a simulated environment. MBCTs must foster a culture of maintenance at the lowest level. Every infantry squad will need to become self-sufficient in routine and emergency vehicle maintenance, as well as self-recovery. The current wreckers at the new light support battalions are insufficient and oversized for ISVs. Commanders should be creative in fostering this culture change, which could include competitive maintenance inspections, maintenance task “stakes” like Ranger or Expert Infantryman Badge challenges, or permissive personalization of squad vehicles like the armor community.

Every Infantryman a Scout. The MBCT must still conduct reconnaissance and security tasks without a cavalry squad-

The mobile brigade concept is summarized by light, rapid maneuver; unprecedented visibility of the operational environment and of the formation of the enemy; and a need for constant unit-level innovation.

ron. Infantry battalions must be prepared to perform these tasks and should build training plans accordingly. Scouts are the only all-weather reconnaissance capability in an MBCT. The large influx of drones to the formation is only as effective as the skies above it. Commanders should harness the reconnaissance knowledge of now-former cavalry scouts as they integrate into infantry platoons.

The largest potential short-term win for the MBCT is to drive cultural change toward flexibility in planning and experimentation toward a singular purpose. As GEN Rainey said, “Think big. Start small. Go fast.”⁶ MBCT leaders must lean into new technologies, merge the hungry motivation of young Soldiers with seasoned leaders, and squeeze every minute of a drill weekend or annual training to become more mobile and more lethal.

Where to Initiate Movement While Maintaining Tactical Patience

The transition period will be one of great confusion and uncertainty. There are dozens of entities with a stake in the successful conversion. It will be highly disruptive to a typical training year cycle. These disruptions include armory moves, unit divestments and activations, turn-in and reallocation of equipment, shifting personnel with military occupational specialty (MOS) changes, receiving and training with new equipment, and developing new standard operating procedures (SOPs). A deliberate plan and open transparency to the most junior Soldiers are paramount to minimizing disruption and enabling future retention.

The pace of the MBCT transformation is rapid, but the industry cannot field everything to everyone, everywhere, all at once. Units will likely begin their MBCT conversion before receiving the equipment and personnel they need to deploy and fight. Further, the change to MBCT will outpace the time available to a National Guard unit to train. Commanders must prioritize the capabilities for which they want to allocate training time and resources. There are some areas where units need to exercise tactical patience for industry and doctrine to catch up.

Vehicle replication. It may take several years for units to get their full allocation of ISVs. This means that anything with wheels and an engine could be used to replicate the ISV for unit training. Infantry battalions and companies can begin converting high-back HMMWVs into troop carriers and have units conduct training using vehicles. The ISV is a movement and sustainment system, not a fighting platform. Soldiers

must begin training with a “mobile mindset.” Squads can decide what they carry into the fight, what stays in the garage point or patrol base, and what they simply can do without.

Communication System Replication. The MBCT’s C2 systems will be very different from those of the IBCT, and likely quite different between MBCTs. Cross-communication between brigades and division remains a challenge. Satellite-enabled internet and Soldier-born cellular devices are the way of the future. These systems are improving so rapidly that the Army is hesitant to field any one system prior to it reaching the next level of development. This means that many National Guard units are stuck with legacy systems several generations behind the current authorized equipment, let alone the next-generation MBCT C2 package.

National Guard IBCTs could consider two approaches as they prepare to talk and fight as an MBCT. First, they could acquire commercially available systems, such as Cradlepoint routers or individual mobile devices with the Team Awareness Kit (TAK) or similar software, to replicate the projected capabilities. Alternatively, the transparent battlefield and threat of electromagnetic sensors mean that command posts (CPs) with the most advanced systems must be prepared to go dark at any moment. MBCTs could build “black-out” communications into their training, limiting correspondence to runners or field telephones with spooled wire and switchboards. Many units may be surprised to find these systems still in their supply rooms collecting dust.



