



Cavalry Leaders' Course: More Than 25 Years of Training Cavalry Professionals

by MAJ Ryan J. Gainey, CPT Joe Byerly
and CPT Brian J. Harris

Since its creation in 1987, the Cavalry Leaders' Course has answered the call of the force to provide training to leaders of reconnaissance organizations. Over the years, we have adapted our focus as the reconnaissance community shifted from high-intensity conflict to counterinsurgency to present-day decisive action.

The new course consists of a 15-day training curriculum that concentrates on the student's understanding of fundamentals in addition to the tactical procedures required to conduct reconnaissance and security operations at troop level in support of unified land operations.

A CLC graduate will:

- **Be a subject-matter expert on recon and security fundamentals:** Understand the effect of fundamentals applied to maneuver tactics; ap-

ply the fundamentals into planning through synchronization, task/purpose and timelines; demonstrate ability to train fellow leaders in the fundamentals; and increase organizational understanding/application.

- **Demonstrate application of mission analysis:** Demonstrate improved ability to assess terrain and its impact on maneuver and observation; demonstrate improved ability to assess enemy-forces capabilities, disposition and courses of action; and demonstrate improved understanding of Cavalry task organization and capabilities.
- **Demonstrate mission command:** Effectively communicate through written (graphics) and verbal orders; prioritize recon objectives through effective resource allocation; understand the commander's critical information requirements

of the higher commander; and develop commander's guidance that effectively communicates intent.

- **Integrate supporting assets:** Demonstrate understanding of unit/system and supporting range/distances; employ collection assets effectively; and demonstrate ability to effectively plan the employment of air- and ground-based fires to support recon and security operations.

The course has modified its format to align with Army Learning Model 2015, which emphasizes experiential learning and shifts content delivery from instructor-led to instructor-facilitated. By avoiding the "sage on the stage" technique, CLC challenges students to expand their knowledge base through research and peer-to-peer learning, thus refraining from "spoon feeding" material and fostering a checklist mentality.



The use of 12 tactical-decision exercises, a Cavalry-operations adaptive-planning exercise and professional reading and discussion guides a CLC student through the experiential learning model.

TDEs

TDEs range from simple problem sets to complex hybrid scenarios covering the gamut of traditional Cavalry missions. Operating in a time-constrained environment, students conduct detailed terrain and enemy analysis to develop a tactical plan that is briefed for peer evaluation.

This phase is critical to the learning process, as it provides feedback to the presenter and reallocates ownership of knowledge to the students who must demonstrate their understanding of the concepts through their questions and critique of the presentation. Peer evaluation allows the instructor to evaluate the students while simultaneously guiding group discussion and expanding student knowledge through the mentorship process, further diminishing the “instructor vs. student” mentality that is apparent in instructor-led models.

COAPEX

The COAPEX is a three-day event that centers on planning and integrating assets at squadron level. Students are divided into three-person groups, with the planning emphasis put on intelligence, maneuver and sustainment during the exercise. The course has steered away from teaching and executing the traditional military decision-making process, adopting a focus on identifying and solving complex problems.

On Day 1, the students receive a hybrid-threat scenario that requires their reconnaissance squadron to conduct a zone reconnaissance of a foreign city in a failed state to prepare maneuver battalions beginning operations. They plan operations for a 72-hour period and brief the class at the end of the day.

On Day 2, each group receives a list of tailored significant activities that took place during the 72 hours after their initial H-hour planning, along with updated priority intelligence requirements from the brigade. Students are required to prioritize their lines of effort and conduct a second iteration of planning for a second 72-hour period.

On Day 3, groups receive a fragmentary order from the brigade requiring them to establish a guard south of the city to defend against conventional forces moving north. Students are given limited time to plan and brief the mis-

sion before assuming roles of the troop commanders, writing detailed operations orders for their final task of the course.

The COAPEX allows students to see the importance of planning and synchronization at the squadron level and how it can poorly or positively affect operations at the troop level.

Professional reading and on-line discussion

CLC was among the first schools in the 1990s to use the Force XXI training program. The program allowed students to interface via the Internet directly with subject-matter experts from the National Training Center and around the force, considerably broadening in-class discussion.¹

CLC has reintroduced this concept with an on-line forum. Each night students receive one to two hours of professional reading that covers a myriad of topics ranging from historical vignettes to articles on mission command. Students share their thoughts and experience in response to reading on-line message boards and classroom discussion.

The message board, found on the CLC milBook page (<https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/the-cavalry-leaders-course>), enables students to extend discussions beyond the classroom and onto a professional forum accessible by leaders throughout the force. This knowledge crossover allows students to not only learn from each other but also from military leaders with varying backgrounds and experiences. These collaborative on-line discussions enhance the student's learning experience while also generating more topics and ideas for the instructor to lead in class professional discussion.

Not only for Armor officers

Since its initial inception, the course has traditionally focused on training post-career-course maneuver captains slated to command a Cavalry organization. While this remains true for most of the student population, we have expanded the course to encompass the maneuver community's senior non-commissioned officers (E-7 to E-9) who are preparing to serve or are currently serving as troop first sergeants or squadron-operations sergeants major.

Their inclusion in the course enables NCOs to achieve a better understanding of reconnaissance and security operational planning. Most importantly, it enhances the NCO's understanding of how to integrate their concept of

support into these operations. Also, the vast experiences these NCOs have often bring a unique perspective to the small group during the multitude of collaborative exercises and discussions conducted throughout the course.

In addition to NCOs, CLC also provides a great opportunity for infantry officers without Cavalry experience who are selected to command a Cavalry troop to garner a better appreciation for reconnaissance and security operations. Since successful Cavalry operations have always been a combined effort across several of the warfighting functions, the course is open to officers and NCOs from all branches that support reconnaissance operations.

