

Revised Signal officer advanced course and assignment oriented training

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The Signal Officer Advanced Course (SOAC) is designed to prepare officers to command at company level and to serve as staff officers at battalion and brigade level. The Army's goal is for officers to attend the course between the third and sixth year of commissioned service. This is usually after an officer's first assignment, close to the time of promotion to captain, and prior to company command. The Signal Corps has been meeting this goal and providing commanders in the field

with well trained, tactically and technically competent officers who are solidly grounded in the leadership skills and techniques necessary to command and serve as staff officers. Based on Chief of Staff of the Army's guidance, all Officer Advanced Courses (OAC) have been revised. Figure 1 shows the Revised TRADOC Concept. This revised concept will improve the training and make it more responsive to the needs of commanders in the field.

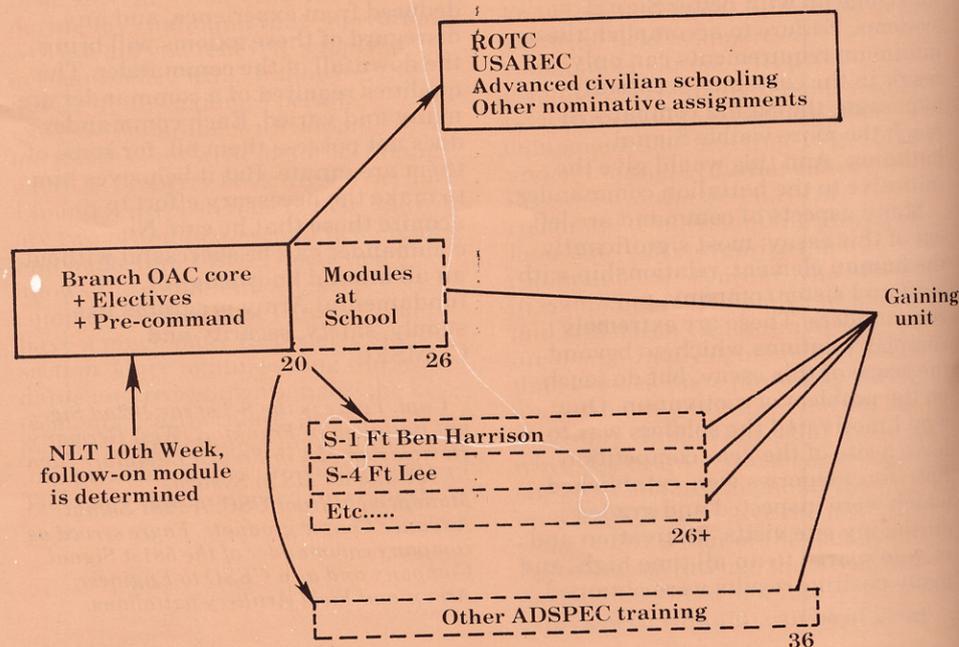


Figure 1. Revised TRADOC concept

Division/Corps Opns (Fort Gordon) (5 weeks)	Designed to prepare officers for duties as S-3/Operations officers in Corps and below Signal units.
Echelon Above Corps Opns (Fort Gordon) (5 weeks)	Designed to prepare officers for duties as S-3/Operations officers in Theater Army and Strategic Signal Brigades and Battalions.
S1 (Fort Benjamin Harrison) (6 weeks)	Designed to prepare officers for duties as an adjutant.
S4 (Fort Lee) (4 weeks)	Designed to prepare officers for duties as an S-4

Figure 2. AOT courses

The revised training concept includes a 20 week OAC plus short follow-on courses designated as Assignment Oriented Training (AOT). The OAC consists of a common core curriculum and branch specific subjects. The common core curriculum, standard throughout all branch OACs, includes approximately six weeks of instruction on combined arms subjects and other training mandated by HQDA and TRADOC. The remainder of the 20 weeks is devoted to instruction in branch and specialty specific areas. AOT, up to six weeks in duration, will be available upon completion of OAC. It will provide specific training for an officer's next assignment. The new training concept is designed to supplement the branch qualification process started in the Officer Basic Course.

Adhering to the guidance from the Chief of Staff of the Army and TRADOC, the Chief Signal Officer implemented the revised SOAC, effective, January 1985. It provides officers with the leadership, tactical and technical skills necessary to meet the standards of company level command and assignments at Signal battalion or brigade level.

The revised training consists of three phases: a pre-course phase, the SOAC, and AOT. Before arriving at Fort Gordon to attend the SOAC, officers will receive a welcome packet containing self-diagnostic exams with

answer sheets. These exams include map reading, basic electronics, automation, corps/division operations among others. Upon completing these exams, officers can order a sub-course packet from the C-E Leadership Department at Fort Gordon to study any weaknesses they found in their training.

