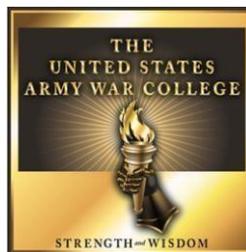


The Foundation of Strategy's Means: U.S. Army Initial Military Training

by

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Abstract

During World War II the U.S. Army developed an initial military training (IMT) System that was responsible for preparing over two and a half million soldiers for service. Within the military element of national power, trained men and women establish the foundation upon which the Army builds and sustains the means of strategy. As such, the process of inducting civilians and training them to a level where they can seamlessly integrate – and meaningfully contribute – to a tactical unit is an issue of strategic import. Examining the doctrine, organization, training methods, material, leadership, personnel, and facilities employed by U.S. Army in WWII to execute initial military training yields several important lessons. Additionally, it exposes tensions that when left unaddressed created turmoil in the system, forcing the U.S. Army to adopt less than optimal measures in individual training and replacement operations. These tensions revolved around decisions concerning course length, training unit organization, and levels of occupational specialization and expertise. However, the Army can avoid many of these tensions by making changes to contemporary policies related to facilities, force design, and personnel actions.

The Foundation of Strategy's Means: U.S. Army Initial Military Training

In March of 2016 the defense blog *War on the Rocks* published an article contemplating whether the United States had the capacity to outperform China in the event a confrontation developed requiring the mobilization of military power on a grand scale.¹ Setting aside the Chinese aspect of this issue, a broader question emerges concerning the United States' ability to mobilize armed forces in the event of a significant contingency. Are the correct elements in place to rapidly, efficiently, and successfully generate well trained and properly equipped forces on a scale and at a pace that creates an advantage for the United States while disadvantaging a potential adversary? This is not a simple question nor is it narrow in scope. The execution of mobilization involves all segments of U.S. society, all branches of the government, each of the armed services, and numerous interrelated factors ranging from funding, to transportation, to the training base.²

Given the wide breadth of activities associated with mobilization, narrowing the focus will allow for a deeper look into one aspect that has been a focal point of discussion and debate since the United States' inception. While all of the United States Armed Forces are subject to fluctuations in budget and end strength revolving around the Nation's wars, the U.S. Army is perhaps the first among equals in this regard. The roots of this can be found in the U.S. Constitution and the distinction it makes concerning the development of the Army. With the provision for Congress to "raise and support armies, but no appropriation of money to that use shall be for a longer term than two years", the Constitution's authors indicated a prevailing desire to not maintain a substantial army in continuous service and a precedent for reliance on mobilization and expansion in response to conflict.³ Bounded by oceans to the east and west, and

neighbors that do not present an existential threat to the north and south, the United States has had the luxury of prescribing to this philosophy. However, it creates readiness issues for the United States Army in a number of regards.

When the directive comes to expand the force, the U.S. Army will need investment across multiple capabilities including, facilities, personnel, material, and training. While each of these has the potential to serve as a bottleneck in the process of mobilizing for war, the U.S. Army in particular perhaps more acutely feels one than the other four services. Traditionally, in war or in peace, the Army has maintained the largest end-strength. Moreover, at peak times such as the height of the Vietnam War the Army can account for more than half the total active duty and two-thirds of the reserve component strength of America's defense establishment.⁴ In times of expansion, the U.S. Army will generally have a much steeper personnel growth curve than the other services. As such, when faced with the requirement to expand the force, the reception, indoctrination, and education of new inductees – their initial military training – must be a central component of any U.S. Army mobilization effort.

The Strategic Context of Initial Military Training

At first glance, the provision of initial entry training does not seem like an issue of strategic import. It involves the development of tactical skills at their most basic level, the individual. Nothing could appear further from the realm of strategy and the process of harmonizing ends, ways, and means to achieve national objectives. However, when considering that the most essential component of the means available within the military element of national power is the men and women that operate the implements of war, the importance of the initial military training (IMT) system is elevated to a level of strategic consideration. In the final tally, the President and Congress can declare war

and put the Nation on a wartime footing, the economy can enable the industrial base to exceed all wartime production standards, all elements of National power can be committed to the war effort, but without trained men and women to man the ships, tanks, and airplanes these efforts are for naught. The training base establishes the foundation upon which strategy's means are built and sustained.

