

# COMMANDER'S HATCH

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## Educating the Officer Leaders

The Armor School remains committed to forging the finest mounted combat force in the world. In previous articles, I've discussed how emerging changes in organization, equipment, and doctrine will have a dramatic effect on mounted warfare in the future. Our leaders must be capable of effectively integrating and using these innovations. This requires that training methodologies keep pace. A key component of this is our Officer Education System. This "Commander's Hatch" will discuss where the Armor School is headed in the next few years in achieving excellence in training the Total Armor Force. I'll first discuss where the Armor Officer Basic Course (AOB) and Armor Officer Advanced Course (AOAC) are now, and where they are headed in the near future. Then I'll provide a vision for a University of Mounted Warfare for the 21st century.

The AOB course provides the force with tactically and technically competent lieutenants, imbued with the warrior spirit, who are prepared to assume command of a tank platoon immediately upon graduation. It focuses on the basics of platoon tactics, gunnery, maintenance, and soldier/leader skills. Lieutenants learn through a combination of classroom instruction, tactical exercises without troops, and hands-on experience, culminating in a gunnery exercise midway through the course and a six-day STX at the end. They use the entire suite of TADDS available to the force, including SIMNET (CCTT when it becomes available), TWGGS, COFT, and PGT. Lieutenants use TWGSS to facilitate the transition from the COFT to the gunnery

ranges, and in conjunction with gunnery. They conduct multiple exercises transitioning from TEWTS to PGT, and eventually to SIMNET. The lieutenants go through a planning, preparation, execution, and AAR sequence during each phase. Staff sergeants and sergeants first class with a wealth of field, CTC, and combat experience do the majority of the instruction.

FY98 will see two major initiatives. In the third quarter, AOB will expand from its current 15 weeks, 2 days (currently the shortest basic course) to 17 weeks. These additional 8 days will include job specific equipment and other instruction tailored to the lieutenant's follow-on assignment in a light or heavy cavalry unit or in one of the M1A1 or A2 variant units. Cavalry instruction will focus on equipment and complement the Scout Platoon Leader Course POI that focuses exclusively on tactics. The second initiative will embed an M1A2 track in AOB, also beginning the third quarter, to keep pace with the current fielding effort. This will initially involve only one of the four AOB platoons in a class and will expand as fielding expands.

The Armor Officer Advanced Course prepares mounted officers to command at the company level and to serve in a battalion or brigade staff with an emphasis on their role as a battle captain. Over 80% of the course is focused on combined arms warfighting, roughly balanced between company, battalion, and brigade operations, along with some instruction on stability and support operations. AOAC students plan and execute offensive and defensive operations using

both SIMNET and Janus at the company/team, battalion/task force, and brigade echelons. In the remaining 20 percent of the POI, students receive instruction on logistics, maintenance, counseling, leadership skills, TTPs on taking command, and some basic staff skills. Students also receive instruction on Battle Focused Training (FM 25-101), including how to conduct training meetings and how to develop and execute a comprehensive maneuver and gunnery training strategy that achieves the proper balance between live, virtual, and constructive simulations. The overwhelming amount of instruction is in small groups, led by some of the mounted force's best and brightest branch-qualified captains. Following AOAC, students go TDY to Fort Leavenworth for the 6-week CAS3, then return to Fort Knox and PCS. In FY99, all advanced courses will be reduced from 20 to 18 weeks in accordance with CPT-PME.

AOAC is also changing to meet the needs of the mounted force in the 21st century. As the mounted force transitions from analog to digital, our leaders will have to develop a solid understanding and working knowledge of the Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2) system, and will have to acquire some basic user competencies with the five ATCCS systems. For maneuver leaders, this will require a working knowledge of MCS Phoenix and a familiarization with the remainder of Sigma Star. Currently, AOAC students receive an introductory block of instruc-

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tion on these systems. With the assistance of our Mounted Battle Lab, AOAC students will receive additional instruction on these systems, beginning in late FY98. This instruction will be expanded as the actual systems are fielded to the schoolhouses in FY 99, and will be fully integrated into both classroom instruction and simulation exercises.

AWEs have clearly demonstrated that the 21st century mounted leader will also operate in an environment where improved digital technologies provide increased situational awareness and concurrently increase the demands on the commander and staff to more rapidly gather information, analyze, recommend, decide, and, most importantly, execute. This suggests a clear requirement for execution and digital leader reaction drills to improve leader decision-making competencies. In a previous "Commander's Hatch," I noted that Fort Knox already has the nucleus for these drills — the Force XXI Training Program, parts of which are already being used in the force. Two key components of this, the Battle Staff Training System (BSTS) and COBRAS III will be introduced into the AOAC POI this year. BSTS is a computer-based, self-paced program designed to train individual staff skills. COBRAS is a comprehensive package of Training Support Packages (TSPs) designed to provide the heavy brigade commander a series of vignettes, using constructive and virtual simulations, to train collective staff skills.

We are also at the forefront in incorporating various instructor-assisted technologies to make our instruction more accessible to the Total Mounted Force and more efficient and effective for resident and non-resident instruction. This also supports the Army and TRADOC's distance learning and classroom XXI initiatives.

One such initiative currently being tested with the Iowa National Guard uses the Internet and other instructor-assisted technologies to teach the military decision-making process to non-residents using SGIs here at Fort Knox. Another multi-year initiative, which will begin in FY 98, will transform the Armor School, beginning with Skidgel Hall, into a 21st century advanced learning environment.

This future University of Mounted Warfare will be laptop-based. It will provide all students access to the Internet, creating a library without walls. Resi-

dents and non-residents will have access, not only to information here at Fort Knox, but to other TRADOC schools, other branches, and the TO&E Army. A central terrain server will provide a visual terrain environment that will support a range of terrain formats, including 3-D, 2-D, video, and animation. This, in conjunction with emerging digital leader reaction tools and Force XXI Training products, will allow students to visualize not only terrain, but also conduct COA development, wargaming, and multiple leadership execution drills using the suite of virtual and constructive simulations available at the school. Instruction and use of emerging C2 technologies and systems such as FBCB2 and ATCCS will occur in hybrid classrooms, which will also serve as battalion and brigade TOCs during simulation exercises. This learning environment will also provide the vehicle for asynchronous and synchronous instruction to non-residents, both active and reserve. As an example, a National Guard captain would have up to a year to complete the asynchronous portion of AOAC in a non-resident mode. He would then receive the non-resident synchronous portion of the course over 10 weekends in his home state, taught by SGIs here at Fort Knox via teleconferencing. Finally, he would complete the course by coming to Fort Knox for a resident 2-week simulation-based phase to validate what he had learned.

Resident instruction, while perhaps reduced from present lengths, would still occur at Fort Knox. The socialization process and shared learning opportunities that exist in the small group will in the future, as they are today, remain as critical components of the officer's learning experience.

This University of Mounted Warfare will transform not only Skidgel Hall but ultimately the entire Armor School, encompassing not only OES but also IET and the NCO Academy. Members of the mounted force, both resident and non-resident, whether they are trainees, NCOs, or officers, will have access to a comprehensive suite of education, training, informational services, and materials. Education and learning will become a life-long experience for the mounted warfare community, beginning with their initial arrival at Fort Knox and continuing through their service in the mounted force.

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