SOAC is a performance oriented course which provides instruction in leadership and professional skills, combat operations, combat communications, C-E technology, logistics and communications security. Future articles in the ARMY COMMUNICATOR will describe the SOAC in depth.

Assignment Oriented Training is designed specifically to prepare officers for their next assignment. The type of AOT which an officer receives will depend on the unit of assignment and duty position. The AOT modules at Figure 2 currently exist for Signal officers.

This revised training concept created a need to develop a revised process to make assignments for SOAC graduates and to determine the required AOT. Signal Branch, the Signal Center and commanders in the field will work together to ensure a smooth process. In general, Signal Branch will make assignments to post

or major command. Local commanders will determine the pinpoint unit assignment and duty position and identify required training. The Signal Center will manage quotas for local AOT Courses.

Under the current Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS), officers are developed, trained, and assigned in dual specialties. An officer's Initial Specialty (INSPEC) is designated upon accession as SC 25, 27 or 72 and their Additional Specialty (ADSPEC) is designated at the 7 year point. Officers are assigned in their initial specialty until they are branch qualified. Branch qualification is successful upon completion of SOAC, a tour in their specialty, and—for a SC 25—a successful company command. Officers are then eligible for assignments to nominative Signal positions, ROTC, Recruiting Commands, Readiness Regions or TRADOC (Instructor/Combat Developer). They may also receive assignments for ADSPEC development or to other INSPEC positions.

Signal officers usually go to the SOAC after their first three year tour (Figure 3 shows the Revised SOAC Implementation Plan). Approximately six months before starting SOAC, Signal Branch screens files of eligible officers to determine if they meet specific criteria. Files are reviewed to ensure officers are in a career status and their performance supports

