

Armor Captain's Career Course – Distance Learning (AC3-DL): Update on the Spearhead to the Future

The new Armor Captain's Career Course (AC3) is now available on the Internet, providing an exciting, new way for Armor and Cavalry officers to complete their required military education using innovative, leading-edge technologies.

Fort Knox Armor School has produced the first Internet-based officer advanced course. The school's pioneering work has been recognized by the United States Distance Learning Association, which cited the School in its 1999 award for excellence.

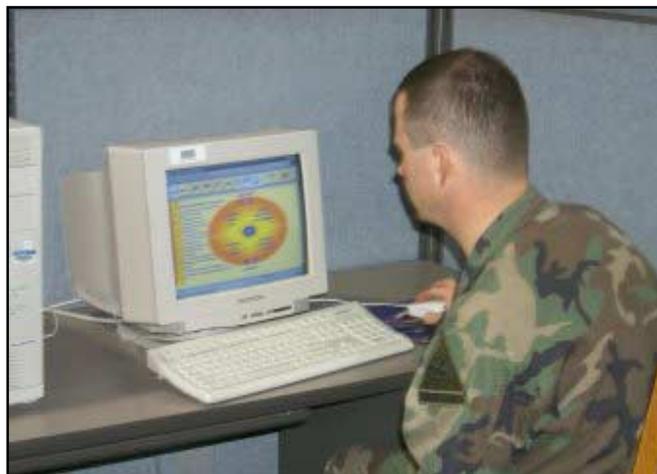
The new course, replacing a paper-based correspondence course, is called the Armor Captain's Career Course – Distance Learning, or AC3-DL. It is a virtual reality and live environment that allows geographically dispersed students and instructors to collaborate in real time. Assistance is available in every phase of the course.

AC3-DL has three phases: IA, asynchronous self-paced lessons; IB, synchronous IDT weekends with instructor connected, and a two-week resident ADT phase II. It is possible for an eligible officer, usually a first lieutenant or captain, to complete AC3-DL in as little as 14 months; however, the normal completion time is 24 months.

Soldiers in the AC3-DL course are trained to the same standard as a resident course student. The new course improves on the old paper-based course, which only trained company commanders. AC3-DL also trains staff skills for assistant operations officers at the battalion and brigade level, providing in-depth lessons on the military decision-making process (MDMP), intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB), and troop-leading procedures (TLP). It is important to note that the instructor-in-the-loop ensures the student officer will receive quality training that replicates the training in the resident AC3 course.

Currently, there are about 140 officers enrolled with the expectation of graduating about 60-75 per year. AC3-DL does not require any paper-based products, connection to video teleconference, or any legacy means of distance or distributed learning tools. Except for the two-week resident phase, all course lessons are Internet-based. In addition to motivation, all the student officer needs is a computer with minimal specifications that is capable of accessing the Internet. This may be from his home, his armory, or virtually any location with a computer and telephone line.

AC3-DL follows the proven learning methodology of crawl, walk, and run. AC3-DL features performance-oriented instruction, streaming audio, video, and animation. Digital maps and overlays are built into a "Virtual TOC" along with other advanced courseware techniques such as "Firefigths," pop quizzes to test learning, "mouseovers," explanatory text



(which appears with graphics or other text to explain certain points), pre- and post-lesson tests, and volume gate tests. The student officer is kept aware of how well he is progressing in the self-paced phase 1A, with success defined as a post-test grade of 70 percent or more on each module. Unlike past distance learning methods, AC3-DL maintains an instructor "in the loop." After learning the basics of a new competency, and successfully completing a series of computer-graded exams, the student sends (via e-mail) his work to his instructor for review. The instructor also periodically monitors all student progress using the AC3-DL student management database.

AC3-DL planned improvements for 2001 were to include the following: adding text to lessons indicating the estimated time to complete a lesson; insertion of Honor Code directions into the course overview and each gate test instructions; conversion of the military decision-making process, intelligence preparation of the battlefield, and conversion of CS/CSS to shorter lessons; identification of "mouseovers" which can be printable; identification of selected graphics for resizing; and examination of any redundancies in the "Firefigths."

In addition, the Armor School has an aggressive improvement program planned, and we expect to continue to implement these improvements. Remember, if you plan to stay in the Army National Guard as an officer, AC3-DL provides the "way-ahead." For information and enrollment, see your unit school manager, who can enroll you through ATRRS. If assistance is needed, call MAJ Chet Guyer at DSN 464-7601, commercial (502) 624-7601, or Pete Borosky, LTC, USA, Ret., at 464-3809, commercial (502) 624-3809. Once enrolled, you will receive a welcome letter and instructions about how to access the course.