

## THE INFANTRY OFFICER ADVANCED COURSE: A CASE FOR REFORM

Change is the military order of the day: technology burgeons, training techniques are being revolutionized, tactics are in constant flux. The shape of future battle is uncertain, but undeniably that commander will be advantaged who can anticipate his foe, combine his own weapons and technique for tactical surprise, and train his troops to execute his tactics with celerity and force. When war is thrust on the U.S., wherever that may be, we are unlikely to have time to train such commanders. We will have to go with what we have: if they are deft and swift we will win; if they are not we will lose.

The Infantry School does not now train such commanders. Its basic course is only indoctrination; its advanced course trains officers after they have commanded companies. USAIS offers no systematic, formal training to Infantry officers beyond company grade. We need to alter that unresponsive arrangement, because one of the consequences of foreseeable mid-intensity combat -- short, violent wars -- is that captains and lieutenant colonels will influence the outcome far more than generals; training will be more important than materiel; one Abrams may be worth two Pattons. This paper argues that we can increase our readiness for such a war significantly by revising our officer training structure.

Now is the time to move. The Vietnam War over, and OPMS upon us, the time is ripe for revision of the purposes and format of the Infantry Officer Advanced Course (IOAC) at Fort Benning. Indeed, so irrelevant and expensive an undertaking urgently deserves reform, in an Army facing a parsimonious Congress, and battle futurity definite only in grave danger:

### Irrelevancy:

As a seminal influence on Infantry doctrine, IOAC is nigh impotent: more than two out of three students have completed their company-level troop duty in the US Army, and will not return to troops for upwards of six years -- during which concepts, weaponry, and technique will change dramatically. (Nor, despite personnel stability, is this fraction likely to reverse over the next five years.)

As a model for training technique, IOAC is vapid: the faculty has been lured away from the rolling hills, the Upatoi, and the pines into a windowless, air-conditioned factory which, whatever its efficiency at piece-rates, is not likely to produce masters of the realities of ground, weapons, time, and units, or to stimulate nascent tacticians; moreover, its methods and apparatus of instruction, though marvels of their kind, cannot readily be emulated by trainers with troops.

As a font of expertise on Infantry, IOAC has been diluted: basic, branch-utilitarian subject matter has been scrapped to make time for behavioral nostrums, broadening disciplines, and diverse electives, intended to equip the graduate, on the one hand, for the politico-military exigencies of lower-spectrum warfare and a non-conscript force, and, on the other hand, for competition at Army boards with the increasingly generalized officers of other branches.

Expense:

<u>Officer Advanced Courses FY 73</u>					
<u>School</u>	<u>No Stu Tot</u>	<u>Stu Acct MY</u>	<u>ISOH</u>	<u>(\$K)* Cost/Student</u>	<u>(\$K)* Total Cost</u>
USAIS	1,009	726.5	635	8.9	8,964.7
USAARMS	576	437.8	469	13.5	7,764.6
USAFAS	608	481.5	666	16.8	10,214.1
USAADS	145	104.4	153	14.6	2,111.5
USAES	243	155.5	71	3.9	946.5

\*Includes \$1,800 per student for PCS costs.

Comparison of each officer course training load with the TRADOC total (3059.7) shows that the above five schools train two out of three Advanced Course students, and that USAIS has the largest concentration:

Advanced Course Training Load

<u>School</u>	<u>Percent</u>
USAIS	23.7
USAARMS	14.3
USAFAS	15.7
USAADS	3.4
USAES	<u>5.1</u>
	62.2

But the "cost" of IOAC most likely to provoke cavil in DOD or Congress is the time-out-of stream: there is a growing conviction among Congressional staffers and DOD analysts that many Army training dollars produce no benefit for the US, and indeed support schooling which deprives the Army of productive officer-time in units, which is redundant, or which is unlinked to utilization. It will not be easy to defend IOAC from criticism that it comes too late in a company officer's career to be directly useful, is professionally less important than CGSC for the junior field grade officer, and is simply outdated for battalion commanders -- all at the cost of nearly one year out of the most productive and energetic period in an officer's career.

