

Developing multi-discipline MOS-independent communicators

By CPT Mary Crawford and
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Leaders of the Joint Communications Unit are charging ahead in the U.S. Army Signal Corps drive toward creating multi-disciplined communications Soldiers.

Since its establishment in 1980 the leaders of the Joint Communications Unit have embraced the concept of MOS independence. Based out of Fort Bragg, N.C., JCU is an all volunteer unit that consists of communicators from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines with diverse backgrounds and varied experiences.

All enlisted personnel selected into JCU must complete six months of intensive communications and tactical training known as the Special Operations Radio Operators Course. SOROC curriculum encompasses Radio Telephone Operator procedures, LAN/WAN Networking, SHF/Transport and Server Services/System Administration. At the completion of six months of rigorous training, students graduate as holistic communicators and have become true multi-disciplined service members, regardless of rank, service or MOS.

JCU's success in creating a multi-disciplined communicator starts with the six month SOROC course. SOROC serves as the JCU training and assessment program designed to determine if individuals have the technical capacity and physical conditioning required to meet the unit motto, "DoD's Finest Communicators." That communicator must prove to be capable of establishing

and maintaining voice, video, and data communications in any environment, to support any mission, independently or as a member of a team. A JCU member must be an MOS agnostic communicator capable of performing a multitude of functions across the Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence spectrum from tactical to strategic operations.

Although that mindset is trained and employed on a daily basis in JCU, it starts with SOROC. Resourcing and flexibility are absolutely critical factors needed in order to create this type of communicator. Eight professional communications instructors are dedicated to teaching two classes a year with a maximum class size of 36 students.

In conjunction with the instructors, a Training and Academic Counselor Non-Commissioned Officer tracks student progress and provides mentorship throughout the course. Class instruction is augmented by seasoned JCU communicators, as required. JCU Line Troop Sergeants Major are required to critique courseware once per module of instruction.

Furthermore, Troop SGMs validate and modify the Program of Instruction twice a year in order to keep the information relevant. Additionally, each student has near unrestricted access to perform hands-on training with course equipment. While all of these factors are critical to the success of SOROC, they must be matched with a challenging, broad based POI.

SOROC teaches theory, fundamentals and critical

thinking. Students learn how the equipment set operates the way it does, not just how to make it work. While students graduate with Network+ and Security+ certifications, SOROC does not teach checklists, nor is it a boot camp for certifications. First and foremost, SOROC begins with a month long tactical portion which teaches marksmanship, patrolling, land navigation and advanced driving.

Immediately upon completion, students begin four cumulative modules of technical training and testing: SOROC Module I is the baseline that consists of the Physical Layer and initial communications. It is classified as the RTO module of training. This section covers power, cabling, cryptography, numerous radio operations, secure telephone, and logistics/hand receipt accountability. SOROC Module II focuses on LAN/WAN Networking. It is broken down into two subsections: IP Based Networks and Network Services. IP Based Networks covers: local area networking, wide area networking, and secure tunneling/VPN. The Network Services portion includes: Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP), Radio-over-IP, and multicasting. SOROC Module III is the SHF/Transport section. In this module students receive training on 1.2m, 2.4m, and 3.7m SATCOM Ground Terminals, and numerous state-of-the-art downsized deployable package configurations. This module includes the transport equipment string required from a modem though various types of encryption, down to routers providing services at all levels of classification.

SOROC Module IV is the Server Services/System Administration portion of training. This training is also broken down into two subsections: Data Services and Support Structure. Data Services encompasses: Windows Active Directory, back-up technologies, and web/portal. The Support Structure portion covers: Remedy, support hierarchy, and help-desk level support for major applications.

At the conclusion of each module, students undergo a three day communications exercise and must pass a hands-on test and written exam. Students are authorized one retest, but if they fail the retest they are immediately dropped from the

course and reassigned to the needs of their Service. SOROC concludes with a 10-day culmination exercise to validate the students' ability to demonstrate the principles they've learned. Upon successful completion of the final exercise students are formally accepted as one of "DoD's Finest Communicators" and assigned to JCU.

SOROC takes in students with a variety of communications specialties from all Services and produces a well-rounded communicator capable of participating in a wide range of missions, with skill sets spanning the spectrum of C4I proficiencies. A course like SOROC requires dedicated professional instructors, active leadership involvement, nonnegotiable standards, hands-on access to the latest equipment, and a flexible POI that can be adjusted when needed. As the Signal Corps examines MOS consolidation, JCU and the SOROC model should be examined to gain an understanding of how to create a multi-disciplined communications Soldier.

For more information about JCU go to www.jcuonline.org

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ACRONYM QuickScan

C4 I - Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence
DoD - Department of Defense
IP - Internet Protocol
JCU - Joint Communications Unit
LAN - Local Area Network

MOS - Military Occupation Specialties
POI - Program of Instruction
RoIP - Radio-over-Internet Protocol
RTO - Radio Telephone Operator
SATCOM - Satellite

Communications
SHF - Super High Frequency
SOROC - Special Operations Radio Operators Course
TAC - Training and Academic Counselor
VoIP - Voice-over-Internet Protocol
WAN - Wide Area Network