



COHORT BATTALION TRAINING

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The conversion of the 7th Infantry Division (Light) to its present configuration resulted in its expansion from two to three active duty infantry brigades. This was done primarily by assigning the Army's first three COHORT light infantry battalions to the division, one to each reconfigured brigade.

All the division had in the way of guidance for training these battalions was the recommended use of Tactical Battle Drills (TBDs) in multi-echelon training and the ARTEP Mission Training Plans (AMTPs). The battalions therefore had to develop and execute their own training plans. One of them was the 5th Battalion, 21st Infantry. Other light infantry battalions may find this battalion's training plan useful as they activate their own COHORT units. *

As a newly activating unit, the 5th Battalion initially had only a few soldiers, no equipment, and no billets. The S-3 and the command sergeant major, who were first assigned to the provisionally activated battalion in November 1984, immediately began their planning under the direction of the battalion commander-designate, who was then the brigade executive officer. In addition, the brigade adjutant had been selected to command a rifle company in the new battalion, so he

was also available to the battalion from its inception.

This vanguard of the 5th Battalion, 21st Infantry met frequently to establish goals and standards and to create a vision for the new unit. This vision was further translated into a command philosophy and explained in detail to each member of the chain of command when he came in.

Most of the battalion's officers and NCOs reached the unit in February and early March 1985, and they immediately processed and procured local quarters. Battalion-organized diagnostic hands-on and written skill tests were administered to them, and reinforcement training was conducted to bring them up to the level expected of their MOSs and skill levels and to prepare selected ones to attend the Light Leaders Course at Fort Benning. There was also a great deal of emphasis on their physical readiness and on increasing their mental and physical stamina.

At the same time, company executive officers and support personnel inspected the billets the unit would occupy, inventoried furnishings, accepted lateral transfers of equipment, ordered the additional TOE equipment needed, and performed other administrative and logistical actions.

From 25 March through 22 April 1985, the selected officers and enlisted men attended the Light Leaders Course at Fort Benning. This course is primarily a leadership and "train-the-trainer" course, with more than half the instruction being conducted by the students. Its goal is to increase the leadership abilities and the proficiency of each student in methods of instruction and tactical battle drills. (See also "Light Leaders

* NOTE: I would like to thank LTC Joseph C. Windle and CPT William B. Crews, formerly commanders of 2d Battalion, 32d Infantry and Company B of that battalion, respectively, for their assistance, insight, professionalism, and diligent efforts in drafting an earlier version of a similar manuscript based upon their own unit experiences.

I would also like to thank LTC Thomas J. Kelly, commander of the 5th Battalion, 21st Infantry for reading the draft of this article and offering cogent recommendations for improvement. My special thanks go to ISG Cleophus M. Childress, Company B, 5th Battalion, 21st Infantry, for reviewing this article from the NCO's perspective. One could not ask for a more professional, competent, and unwaveringly loyal First Sergeant.

Course," by Captain William D. Phillips, INFANTRY, January-February 1985, pages 35-37.)

Some intangible results of the course directly contributed to the battalion's development and cohesion. The shared stress, the high standards, and the inculcation of the "spirit of light infantry" from the Ranger instructors, forced each company's leaders to bond together, an action that definitely strengthened the company chain of command. It also gave the company commanders and first sergeants a chance to observe and assess the capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, and potential of their subordinate leaders.

(It is important to understand that this course is not conducted like Ranger School. There is no harrassment, each student wears his insignia of rank and is treated accordingly, and the company chain of command is further reinforced by its remaining intact throughout the course. A graduate of the Light Leaders Course is not only more aggressive, tough, and competent in soldier skills and tactical battle drills but also much more confident in his own training and abilities and in those of his leaders.)

Once back at Fort Ord, the battalion's in-house training intensified. The NCOs who had attended the Light Leaders Course taught tactical battle drills and other subjects to those who had not attended. The battalion developed a week-long course that stressed land navigation, physical training and confidence building, tactical battle drills, and the reinforcement of individual skills and leadership attributes. And during this period, barracks renovations and preparations were completed.

Selected chain-of-command members (battalion and company commanders, S-3, command sergeant major, first sergeants, and platoon leaders) and the battalion chaplain traveled to Fort Benning in late May to meet the new soldiers and their families, to give them an orientation on the Fort Ord area and the 7th Division, and to participate in the graduation ceremony.

