

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION
103 ARMY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20310-0103**

7 MAR 97

Dr. Michael S. Frankel
Chair, Army Science Board
Research, Development and Acquisition
103 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0103

Dear Dr. Frankel:

I request that you conduct an Army Science Board (ASB) Summer Study on "Distance Learning." The assessment should address, as a minimum, the Terms of Reference (TOR) described below. The ASB members appointed should consider the TOR only as guidelines and may include in their discussions related issues deemed important or suggested by the sponsor. Modifications to the TOR must be coordinated with the ASB Office.

Background.

a. The Army faces a massive and unique set of education and training challenges. The Army is geographically dispersed with units at well over a thousand locations. Personnel turnover rates can reach as high as 20 to 40 percent for given military occupational specialties. New equipment, doctrine and techniques are continually infused to upgrade and enhance unit capabilities in order to support the wide range of missions the Army must be able to accomplish. These factors taken together mean that education and training is a pervasive, continual process which consumes a huge amount of resources.

b. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find an analogous set of circumstances elsewhere in government, industry or academia that rival the challenges the Army confronts in meeting educational and training requirements and demands.

c. Traditionally, Army education and training has been characterized by the use of fixed facilities and movable populations of Soldiers. The Army along with other world class organizations are "learning" as well as "doing" organizations. Learning is part of continuous improvement and maintenance of competitive skills. The classic schoolhouse delivery solutions are no longer appropriate except in special situations.

d. At the same time, the Army has been in the forefront of advancing new concepts and adapting new technologies for educating and training its Soldiers. It is the DOD lead Service for advanced distributed simulation which could be considered as training counterpart of distance learning. It has pioneered interactive and embedded training in the same integrated manner.

e. The Army and DOD are making substantial investments in distance learning. The Army plans to execute a significant distance learning program, estimated to cost about one billion dollars over the POM. At the same time, industries and academic institutions are addressing some of their needs with distance learning methods and tools.

f. To date, virtually all the hardware and network services (local and long distance) have been met using the technologies of the ongoing information revolution. Important software applications and innovations derive from this revolution.

g. However, course content which has data base and other software components requires its own research and development, Verification, Validation & Analysis and fielding. In addition, the circumstances of distance learning require robust methodologies for instruction, interaction and evaluation. Even with this, the opportunity exists for major advances which leverage the benefits flowing from the people and the developments which are driving the ongoing information revolution.

Terms of Reference.

a. Review the Army Distance Learning Plan. Comment and make recommendation on priority items to augment the current program.

b. Recommend training development and delivery in the post -2010 era commonly referred to as "Army After Next". Comment on the concept of "Soldier Driven" training as the basis for training management in AAN. Discuss its desirability and feasibility. Comment on the forms it might take, and what will be required of soldiers and their leaders within this context.

c. Survey business, industry, academia and government for innovative training and education initiatives. Ascertain associated technological, pedagogical, psychological or other interdisciplinary approaches aimed at imparting skills, knowledge and ability in new and effective ways.

Study Support. Co-Sponsors of this study will be Ms. Helen T. McCoy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Financial Management and Comptroller); LTG Leonard D. Holder, Deputy Commanding General for Combined Arms, TRADOC; MG J.M. Riggs, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, and

Ms. Sara Lister, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). The Primary Staff Assistant is COL Francis Coppola, Assistant Chief of Staff USAR Combined Arms Center. Secondary Staff Assistant is Ms. Paula Rebar (ASA(FM&C)).

Schedule. The study panel will initiate the study immediately and conclude its effort at the eleven-day report writing session on June 16-26, 1997 at the Beckman Center in Irvine, California. As a first step, the Study Chair should prepare a Study Plan for presentation to the Sponsor that outlines the study approach and study schedule.

Special Provisions. It is not anticipated that this inquiry will go into any "particular matters" within the meaning of Section 208, Title 18 of the United States Code.

Sincerely,

signed
Gilbert F. Decker
Assistant Secretary of the Army
(Research, Development and Acquisition)