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# IBOLC Mobilization POI: *A Historical Framework*

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**D**uring the Battle of Soissons in World War I, 60 percent of the U.S. Army's Infantry lieutenants involved were either killed or wounded in action.<sup>1</sup> In World War II, the 60-day drive from Salerno to Cassino resulted in Infantry lieutenant casualty rates of over 100 percent. After two months, there were no junior officers in the division who had taken part in the pre-deployment training cycle.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the first seven weeks of fighting in Normandy, the 90th Infantry Division lost an average of 123 officers and 48 percent of its Infantry platoon leaders per week.<sup>3</sup> In the Korean War, 80 percent of officer casualties were lieutenants.<sup>4</sup> More recently, during the Russian-Ukrainian War, the Ukrainian armed forces' ability to conduct synchronized offensive action has been complicated by the heavy attrition of its experienced junior officers, possibly losing 70 percent of its combat-experienced personnel since 2022.<sup>5-6</sup>

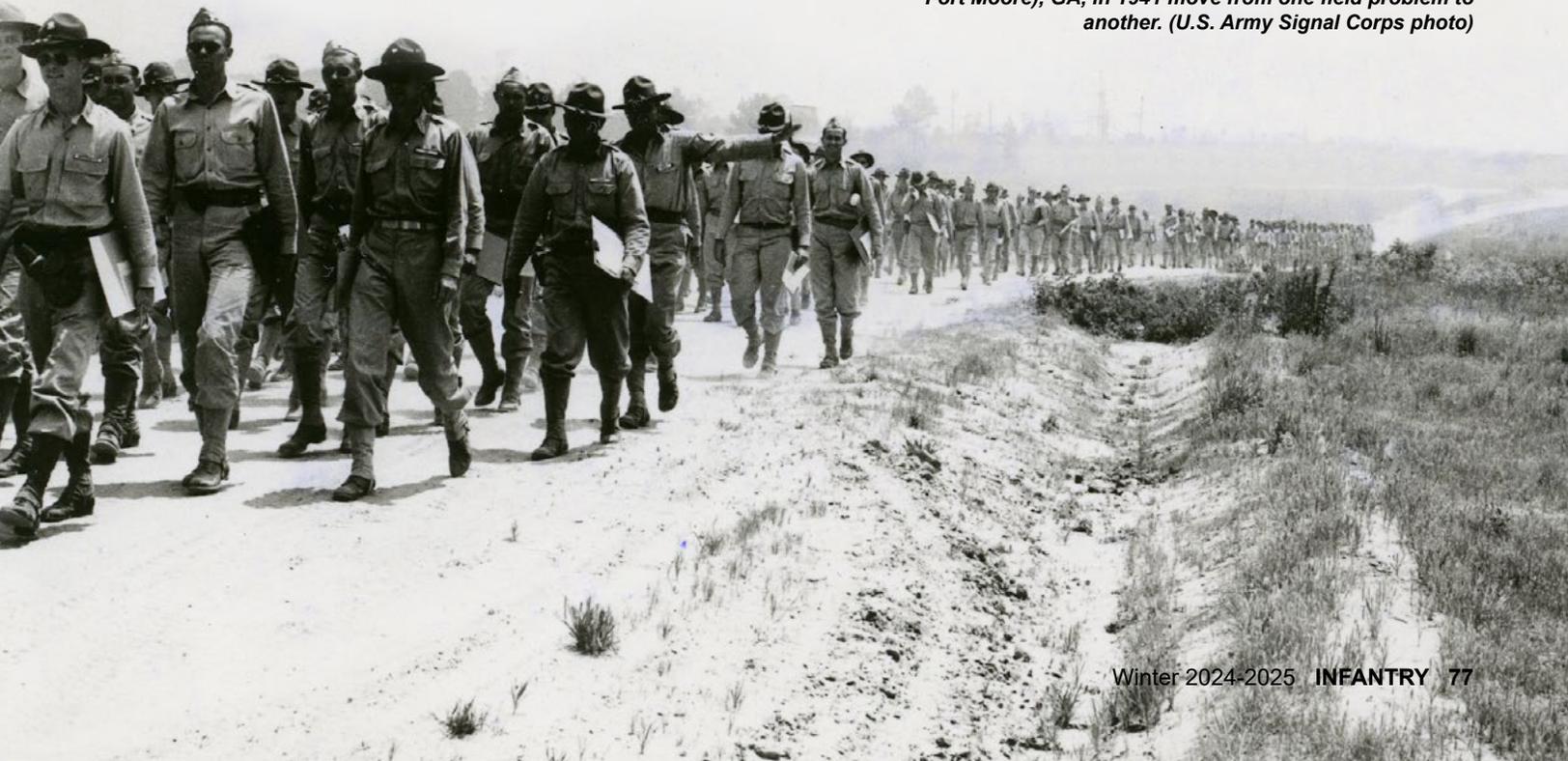
If the Army had to mobilize for large-scale combat operations (LSCO) today, how could the Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course (IBOLC) adapt to meet the manning and training requirements of Infantry lieutenants? Despite technological advances in weapons, sensors, mobility, and protection, the Infantry platoon leader remains at the tip of the arrow on the strategic map. The heavy cost paid by Infantry platoon

leaders to advance the points of arrows is a stark reality of both historical and modern battlefields.