The ceremony marked the successful completion of the demanding One-Station Unit Training (OSUT) and signified a soldier's transition from trainee to Infantryman. In addition,

each company commander was given his own time to conduct small but dignified ceremonies in which the Regiment's history, lineage, and honors were chronicled, and the significance and symbolism of the unit crest was explained. Then each soldier was presented with a packet containing division patches, unit crests, and the unit's Presidential Unit Citation.

rites of passage

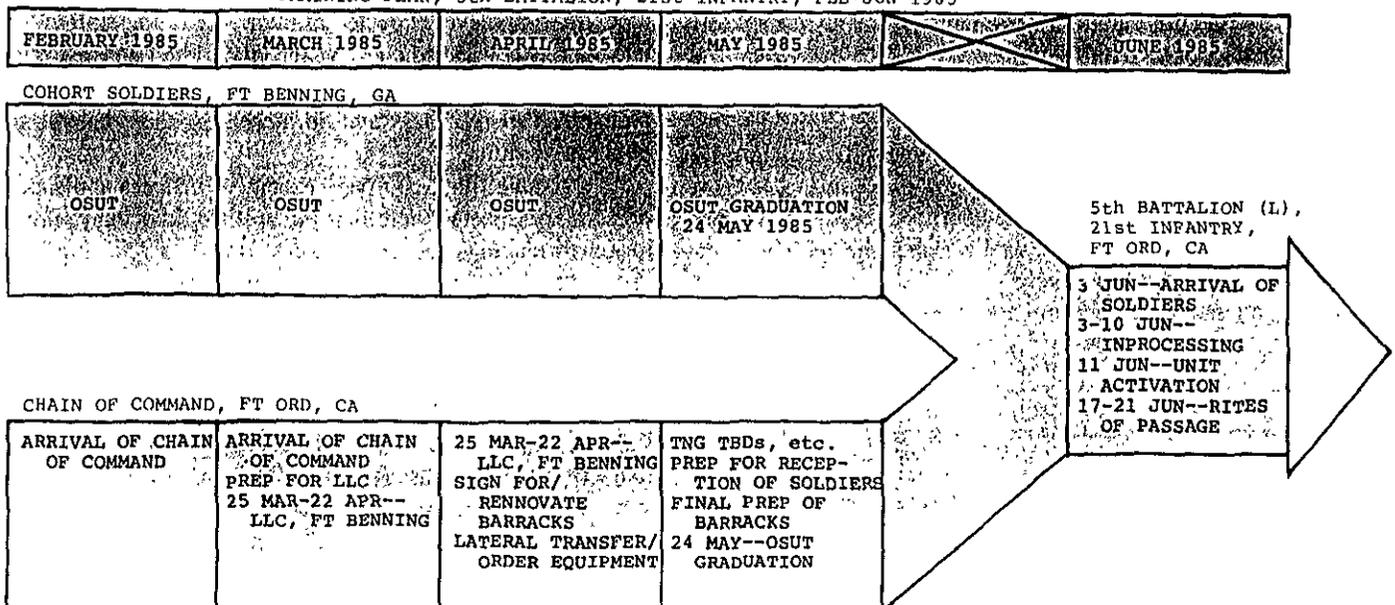
When the soldiers arrived at Fort Ord on 3 June 1985, the chain of command was totally prepared to receive them. A highly professional, effective, and efficient in-processing program was adhered to, and the actual activation of the battalion took place at a ceremony and review on 11 June.

From 17 to 21 June, the battalion participated in the Rites of Passage, which consists of five days of intensive training in individual and survival skills and adventure training conducted by a separate committee of NCOs, almost all of them Airborne Rangers. One of the major objectives of this course is to help soldiers make a mental transition to their new surroundings and to assimilate each of them into the division so that they will feel like an integral part of this unique organization. This also provides an ideal opportunity to start training new soldiers on field discipline—stand to, noise and light discipline, proper security at night, frequent maintenance of weapons, field hygiene, and a host of related subjects.

The course emphasizes team-building activities such as road marches, rappelling, bayonet assault courses, confidence and obstacle courses, and the like. These activities are not only fun, they also serve to strengthen the soldierly bonds within each squad. In effect, the course reinforces the NCOs' positions of authority and skill by having them conduct all unit instruction and movements.

The next step was the Light Fighters Course, held at Fort Hunter Liggett, an area of diverse terrain 86 miles south of Fort Ord. The primary purpose of this course, which is an annual requirement in the division, was to teach the soldiers

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the squad and platoon tactical battle drills that the battalion's chain of command had learned in the Light Leaders Course.

The battalion's objectives for the course were to:

- Teach squads and platoons the critical skills they would need to become the best light infantry fighting force in the world.
- Develop its units into flexible, tough footmobile fighters capable of using their specialized training to aggressively exploit enemy weaknesses.
- Develop cohesive, high-spirited units capable of aggressive, independent combat action.
- Increase its ability to make the most of its combat power through surprise, stealth, and expert use of terrain and camouflage.
- Conduct the training in a realistic, tactical environment that applied an appropriate amount of stress. At least half the training was conducted at night.
- Increase its soldiers' confidence in their leaders. All unit instruction of critical skills were presented by the leaders who would lead the units in combat.

