

Initial Skill Trainer MOS

MAJOR JOSEPH E. PERKINS

The classification of jobs necessary to field any army has been an important step in organizing men and women for war since the dawn of civilization. Improvements such as standardized aptitude, achievement, and medical testing have enabled today's Army to predict the trainability of a total stranger with better than 90 percent reliability. Unfortunately, as that stranger becomes a soldier and climbs from one skill level to the next, the classification process loses its accuracy, objectivity, and predictability. The lack of correlation between a job description and the skills of the job holder is particularly noticeable among drill sergeants, especially in a U.S. Army Reserve training division.

The drill sergeants in today's USAR training divisions were intended to augment or replace the cadre of existing training centers or to set up new centers upon mobilization. Although these drill sergeants give a good account of themselves during their active duty training tours, most of them are not qualified to hold the military occupational specialties they've been awarded.

CONTRADICTION

This obvious contradiction is due more to weaknesses in the current skill classification and verification system than to inadequate performance on the part of the drill sergeants or to inflated evaluations by their supervisors. The creation of a separate MOS that would incorporate the skills necessary to train recruits to Skill Level 1, or to supervise their training, under the constraints of a training division's personnel and equipment

allowances, would reduce the disparity between the drill sergeant's job description and the actual job he performed.

As it stands now, a drill sergeant's job is not an MOS at all. Rather, it is a special qualification identifier that a noncommissioned officer earns after at least four years of on-the-job experience in one or more stateside or overseas tours. It presumes that, before an infantryman "earns his hat," he has served as an entry level rifleman, mortarman, or a TOW gunner to the extent that he has led a fireteam or a squad during live fire ARTEPs. The requirement that a noncommissioned officer must have progressed through a succession of increasingly responsible jobs before receiving drill sergeant training is reflected in the job description of an 11B30 or a 19E40. It is this prerequisite that contradicts the reality of the successful USAR drill sergeant.

Most USAR and some Active Army "hats" who are considered qualified infantrymen, or tankers, or artillerymen, on the basis of standardized written tests and performance evaluations, have never served as mortar squad leaders, artillery section leaders, or tank commanders — and they probably never will. Yet, despite belonging to divisions that have fewer tanks than an armor company and only two batteries of cannon, the Reservists have had enough branch training to earn high marks from their active counterparts at the training centers.

How is this possible?

The answer is obvious. The job of transforming a civilian into a novice rifleman, tanker, or cannoner clearly does not require that each drill ser-

geant be branch qualified at Skill Levels 3 or 4. Conversely, leading a squad or serving as a platoon sergeant does require the experience that training successively larger and more complex groups of soldiers requires. Should drill sergeants without that experience be considered qualified to replace squad leaders or platoon sergeants upon mobilization? Not at all. Bringing civilians to novice skill levels as soldiers and preparing units to function through the noise, heat, and smoke of battle are two very different, though related, tasks.

TWO DANGERS

Two dangers are an inherent part of our current classification requirements. On the one hand, the USAR drill sergeant is given the frustrating and often unattainable task of honing his skills as an infantry squad or platoon sergeant in an organization that has neither squads nor platoons for him to lead. On the other, if he is able to verify his MOS through the Skill Qualification Test batteries, he becomes classified as something he is not. He may be an above-average student of Soldier's Manuals and How to Fight Manuals, but he is far from being a squad leader or a tank commander. Yet, under the current classification system, that is precisely how he is advertised to mobilization planners.

Geography and the nature of Reserve duty do not help. The Active Army infantryman might rotate through One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning, spend a tour south of the Demilitarized Zone in Korea, and serve at least part of a duty tour at Fort



Soldiers in One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning.

Riley in the four or five years before he enters the Drill Sergeant Academy. His Reserve counterpart, after OSUT, will return to his job and his family. And while the Active Army soldier is practicing squad and platoon tactics, hipshoots, and battle drills during a series of field training exercises and unannounced readiness tests, the Reservist is learning the infantryman's craft through study, instruction, and practice drills with makeshift units and scarce training resources.

Stationing problems and parochialism also contribute to the lack of opportunity a Reservist has to polish his skills. In small towns, for instance, there is usually only one unit. If it's an engineer platoon, then the high density specialty in that town will be engineering. But if that unit is reorganized as a quartermaster shower and laundry unit, as sometimes happens in the USAR, no one moves out of town. The unit simply turns in its engineer equipment, requisitions quartermaster gear, administratively reduces and classifies enough soldiers to conform to its new personnel allowance, and begins to train its soldiers, individually and collectively, to be ready for mobilization. Thus, in small towns, cross-fertilization and seasoning is accomplished only when the local unit is reorganized, and this usually happens only once or twice a

decade.

The larger the community, of course, the more opportunity there is for transfer between units. For example, a soldier might serve a tour with the 1st Battalion, 315th Infantry (Mechanized), in Philadelphia learning his craft as an infantryman. Then he might transfer to the 78th Training Division (only an hour away by commuter train across the Delaware River) where he can exploit his leadership experience by becoming an infantry drill sergeant. But this rarely happens. Parochialism, lack of information, identification with the old peer group, and skepticism about the opportunities to transfer back make such arrangements impractical between two USAR units and impossible between a Reserve and a National Guard unit.

As a result, two classes of infantrymen, tankers, and artillerymen have been created in the USAR: those with collective training and leadership experience, and those without it. Yet the personnel selection and classification system does not recognize the distinction between them — and it should.

The creation of a special USAR MOS would not be without precedent. Skills peculiar to USAR organizations and their equipment have already been identified in the fields of air defense

(16F), aerial reconnaissance and surveillance (17L), data processing (34J), and railway equipment repair (65B, D). Establishing initial skills trainer MOSs in the infantry (11T), armor (19T), and artillery (13T) career management fields would recognize the realities imposed on the training divisions and on the USAR drill sergeants by equipment and organizational constraints and geography. (These MOSs might also prove useful in classifying Active Army combat arms drill sergeants whose branch backgrounds were limited to training center tours or non-ARTEP unit experience.)

Because the tasks a soldier must master to hold a basic (11B, 13B, 19E) MOS are more numerous and more sophisticated than those for the trainer MOS, the simpler MOS could serve as a feeder for the more complex one. By verifying his skills as an 11B4X, a soldier would be considered qualified as an 11T4X. However, for an 11T to qualify as an 11B, a transition regimen or evaluation would be required, and both would be based on ARTEP performance.

An initial skills trainer MOS, therefore, would make the selection and classification system more accurate for three of the combat arms. By determining additional training requirements before general mobilization and by identifying individuals qualified by experience and training to replace mid-level NCOs in infantry, armor, and artillery battalions, the Total Army could use its scarce manpower resources — its squad, section, and platoon sergeants — more efficiently.



MAJOR JOSEPH E. PERKINS, a 1965 graduate of The Citadel, is assigned to the 84th Division (Training) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Previously, he held a succession of command and staff positions in air cavalry, armor, and infantry units as a Reservist and a National Guardsman in the United States, Germany, and Vietnam.