

CAVALRY LEADERS' COURSE:

MORE THAN 25 YEARS OF TRAINING CAVALRY PROFESSIONALS

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Since its creation in 1987, the Cavalry Leaders' Course (CLC) 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 has shifted from high-intensity conflict to counterinsurgency to present day decisive action operations.

The new course consists of a 15-day training curriculum that concentrates on the understanding of fundamentals in addition to the tactical procedures required to conduct reconnaissance and security operations at the 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; apply the fundamentals into planning through synchronization, task/purpose, and timelines; and demonstrate the 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 COAs; 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 higher commander's critical information requirements (CCIR); and develop commander's guidance that effectively communicates intent.

Integration of supporting assets — Demonstrate understanding of unit/system and supporting range/distances; employ collection assets effectively; and demonstrate the 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, the 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 (TDEs), a Cavalry operations adaptive planning exercise (COAPEX), and professional reading and discussion guides a CLC student through the experiential learning model.



TDEs

The TDEs range from simple problem sets to complex hybrid scenarios covering the full gamut of traditional Cavalry missions. Operating in a time-constrained environment, students will 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 own 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 integration of assets at the squadron level. For the exercise, students are divided into three-person groups, and emphasis is placed on intelligence, maneuver, and sustainment planning. The course has steered away from teaching and executing the traditional military decision-making process (MDMP), 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 for 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 (SIGACTS) that took place during the 72 hours after their initial H-hour planning, along with updated priority intelligence requirements (PIR) 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 (FRAGO) 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 mission 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 Online Discussion

In the 1990s, the CLC was among the first schools to utilize the Force XXI training program. The program allowed students to interface via the internet directly with subject matter experts from the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, Calif., and around the force, considerably broadening in-class discussion.¹

The course has reintroduced this concept with an online forum. Each night, the students receive 1-2 hours of professional reading that cover a myriad of topics ranging from historical vignettes to articles on mission command. Students share their thoughts and experiences in response to the reading through online 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 online discussions enhance the learning experience of the student while also generating additional topics and ideas for the instructor to lead in class professional discussion.

Not Just 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 the majority of the student population, we have expanded the course to encompass the maneuver community's senior NCOs (E-7 to E-9) who are either preparing to serve or are currently serving as troop first sergeants or squadron operations sergeants major.

This will allow NCOs to achieve a better understanding of reconnaissance and security (R&S) operational planning and, more importantly, how to effectively 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 R&S 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 S6 who has a clearer understanding of what a troop does is better able to develop a communications plan that supports the entire squadron. A fire support element commander who understands the logistics and complexity of screen and guard operations will be better prepared to train his Soldiers who support these types of missions. In opening up 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 through the use of mobile training teams (MTTs). In FY 12, CLC conducted nine MTTs, which included the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Germany, NTC, the Marine Corps School of Infantry Light Armor Reconnaissance Course, and several National Guard units supporting pre-deployment and annual training (AT) events. The limited resources required to conduct a CLC class makes an MTT a lucrative option for most active and National Guard units. For the cost of sending one Soldier on temporary duty (TDY) 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 MTT courses may differ slightly from their residential counterparts, CLC is able to fully replicate its lesson plans on the road. This ensures that 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



Photo by CPT Joe Byerly

SFC Mark Leavens issues a troop-level operations order to fellow students during the reconnaissance phase of the CLC. The course provides a great opportunity for Infantry officers without Cavalry experience who are selected to command a Cavalry troop to garner a better appreciation for R&S operations.

training events, as well as augmenting unit staff training to assist squadron staffs in planning R&S-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 can be used to refine 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 both 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 R&S 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 officers are currently located in Patton Hall on Fort Benning. Leader resources, professional reading and discussions, and course and instructor contact information are located on the course milBook page (<https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/the-cavalry-leaders-course>).

As we move towards 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

Soldiers from 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division drive their M3A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles to reach a phase line where they will move into a defensive posture during platoon scout training at Fort Carson, Colo., on 26 January 2013.

Photo by SSG Andrew Porch

Notes

¹ Dr. Robert S. Cameron, *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.

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CPT Joe Byerly is also a CLC instructor, 3-16 Cavalry. His previous assignments include serving as the plans officer for the 2nd Armor Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.; commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, and C Troop, 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, Fort Stewart; and plans officer for 3-7 Cavalry. CPT Byerly earned a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from North Georgia College and State University.

CPT Brian Harris is course manager/instructor for CLC, 3-16 Cavalry. His previous assignments include serving as commander of A Troop, 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.; assistant S3 plans officer and tactical operations officer/pilot-in-command, B Troop, 1-17 Cavalry; and mortar platoon leader, HHC, 2nd Battalion, 72nd Armor, 2nd Infantry Division, Republic of Korea. CPT Harris earned a bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Central Florida.