The course also provided time for individual squad leaders to be innovative and use their initiative, because of the wide diversity of training that was offered during the 19-day course. That training included a combat intelligence training course, combat fire base/night defensive position operations, rappelling/rope work, air assault and small boat operations, and realistic squad and platoon live fire exercises.

When the battalion returned from the Light Fighters Course, the units continued with multi-echelon training, completing squad ARTEPs in September, platoon ARTEPs in October, company ARTEPs in January, and the battalion ARTEP in April 1986. (The battalion ARTEP was originally scheduled for completion in February, but was pre-empted by other missions.) In accordance with doctrine, the squad ARTEPs were planned and conducted at company level and platoon ARTEPs at battalion level.

Although it is still too early for a conclusive assessment of the effectiveness of COHORT light infantry battalions in gen-

eral, and of the 5th Battalion, 21st Infantry training program in particular, some early assessments appear to indicate initial success.

One of these assessments, made by a social science analyst from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, commented on the "contagious professional integrity" and the "relaxed atmosphere" in the battalion. It further concluded that "COHORT provides a foundation on which exceptionally competent units have been and are being developed in the 7th Infantry Division."

In another assessment, the Inspector General of the 7th Infantry Division administered a survey in 12 battalions to 223 soldiers (corporal/specialist 4 and below) in which each was asked to rate his unit's ability to perform in combat. The 5th Battalion, 21st Infantry showed a level of confidence substantially higher than the average for the division as a whole.

The battalion constantly makes its own internal assessments, including regular Battalion Training Management System sessions in which both officers and NCOs participate. From all these assessments, some initial observations can be made:

First, the squad is the most important element in a battalion. A squad must be given the time and resources it needs to conduct its own training. Though the planning for this training may be centralized, its execution must be decentralized so that it will be as effective as possible. Training managers must create an environment that permits freedom to learn, accepting an occasional mistake if an honest attempt has been made to complete the task or mission properly—and they must realize that learning takes place as a result. If a flawless execution of every mission is expected on every occasion, the probable result will be micromanagement in which, for example, the battalion commander over-supervises the company commanders and actually takes away their authority, and so on down the chain of command. Mistakes in this situation can lead to over-reaction, and the situation grows worse as the subordinate whose authority has been usurped becomes increasingly frustrated.

If the training is decentralized, a squad leader is challenged

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JULY 1985	AUGUST 1985	SEPTEMBER 1985	OCTOBER 1985	NOVEMBER 1985	DECEMBER 1985
5th BATTALION (L), 21st INFANTRY, FT ORD, CA					
PREP FOR LFC SQD TNG 15 JUL-2 AUG LT FIGHTERS CRS FT HUNTER LIGGETT	2 AUG-COMPLETION LT FIGHTERS CRS INDIV/SQD/PLT TNG TRADOC TEST ON OSUT POI	10-24 SEP--SQD ARTEPs, FT H.L. AT LIVE FIRES SQD TNG PLT TNG	PLT TNG 16-29 OCT--PLT ARTEPs--FT H.L., CAMP ROBERTS MORTAR LIVE FIRES	PLT COMBINED ARMS LIVE FIRE EXERCISE POST GUARD FORCE LOCAL TNG AREAS	2-10 DEC 85--BN FTX, FT H.L. 16 DEC--BEST RIFLE CO COMP. 17 DEC-5 JAN 86 CHRISTMAS LEAVE PERIOD

JANUARY 1986	FEBRUARY 1986	MARCH 1986	APRIL 1986
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6-10 JAN--PREP FOR CO ARTEPs 12-17 JAN--CO ARTEPs, FT H.L. (ALSO CO CALFEX) SQD TNG PREP FOR DIVISION READY FORCE 1 MISSION	DRFI MISSION PLT LIVE FIRE EX SQD/PLT TNG IN LTAs (ALSO RE- VERSE CYCLE TNG) CONSOLIDATED MOR- TAR FDC TNG CONSOLIDATED DRAGON TNG	SQD/PLT TNG 16-29 MAR--BN IS OPFOR AGAINST 9th REGT, FTX, FT H.L.	POST GUARD FORCE INDIV SQT TNG 21-25 APR--SQTS 26 APR-3 MAY--BN ARTEP/BDE CER- TIFICATION EX, FT H.L.
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1986/87
AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS COURSE
EXPERT INFANTRYMAN BADGE TEST
LIGHT FIGHTERS COURSE II
FT HUNTER LIGGETT
MULTINATIONAL FORCE AND
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to train himself to the unit's standards so that he can effectively train his squad as well as maintain his own credibility. The squads develop a unique identity and a collective "we" attitude. Training standards are also invariably higher when a competitive spirit is created among squads.