The intent of this article is to stimulate discussion by proposing a draft program of instruction (POI) for an IBOLC designed to meet the manning and training demands of LSCO — specifically, if a full mobilization is declared by Congress that authorizes a force expansion of up to one million personnel, a level of mobilization and force expansion not enacted since World War II. I will offer specific recommendations related to the length, curriculum, and assessment criteria of the course.

The recommendations presented are drawn from analyses of historical Infantry officer course POIs, after action reviews, correspondence, historical reports, LSCO-era Army studies, and other primary sources from past periods of high-intensity conflict. This research identified trends and insights related to the length, subject matter, and assessment criteria of Infantry basic officer training, which I then evaluated against examples and predictions of current and future conflicts. It must be noted that these recommendations are in no way a critique of or call to modify the existing IBOLC. They are solely to provide a baseline discussion of what IBOLC could look like in the event of a mass mobilization of junior officers in support of LSCO.

*Student officers at the Infantry School at Fort Benning (now Fort Moore), GA, in 1941 move from one field problem to another. (U.S. Army Signal Corps photo)*



Conflict	Commission	Initial	Adjusted to	Notes/Causes for Change
World War II	OCS	12 (1941)	17 (1943)	In 1943, junior officer manning needs were met and the course was extended to 17 weeks to improve the leadership and tactical shortcomings of graduates.
	USMA	12 (1941)	17 (1943)	
	ROTC	12 (1941)	17 (1943)	
Korea	OCS	-	22	OCS was discontinued at the end of WWII, and the Army lacked funding to restart it until 1951.
	USMA	OTJ	15 (1951), 11 (1953)	The Army lacked funds to run officer basic courses. Abbreviated basic courses restarted in 1951, and official basic courses began in 1953.
	ROTC	OTJ	15 (1951), 11 (1953)	
Vietnam	OCS	23	23	The 1966 Haines Board (review of officer education) found that USMA and ROTC did not adequately prepare new officers for their first assignment. In 1971, new officers from all commissioning sources began attending a branch officer basic course.
	USMA	OTJ	6 (1967), 9 (1971)	
	ROTC	6	9 (1965), 12 (1971)	

**Acronyms:** OCS: Officer Candidate School; USMA: U.S. Military Academy; ROTC: Reserve Officers' Training Corp; OTJ: on-the-job

**Figure 1 – Infantry Officer Basic Leader Course Lengths in Weeks Before and Adjusted during Conflict**  
 (Note: OTJ Training: Newly commissioned officers did not attend a basic course and instead reported directly to their gaining unit.)

**Length**

*“[Training] should be as brief as practicable, and limited to sound basic training and technical and tactical training sufficient to enable the young officer to join a training unit and render reasonably effective service.”*

— **GEN Leslie McNair**

Commander of Army Ground Forces, in response to a G-1 proposal to extend Officer Candidate School (OCS) from four to six months, September 1943.<sup>7</sup>

*“[In WWII] We trained a lot of lieutenants just to the point where it isn’t a national disgrace to put them on the battlefield. I was one of them.”*

— **GEN William DePuy**

Founder of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, remarks at the Infantry School, April 1973.<sup>8</sup>

I propose a 14-week course after considering two critical-but-opposing variables required for any mobilization POI: manning requirements and tactical proficiencies. Sacrifices in either result in degraded combat performance for the gaining unit. A company lacking platoon leaders is a less effective fighting force, likely to sustain increased casualties, but so too is a company with platoon leaders who are ill-equipped for the harsh realities of the battlefield. During a large-scale war, manning requirements bind the length of the course, and required leader competencies drive the content of the course. From a training standpoint, should the length of the course limit the POI, or should the POI limit the length?

I crafted this POI in a manner in which the length determined the curriculum, and the length would be as brief as possible to support manning needs. An analysis of historical IBOLC lengths supports this decision. Historically, at the onset of conflict, manning requirements are prioritized over tactical competencies, resulting in shorter courses designed to expedite junior leaders’ arrival to their fighting or training unit (see Figure 1). Only after manning requirements are met can basic courses be afforded the flexibility to increase in length and modify their curriculum based on new battlefield developments. The initial output of freshly trained junior offi-

cers is critical not only due to anticipated casualties but also to fill billets for new units, promotions to the next rank, lateral transfers, and rotations through schoolings as wars progress.<sup>9</sup>

