
Armor OES Expands to Include ‘Reconnaissance-Centric Training’

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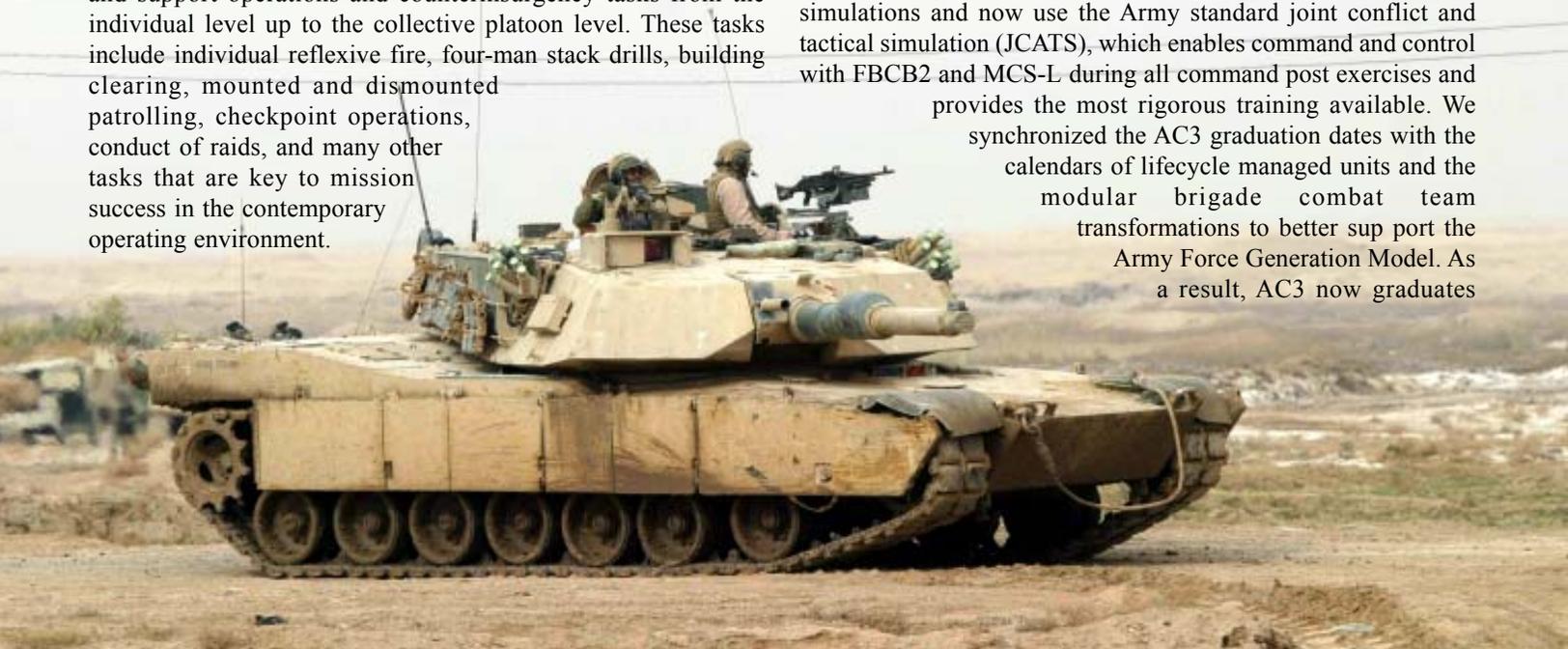
I would like to take this opportunity to update the Armor community on some of the exciting changes to the Officer Education System (OES) here at Fort Knox. As the primary unit responsible for officer training, the 16th Cavalry Regiment has been the catalyst for most of these changes.

I’ll start with the Armor Officer Basic Course (AOBC), which will retain its primary mission to prepare Army and Marine Corps Armor lieutenants in the basic fundamentals of leading a platoon in the full spectrum of operations. In keeping pace with Army modularity, we have developed a new program of instruction that is current and relevant. We have expanded the curriculum from just “tank centric” training to include more “reconnaissance centric” training to provide the skills necessary for Armor lieutenants to lead a tank and/or a reconnaissance platoon in combat. We have made a number of significant changes to support this shift. For instance, gunnery no longer consists of just firing tanks; lieutenants now fire the MK19 40mm machine gun, the M249 squad automatic weapon, and the .50-caliber machine gun from a high mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV). We also merged the four-day HMMWV field training exercise with the three-day urban operations field training exercise and created a seven-day stability and support operations field training exercise to teach future armor and cavalry platoon leaders stability and support operations and counterinsurgency tasks from the individual level up to the collective platoon level. These tasks include individual reflexive fire, four-man stack drills, building clearing, mounted and dismounted patrolling, checkpoint operations, conduct of raids, and many other tasks that are key to mission success in the contemporary operating environment.

The “ten-day war” that many of you conducted in the past is even more challenging and exciting. We now begin the exercise at the individual crew level then continually ramp up the level of difficulty as we transition to section and platoon-level training. The culminating event is company/team level force-on-force night operations with participation of captains from the Armor Captains Career Course (AC3). We are developing Armor platoon leaders who are trained in their branch-specific tasks and are prepared for the fight they are about to face.