In short, we need to train our squad leaders as best we can, then trust them to train their squads any way they deem appropriate so long as the unit's standards are met and the mission is accomplished.

As much individual training as possible should be conducted before collective training, with the NCOs involved, as they should be. The First Sergeant is the senior trainer in a company for individual training. Not only does this increase the NCOs' authority and responsibility, it also improves their positional authority, prestige, self-esteem, and confidence in the chain of command.

On the other hand, if a unit starts with collective training, the NCOs will probably perceive a lack of trust in their abilities and think that the officers want to take over their jobs. If this happens, it may be tough for the officers to regain the trust and confidence of the NCOs, and there may be serious repercussions later in the COHORT life cycle.

Even though safety is of paramount importance, it is essential that all training, especially live fire exercises, be conducted as realistically as possible. The 5th Battalion set a goal to conduct at least one live fire exercise a month to further build aggressiveness, tactical proficiency, self-confidence, and confidence in comrades and weapons. Tactical exercises that are conducted force-on-force add competition, encourage initiative in small-unit leaders and individual soldiers, and maintain the interest of the soldiers.

Another observation is that COHORT corporals are among the greatest strengths of the COHORT system. Because a rifle company does not have enough sergeants to serve as fire team leaders, it has to select about ten COHORT soldiers immediately to fill these vacant positions. As a result, these soldiers are designated "COHORT corporals," appointed acting corporals, and allowed to wear corporals' stripes.

These young soldiers are usually intelligent, motivated, willing to learn, and in outstanding physical condition. Their potential is unlimited. They are treated as NCOs, become important members of the chain of command, and are trained in the duties and responsibilities of NCOs. In addition, they receive more training in individual and collective tasks, so they can lead and train their own fire teams confidently and competently.

On the basis of its entire COHORT experience, the battalion has several recommendations:

- The Department of the Army must be selective about the NCOs it places in a COHORT unit chain of command and should evaluate demonstrated performance, leadership ability, and potential instead of levying certain posts or units for a required number of NCOs to be reassigned at a specific time to a COHORT unit. If a unit is tasked with providing NCOs for another unit, it is not likely to send its best soldiers.

- When a unit is scheduled to be activated, the soldiers who hold specific low-density MOSs—such as 71L, 75B, and 76Y (especially 76Y)—need to be among the first soldiers assigned

to the unit. These soldiers are needed to initiate and conduct all administrative and logistical actions before the COHORT soldiers arrive.

- Also before the COHORT soldiers arrive, all NCOs should either re-enlist or extend their enlistments to cover the entire COHORT life cycle. Re-enlistment regulations must be unwavering on this point, but they have not been in the past. The COHORT system is designed to improve stability and cohesion and to reduce personnel turnover, especially in the chain of command.

- The Army seems to have been merely paying lip service to the statement that officers are affected by the COHORT system. They really do not appear to be. We must also try to reduce personnel turnover among commissioned officers in a COHORT unit.

- Currently, the enlisted infantrymen in a COHORT battalion initially enlisted for three years plus the time required for OSUT, whereas the enlisted soldiers holding low-density MOSs initially enlisted for only three years. This means it is possible for the low-density MOS soldiers to reach the end of their enlistments about three months before the infantrymen and three months before the end of the COHORT life cycle. This situation warrants additional study.

- Senior leaders need to be aware that officers and NCOs carry a tremendous burden of responsibility, physical as well as mental, in a COHORT light infantry battalion and need to watch for leader "burn-out." There is nothing more demoralizing to an NCO who is working hard in a COHORT unit and spending half his time in the field away from his family than to be told that he is going to be stabilized at the same installation to go through a second COHORT life cycle.

In the past year, the 5th Battalion, 21st Infantry has trained light infantry battalion COHORT soldiers innovatively and with apparent success. The tie between leadership and training has been clearly demonstrated. The efforts of both the chain of command and the NCO support chain to improve leaders and replace those who seemed unwilling or unable to achieve and maintain the necessary high standards have paid tremendous dividends. The result has been cohesive, combat-ready squads, platoons, and companies made up of tough, skilled, aggressive, and dedicated infantrymen.

The essential element of success in this program has been COHORT. The individual replacement system will never permit the required excellence, and though the price of a COHORT battalion is high, it is not too high. The longer initial training time for a COHORT battalion will yield better results. The stability inherent in COHORT, plus dedicated and competent leadership and a well-planned, demanding, and superbly executed training program, are the essential elements for creating the finest light infantry in the world.



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