Manning requirements are of considerable importance for the Infantry Branch, particularly its officers. In times of war, the Infantry incurs the highest casualty rates, and many of the most intelligent and physically fit officer candidates either may apply or be algorithmically assigned to other branches.<sup>10</sup> For some branches such as Medical, Signal, and Cyber, the Army can simplify the officer acquisition process by directly commissioning from the civilian sector to fill technical jobs.<sup>11</sup> During World War II, the Army learned there wasn’t a civilian job equivalent to an Infantry platoon leader. Infantry officer mobilization is further complicated by the fact that active-duty and recalled Reserve Infantry officers will predominately be a rank that precludes them from serving in lieutenant billets, resulting in more senior positions being filled with gaps remaining at the company level. For example, the Army’s end strength today (452,000) is smaller than the Army that entered the Korean War (592,000), an isolated conflict.<sup>12</sup> Despite four officer recalls, divisions were still 10-percent understrength in junior officers during the defeat of Task Force Smith.<sup>13</sup> If the nation mobilizes for war, an abbreviated pipeline will be necessary to meet the demands of a rapidly expanding Army. Should D-Day precede M-Day, procurement rates will have to contend with replacement rates as well.

My proposed 14-week POI requires a minimum of a six-day training week with a near-total focus on infantry tactics and leadership. The six-day training week over the course of 14 weeks equates to 84 training days, which is just 10 days fewer than the current five-day, 19-week training program. I also recommend the 14-week program include a nine-day field training exercise (FTX) which would add another training day for a total of 85. The mobilization course POI dedicates more time to infantry tactics and FTXs by reducing time spent on individual tasks such as basic rifle marksmanship, land navigation, and other subjects covered by pre-commissioning sources. The intent of the course is to arm students, in the

briefest time possible, with the skills necessary to arrive at their unit, lead effectively, survive first contact, and continue to learn.

### Curriculum

*“Battles and wars are frequently decided not by the doctrines that armies bring to war, nor by the technology that equips military forces, but by the human beings charged with making the crucial battlefield decisions that will lead to either victory or defeat.”*

— David Barno and Nora Bensaheh

*Adaptation under Fire: How Militaries Change in Wartime*<sup>14</sup>

Modern rifle platoon leaders have more tools at their disposal than ever before. Advanced weaponry, communications systems, mobility platforms, and small unmanned aerial systems (sUAS) are increasingly wielded at the platoon level. However, modern battlefields illustrate that these gains are vulnerable to the convergence of cross-domain effects orchestrated by higher enemy echelons. In World War I, platoon leaders just needed a pocket watch and radio line to synchronize their attack with creeping artillery barrages, leaving little in the plan the enemy could directly disrupt. Today, the advanced radios, navigation devices, and vehicles available to the platoon may be as much of an asset as a vulnerability on a sensor-dominated battlefield.<sup>15</sup>

The proposed 14-week course aims to equip leaders with the temperament, knowledge, and responsibility required to fight their element on the modern battlefield, with or without the full array of tools at their disposal. To achieve this, students must be forced to contend with the 21st century problems of precision fires, drones, and communications jamming, as well as legacy obstacles like landmines, armor, logistical disruptions, fieldcraft, and hygiene. Students will be forced to consider these challenges as they plan and lead missions across various environments and, on the other

side, dig in to simulate an isolated, prolonged defense against a ruthless aggressor. Throughout these scenarios, students will have to reckon with not just the enemy but logistics and the health and morale of their platoon as well.

This mobilization course’s POI prioritizes the development and assessment of the leader’s temperament to avoid the “hesitant, uncertain leadership” typically exhibited by platoon leaders at the initial outbreak of conflict.<sup>16</sup> Lieutenants cannot afford to be uncertain in front of their Soldiers or so mentally

Figure 2 — Proposed 14-Week IBOLC Mobilization POI

Week/Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Week 1	In Briefs, Doctrinal Foundations, Fitness Assessments						
	In Briefs	In Briefs	Doctrinal Foundations	Doctrinal Foundations	Doctrinal Foundations/Ruck	Recovery Class	Rest
Week 2	Basic Rifle Marksmanship						
	Table I	Table II/III	Table IV	Table V	Table VI	Exam 1, HPDT	Rest
Week 3	Land Navigation/ Automatic/AT						
	Academics/Terrain Walk	PE (Day/Night)	Test (Day/Night)	MG Theory	MG Theory	MG/AT Re-Test	Rest
Week 4	AT/CFF/TLPs						
	AT Ambush	CFF, TLPs	TLPs	TLPs	OPORD	OPORD	Rest
Week 5	Squad FTX (Squad w/ Gun Team)						
	Squad Teach	Squad Teach w/UAS	Squad FTX	Squad FTX	Squad FTX	Squad FTX, Peers 1	Rest
Week 6	Team/Squad LFX						
	Team Teach	Team Blank	Team Live	Squad Teach	Squad Blank	Squad Live	Rest
Week 7	Introduction to Platoon Operations						
	Platoon Ops	FC/PH	Platoon Ops	Platoon Ops	Platoon Ops	Platoon Ops	Rest
Week 8	Platoon Operations						
	CSL 1	Platoon Ops	Platoon Ops	Platoon Ops	Platoon Ops	Platoon Ops	Rest
Week 9	Advanced TLPs						
	Academics	Academics	Mines, Obstacles	OPORD	OPORD	ROM/Planning	Rest
Week 10	Urban and Defensive Operations						
	Urban Academics	Terrain Walk/UAS	Defense/dig	Refine/Plan	Attack/Defense	Attack/Defense	CATK/Retrograde
Week 11	Urban and Defensive Operations						
	Urban Orientation	Attack/Defense	Attack/Defense	Attack/Defense (2:1)	RTB, Peers 2	Rest	Rest
Week 12	Platoon LFX						
	ROM, Set up, CSL 2	Platoon Blank	Platoon Live	Platoon Blank	Platoon Live	ACFT	Rest
Week 13	Mounted/Breach (Open and Urban Terrain)						
	Vehicle Familiarization/Academics	Academics	Mounted Ops	Mounted Ops	Mounted Ops	12-Mile Foot March	Rest
Week 14	Graduation						
	Boards/Prep	Boards/Prep	Boards/Prep	Boards/Prep	Graduation		