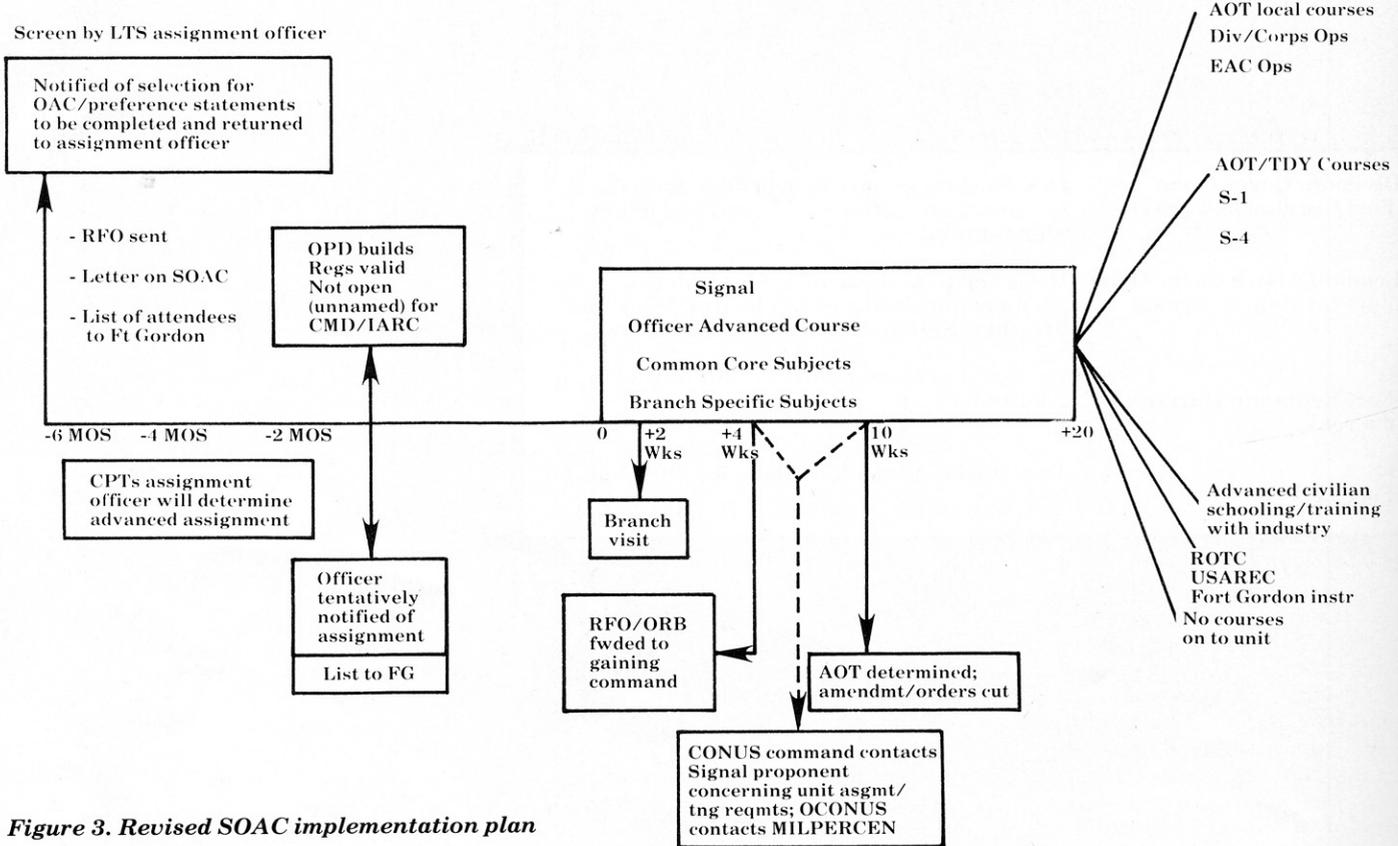


Figure 3. Revised SOAC implementation plan

continued military training. Officers are notified of their selection for the SOAC and requested to submit a preference statement. This preference statement is considered along with Army requirements and professional development needs in projecting the officers' next assignment. Officers will receive written notification of their projected assignment two months before reporting to Fort Gordon. During the second week of SOAC, Signal Branch will interview all students and discuss professional development and finalization of assignments. During the fourth week of SOAC, Signal branch will send Request for Orders (RFOs) to the gaining command. The gaining commands, between the fourth and tenth weeks, will determine the unit assignment, duty position, and required training for the officer.

CONUS commands will relay this information to the Proponent Office at Fort Gordon and OCONUS will send the information to Signal Branch MILPERCEN (see Figure 4 for the AOT Information Flow). Officers will then be scheduled into the appropriate AOT module for attendance immediately after graduation from SOAC. In some cases, AOT scheduling will dictate that officers report to their unit and return in a TDY status for the next available course.

The training revisions in the OAC are certainly timely and in keeping with the direction the Army is headed. The new plan will provide: continued professional development geared toward the next assignment, a better qualified officer to the gaining command, commanders involvement in officer's training, enhanced communication between commanders and the Chief Signal Officer and

streamlining of the assignment functions both at Signal Branch and in the field.

The concept of a common core curriculum for all officers, coupled with branch specific training and followed by Assignment Oriented Training is certainly an innovative approach with distinct advantages for the individual officer, the unit and the Army.

In addition to the AOT, other military training is available for Signal officers throughout their careers. This includes further specialty training for SC 25, 27 and 72 officers. The Teleprocessing Operations Officers Course (TOOC II-25B) at the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson AFB prepares eligible Signal officers for entering or continuing in SSIs 25B and 27A by

Coordination Required

Information flow between Signal Branch (MILPERCEN), Signal Center and gaining installation.

1. MILPERCEN will forward RFOs to gaining installations with a suspense date and POC for AOT.
2. CONUS installations will notify the Signal Center of assignment/duty position of the officer; OCONUS will notify MILPERCEN. A negative response is required.
3. The Signal Center will inform MILPERCEN of officers requiring non-local AOT. MILPERCEN will notify the Signal Center of OCONUS requests for local AOT.

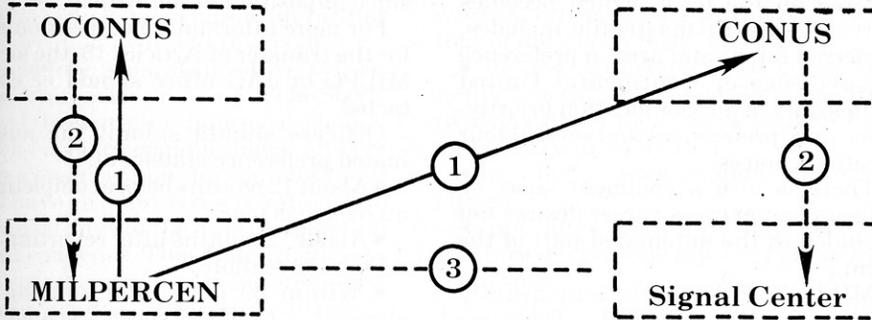


Figure 4. AOT information flow

providing them with education in teleprocessing and computer science technology. The Telecommunications Systems Staff Officer Course (TSSOC) at Keesler AFB prepares eligible Signal officers for entering SSI-27B by providing them with training in C-E systems engineering. SC 25 officers may also attend the C-E Staff Officers Course (CESOC) at Fort Sill. For SC 72 officers, training may include courses offered at Fort Lee, such as the Supply Management Officers Course, Army Maintenance Management Course, Logistics Management Development Course and Logistics Executive Development Course. Signal officers may also receive Airborne and Ranger training.

The vital role of the Signal Corps and advancements in technology require educated and skilled professional officers. The abundance

of education and training available to Signal officers provides the skills necessary to manage and maintain communications systems in support of the Airland Battle. This training will better prepare officers to excel in challenging positions throughout their career.

Maj. Gen. T.D. Rodgers on leadership:

A wise leader knows to keep the skills he will need during wartime ever on his mind during peacetime so they become second nature, a part of him, instinctive.