An S-6 who has a clearer understanding of what a troop does is better able to develop a communications plan that supports the entire squadron. A commander in the forward-support command who understands the logistics and complexity of screen-and-guard operations is better prepared to train his Soldiers who support these types of missions. In opening our doors to leaders from other warfighting functions, we've found that their participation has greatly enhanced the overall effectiveness of this course.

Bringing CLC to you

CLC has greatly expanded its reach to the operational force using mobile training teams. In Fiscal Year 2012, CLC conducted nine MTTs, including the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Germany, the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, the Marine Corps School of Infantry Light Armor Reconnaissance Course and several National Guard units supporting pre-deployment and annual training events.

The limited resources required to conduct a CLC class make an MTT a lucrative option for most active and National Guard units. For the cost of sending one Soldier on temporary duty to Fort Benning for a residential class, a unit can fund one CLC instructor to travel to home station to conduct a course, training up to nine leaders.

While some courses may differ slightly on a MTT from its residential counterpart, CLC is able to replicate its lesson plans on the road. This ensures a CLC graduate is the same no matter the location.

In addition to standard MTT classes, CLC cadre have provided unit mentorship during training-center rotations and home-station training events, as well as augmenting unit staff training to assist squadron staffs in planning

reconnaissance and security-centric scenarios. Though these additional events are not Army Training Requirements and Resources System-coded training, they provide units with Cavalry subject-matter experts who are useful for refining their current products and tactics or to simply “re-blue” Cavalry leaders in doctrine and techniques.

The wide range of MTT experience has resulted in a strong relationship between the cadre and operational units and training centers. This relationship means that the CLC cadre is up to date with current tactics, trends and task-organizational changes being used across the Army. Coupled with our close link with the reconnaissance and security doctrine writers at the Maneuver Center of Excellence, CLC cadre are a powerful tool for Cavalry commanders to use in training and evaluating their formations.

Course contact information

Course administrative offices are located in Patton Hall on Fort Benning, GA. Leader resources, professional reading and discussions, and course and instructor contact information are located on the course milBook page.

As we move toward a new phase in our Army’s history, CLC continues to be the only source for Cavalry training for troop-level leadership. This course will ensure that leaders are taught “how to think rather than what to do, [which is] central to building mental mobility and ensuring the ability to function in any operational environment.”²



MAJ Ryan Gainey is an instructor for CLC, 3-16 Cavalry, Fort Benning. His assignments include commander, B Troop, 1st Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Hood, TX (Operation New Dawn, 2010-2011); squadron planner, 1/3 Armored Cavalry Regiment; MTT chief, MiTT 31, Babil Province, Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2008-2009); surveillance-troop executive officer, D Troop, 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, WA; and anti-tank platoon leader, H Troop, 2nd Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Fort Polk, LA (Operation Iraqi Freedom). MAJ Gainey’s military education includes Armor Officer Basic Course, Scout Leaders’ Course, Maneuver Captains’ Career Course, Cavalry Leaders’ Course and Airborne School. He holds a bachelor’s of science degree from Northwestern

State University of Louisiana in health and exercise science. He is the recipient of a Bronze Star Medal (one oak-leaf cluster), Meritorious Service Medal, Order of St. George bronze medallion and Draper Armor Leadership Award-Individual.

CPT Joe Byerly is also an instructor for the CLC, 3-16 Cavalry, Fort Benning. Previous assignments include plans officer, 2nd Armor Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, GA; commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-64 Armored Regiment, and C Troop, 3-7 Cavalry; squadron plans officer, 3-7 Cavalry; and platoon leader, A Troop, 2-1 Cavalry, Fort Lewis. CPT Byerly’s military education includes Advanced Officer Basic Course, Scout Leaders’ Course, Maneuver Captains’ Career Course and CLC. He holds a bachelor’s of science degree from North Georgia College and State University in criminal justice. CPT Byerly is the recipient of the Bronze Star Medal (one OLC), MSM and Purple Heart. He is also the FY11 Recipient of the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award.

CPT Brian Harris is course manager/instructor for CLC, 3-16 Cavalry, Fort Benning. He previously served as commander, A Troop, 1-17 Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC; assistant S-3 plans officer and tactical operations officer/pilot-in-command, B Troop, 1-17 Cavalry; and mortar-platoon leader, HHC, 2-72 Armored Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, Camp Casey, South Ko-

rea. CPT Harris’ military education includes Pathfinder School, Airborne Course, CLC, Aviation Captains’ Career Course, Joint Firepower Course, Army Aviation Tactical Operations Officer Course, Aviation Warrant Officer Basic Course, Initial Entry Rotary Wing Course/OH-58D FSXXI Course and Armor Officer Basic Course. He holds a bachelor’s of arts degree in history from University of Central Florida and is a recipient of the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart and four Air Medals.

Notes

¹ Cameron, Robert S. Dr., *To Fight or Not to Fight? Organizational Trends in Mounted Maneuver Reconnaissance from the Interwar Years to Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010.

² Ibid.

ACRONYM QUICK-SCAN

- CLC** – Cavalry Leaders’ Course
- COAPEX** – Cavalry-operations adaptive-planning exercise
- FY** – fiscal year
- HHC** – headquarters and headquarters company
- MSM** – Meritorious Service Medal
- MTT** – mobile training team
- NCO** – noncommissioned officer
- OLC** – oak-leaf cluster
- TDE** – tactical-decision exercise



SFC Mark Leavens issues a troop-level operations order to fellow students during the reconnaissance phase of the course at Fort Benning. (Photo by CPT Joe Byerly)