Acronyms: ACFT- Army Combat Fitness Test; AT - anti-tank; CATK - counterattack; CFF - call for fire; CSL - cognitive stress lane, FC/PH - fieldcraft/personal hygiene; FTX - field training exercise; HPDT - High Physical Demands Test; MG - machine gun; OPORD - operation order; ROM - receipt of movement; RTB - return to base; TLPs - troop leading procedures; UAS - unmanned aerial system

overcome by battle that they can't determine which weapon, tactic, or battle drill to use in a dynamic situation. Second, it equips soon-to-be platoon leaders with the knowledge necessary to navigate the above mentioned challenges, with academic classes dedicated to subjects such as vehicle identification, anti-tank/crew-served battlefield geometry, sUAS, and more. These lessons are ultimately fed into extended field problems in offensive, defensive, and urban settings to challenge students not just as tactical leaders but as leaders with dutiful responsibilities for their Soldiers. The proposed draft instruction program is referenced in Figure 2, broken down by the weekly macro and day-by-day schedule.

**Temperament**

*“Individuals must be subjected in training to every feasible sight, sound and sensation of combat. They must be disciplined mentally to act calmly and with sound judgment, regardless of the noise, confusion, surprise, and the fog of war.”*

— MG W. B. Bradford

in a 1951 mobilization training directive extending the Army training week following the defeat of Task Force Smith<sup>17</sup>

An Army Ground Forces study conducted in 1943 determined that the length of the Infantry Basic Course should not be extended. The study, citing feedback from overseas commanders, found that while extending the course would provide further technical instruction, the additional time would not assist platoon leaders where they were struggling the most — leadership.<sup>18</sup> The first of what became an annual Infantry conference (1946), held at what was then Fort Benning, GA, had similar findings: Junior leaders lacked the confidence to brief their more experienced NCOs. The solution: “[G]iving him problems to perform, problems to present and critique before others before he ever gets a command.”<sup>19</sup> After action reports (AARs) from the early U.S. defeats in Korea echoed these sentiments, stating that basic officer courses must provide junior officers “ample opportunity to exercise judgment, initiative, and resourcefulness” to develop the “aggressive leadership” necessary to react to one’s surroundings and lead disciplined formations.<sup>20</sup>

IBOLC, as it exists today, provides an excellent tactical and technical program into which enhanced leadership instruction can be woven. Due to the abridged training length, this mobilization POI reduces time spent on individual Soldier tasks (rifle marksmanship, land navigation, etc.) to place a greater focus on individual leader tasks. The ability of a leader to plan and brief under pressure, monitor health and morale, and solve problems while physically and mentally fatigued is more important than various forms of rifle qualification. The course also includes deliberate events and blocks of instruction to further develop platoon leaders as confident decision-makers, one of which is the cognitive stress lane.



Students in Infantry Officer Basic Leadership Course 02-23 execute the Night Infiltration Course during Training Week 21. (Photo courtesy of 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment)

The cognitive stress lanes (CSL) would include two new events designed to develop the individual leader of Soldiers. These lanes challenge students’ problem-solving and decision-making abilities while they are exposed to physical, mental, and other sensory stressors. The course builds upon the POI’s performance psychology lessons, which teach students techniques for staying calm, thinking through problems, and recalling details during periods of high intensity. Each student would run the course twice, once near the beginning and once near the end of the course.

**CSL 1:** The first CSL bridges the troop leading procedures (TLPs) and squad FTX weeks by challenging students to directly apply their introductory classroom instruction while physically and mentally fatigued. CSL 1 would begin with a vehicle identification sheet which students would have to know/memorize and then move to conduct an obstacle course, burden carry, Stroop test, and call-for-fire lane (must recall vehicles identified earlier) before culminating with receipt of a fragmentary order (FRAGO) and generation of a concept sketch to brief their tactical officer or NCO.

**CSL 2/Night Infiltration Course (NIC):** The second CSL utilizes the NIC to set the stage prior to the platoon live fire. The NIC must utilize enemy weapon systems to provide the overhead gunfire to best indoctrinate lieutenants to the sounds and rhythm of the enemy’s weapons. The course would similarly begin with vehicle and equipment identification/memorization, followed by insertion into the NIC, a team puzzle, call for fire (must recall vehicles identified), and hasty planning with concept sketch brief against an enemy situational template based on weapon systems and equipment encountered on the NIC.

