

# THE TRANSFORMATION OF INITIAL ENTRY TRAINING

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*“The high quality of Army leaders and Soldiers is best exploited by allowing subordinates maximum latitude to exercise individual and small-unit initiative. Tough, realistic training prepares leaders for this, and FM 3-0 prescribes giving them maximum latitude to accomplish the mission successfully.”*

— FM 3-0, Operations



Since we were attacked on September 11, 2001, the United States has been engaged in the Global War on Terrorism. As an Army, we have determined that we will be in a state of persistent conflict with an operational environment that is complex and multidimensional with battles fought predominantly within population centers. The current strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan has small units living among the population in combat outposts while clearing their areas of operation, holding the physical and human terrain, and building national capacity. These conditions are further compounded by the current operational tempo and Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle that has an increasing number

of Soldiers graduating from Initial Entry Training (IET) and deploying to combat within 90 days without completing the Soldierization process at their unit. To win under these circumstances, our units require flexible and adaptive leaders and Soldiers who are capable of thinking and exercising initiative on the battlefield from the moment they arrive. IET at Sand Hill on Fort

Benning has responded to this challenge and is currently producing the leaders and Soldiers capable of winning in this environment.

## Observations and Analysis of the Previous IET Program

The previous IET program established in the 1980s focused on mass producing Soldiers in the most efficient manner possible. This methodology assumed identical experiences would produce identical training results. Trainers believed that if all Soldiers attended the same training, conducted in the same way using the same script, then they would emerge with similar capabilities. This methodology also relied on centralized planning using a set program of instruction (POI) that directed what to train, how long to train, and how to do it using set scripts and procedures believing this would produce the capabilities required.

Our POI metrics focused on the inputs to training rather than outcomes. The POI and other applicable training base regulations directed the rules and procedures for conducting the training. This resulted in trainers who focused on whether or not a Soldier attended six hours of land navigation training taught in accordance with procedures specified in the POI versus whether he could read a map or navigate from point A to B. This condition often led our trainers to train to time and not to standard, leaving little time in the POI for remedial training. This resulted in a “check the block” mentality and did little for developing the leader or Soldier initiative required in combat and in accordance with our doctrine of battle-focused training.



Courtesy photos

Soldiers fire M16/A4s using M68 optics during advanced marksmanship training.

Additionally, because of the diverse educational background of our Soldiers, trainers applied a lowest-common-denominator approach focused on attaining the minimal standard among all. The mind-set was that operational units would complete the training process for the Soldiers prior to having them perform as members of a team or squad in combat. Given today's operational environment, this methodology was not producing the quality, thinking Soldiers our units required; nor was the time available later to accomplish this task prior to deployment to combat.



*Initial Entry Training Soldiers prepare to enter and clear a room during urban operations training.*

### **Making the IET Transformation a Reality**

Fort Benning, the proponent for Infantry One Station Unit Training (OSUT), worked closely with Fort Jackson, South Carolina, the proponent for Basic Combat Training (BCT), to transform all IET training. The proponent leaders agreed upon these principles to guide the required transformation. First, the primary outcome of IET is to shape the attitude, behavior, and character of the Soldier. Trainers must instill the right attitude in Soldiers based on the Soldier's Creed, assist Soldiers in modifying their behaviors to meet Army task standards, and build their character based on our Army Values, ethics, and discipline.

Second, trainers would focus on the end result or outcome vice the training process itself. This product-oriented principle is linked directly to our term "outcomes based training." In other words, trainers were not accountable to an outmoded POI, but to ensuring the Soldier could meet the agreed upon outcomes. Simply put, a training outcome is what a Soldier should be able to demonstrate as a result of his training. For example, the Soldier knows and understands the Army Values rather than just accepting and demonstrating a willingness to live by the Army Values. These outcomes have been divided into upper and lower level outcomes and link directly to intangible attributes and tangible skills.

Intangible attributes are the basis for upper level outcomes. They are those

attributes that commanders most desire in their Soldiers for combat such as confidence, accountability, initiative, thinking skills, problem solving, awareness and responsibility. Training can always affect these attributes based on the presentation and quality of training for the Soldier and his interaction with his trainer. It is important for trainers to challenge Soldiers to solve problems. This, in turn, promotes learning through self discovery once a Soldier masters the basics.

Lower level outcomes are those tangible tools, or the infantryman's skill set, that are the focus of the majority of our individual common task training. These skills include first aid, marksmanship, land navigation, communication, individual and team movement skills, and gunnery skills to name a few.

