

# Language lab gets \$300K face lift

By Ann Patton

Academy Spirit staff

The language laboratory in Fairchild Hall is undergoing a renovation which is expected to serve more students in better ways. The overhaul includes new carpet, furniture and software. "It was in pretty bad shape," Lt. Col. Scot Allen, director of operations for foreign language, said of the lab with its frayed carpet and battered furniture. Cost of the finished project is estimated at \$300,000.

Last semester the old lab accommodated 85 work stations, the new one will soon accommodate 100. The teaching of language is growing by leaps and bounds at the Academy. Cadets, being young people, enjoy all the latest electronics, he said. "We needed to meet their expectations," Mr. Pudlo said. With the improved software, cadet language students can download voice files for iPods and play computer games in the lab involving foreign language.

The expanded software package will allow students to use their language lab programs in the dorms. "One of our biggest additions is a cadet's ability to work alone at a station on an activity and respond to prompts via voice recognition technology," said Dr. Jennifer Colón, assistant professor of Spanish. "This not only exposes the cadet to input in the target language, but it also enables him or her to respond verbally and know if the answer is appropriate.

Last year, 1,800 cadets were enrolled in foreign language classes. This year, the department is planning for 2,200. "This is a huge increase," Colonel Allen said.

Mr. Andrzej Pudlo, the lab's director, pointed out other new features of the improved lab, including lower partitions to improve teacher/student communication. New software will encourage more interaction and communication with the teacher and with other students and provide testing, broadcasting and control capabilities.

Cadet language students seem to enjoy working in the lab. "The more real-life situations we can provide them, the more motivated to complete the task they become," Dr. Colón said. "When we give them rote tasks to perform, due to software limitations, they are perceived as unimportant and are not met with a great deal of enthusiasm." She added the lab also helps expand the teacher's capabilities.