The intent of these exercises is unchanged from the World War II and Korean War “Battle Indoctrination Courses” they draw inspiration from, with added cognitive elements to provide “mental conditioning of individuals in order that they

may become accustomed to, and capable of, withstanding the shock and rigors of battle.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Knowledge**

Vehicle and equipment identification were purposefully included in the combat stress lanes. Platoon leaders must be familiar with all friendly and enemy vehicles and equipment prior to reporting to their first unit. Task Force Smith was defeated in the initial phases of the Korean War because a platoon leader and his commander stood idle trying to determine if the tank column approaching their position was friendly or enemy. By the time they identified the armor column as enemy, the tanks opened fire on their position, and North Korean infantrymen closed in, forcing a U.S. retreat.<sup>22</sup> Reports from the war in Ukraine are replete with examples from both sides of fratricide on friendly vehicles. Junior officers must also be familiar with enemy systems to best match munition to target, achieve desired effects, and avoid target overkill. Similar considerations apply when calling fire missions absent a forward observer. The fog of war and pace of combat will leave little time to think and reference guidebooks to determine if (and how) you’re engaging a BRDM-2, BTR-87, or BMP-3.

In addition to vehicle identification, a LSCO mobilization course should stress landmine identification and battle drills. The GWOT-era “5s and 25s” (meter checks) and practice of the five Cs (confirm, clear, check, cordon, control) has fallen mostly out of practice, although it has wisely been reincorporated into the enlisted Infantryman OSUT POI. Mines and other explosive ordnances are highly relevant to any mobilization POI given the prevalence of and variety of mines in Ukraine and the high likelihood of their use by the enemy in jungle or island environments. sUAS capabilities are taught early in the course.

Preparing a trench, digging a hasty fighting position, and setting up cover and concealment are just a few of the skills critical to survivability in LSCO that were not emphasized during the 20 years of counterinsurgency operations. The Army has already reemphasized these skills across curriculums and exercises, and basic officer courses must follow. Analyses and firsthand accounts of the war in Ukraine reflect the need for soldiers to be experts in camouflaging themselves and their equipment.<sup>23</sup> After a year of pitched fighting in Korea, the Army published Training Memorandum #1, which dictated the following unit training priorities in order: “defensive operations, hasty field fortifications, obstacles, and camouflage.” A study conducted that same year found that Soldiers viewed “how to dig in and take cover” just as important as “how to maneuver in small groups” in regards to training they wished they had received more of.<sup>24</sup> Videos from Ukraine depicting modern trench assaults certainly explain why.

### **Responsibility**

*“Whether he looks out for his men regardless of his physical comfort, whether he demands of them, and whether he sees that the demands are met, those are practical problems*

*he had to learn from his senior officers, even from noncommissioned officers in some cases.”*

— GEN James Gavin

1946 Infantry Conference, discussing improvements needed in junior officer leadership instruction<sup>25</sup>

Classroom academics must be combined with extensive field training exercises to match theory to practice while leaders are tired, hungry, and having to contend with not just the enemy but also weather conditions and the health and morale of their unit. The course must instill in future platoon leaders a sense of duty and care for the Soldiers they will lead through intense offensives or monotonous, isolated defenses. The urban and defensive operations block is a nine-day FTX, immersing the students in an operation that consists of an assault of a trench system, defense, retrograde to dense urban terrain (DUT), and an urban attack and defense. Besides the obvious benefits in tactical proficiencies, the FTX is designed to ensure lieutenants are taught to perform their duties as they relate to three critical components of leadership in LSCO: fieldcraft, health and hygiene, and morale.

Cover and concealment is no longer just a ground-based consideration. sUAS swarm above the battlefield en masse to find, fix, and organically finish or call for fire on tactical-level targets. Proper camouflage and position preparation remain effective means of preventing detection from red air. The camouflage techniques that blur silhouettes to the naked eye have the same effects on the feed of a drone by distorting shapes, making people and positions harder to identify on



*Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course students encounter an enemy drone during a recent platoon live-fire exercise at Fort Moore. (Photo courtesy of 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment)*

screen. Experienced leaders know that the priorities of work are not always adhered to when Soldiers are tired, hungry, fearful, or distracted. Future platoon leaders cannot afford to learn this during combat. Throughout the FTXs, students must learn that they alone are ultimately responsible for validating the fieldcraft and preparation of their subordinates.