Third, IET would be a continual process with expected levels of progression at major (specific) phase points.

Fourth, IET would be centered on training individual Soldiers but conducted in a group setting.

### **The Current IET Graduate**

IET trainers completely redesigned the BCT and Infantry OSUT POIs based upon the IET principles discussed above and what they thought Soldiers should be able to do to meet the challenges of the operational environment upon graduation. We agreed that each graduate will demonstrate the following upper level outcomes: an acceptance and willingness to live by the

Army Values, perform as a member of the team, the discipline and self confidence to operate as a ground combatant, an ability to recognize and solve problems appropriate to his circumstances and level of responsibility, working or operating under stress, possessing confidence at graduation that he has been challenged and can continue to grow personally and professionally, and demonstrated proficiency in key lower level outcomes (see below).

The primary aim of BCT and OSUT is to develop the Soldiers'

attributes and character in addition to their key task proficiency skills. These former characteristics are somewhat intangible and difficult to measure in terms of quantifiable metrics; however, they are observable and can be assessed by the cadre. For instance, does each Soldier work well with the other members of his squad? Does he always contribute fully to accomplishing his share of a task? Throughout a training cycle, the constantly evolving answers to these questions will help the cadre assess how well the Soldier displays teamwork. Similar circumstances allow cadre to measure the other characteristics as well.

The lower level outcomes are the easiest to develop and measure because they are the hard skills that the Soldier has to be able to perform as a warrior in a small unit. Trainers identified the requirement to be proficient at the following key basic tasks:

- \* Is physically fit (including foot marching);
- \* Demonstrates the basics of how to take care of himself in the field, in adverse weather, and in stressful conditions;
- \* Is constantly aware of his surroundings and alert to potentially significant changes;
- \* Is able to hit what he shoots at;
- \* Handles weapons competently, confidently, and safely, whether using blank ammunition or live;
- \* Can perform lifesaving battlefield first aid;



*During the team development course, IET Soldiers at Fort Benning work as a team to successfully maneuver the obstacles.*

- \* Can read maps and navigate from one point to another;
- \* Can operate a radio and perform basic voice communications;
- \* Can react to man-to-man combat;
- \* Can move as a member of a team and react to contact correctly;
- \* Demonstrates appropriate military customs and courtesies;
- \* Assesses and responds appropriately to threats;
- \* Can apply the fundamental skills required in a defense;
- \* Can enter and clear a room correctly;
- \* IICs: Can correctly perform basic gunner skills.

Few of these tasks resemble those in our current doctrinal manuals; however, they are tasks that all of our Soldiers have to be able to execute to meet the demands of our current operational environment. For each of the corresponding tasks we developed a set of measures of effectiveness (MOEs) to help trainers assess the effectiveness of their training.

For example, the task “Is physically fit” has several MOEs. These include: “passes the APFT; completes a 5-mile run at a 9 minute per mile pace with the formation; climbs to the top of the rope unassisted; can do six pull-ups; completes a 12-mile foot march at the prescribed pace with the prescribed load; and does not quit.” These MOEs highlight a mix of measurable and observable metrics used by the trainers to assess a Soldier’s fitness.

Additionally, OSUT trainers developed the MOEs for the task, “can correctly perform basic gunner skills.” These MOEs include: correctly mounts 60mm, 81mm, and 120mm mortars; fires a mortar; executes small deflection change with accuracy; correctly refers the sight and realigns aiming posts; accurately executes large deflection and elevation changes; performs reciprocal lay; and understands the principles and key roles in the indirect fire system (forward observer, fire direction center, and gun section).

The remaining tasks listed above have MOEs associated with them that provide the basis for the cadre and specifically the drill sergeants to assess an individual Soldier’s progression. Once the trainers identified what a new Soldier should be able to do upon graduation, they focused on defining the environment to conduct the training in.

### The Current IET Environment

In order to train Soldiers to meet desired attitude, behaviors and character outcomes, trainers had to establish the right training environment. Under transformation, trainers immerse new Soldiers in a positive environment where they can consistently provide opportunities for Soldiers to demonstrate the Army Values and proper conduct. Drill sergeants mentor and teach the new Soldiers and are responsible and accountable for developing their Soldiers’ attitude, behaviors, and character.

The positive environment encompasses a consistent embodiment of Army Values with appropriate conduct by exemplary role-model trainers (company cadre including the drill sergeants). It also establishes an environment where standards and expectations are clearly communicated, achievable, and consistently and equitably enforced. This environment

has created a positive drill sergeant/leader-to-Soldier relationship where each Soldier can be mentored and feels he is a valued member of the team.