The AC3 has also undergone significant revisions, which resulted from a combination of a directed redesign of all captains career courses, cancellation of the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS3), feedback from the Force, and discussions with leaders and commanders from Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. The loss of CAS3 allowed us to add ten days to AC3, so we thoroughly reviewed the program of instruction to ensure we stay current and relevant. We dropped task force defensive operations and a block on tactical operations center (TOC) operations and added dedicated training blocks on brigade operations; urban operations; stability operations; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations; and security operations.

We retained task force offensive operations and company/team offensive and defensive operations. Since the majority of students have had exposure to Force XXI battle command, brigade and below (FBCB2) systems as lieutenants, we replaced FBCB2 instruction with maneuver control system-light (MCS-L) instruction. We eliminated tactical operations (TACOPS) simulations and now use the Army standard joint conflict and tactical simulation (JCATS), which enables command and control with FBCB2 and MCS-L during all command post exercises and provides the most rigorous training available. We synchronized the AC3 graduation dates with the calendars of lifecycle managed units and the modular brigade combat team transformations to better support the Army Force Generation Model. As a result, AC3 now graduates



eight times annually, versus four times in the past.

We have not only updated the Active Component AC3, but also the Reserve Component (RC) course. Beginning this August, the RC course will run 13 months. Each course is designed to be successive, commencing with a distance learning (DL) phase, followed by the first resident phase, then a second DL phase, and finally, a second resident phase. The first two-week resident phase includes testing on the task force military decision-making process and company/team operations. The second resident phase integrates RC students into each resident course in small groups of twelve students, where they will execute brigade operations by training with a capstone brigade simulation-driven command post exercise with the Armor Pre-Command Course.

Not to be left out, the Cavalry Leaders Course and the Scout Leaders Course are adapting as well. Instruction now reflects the recent changes in reconnaissance organizations and cavalry tactics, techniques, and procedures resulting from the Army's transition to force modularity. Graduates are now prepared to operate in a heavy brigade combat team (HBCT), an infantry brigade combat team, (IBCT), or a Stryker brigade combat team (SBCT) organization.

Perhaps the greatest change to the Armor Officer Education program is establishing the Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC) here at Fort Knox. The course begins in January 2006 and will consist of three phases. BOLC I is pre-commissioning training and includes the Reserve Officers Training Corps, the U.S. Army Military Academy, and Officer Candidate School. BOLC II is the Warrior Officer Common Training Phase in which all newly commissioned lieutenants will attend a seven-week course at Fort Knox, Kentucky, Fort Benning, Georgia, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, or Fort Bliss, Texas. Fort Knox will support eight companies of BOLC II training. BOLC III includes a 15-week basic branch training phase at Fort Knox for all Armor lieutenants.

In addition to the new program of instruction changes, all OES courses have benefited from including recent Operation Iraqi and Enduring Freedom veterans as

instructors. Over 65 percent of the AOBC instructors and 75 percent of the AC3 instructors are OIF or OEF veterans. Not only are we gaining experienced new instructors, but we are sending instructors to Iraq for a

month to embed with Armor units to ensure our courses are current and relevant. I encourage Armor leaders currently in Iraq to welcome these instructors.

FORGE THE THUNDERBOLT!

ABOUT THE CLC AND SLC

Cavalry Leaders Course

CLC is an intense three-week course focusing on reconnaissance troops, RSTA squadrons, heavy and light brigade combat team reconnaissance squadrons, doctrinal employment, and tactics/techniques/procedures (TTPs) for reconnaissance units in reconnaissance and security operations. Operations orders, practical exercises, TEWTs, and simulations (CCTT) are used to teach CLC students. CLC students spend the entire three-week course being trained to plan and execute reconnaissance and security missions with RSTA and reconnaissance organizations in the contemporary operating environment (COE).

The Armor School at Fort Knox encourages CLC enrollment for all Armor officers as well as those leaders serving in Infantry, Field Artillery, Engineer, Aviation, Military Intelligence, and Signal Corps branches, who are assigned as planners or commanders of RSTA/Cavalry organizations. All those in the above categories should seriously consider attending CLC to prepare for their assignments to or in support of RSTA and Cavalry organizations. Attendance at CLC is currently open to graduates of any officer career course with the rank of first lieutenant (promotable) through major. The course is also open to first sergeants or those serving in first sergeant positions of any reconnaissance organization. Enrollment is available through ATRRS.

Scout Leaders Course

The Scout Leaders Course (SLC) is an intense 17-day course that focuses on the fundamentals of reconnaissance at the platoon level. The course instruction is delivered in the small group environment using the conference/discussion methods, computer based training, rapid decision-making exercises, and virtual and live training scenarios. Students are expected to arrive for the course with a solid understanding of troop leading procedures, and how to plan and deliver an operations order.

SLC is designed to train and educate platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, and section sergeants how to effectively lead a reconnaissance platoon. The objective of SLC is to graduate competent and confident officers and NCOs who understand the fundamentals of reconnaissance and security doctrine and the capabilities and limitations of the reconnaissance platoon in the modular force.

Course attendance is limited to the following active Army/Marine and Reserve Component commissioned officers (Armor, Infantry, Engineer, Aviation, Military Intelligence, Field Artillery): First or second lieutenants who have successfully completed the Basic Officer Leadership Course. Certain staff sergeants and sergeants first class may also attend. NCOs interested in attending the course should contact the SLC at DSN: 624-1324 to confirm their eligibility.

Additional information on these courses can be found on the Armor School's Web site at <http://www.knox.army.mil/school>.