### How Did We Get Where We Are?

Formal schooling for serving U.S. Army officers had its beginnings at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, 150 years ago. In April, 1824, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun directed the Army to establish here the Artillery School of Practice. Calhoun's concept aimed at upgrading artillery professionalism by two means:

(1) Each USMA graduate commissioned into artillery would complete a one year course, and would thence carry into his regiment the latest on materiel, tactics and technique.

(2) Ten companies of artillery, drawn from all four artillery regiments, were detailed to special duty at the Artillery School, and the plan provided rotating all regular artillery companies through that instructive duty.

Similar notions were embodied in the Infantry School of Practice which was set up at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, in 1827, and in the other "schools of practice" which appeared and reappeared throughout the nineteenth century. Generally speaking, up until 1901 and Elihu Root, Army post-graduate schools were narrow and utilitarian in focus, and were designed for a select few -- who were thereafter to act as a seminal group. It should be noted that the nineteenth century Army nonetheless demanded considerably more of officers by way of self-study and achievement than we do today; e.g., Congress legislated in 1890 that officers would be required to pass a written examination for all promotions below the grade of major.

At the turn of the century, when Elihu Root became Secretary of War, he was impressed with the breadth of nonmilitary responsibilities thrust upon even junior Army officers in America's growing empire, and with the fact that fully one-third of his professional officers had received no formal military training whatsoever. At his direction, a War Department General Order of 27 November 1901 reorganized U.S. Army Schools into their present pyramidal pattern. Root's system created the hierarchy of coherent, progressive, but increasingly selective schools throughout an officer's career, culminating in the Army War College at Washington. The purpose of each course was to broaden, and to sift. Thus, each military post was to have a school for the instruction of officers in a prescribed course of rudimentary military theory and practice. Those officers who showed special promise in the post schools would then be selected for "advanced schools" of the various arms and services. In turn, they who did well in the advanced courses would become candidates for the Staff College at Leavenworth, and so to the top.

Since Root, the Army School System has had one conceptual element added and one subtracted. That deducted is, of course, the extra-institutional dimension -- officer examinations do not exist, and the post or regimental officer school has vanished. (USAREUR operates two week company and battalion command courses, the largest noninstitutional officer training program in existence today, but there are no Army-wide "prescribed courses" for schooling officers in units.) The added element in the System is the concept that service school courses are important as a means of socialization: military professionalism is fostered by periodic relief from the press of duty for months devoted to self-contemplation, study, and association with contemporaries. (The latter rationale is much more highly regarded among military officers than among civilian analysts.)

The IOAC at Fort Benning is the product of this past, plus the strains of the war in Vietnam. During the decade in which the Vietnam war influenced the whole U.S. Army, it bore onerously on the curricula at USAIS, which had to respond to countless directives from "higher" to add this-and-that, with little or no guidance on what to subtract. The style of the 1960's was "enrichment," broadening of students, for many of the same politico-military imperatives that had motivated Root in 1901. Almost as a matter of simple efficiency, the School eliminated time allocated to transporting students afield, or to allowing students to wander about the Georgia countryside. It eliminated troop unit demonstrations. It reached out into the latest instructional technology for the most efficient ways of conveying information, or teaching skill or knowledge. It moved the IOAC indoors, and added cultural electives. Especially in the latter years of the war, USAIS paid a lot of attention to socialization, formalized as "VOLAR" projects. Infantry officers were peculiarly vulnerable to repetitive tours in the war zone, and the nine months of PCS duty with family during the IOAC were prized by student officer, USAIS and Infantry Branch alike.

#### Where Do We Go From Here?

Even if USAIS were wedded to status quo, it would be hard pressed to resist fundamental change. CG, TRADOC, is keenly interested in re-focusing the IOAC on company-level matters, and in promoting mastery by Infantry company officers of training techniques for squad and platoon tactics: "Back to Basics." But, the Officer Personnel Management System could dictate changes which will compete for curriculum time and school resources, perhaps to the point of being countervailing.