Considering the negative implications of a poorly executed program adds further evidence to the strategic relevance of initial military training. Several examples illustrate how a poorly designed system for IMT can lead to less than optimal solutions when filling out the ranks in wartime. During World War I, the Army established a series of camps for training replacements prior to movement overseas. Ultimately, the capacity of these camps could not meet the demand and recruits shipped out with generally less than a month of training. In this case the burden of basic training was passed to the theater.⁵ During heavy combat in 1944, due to an insufficient flow of infantry replacements from the continental United States, the Army instituted emergency measures to meet its needs by combining the theater's communications zone for able-bodied support personnel and putting them through an ad hoc infantry training program.⁶ The Korean War experience is another example where capacity could not meet requirements forcing the U.S. Army to rely on the Korean Augmentation to United States Army (KATUSA) program in which the Army filled units with Korean nationals.⁷ Emergency measures such as these may cause more casualties, and take the emphasis away from what is important in the theater: planning, sustaining, synchronizing, and executing combat operations; and ultimately prolonging the war effort.

Currently, the U.S. Army identifies the process of inducting civilians and training them to a level where they can integrate and meaningfully contribute to a tactical unit, as initial military training (IMT). Initial Military Training is defined in Army Regulation 350-1 (Army Training and Leader Development) as providing;

an orderly transition from civilian to military life. It is the first step to transforming volunteers into Soldiers. It teaches Soldiers the tasks and supporting skills and knowledge needed to be proficient in required skills at the first unit of assignment. IMT produces technically and tactically competent Soldiers who exemplify Army Values, live the Warrior Ethos and are prepared to take their place in the ranks of the Army. IMT includes HQDA mandatory training and command directed training each member of the U.S. Army (both officers and enlisted Soldiers) must complete to qualify for an MOS or branch.⁸

The Army divides the system into three major components, basic combat training, advanced individual training, and basic officer leader training. In some cases, the Army combines basic combat training and advanced individual unit training into one program known as one station unit training. While the organization of initial military training in the U.S. Army has gone through changes over the years, the core ideas have been generally consistent. These include: (1) developing basic skills and attributes that ensure a soldier can quickly integrate into a formation with little additional training and survive if immediately committed to combat, (2) standardization of training to allow flexible assignment of graduates to the point of need and to create a common baseline from which advanced individual training and tactical training can proceed, and (3) to remove the burden of training basic individual skills from tactical units so they can concentrate on collective training.⁹

There is perhaps no more significant example of the employment of an initial entry training system to grow the ranks and provide replacements than the U.S. Army experience in World War II. During the war, the U.S. Army's numbers swelled to over

eight million men with the Army Air Force accounting for about twenty-five percent of that total. The U.S. Army Replacement and School Command alone inducted, trained, and shipped overseas more than two and a half million replacements. The significance of the effort is evident when compared to World War I or the Korean War where the U.S. Army's active duty end strength reached its apex at 3.6 million and 1.5 million respectively.¹⁰ Additionally, the replacement system was one of the key forces that enabled the U.S. Army to reduce its initial WWII goal of establishing 215 divisions to 89 by constantly reconstituting formations with replacements vice building new ones.¹¹ The U.S. Army effort not only stands out for the sheer magnitude of the endeavor, it is also significant because it established the procedures and techniques the U.S. Army would adopt and use for IMT to the present day. Moreover, the experience highlights some of the difficult trade-offs that will need to be made if a significant expansion is called for in the future. These include decisions concerning the length of training, how to create an efficient training system while preserving other important aspects such as training realism, and how to create versatile replacements that the Army can flexibly assign to the point of greatest need while still developing enough expertise to be effective upon arrival at a tactical formation.

Initial Entry Training Concepts for Mobilization

The U.S. Army has generally implemented two broad concepts when confronted with the requirement to expand rapidly its end strength. The first concept involves the provision of basic and advanced individual training by an institutional or non-tactical unit of the Army. Once the soldier is complete with this training, the Army sends them to an operational unit for integration into collective training or directly into combat. The operative feature of this system is that upon arrival at the tactical unit the soldier is fully

prepared to seamlessly integrate into the formation and contribute meaningfully to the unit's mission. As the U.S. Army began its mobilization and preparations for World War II, the War Department's intention was that every new recruit would receive some level of basic training prior to joining a tactical formation. The Army abandoned this practice following the attacks on Pearl Harbor when it decided that newly forming divisions were the priority for new construction versus committing resources to establish more institutions for replacement training.

With the decision to prioritize facilities for the divisions, the Army began using the second concept, which is to induct soldiers and upon arrival at their tactical unit begin the process of initial entry or basic training as one phase in a larger program that leads to collective training and ultimately readiness for combat. The key feature in this system is that officers and non-commissioned officers of operational units are responsible for indoctrinating new soldiers and developing those immaterial and branch specific skills required for the soldier to adapt to the Army's culture, successfully contribute during collective training, and to survive in combat. Each concept has unique features, limitations, and merits, which make their application suitable, based on the context under which mobilization is occurring. However, the U.S. Army has predominantly used the first system since World War II, and as such, an examination of the experience with replacement training by institutions provides more insights into the challenges the Army might face in a future mobilization scenario.