Drill sergeants are challenged to train Soldiers to adhere to standards through self-discipline rather than by enforced discipline. Drill sergeants are now expert trainers who guide the Soldiers to learn through self discovery and reward them for continuing to exhibit those behaviors through their self-discipline. This positive, motivational training enhances Soldiers’ initiative and task retention and replaces the negative techniques previously used to modify their behaviors.

Drill sergeants strive to enable every Soldier to achieve the performance level each is capable of achieving according to their potential. They continually assess and modify tasks, activities, and conditions to accommodate the progression and current abilities of each Soldier. Even though training is conducted in a group setting, it is focused on the individual Soldier. Learning is a continual process with levels of progression throughout each phase of training. If Soldiers are not progressing, then they receive remedial training that may include restarting them in a later class to repeat training. As Soldiers progress through certain levels, the cadre increases their privileges. The environment and training method changes have provided this transformation of the IET product — your Soldier trained and ready for the fight upon arrival at first unit of assignment.

### Summary of Key Changes

After completing the redesign, we made several key changes in the POIs that further improved the quality of our leaders and Soldiers. These benefits accrue directly to the operational units once their new leaders and Soldiers arrive. First, all graduates depart IET as certified combat lifesavers trained as battlefield first responders. You can expect a confident Soldier ready to perform buddy-aid when required.

Second, the new POI improves basic rifle marksmanship, adds

additional advanced rifle marksmanship training including close quarters marksmanship, and adds a new combat qualification standard that replicates combat requirements. The combat qualification standards are not finalized but will include firing from behind barricades, correcting malfunctions, rapid reloading using cover and concealment, and other techniques that require thinking and build confidence in our Soldiers. You can expect IET graduates to be competent, accountable, and confident with their weapon under stressful and realistic conditions.

Third, Soldiers receive more effective fire team training. This training focuses on moving as a member of a fire team, reacting to contact, and entering and clearing a room. It is then reinforced and validated during the battle march and shoot, buddy team and fire team live-fire exercises (LFXs) and the convoy LFX. These LFXs replicate many of the conditions our Soldiers will soon encounter in combat.

Fourth, Soldiers receive more effective training conducted by their drill sergeants on situational awareness, weapons proficiency, communications, land navigation, escalation of force, fundamentals of defense, and detect and react to improvised explosive devices (IEDs). We conduct all of this instruction at

the small unit level rather than in company-sized classrooms and embed it throughout the cycle.

Fifth, Soldiers receive more combatives training, and if they meet the standard, depart IET level 1 or above certified. This dramatically enhances their confidence and aggressiveness needed in combat.

Sixth, many Soldiers receive cultural awareness training that makes them aware of Middle Eastern history and geography, provides them basic Arabic language skills, and better prepares them for future patrolling requirements.

Finally, the new POI marks a substantial cultural change in how IET trainers conduct BCT and OSUT training. It focuses on training fewer things better. It also changes the way trainers assess proficiency. They focus more on values, teamwork, and discipline while conducting training under more realistic conditions similar to those found in the operational environment. The training methodology requires sustained proficiency throughout the training cycle and not just at end of instruction like the “end-of-cycle testing” conducted under the previous POI. Our linkage to the operational Army is critical to ensuring our training remains relevant. IET trainers rely heavily on the feedback from operational commanders, Center for

Army Lessons Learned products, Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG) training courses and materials, and the recent experience of our newly assigned cadre, mainly drill sergeants. Our IET program is meeting the need posed by today’s operational environment.

*“Today’s dangerous and complex security environment requires Soldiers of character. Their character and competence represent the foundation of a values-based, trained, and ready Army. Soldiers train to perform tasks while operating alone or in groups. Soldiers and leaders develop the ability to exercise mature judgment and initiative under stress. The Army requires agile and adaptive leaders able to handle the challenges of full spectrum operations in an era of persistent conflict.”*

— Draft FM 7-0, *Training the Force*  
June 8, 2008

Our Soldiers continue to win on the battlefield, and Sand Hill’s new training environment and methodology provides leaders and Soldiers the opportunities they need to demonstrate the initiative and thinking skills necessary to succeed in combat. The current training is focused on less tangible outcomes, but delivers the high quality, thinking product our commanders and units require in combat. You will continue to see these leaders and Soldiers demonstrating the character and values our operational units require to fight and win our nation’s wars during this period of persistent conflict.



*A Soldier administers an IV during battlefield first responders training.*

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