

Inaugural class completes Maneuver Pre-Command Course

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The Bayonet

December 10, 2010

<http://www.army.mil/-news/2010/12/10/49275-inaugural-class-completes-maneuver-pre-command-course/>

FORT BENNING, Ga. (Dec. 10, 2010) - Another batch of senior officers made it through Fort Benning's Pre-Command Course on Thursday, but this class made a little history.

The 18 Soldiers were students in the Maneuver Pre-Command Course, the first combined Infantry and Armor session. Maj. Greg Curry, the course manager, said a few Armor officers attended in the past, but it's now fully integrated and all will come here as part of the move from Fort Knox, Ky.

"It's like a culmination event - one of the last few things that solidifies the fact we have to start working a little closer with our brothers as the Armor force comes here to get established at Fort Benning," he said. "We truly believe this is one force, one fight."

While the title is different, the program is still aimed at preparing officers for battalion command or a leadership role in the Army's equipment fielding process, something that would have broad impact on large groups of Soldiers, Curry said. Some haven't been in a Forces Command unit in a while, so this gets them reacclimated to the roots of their Infantry or Armor career fields. Students are refitted with tactical and technical expertise while getting a refresher on the warrior ethos.

"We reinvigorate them and teach them how to get it across to their subordinates," he said. The eight-day course began Nov. 30 and included eight Infantry officers, seven Armor, two from the Army Acquisition Corps and an engineer.

Curry said the group had leadership discussions with Maj. Gen. Robert Brown, the Maneuver Center of Excellence and Fort Benning commanding general, along with the Infantry and Armor School commandants. The agenda also featured combined briefs on the Bradley fighting vehicle, Stryker Infantry carrier vehicle and master gunnery concepts.

"They get a very well-rounded view from both sides of the house," he said. "It helps them understand what those vehicles' capabilities and limitations are. The maintenance issues that come with those are very different."

A vital piece of the course took place Dec. 2 during the hands-on training exercise at Red Cloud Range, a firepower demonstration staged by Soldiers from the 29th Infantry Regiment. Curry said students receive individualized training, fire various weapons and get a chance to see some of the Army's latest equipment.

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Uniting Armor and Infantry into the Maneuver Pre-Command Course is important for Fort Benning and the Army, he said.

"We both do significant things very differently. At the same time, the premise we're going off of is we do a lot of things alike," he said. "We can only make our force stronger by combining the two, to know and understand each other better. The way formations have changed the last few years, you're getting a mixed bag all within the same unit, so we need to be fully integrated in the combined arms fight."