To institute its program for replacement training the U.S. Army developed policies and procedures within each of the seven categories used by the Joint and Army acquisition community for capabilities development. These categories include:

organization, doctrine, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities.¹² Each of these categories played an important role in the creation of the U.S. Army's replacement training system in World War II and will be used as a framework to understand how the U.S. Army approached the establishment of a replacement training system that significantly influenced the war effort.

Organization

To facilitate the training and development of units for combat in World War II, General George Marshall created the Army Ground Forces (AGF) in May of 1942 as a single headquarters responsible to oversee the organization, training, and readiness of ground combat units as they prepared for movement overseas and commitment to a theater of war.¹³ Whether a soldier received their basic combat training as part of a tactical unit or as an individual in a training center, the AGF had a significant effect on how the soldiers training proceeded. For institutional training, the AGF added another layer of command by creating the Replacement and School Command in March 1942 and consolidating the role in replacement training formerly held by the branch chiefs of Infantry, Cavalry, Field Artillery, and Coast Artillery. Initially, selected commands and centers, such as the Armored Force and Tank Destroyer School, maintained their direct reporting relationship to the Army Ground Forces Headquarters, but by the end of the war all fell under the Replacement and School command with the exception of the Anti-aircraft School.¹⁴

Within the Replacement and School Command, the U.S Army developed a series of Replacement Training Centers (RTC) starting in March 1942 that were the primary organizations where individual training occurred.¹⁵ Their intended function shifted as the war progressed; initially they dealt with providing filler personnel for newly forming units

then as combat operations began, they shifted focus to providing replacements to the theaters of operation. While this seems like a simple and natural shift, it affected the organization for training, as the requirements for filling newly formed units were quite different from replacing casualties lost to combat. Once enough cooks had been trained to fill all units, the task was nominally complete as cooks were not lost at a high rate in combat. This was unfortunately not the case for riflemen.¹⁶ To keep pace with the losses a typical infantry regiment experienced in combat, the Army needed infantry replacements to completely reconstitute the formation every three months.¹⁷

The U.S. Army started the war with twelve Replacement Training Centers (RTC) with each of the initial RTCs being associated with a branch or arm of the service. In some cases branches operated multiple centers, with the infantry operating four training sites, field artillery and coast artillery each operating three, and the final two being dedicated to armor and cavalry.¹⁸ In the end, the Army organized thirty-four RTCs during the war with seven as basic training sites that offered only branch immaterial instruction. The other twenty-seven RTC's provided both immaterial and branch specific training, and would be analogous to the one-station unit training system currently in use.¹⁹ AGF organized each RTC along a traditional structure with a center headquarters, and subordinate regiments/groups, battalions/squadrons, and companies/batteries/troops. At each echelon measures were taken to reduce personnel overhead in the headquarters by omitting some of the staff sections or functions that might found in a tactical formation that were not critical to the training mission. The number of subordinate units varied by the quantity and type of soldiers AGF tasked the center to train. However, a typical RTC would be organized in multiples of four; four

squads to a platoon, four platoons in a company, and four companies to a battalion. Each company had a 200-240 soldier capacity with companies composed of trainees within the same specialty; all riflemen in one company, all heavy weapons operators in another and all cooks in a company of their own.²⁰ Within this fixed structure units organized committees at the regimental, battalion, and company level to provide cadre based instruction. This committee system enabled instructors to become experts in selected topics and provide more in-depth instruction.²¹

The organization was not static and changed in relation to several factors. In some instances, adjustments were made based on requirements of the force; this was the case in 1942 when twenty-eight combat arms battalions were temporarily converted to train service of supply soldiers when the War Department identified a deficit in sustainment personnel needed to support Operation Bolero.²² In other cases, a desire to eliminate redundancy and maximize efficiency drove the changes. This was seen in June 1941 when the Armored Force Replacement Center cut one of its three training groups (equivalent to a regiment) when it was determined that selected branches did not require specialized armor based instruction. As such infantrymen, engineers, signalmen, and sustainment branched soldiers began receiving instruction at their parent branches RTC.²³ While the RTCs accomplished these adjustments, they were not immediate or without cost as the changes required a reorganization of the training center, retraining of instructors, and transfers of equipment. It generally took five months from the decision to adjust before the RTC reflected the change in output.²⁴

Doctrine

The Army's overarching concept of the individual replacement training system in World War II was to reduce the training burden on tactical unit commanders. Thus, the

Army provided them a soldier that was indoctrinated in the Army's culture and trained on individual skills to the point they could contribute to the accomplishment of the unit's mission. This would allow commanders to focus on other tasks associated with either standing up a new unit or preparing an established one for combat. The detailed guidance for accomplishing this was codified in a series of documents called mobilization training programs (MTP). Much like the contemporary U.S. Army program of instruction (POI), the MTPs established the hours by subject that the RTC would teach recruits, the sequence of training, and the duration of the program.²⁵

