Commandant's NOTE

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LEADERSHIP AT THE LIEUTENANT LEVEL

Leadership has been the heart and soul of the military profession since men first organized and armed themselves to defend their homelands. There is certainly nothing new, therefore, in the notion that the proper exercise of leadership is absolutely essential to the well-being of both small and large military units.

The Infantry School is in the vanguard of those who believe that outstanding leadership is a positive force that can enable the Army to succeed in all its operations, including combat. In fulfilling our responsibility to promote leadership, we begin at the beginning — with the students of the Infantry Officer Basic Course. It is during this branch qualification process that the tone of leadership development is set and that the enduring values and solemn responsibilities of our profession are instilled. It is here that we try to see that our prospective platoon leaders have the soldierly qualities, that they embody the Army ethic, and that they can exercise the principles of leadership.

The 16-week Infantry Officer Basic Course (IOBC) includes in its curriculum 201 hours of classroom instruction and 727 hours of field and range training. Some aspect of leadership training is present in each of these hours.

In developing and evaluating the students' leadership abilities, the IOBC curriculum uses all of their training — physical, mental, and interpersonal skills and professional knowledge. For example, to graduate, students must pass the Army Physical Readiness Test, complete a 12-mile road march in three hours or less, and be able to function effectively, with little sleep, during high-intensity field training exercises up to 11 days in length. They must demonstrate their proficiency in dismounted drill and command voice as part of the IOBC "School of the Leader" program. In addition, the students are required to present satisfactory periods of instruction on physical training and soldier's manual tasks and to complete all the 11B MOSC soldier's manual tasks themselves through skill level 4.

To further their knowledge of military leadership and to build upon the knowledge they gained during their precommissioning training, the students are given 29 hours of classroom leadership instruction in subjects such as decision-making, planning, and counseling. This instruction includes six hours of counseling workshops in which the students conduct soldier counseling and, in the process, refine the interpersonal skills and techniques they have learned in the classroom.

Because the ultimate goal of IOBC is to turn out a qualified Infantry platoon leader, the students are required to serve in numerous leadership positions during the course, from squad leader through platoon leader. These positions are in garrison and tactical field training, in both blank and live fire exercises. Before they are allowed to graduate and report to their first unit of assignment, the students must demonstrate the proper use of troop-leading procedures, the proper technical and tactical expertise, and the ability to make decisions.

The key to developing the leadership skills of the lieutenants in IOBC is proper feedback and counseling. The cadre members — usually one captain and two senior NCOs per 40-man platoon — give the students this feedback and counseling. After completing a leadership position, each student is counseled on his actual performance, on his demonstrated strengths and weaknesses, and on what he needs to do to improve.

The format for the performance counseling is derived from the Leadership Assessment and Development Program that is used by ROTC and OCS. Thus, the performance counseling format and the terminology remain consistent and well-understood by the students throughout their Military Qualification Skills (MQS) I and II training.

In addition to receiving counseling on his leadership positions, each student is counseled on his total performance in IOBC during the sixth, eleventh, and sixteenth weeks of the training cycle. Furthermore, the students of each IOBC platoon conduct peer ratings in these same time periods; the results of these ratings are discussed during the counseling sessions. Thus, throughout the course a student officer is periodically presented an overall evaluation of his individual performance, his group relationships, and his leadership ability, with recommendations for improvement.

The Infantry School has a solemn and explicit contract to initiate in this course a developmental process that will give our Infantry units platoon leaders who are filled with a sense of pride and professionalism, confident in their ability to perform their skills in combat and motivated to command high-performance units.

Good leadership that is based on strength, knowledge, common sense, and sensitivity is the truest measure of a unit's overall combat readiness. The Infantry School enthusiastically accepts and actively exercises its critical responsibility to mold the Infantry leaders of the future.

Practice combined arms!