Non-battle casualties related to health and hygiene remain a persistent threat to manpower and morale. A 1969 operational report from Vietnam warns that “Malaria continues to be a serious problem in the Division,” disproportionately affecting forward units.<sup>26</sup> A platoon leader captured similar thoughts in his official “lessons learned” report, writing: “The platoon leader must be concerned with the many diseases [which] are capable of rendering a unit inoperative.” His solution: supervision of personal hygiene and adherence to basic preventative measures such as ensuring periodic medical checks.<sup>27</sup>

These were lessons which remained unlearned from World War II and Korea. The Infantry School’s 1954 Korean War AAR found a basic weakness of junior officers was their failure to “know their men and look after their welfare,” resulting in many man-hours lost due to preventable disease.<sup>28</sup> The concept of dutiful responsibility was so absent from officer curriculum that it was not until the war was more than a year old that U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM — then known as Office of the Chief of Army Field Forces or OCAFF) formally mandated that officers conduct periodic foot checks, drastically reducing the number of cold-weather injuries.<sup>29</sup>

Platoon leaders must be taught to recognize the effects that the environment will have on their Soldiers. Whether it be the cold, rain, disease, or isolation, the health and morale of Soldiers will be determined by the actions their leaders take to care for them. One Soldier said it best, commenting on his leaders during a harsh Korean winter: “It is not the enduring of hardships but rather the enduring of hardships that could have been prevented that ruins morale.”<sup>30</sup> Soldiers can persist in the cold when they are confident their leadership is making efforts to clothe them. Will platoon leaders use their movement to the rear to just eat and receive orders, or will they use it as an opportunity to wield their rank and ensure their Soldiers are fed and clothed?

Some may argue that the above are NCO responsibilities, but large-scale combat operations will, by necessity, blend “officer business” and “NCO business” into “leader business.” At the onset of conflict, units will likely have to give up NCOs to serve as cadre for schoolhouses and leaders for newly created units. Throughout the war, units will sustain casualties, requiring the promotion of less-experienced Soldiers into NCO billets. Whereas the current force typically comprises staff sergeants and sergeants first class who are older and more experienced than the platoon leader, that should not be the assumption for the next fight. One example is the “shake-and-bake” NCO program the Army implemented during the Vietnam War to overcome its NCO manpower needs. The program sent privates to an NCO course immediately after basic training and graduated them as E-5s to fill NCO ranks.<sup>31</sup>

During mobilization, the NCO Corps may not be plentiful or mature enough to sufficiently and solely own the above responsibilities. Fieldcraft, hygiene, and morale remain core NCO responsibilities, but it is ultimately on the platoon leader to ensure said tasks are seen through.

### Training and Selection

*“We must remember that one man is much the same as another, and that he is best who is trained in the severest school.”*

— Thucydides

The qualities and aptitudes required for platoon leadership in ground combat are not inherently present in every citizen or Soldier. The proposed 14-week course, due to its necessary short length, can only unleash and build upon these qualities if they are already present in the student to some extent. This article provides a proposed draft POI for a Congressional mobilization not enacted since World War II — meaning there must be sacrifices in the contemporary developmental models to ensure America’s sons and daughters are led by the most competent young Infantry leaders. The abridged training pipeline will come at a trade-off in output quality, so the course must identify individuals who can’t adapt and learn at the rate required to survive and learn from the foundations the course provides post-graduation. Time, schoolhouse capacities, and needs for lieutenants in other branch billets are also factors worth considering. The training and selection of Infantry platoon leaders for LSCO is not a process that everyone can or should succeed in.

World War II-era Infantry basic courses had an average failure rate of 25 percent, with some classes nearing 40 percent.<sup>32</sup> Of the three causes for failure (academics, leadership, and conduct), 49.6 percent failed for academic insufficiencies and 48.4 percent for lack of leadership.<sup>33</sup> The academic criteria were relatively straightforward by use of objective written tests. Leadership, however, was never formally defined, and no official measures were developed. Fortunately, there was one study conducted which evaluated 9,000 failures from 200 Infantry basic courses. The study identified the following as principal causes of relief:<sup>34</sup>

1. Power of self-expression (lack of personal force, colorless personality);
2. Self-assurance (lack of self-confidence, lack of initiative, inability to make quick decisions, unwillingness to assume responsibility, timidity, lack of poise under stress);
3. Attitude (lack of effort, indifference, lack of perseverance);
4. Teamwork;
5. Military appearance (untidiness, lack of cleanliness, lack of coordination, stamina, and endurance); and
6. Speech (crudeness of speech, lack of volume and authoritative tone).

The above criteria are captured in IBOLC’s current assessments of character, competence, and confidence. As such, this mobilization POI proposes performance evaluations similar to the existing IBOLC assessments with a few

adjustments based on course length, new course events, and assumptions on follow-on schooling (see Figure 3).

