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Course graduates 19 Mission Command System Integrators (Mission Command Center of Excellence)

FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan. – Nineteen soldiers graduated from the Mission Command Systems Integrator (MCSI) Course in a ceremony, April 18th, at the Directorate of Training and Strategy, ready to begin their new duties as Systems Integrators in their unit's command posts.

Mission Command Systems Integrators provide the commander a Subject Matter Expert with the capabilities to integrate the primary Mission Command (MC) systems as well as a leader capable of training and mentoring MC system operators on the integration of their respective warfighting systems within the command post. The Directorate of Training and Strategy is a subordinate organization of the Mission Command Center of Excellence (MC CoE).

Sgt. 1st Class Lehi Tollestrup, a battalion communications chief from Fort Irwin, Calif. and graduate of the course felt that the course will benefit his unit.

“I think the biggest thing is now I can help create the [common operational picture] and help populate other mission command systems and tell my commander yes, they do work and this is how they work and give him an accurate picture of the battlefield,” Tollestrup said.

Maj. Gen. Thomas S. James, Jr., Director, MC CoE, spoke with the students about their role in executing the Mission Command warfighting function.

“Too often you go to a unit and say ‘the machine can’t do this, the machine can’t do that’ and so they don’t use it. That’s because they don’t know how to use it. I was guilty as a battalion commander and as a brigade commander because I didn’t have somebody that had come to this course or understood how these things work together,” James said. “You’re going to go to the fight with the systems that you have now and so we’ve got to be able to capture the operating environment to the commander so he can make effective decisions.”

Systems Integrators are the first step in giving commanders the ability to understand, visualize, and describe the battlefield so they can make quicker, better, more informed decisions than the enemy. Integrators take information and turn it into shared knowledge that commanders can use to implement tangible actions in order to maintain a position of relative advantage over the enemy.

Army Mission Command Systems and the integration of those systems are fundamental in exercising the mission command warfighting function, mission command integration, and synchronization of all the warfighting functions.

James shared the story of a Corps Commander in Operation Iraqi Freedom that highlights the importance of Systems Integrators. He said that “multiple times on the attack up into Baghdad he was able to make an ineffective and wrong decision at the corps level, realize that he made a wrong decision after he had issued it and recoil and make an effective decision and get it all the way through the formation before the enemy even knew he made that bad decision and he attributes most of that just to the effective Soldiers that we have that understood fundamentals and bought that decision space for him.”

Capt. Daniel Preister, a Mission Command Assessment Test Officer for the Integrated Test and Evaluation Director at Fort Bliss, Tex. felt that the skills he learned during the course will assist commanders in winning battles.

“Understanding how [integration] works, and how all the systems talk and what [the systems] do is about taking information, turning it into knowledge, and turning it into action. Now I have those front pieces, the information and the knowledge to see how that commander is going to take that, fight the system and fight the network, to help him win the battle,” Priester said.

The MC CoE offers the Mission Command Digital Master Gunner (MCDMG) and the MCSI courses eleven months out of the year. They are open to all active duty, National Guard, and Reserve officers and non-commissioned officers. Soldiers from Sgt (E-5) through Lieut. Col. can sign up for the courses through the Army Training Requirements and Resources System (ATRRS).

Headquartered at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, the Mission Command Center of Excellence is a network of organizations that develops, integrates and synchronizes Leader Development, Army Profession and Mission Command requirements and solutions to prepare leaders and units to successfully exercise Mission Command during the execution of Unified Land Operations. <http://mccoe.army.mil>.