A Soldier with 1st Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment conducts unmanned aerial system training at Camp Atterbury, IN, in June 2025. (Photo courtesy of the 76th Mobile Brigade Combat Team)

There is no one-size-fits-all communications plan for an MBCT. TAK has proven very successful in the 76th MBCT. It is easily adopted by younger Soldiers and seasoned leaders alike. A combination of Android government devices running TAK, generic laptops running Windows TAK (WINTAK), and Mounted Mission Command-Software can create a primary communication and intelligence plan for digital communications from brigade down to the individual Soldier. Of note, battery management is important, as TAK rapidly drains device batteries due to continuously active-location services.

Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Training Package. The MBCT will field UAS at every echelon. Some of the projected capabilities may still take years to develop, let alone field to units. COMPO 2 units know they are typically the last in line to receive these systems. MBCTs must then take initiative to acquire systems to replicate a UAS capability prior to anticipated fielding. Where these systems come from is inconsequential. Possible examples include unfunded requests, borrowed systems from other organizations, or permissive policies to allow use of personally-owned systems in training. Units must get systems into the hands of as many Soldiers as possible to begin training at echelon and to integrate UAS into maneuver training.

Mobile Command Posts. Every drill weekend is an opportunity to operationalize mission command and test mobile CP configurations at echelon. Units can do this during home station or spread across ranges and field training. Units should focus first on building current operations pictures using highly mobile CPs to track drill weekend tasks, convoys, and close-out requirements. They should then expand into other capabilities such as plans, intelligence, and administration and logistics. Units should aggressively test ways to make each CP progressively smaller and more mobile.

Laboratory Workshop and Knowledge Management. The conversion to an MBCT is not quite starting from a blank page, but it is a rare opportunity to take a holistic look at unit SOPs and consider how to fight in this new construct. Use every drill weekend to bring together staff, key leaders, and enablers to wargame concepts such as CP layouts, airspace management, and the targeting cycle. Knowledge management often seems like an oxymoron, but it is important to establish a repository early on for lessons learned from other units and to write your own. Every whiteboard workshop should be digitized and stored for future reference. This will prove useful during SOP revisions.

Innovation Centers. For years, active-duty units have leveraged their centrality to create innovation centers focused on additive manufacturing and a centralized repository for unit-level improvements. This is difficult for National Guard units to replicate because of their mission to spread out across the community. Furthermore, most brigades span multiple states. Despite these challenges, states with MBCTs need to establish innovation centers. Units should solicit their states to budget for unfunded purchases such as 3D printers and electronic components to build Blue List-authorized drones. Since most COMPO 2 infantry companies



Soldiers in Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment, conduct annual training at the Muscatatuk Urban Training Center in Indiana. (Photo courtesy of the 2-151 IN Facebook page)

are generally dispersed, brigades and battalions are best postured to create miniature “innovation centers” to build UAS, manufacture replacement parts, and receive grass-roots suggestions for innovation. The XVIII Airborne Corps’ Dragon’s Lair innovation competition — a “Shark Tank”-style event for submitting improvements to the force — is a great example to emulate in National Guard brigades.

Recruit into Low-Density MOS. States with MBCTs should begin to incentivize recruiting electronic warfare (EW) enlisted Soldiers and commissioned officers. These low-density MOSs take a long time to get through schools. In the meantime, use other states’ existing EW companies and staff to team up during your annual training to gain staff experience in brigade and battalion planning.

Further, it is important to look within a state at existing personnel hiding in “pure” branch units. With the conversion to an MBCT, now is the time for the state’s aviation and cyber communities to view slots in an MBCT as broadening opportunities rather than dead-end assignments.

Learning to fight as an MBCT. The Maneuver Center of Excellence is currently developing the MBCT doctrine. For now, the best resources to learn how to fight an MBCT are the MBCTs that have come before. Active-duty and NG MBCTs have compiled numerous lessons learned that inform the current modified tables of organization and equipment (MTOE) and developed useful tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs).

Techniques that worked well. Commanders and staff of new MBCTs need to educate themselves on MBCT capabilities and limitations. They must then engage in the delicate task of educating legacy infantry divisions on how to best

employ the MBCT. An MBCT moves at the speed of Strykers but fights at the speed of an IBCT. Similar to the three-to-five-second rush individual movement technique, MBCT formations should fight with the mindset of dispersing, converging, and dispersing again. In the offense, the MBCT can be used to secure key terrain rapidly, employ maximum dispersion for deception or disruption, or follow a combined arms breach as an exploitation or pursuit force. In defense, the MBCT can serve as a screen with maximum frontage and depth or can respond rapidly as a division reserve.