Student performance would be screened by a cadre board three times throughout the course, an interval similar to World War II and Vietnam-era courses (applicable information from Korean War could not be found).<sup>35-36</sup> There are numerous benefits to conducting frequent cadre evaluations. They provide the students actionable feedback on their performance and allow tactical officers to tailor their instruction to the individual student's needs (e.g., assigning different roles during FTXs). Early screenings enable those deemed unsuited for the Infantry to re-branch without wasting excessive time, freeing resources and attention for other students. Later screenings allow the cadre to identify underperforming students who may yet become Infantry leaders through reinsertion into a later class for additional training. The three cadre boards would evaluate the following:

**Cadre Board 1 (Week 6):** Exam 1, Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT), CSL 1, TLP 1 operation order (OPORD), Peers 1

**Cadre Board 2 (Week 9):** Cadre Evaluation 1, TLP 2 OPORD, Peers 2, Squad/Platoon Operations

**Cadre Board 3 (Week 14):** Cadre Evaluation 1 & 2, CSL 2, Exam 2, Course Critical Patrols, Peers 3

The capacity for combat leadership of Soldiers is a difficult trait to quantify, requiring some form of subjectivity in the form of an experienced cadre board to ensure the right lieutenant does or does not lead Infantrymen. The cadre boards would focus primarily on students who fail a course-critical event and determine if the student should be maintained, dropped from the course, or reinserted into the next. The cadre would make their recommendations based on an analysis of the student's records, their own observations of the student, and peer evaluations. The first board is oriented towards dropping

students early who fail multiple critical events or recommending reinsertion or probation for students who display potential. The second board would re-evaluate students on probation and any students who had failed a critical event to make a recommendation on drop, reinsertion, or probation for the third board. The third board would assess students placed on probation from the second board, new critical event failures, and any negative patterns identified through peers.

Strong leadership potential can compensate for weaker academics, but the inverse is typically not true. For example, students who marginally fail Exam 1 but score high on their first OPORD and peers would likely be maintained on probation. However, students who score high on Exam 1 but perform poorly on their OPORD and peers would likely be dropped or reinserted. The risk inherent with subjectivity is reduced through limits on critical events students can fail before automatically being dropped or reinserted (failing two events is, at best, an automatic reinsert). If students are reinserted and fail the same or two other events, they will automatically be dropped. Students who are dropped will be re-branched for continued service based on the needs of the Army.

The decision to drop or reinsert students will no doubt be influenced by the supply and demand for new Infantry officers. Reinserting a student into a subsequent class adds one student with an at-risk record and removes one new student who is potentially fully qualified. The reinserted student is also additional time and resources the Army spends for a lower chance of successful commission. Three classes in World War II were comprised solely of turnbacks and had an average graduation rate of 44 percent.<sup>37</sup> Even so, if each class comprised 250 students (the average at the time), the result would be 330 new Infantry officers for the force. If qualified candidates are plentiful and manning needs lower, then this course recommends fewer reinsertions. If there are fewer qualified candidates and manning needs are higher, then this course recommends higher rates of reinsertion.

## Conclusion

Open-source wargames against the Army's pacing threats have repeatedly produced casualty rates that could exhaust the existing force structure in a matter of weeks.<sup>38</sup> We cannot assume that the next war will be short, isolated, or produce few casualties. Regional conflicts are intensifying across the globe while Russia's deadly war in Ukraine continues with no end in sight. History has proven war is a phenomenon that risks spiraling out of control at unforeseen and calamitous rates. If the military and political conditions are met to trigger a mobilization, IBOLC will have a short amount of time to produce lieutenants who are inexperienced yet tactically competent, untested in combat yet unnerved by fear, and judged by their Soldiers to be a leader on day one.

**Figure 3 — Suggested Performance Evaluations**

Event	Week	Standard	Course Critical	Re-Rest	Assessment
HT/WT	1	Go/No Go	Yes	Yes	AR 600-9
Exam 1	2	70%	No	No	Scoring %
ACFT	2/13	60 pts per event	Yes	Yes	DA 705 Scale
M4 Qual	2	23/40	Yes	Yes	1 pt/hit
Land Nav	3	4/7 pts in 4 hours, Day into Night	Yes	Yes	Point Scale
HPDTs	1	Go/No Go	Yes	Yes	Go/No Go
TLP 1 OPORD	4	70%	Yes	Yes	Rubric
TLP 2 OPORD	9	70%	Yes	Yes	Rubric
Field Patrol	10/11/14	70%	Yes	Yes	Rubric
12-Mile FM	12	3 hours or less	Yes	Yes	Scale
CSL 1	5	Go/No Go	No	No	Rubric
CSL 2	10	Go/No Go	No	No	Rubric
Peers	5/8/14	Go/No Go	Yes	N/A	Rubric
Exam 2	12	70%	Yes	N/A	Scoring %



**Students in the Infantry Officer Basic Leader Course conduct platoon live-fire training on Fort Moore's Galloway Range on 9 October 2024. (Photo by Joey Rhodes II)**

Should this hypothetical one day become a reality, the above proposed POI could serve as a historical baseline and reference point for the next Mobilization Infantry Basic Officer Leader Course.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> "Soissons, 18-22 July 1918," National Infantry Museum Exhibit, Columbus, GA.

<sup>2</sup> "Address by Commandant, The Infantry School" in The Infantry Conference Lectures and Demonstrations, June 1946, 3.

<sup>3</sup> GEN (Retired) Paul F. Gorman, "The Secret of Future Victories," Institute for Defense Analyses, February 1992, 11-79, [apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA250718](https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA250718).