As originally explained to the Army at large, OPMS will require each officer to elect a primary and alternate specialty which he will follow throughout his career. Emphasis on specialization is central to OPMS, and

directly contrary to the dominant themes in officer education and officer personnel management over the past seventy-two years. "Infantry" is one of 47 specialties; each Infantry officer will have to elect an alternate specialty sometime prior to his eighth year of service. Accordingly, most explanations of OPMS have envisaged the Advanced Course as being a time of decision for the officer in opting for an alternate specialty, and for the Army in accepting him in that specialty. When asked, officers on DA's OPMS task force admit that they envisaged the Advanced Course as providing, aside from branch specialty schooling, a sort of smorgasbord of electives which would permit the student in quest of an alternate specialty to sample several. These same officers are quick to say that USAIS will have a tough time providing such an array of electives, given DA guidance that OPMS is to cost less than the current system.

The USAIS problem can be illustrated by stating that per forthcoming DA directive, TRADOC must support OPMS with an overall student account 10% less than that for FY 73, a transient account 10% less, and an overall funding decrease of 1% per annum. But the IOAC must cost significantly more if it is redesigned to the smorgasbord model: officers of Infantry Branch can cross into a wider ranger of alternate specialties as senior captains -- the OPMS term is "advanced entry specialty" -- than the officers of any other branch.

The following table, illustrates that advanced entry specialties pose particularly acute problems for our schools at Fort Benning, Fort Sill, Fort Belvoir, Fort Knox, and Fort Bliss:

QUANTITATIVE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICERS  
(DERIVED FROM CURRENT FORCE STRUCTURE)

<u>Branch</u>	<u>Basic Entry Specialties</u>	<u>Additional Training Requirement for Alternate Specialties</u>		<u>Total</u>
		<u>Advanced Specialties</u>	<u>Basic Entry Specialties</u>	
Adjutant General	2	12	2	16
Air Defense Artillery	1	15	4	20
Armor	1	15	4	20
Chemical	5	12	1	18

<u>Branch</u>	<u>Basic Entry Specialties</u>	<u>Additional Training Requirement for Alternate Specialties</u>		<u>Total</u>
		<u>Advanced Specialties</u>	<u>Basic Entry Specialties</u>	
Engineer	1	15	8	24
Field Artillery	1	15	8	24
Finance	1	7	1	9
Infantry	1	15	9	25
Military Intelligence	3	14	2	19
Military Police	1	10	2	13
Ordnance	8	14	1	23
Quartermaster	8	15	5	28
Signal	4	14	5	23
Transportation	10	16	2	28

Source: Draft "Education and Training of Officers under the Officers Personnel Management System" in DA staffing as of 26 Nov 73.

One inference for USAIS is a bewildering menu of costly electives, taught by Army officers masquerading as college professors. Assuredly OPMS means significant additions to ISOH, unless USAIS finds another approach to IOAC.

DA guidance on OPMS encourages TRADOC's seeking alternatives to resident instruction, and contemplates proficiency testing, or other examination procedures, if indicated. OPMS guidance from DA does not mention the Advanced Course as such, but does state that:

At the captain level, each officer will be given adequate opportunity to receive professional military education and requisite specialty education. Standardized professional military curricula will insure that each officer receives the military education necessary for acceptable performance at that grade. Curricula may be offered by a variety of means. At this level, it is conceivable that an officer may

not require specialty training, or some phase of professional military education, by virtue of his previous education and experience. A validation system should be established to identify that officer so he may be afforded alternative training or be released from that period/phase of training and return to a unit duty assignment.

This DA paper also envisages "refresher training in professional military subjects" at the "colonel phase." Notably absent is any premium upon socialization, and notably resurrected is the concept of noninstitutional training.

Thus, it is clear that OPMS affords Fort Benning some latitude to explore alternatives to the present IOAC, including:

- Using exams to filter students prior to the course.
- Administering sections of the course via nonresident instruction.
- Confining its curriculum to its "Infantry Specialty," and leaving the question of training in "alternate specialties" for others to resolve.
- Requiring Infantry specialists to qualify in the "all captains" subjects via nonresident instruction and/or validating examination.