

# The First Lieutenants to Korea Program

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The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the First Lieutenants to Korea Program, which offers lieutenants an excellent opportunity to expand their experience prior to assignment to the Career Course. We currently are looking to fill between six and eight junior officer positions, such as tank company executive officer, headquarters company executive officer, mortar platoon leader, scout platoon leader, and support platoon leader. Some of these jobs are currently filled with second lieutenants, but the majority are currently filled with capable NCOs.

You may be asking yourself as you read this, "Why are there no first lieutenants in Korea?" Not true, we have some, but need MORE! Korea is typically a one-year tour. So once a second lieutenant makes first lieutenant, he is close to the end of his tour, and he leaves us for a CONUS assignment. We get first lieutenants two ways. The first way is we grow our own, by retaining a certain number of officers. Armor Branch allows us to do this by granting Foreign Service Tour Extensions to lieutenants who want to stay in Korea. Occasionally, these are turned down because that lieutenant is already scheduled to fill a slot somewhere else in the Army.

The second (usually lesser known) method we get first lieutenants is the First Lieutenants to Korea Program. You may have heard about it, or seen it at the bottom of the PERSCOM Armor home page. The prime candidate is an Armor lieutenant with a minimum of two years on station and at least one year left as a 1LT. He volunteers, contacts Armor Branch, comes

down on orders for Korea, and PCSs from his current duty assignment. Upon completion of his one-year tour, he again PCSs to the Career Course.

There are several advantages to volunteering to come to Korea as a lieutenant. First of all, Korea provides unique terrain and mission challenges. Fighting in Korea is very different than anywhere else in the world. While in Korea, you will enjoy a high OPTEMPO training environment without a lot of the stateside distracters. Units usually shoot at least three gunnery densities a year. Additionally, they conduct extensive maneuver training, and are working more with light-heavy integration. Korea is truly a combined arms fight. There are few places where you will experience combined arms like you will in Korea.

Second, those that volunteer will avoid Korea as a tour after the Advance Course. For some, this is a significant reason. But since Korea is considered a hardship (unaccompanied) tour, Armor Branch takes that into consideration, and volunteers will get one of their top three assignment choices after the Career Course, as opposed to someone who did not volunteer to come to Korea as a lieutenant. A growing number of Armor officers are being selected to serve as TDA commanders, and for an Armor officer who really wants the experience of an MTOE command, the First Lieutenant to Korea Program is a good way to assure you of a command in an MTOE unit.

Third, the joy of no movement books! You are already here! Korea is the forward edge of freedom, with a real world enemy about 20

kilometers away. No manifests, no flights. The horn goes off, you get on your tank, and you drive to your BP! How easy is that? This certainty and defined mission provides a bit more stability than found in some of the stateside units. It also really puts the mission, sense of urgency, and readiness requirement into perspective for both the leaders and the soldiers.

Fourth, many here will tell you that you will find the units in Korea are tighter and more cohesive than stateside units. Soldiers here enjoy a better quality of life than they did four or five years ago. Many of the camps, specifically Camp Casey, are enjoying a large influx of money for area and facility improvement. Several barracks are under renovation, and many more are being built, in addition to new gyms, theaters, and other soldier amenities.

The fifth, and probably most interesting, is Korea is a country filled with friendly people and an ancient history. It enjoys a growing economy with much to see and do. If you like to travel, Korea is a good base to start from. The USO and other travel agencies offer trips to China, Australia, Thailand and other exciting places in the Far East at very good prices, if Korea doesn't offer what you want.

So if you are looking for something new, or you want an opportunity to travel, you definitely need to look into volunteering for the First Lieutenant to Korea Program. If you are interested, please contact CPT Tom Cipolla at DSN: 221-5533, or email him at:

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