The MBCT is highly mobile — until it isn’t. MBCT mobility extends only to the capability to be sustained, maintained, and replaced. During WfX 25-05, we experienced challenges in replacing destroyed ISVs, resulting in a line of dismounted Infantrymen straggling behind the formation. The MBCT must

have a primary, alternate, contingency, emergency (PACE) plan to sustain, maintain, and replace ISVs.

Unit Mission-Essential Tasks (METs). It is unlikely that a BCT’s mission or METs will change significantly between the “I” and the “M.” While the METs may not change dramatically, how the MBCT achieves these METs in LSCO will look very different from the IBCT maneuvers of recent decades. As previously discussed, battalions should focus on reconnaissance tasks traditionally performed by cavalry squadrons. For most COMPO 2 brigades, planning for a battalion air assault may shift to a company-size operation due to increased sling-load requirements. Testing during WfX 25-05 did not reveal a significant advantage between air assaulting a legacy IBCT infantry battalion versus the ground movement of a mobile rifle battalion to the same location. Both arrived in full at an objective 100 kilometers away at roughly the same time. The MBCT battalion arrived with all of its heavy weaponry and an ability to maneuver on wheels.

SOPs and TTPs. Units at echelon must review their SOPs and TTPs through the lens of an MBCT in LSCO. Some examples include:

- The arrival of UAS at echelon means shortened kill-chains managed at the lowest level.
- A large increase in Javelin missiles, combined with mobility, allows for anti-armor defense in depth but forces new discussions about the rate of consumption.
- The introduction of launched effects brings a new long-range shaping capability to the battalion and company level. At the squad and platoon level, this means discussions on load plans, dismount drills, garage points, and patrol base operations.

- Companies and battalions must reevaluate how they conduct refuel, resupply, and recovery to provide as much dispersion and redundancy as possible. While the Army continues to prototype and develop counter-UAS systems, the best defense for the MBCT is dispersion and masking.

Battalion and brigade staffs should train through tabletop exercises leading to staff exercise (STAFFEX) and CP exercise (CPX) planning, using the MBCT task organization and capabilities. The 76th MBCT had the opportunity to fight as an MBCT during a division Warfighter CPX as well as the subsequent warfighter exercise. The 116th MBCT conducted numerous table-top exercises leading to and during their eXportable Combat Training Capability 25-04 rotation. These “sets and reps” prove critical to visualizing and understanding the MBCT in the battlespace. While professional articles, capability briefs, and MTOE reviews are part of the learning process, MBCT leaders and staff must plan and fight with the MBCT to appreciate its capabilities and limitations.

Where to Fight with What You Have

No Army component knows more about what it means to “fight tonight” than National Guard units constantly postured to respond to natural disasters, domestic crises, or deploy with active-duty units to win our nation’s wars overseas.

Fight Now. GEN Rainey’s article highlights the importance in getting even a fraction of technology into a formation, enhancing the options it gives a commander to accomplish the mission. “There are technologies that would be useful in our formations right now but are not yet fielded because we are waiting until they can do even more.”⁷ Units must recognize that their legacy systems will continue to be part of their formation throughout the transformation. Units will still have targetable communications networks, older equipment, and capability gaps while awaiting the fielding of new equipment.

Beg, borrow, and network. Find existing government contracts to fulfill capability gaps and leverage the people in your state who know leaders of organizations with technology that can be put in Soldiers’ hands. Network through symposiums, forums, professional publications, and the Center for Army Lessons Learned products and podcasts to find the latest best practices. Reach out to other states and offer opportunities for other units to send Soldiers and equipment for mutually beneficial training.

Lessons Learned. Heed lessons learned but be wary of learning the wrong lessons. There is much written and said on the wars in Ukraine, the Middle East, and potential conflict in the Pacific. It is important to distinguish between lessons that apply universally and those that apply only to specific theaters or circumstances. As an example, the ultra-wide dispersion of infantry in Ukraine started partly due to manpower shortages, and the rise of attack drones in Ukraine was due to a distinct shortage of artillery ammunition.⁸ These traits may look substantially different in the confined terrain of a Pacific island or between two conventional forces in an urban environment.

