

Signal classrooms embracing high-technology mobile training

By Nick Spinelli

The U.S. Army is steeped in tradition. Many of the force's actions, from ceremonies to inspections, date back centuries and are still performed as they always have been. But recently, General Dynamics' LandWarNet School on Fort Gordon broke with tradition to begin a pilot course utilizing new technologies and mobile learning in place of dated teaching methods.

"This is the Army Learning Model fully in action," said Tom Clark, the LWN Transmission Section training manager. "We can provide for Soldiers at their point of need. Every piece of the curriculum for this pilot course has been redone in the Army Learning Model format."

In the pilot course, students use tablet computers to access training materials. Content still consists of some classroom presentations, but also includes more PC-based simulations and "how-to" videos. Away from the school, they can access this same training content by going to the LandWarNet eUniversity.

"Under this program, Soldiers have a way to reach back and review content outside the classroom. Essentially, these devices double as virtual instructors," said Jarnard Gunn, one of the pilot course instructors.

Sixteen students, all under

the age of 30, make up the pilot class. Instructors believe the technological savvy typical in this age group plays a role in how the students adapt to this new learning method.

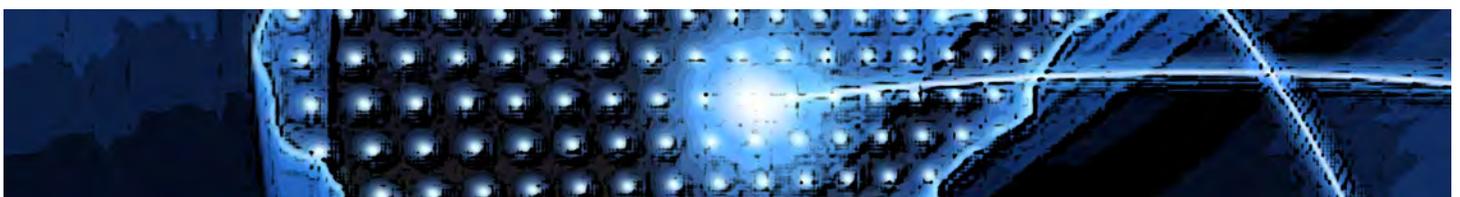
"Modern Soldiers learn differently," said Michael Wilson, a senior course instructor. "And this course helps facilitate that.

All of these students already own and use personal Smartphones and tablets. They're already familiar with the operating system. The operating system utilized is Android, which, because of its open source nature, is more adaptable to the needs of facilitators and students. However, tablet computers are only one



(Photos by Nick Spinelli/Fort Gordon Public Affairs)

SGT Kyle Weekly, a student in the General Dynamics' LandWarNet School pilot course, uses a tablet computer to scan a QR Code, accessing his training materials through the LandWarNet eUniversity.





Students attending a pilot course in General Dynamics' LandWarNet School on Fort Gordon utilize new technologies and mobile learning in place of traditional teaching methods.

part of the pilot course. Videos of Soldiers actually performing the material have replaced Power-Point presentations; and virtual references and manuals have replaced large binders of printed information. William Baker, a senior course instructor, said it's not so much a case of reinventing the wheel as motorizing it.

"Ultimately, the course is more interactive, and you see the Soldiers more interested and in-

olved than in traditional learning environments," Baker said.

An added bonus to digitizing the course is the savings involved. Nearly \$2 million in annual printing costs can now be used to provide additional training capabilities. But all the savings and ease of access are meaningless if the Soldiers don't respond well. Fortunately, that does not seem to be a problem. "I think this is definitely a step

forward," said SGT Kyle Weekly, a student in the pilot course.

"This course is allowing us to get the most cutting edge information, which I think will lead to a better end product. I'm learning the material better this way than I probably would in a traditional training environment."

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