

# Where Modernization Meets Evolution

## 25S Capstone

**Article, photo by Staff Sgt. Geoffrey Rushlau**  
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Ongoing conflicts, specifically the war in Ukraine, provide clear lessons on the speed and complexity of modern warfare. Technology and tactics evolve rapidly, and our forces must adapt to survive and win. These insights have served as a catalyst for the U.S. Army Signal School to modernize how we generate proficient satellite communication systems specialists (25S).

The 25S graduates are trained to deploy globally and establish beyond-line-of-sight communication links using military and civilian satellite constellations. The newly revised 25S Capstone postures students to be better-prepared and more responsive signal Soldiers. The training is also designed to acclimate new systems as they are phased in with Next Generation Command and Control (NGC2) efforts. Commitment to realistic, modern training ensures the next generation of Army communicators are ready to provide operational commanders with flexible and resilient network solutions using any available transmission means.

In support of the chief of staff of the Army's priority "Continuous Transformation," instructors, drill sergeants, and their Department of Army civilian counterparts have transformed the 25S Capstone. Program of instruction (POI) is oriented toward stronger theory-based training, and the modernized capstone exercise ensures that knowledge is solidified through a more robust, scenario-based challenge. This final exercise mirrors real-world missions, forcing trainees to work in-parallel on multiple integrated systems. Students split into teams responsible for:

- Installing, operating, and maintaining a Satellite Transportable Terminal and Phoenix Terminal.
- Operating a Modernized Enterprise Terminal and Tech Control Facility, using control and monitoring systems to establish a multi-carrier link.
- Establishing redundant tactical-to-strategic links via a Quad-Band Satellite Emulator.
- Configuring network equipment and applying systematic problem-solving skills to troubleshoot and resolve faults.
- Assuring connectivity and data access for command posts' end-user devices.

Students achieve an end state that is a redundant link between higher headquarters and a command post's end-users, validated by successful Voice-Over-Internet-Protocol (VOIP) calls and intranet resource page access. This exercise integrates Warrior Task and Battle Drills and requires that students maintain a force protection posture, including dedicated security gate personnel, a roving quick reaction force, and duty desk responsibilities. This exercise provides students with a clearer picture of the culmination of all they have learned over six months.

Despite manning challenges and funding restraints, Charlie Company, 369th Signal Battalion cadre continues to improve and modernize capstone training through their ingenuity and dedication to the mission. The cadre uses collective experience, referencing operational commander expectations, to evolve POI. This helps ensure that students are at a higher level of preparedness when they respond to ever-changing demands placed on signal operators at their first duty stations.

A commitment to innovation extends beyond the confines of the 25S course. The intent is to re-integrate pre-graduation training across Signal School so that 25S students will train side-by-side with 25B (information technology specialist), 25H (network communication systems specialist), and 25U (signal operations support specialist) students. Large-scale capstone exercises would better reflect command post exercises in the operating force. Students benefit from a greater understanding of where they fit in the greater signal and command and control (C2) infrastructure. By advocating for and developing this comprehensive, cross-training amongst military occupational specialties, the Signal School is transforming how the Army prepares the next generation of communicators.

Modernization of the 25S Capstone ensures that lessons learned from today's conflicts are integrated into tomorrow's force. This refined exercise reinforces foundational skills necessary to adapt new tactics and technological advances within NGC2 and beyond.

By evolving the capstone validation, Soldiers graduate not only as operators, but as agile, mission-ready communicators capable of adapting their fundamental knowledge to whatever cutting-edge systems the Army fields next.