<sup>4</sup> Battle Casualties of the Army, Office of the Adjutant General, Statistical and Accounting Branch, 30 September 1954, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Jahara Matisek, Sascha E. Ostanina, and William Reno, "What Does European Union Advising of Ukrainian Troops Mean for the Bloc's Security Policies? An Inside Look at the Training Mission," *Modern War Institute*, 11 June 2024, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/what-does-european-union-advising-of-ukrainian-troops-mean-for-the-blocs-security-policies-an-inside-look-at-the-training-mission/>.

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Jack Watling, "Ukraine Must Prepare for a Hard Winter," RUSI, 19 October 2023, <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/ukraine-must-prepare-hard-winter>.

<sup>7</sup> MAJ William R. Keast, "Training of Officer Candidates in Army Ground Forces Special Service Schools, Study No. 31," Historical Section – Army Ground Forces, 1946, 25, <https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4013coll8/id/4491>.

<sup>8</sup> GEN (Retired) Paul F. Gorman, "Secret of Future Victories," Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, February 1992, III-3.

<sup>9</sup> Frank L. Brown and T.O. Jacobs, "Technical Report 70-5: Developing the Critical Combat Performance Required of the Infantry Rifle Platoon Leader," Office, Chief of Research and Development Department, Department of the Army, April 1970, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Eric William Klinek, "The Army's Orphans: The United States Army Replacement System in the European Campaign, 1944-1945" (Dissertation, Temple University, May 2014), 63.

<sup>11</sup> Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1948), 93.

<sup>12</sup> Roy E. Appleman, *South to Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1961), 49.

<sup>13</sup> "Orientation Conference for 37th and 44th Infantry Division

Commanders," Office, Chief of Army Field Forces, Fort Monroe, VA, 8-9 October 1951, 13, <https://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4013coll11/id/447>.

<sup>14</sup> David Barno and Nora Bensahel, *Adaptation under Fire: How Militaries Change in Wartime* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 76.

<sup>15</sup> Randy Noorman, "The Return of the Tactical Crisis," *Modern War Institute*, 27 March 2024, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/the-return-of-the-tactical-crisis/>.

<sup>16</sup> LTC Bell I. Wiley, *Training in the Ground Army, 1942-1945: Study No. 11*, (Fort Monroe, VA: Historical Section - Army Ground Forces, 1948), 25,

<sup>17</sup> "Orientation Conference for 37th and 44th Infantry Division Commanders," 44.

<sup>18</sup> Palmer, Wiley, and Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops*, 360.

<sup>19</sup> "The Infantry Conference: Report of Committee on Personnel, Policies and Procedures," June 1946, Fort Benning, GA, 27.

<sup>20</sup> "Orientation Conference for 37th and 44th Infantry Division Commanders," Part 2, 55.

<sup>21</sup> "Orientation Conference for 37th and 44th Infantry Division Commanders," 44.

<sup>22</sup> Russell A. Gugeler, *Combat Actions in Korea* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1970), 8, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/trecms/pdf/AD1134169.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> "Russian/Ukrainian Lessons Learned," Maneuver Captain's Career Course lecture, Fort Moore, GA, 30 May 2024.

<sup>24</sup> MAJ Christian K. Jaques, "United States Army Infantry Training Program Effectiveness During the Korean War," (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1995): 76.

<sup>25</sup> "The Infantry Conference: Report of Committee," 9.

<sup>26</sup> "Operational Report, Lessons Learned, 4th Infantry Division," U.S. Army Military History Institute, 21 May 1969, 28.

<sup>27</sup> "Operations Report Lessons Learned, Report 1-67, Observations of a Platoon Leader, 30 January 1967, 37.

<sup>28</sup> "Lessons from Korea, 1954," The Infantry School, Fort Benning, GA, 4 February 1954, 13.

<sup>29</sup> Jaques, "United States Army Infantry Training Program Effectiveness," 77.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur J. Druoker and Kenneth H. Bradt, "Personnel Research Section Report 951: A Survey of Opinions of Officers and Senior NCOs in Korea, Factors Contributing to the Maintenance of Morale Under Combat Conditions," April 1952, 5.

<sup>31</sup> MAJ Adam Wojack, "Is Experience the Missing Link in Junior Officer Development," (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 5 April 2010), 13.

<sup>32</sup> Palmer, Wiley, and Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops*, 347.

<sup>33</sup> Keast, "Training of Officer Candidates in Army Ground Forces Special Service Schools," 14.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>35</sup> *Infantry Officer Candidate Program Manual* (Fort Benning, GA: U.S. Army Infantry School, 1964).

<sup>36</sup> Palmer, Wiley and Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops*, 337.

<sup>37</sup> Keast, "Training of Officer Candidates in Army Ground Forces Special Service Schools," 21.

<sup>38</sup> Kent Park and John Nagl, "Was 50 Years Long Enough? The All-Volunteer Force in an Era of Large-Scale Combat Operations," *Joint Force Quarterly* 114 (3rd Quarter 2024), <https://digitalcommons.ndu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1049&context=joint-force-quarterly>.

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