Ultimately, units can never go wrong focusing on the basics: mastering individual warfighter skills, improving

physical fitness, training lethal squads and platoons, and developing adaptive leaders. These elements are critical for unit success regardless of MTOE, assigned mission, or position in the Regionally Aligned Readiness and Modernization Model cycle. There is no “right way,” no silver bullet, and certainly no shortcuts. Leaders at all echelons will continue to devote personal time to make their units better and ensure that unit training time provides maximum value. The “get it done” spirit of our junior Citizen-Soldiers will create endless opportunities for innovation and problem-solving.

National Guard commanders and staffs that take immediate action, prepare for future capability, and work with what they have will be better able to wield the lighter, more mobile, and lethal formation that is the MBCT. The infantry may still fight on its feet, but it can get to that fight faster and stay in the fight longer as an MBCT.

Notes

¹ Honorable Dan Driscoll and GEN Randy A. George, “Letter to the Force: Army Transformation Initiative,” 1 May 2025, https://www.army.mil/article-285100/letter_to_the_force_army_transformation_initiative.

² GEN James E. Rainey, “Continuous Transformation,” *Military Review* (September-October 2024), <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/SO-24/SO-24-Continuous-Transformation/>.

³ Todd South, “Infantry Brigades Shift to Mobile Brigades in Army Transformation,” *Army Times*, 16 October 2025, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2025/10/16/infantry-brigades-shift-to-mobile-brigades-in-army-transformation/>.

⁴ Cotton Puryear, “116th IBCT Officially Converted to Mobile Brigade Combat Team,” *Virginia National Guard News*, 17 October 2025, <https://va.ng.mil/News/Article/4326630/116th-ibct-officially-converted-to-mobile-brigade-combat-team/>; 76th Mobile Brigade Combat Team,” Indiana National Guard website, accessed 22 November 2025, <https://www.in.gov/indiana-national-guard/indiana-army-national-guard/38th-infantry-division/76th-mobile-brigade-combat-team/>.

⁵ “Transformation in Contact & the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault),” *Breaking Doctrine* podcast (No. 98), 1 December 2025, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/breaking-doctrine/id1522992251>.

⁶ GEN Rainey, “Continuous Transformation.”

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Michael Kofman and Rob Lee, “Not Built for Purpose: The Russian Military’s Ill-Fated Force Design,” *War on the Rocks*, June 2022, <https://warontherocks.com/2022/06/not-built-for-purpose-the-russian-militarys-ill-fated-force-design/>; Stacie L. Pettyjohn, “Drones are Transforming the Battlefield in Ukraine But in an Evolutionary,” *War on the Rocks*, March 2024, <https://warontherocks.com/2024/03/drones-are-transforming-the-battlefield-in-ukraine-but-in-an-evolutionary-fashion/>.

MAJ Kyle Bennett currently serves as the brigade S-3 for the 76th Mobile Brigade Combat Team (MBCT), Indiana National Guard, Lawrence, IN. His previous assignments include serving as mobilization readiness officer for the 54th Security Forces Assistance Brigade in Indianapolis and J35 CONOPS plans officer (U.S.) for Headquarters, NATO Kosovo Force in Pristina, Kosovo. MAJ Bennett is a graduate of the U.S. Army Ranger Course and Reconnaissance and Surveillance Leaders Course. He earned a bachelor’s degree in biblical studies from the Moody Bible Institute.

MAJ Jeffrey Edgar currently serves as the brigade S-2 for the 76th MBCT. His previous assignments include serving as chief of the brigade intelligence support element for the 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, battalion S-2 for 2nd Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment in South Bend, IN, and ACE chief, 38th Infantry Division in Indianapolis. MAJ Edgar is a graduate of the Military Intelligence (MI) Basic Officer Leaders Course, MI Captains Career Course, and I Corps’ and III Corps’ Brigade S-2 Course. He earned a bachelor’s degree in history from Ball State University.