MTPs and the overarching concepts associated with individual military training went through several changes over the duration of the war. Initially, schools developed MTPs associated with the various branches and arms then approved by the War Department or AGF Headquarters. While each accomplished the task of transforming civilians into soldiers through the inclusion of training on basic tasks (e.g. drill and ceremonies or rifle marksmanship), they accomplished this at different points in the training progression and in different quantities. Each also started branch specific training at different points, e.g. a field artillery replacement would be introduced to cannon drill in the first two weeks of their course while other branch's replacements would not start occupational specialty training until much later in the program.²⁶

From 1942 to 1943, AGF made several adjustments that brought the instruction at the various centers onto a more common footing. This process culminated in August 1944 when the Replacement and School Command issued guidance stipulating the first six weeks would consist of branch immaterial military training standardized across the command. This change would make trainees interchangeable amongst the branches at

the culmination of the first six weeks. If a transfer was needed due to a change in a trainees' physical status or a change in demand for a specific specialty came from the theater of operations this provision simplified the process. However, by standardizing the initial training weeks the Replacement and School Command forced the RTCs to put all branch specific training into the remaining eleven weeks of the course. This had a deleterious effect on branch specific training, particularly for those branches that relied on early and repeated exposure to a weapons system to develop proficiency, as with the cannon crewman mentioned above.²⁷ Another aspect of generalization was found in a War Department Directive in 1944 dictating that soldiers destined for specialist positions should be trained broadly by the RTCs and upon assignment to a formation receive on the job training to further refine their skills. In response to this guidance, the Army Ground Forces consolidated and reduced the number and type of specialists trained in its IMT programs from thirty to twelve.²⁸

Training

As indicated above when outlining the doctrine associated with the individual replacement system, the conduct and provision of training went through a series of changes based primarily on requirements and feedback from the overseas theaters. Length of training, tasks executed, and the level at which training was executed were all variable in nature and changed throughout the course of the war. In some cases, AGF found that revisions created less than the desired effect and rolled them back after implementation.

The total number of weeks allocated for initial military training went through a series of expansions and cutbacks alternating based on two competing factors. The need to provide rapidly soldiers to either expand the Army or serve as combat

replacements was consistently in tension with the requirement to ensure soldiers arrived with enough proficiency to contribute meaningfully to collective training or more importantly survive their initial weeks in combat. When the individual replacement program was started in 1941 the length of training was not uniform based on the decentralization afforded the school commandants. As such, course lengths varied from twelve weeks to thirteen weeks. Subsequently, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, AGF cut the training to eight weeks as an emergency measure to quickly provide replacements and expand the Army. However, by July of 1942 the courses returned to their pre-war durations then grew over the course of the war culminating in a program that was seventeen weeks in duration.²⁹ AGF carefully considered decisions to grow the length of training before implementation. While adding more weeks produced a better trained soldier each addition either slowed the flow of trained soldiers or required an increase in personnel in the training overhead. The additional weeks of instruction stemmed not only from the institutional training units and their desire to develop a more proficient soldier but also from feedback and requests from the theaters.³⁰

Given the individual nature of the training provided at the RTCs one of the more interesting requests from the operational theaters that resulted in a longer course was the addition of collective training. In 1943, feedback from overseas units indicated replacements were arriving well trained in the individual aspects of their duties but lacked the understanding of squad and platoon operations and the teamwork required to integrate seamlessly into a unit engaged in combat. As such, AGF added two weeks of squad and platoon training. For a brief period, the seventeen-week program even incorporated one week for company level training which was subsequently dropped

based on recommendations from the overseas units. More significant proposals along these lines were contemplated but never adopted.³¹

AGF considered three other methods for training replacements as collective units during the war that were not instituted. Forming and training whole units that would move through a training progression at the RTCs then ship overseas as a complete formation received considerable attention and was a favored option of the AGF commander, Lieutenant General Lesley McNair. He ultimately did not adopt this as units overseas preferred to reconstitute the existing elements within their formation. A second proposal called for organizing the RTC along the same tables of organization dictated for tactical formations but once training was complete sending the soldiers overseas as individual replacements. AGF dismissed this option due to the amount of time and effort required to reorganize the RTCs and the additional overhead it would entail. Finally, the AGF considered using divisions that were organized but not fully manned and prepared for shipment overseas as collective training and holding depots. The idea was not adopted Army wide as it was felt these units would be in a perpetual state of turnover and never available for movement overseas. However, the Armored Force did temporarily utilize the 20th Armored Division in this capacity by giving replacements four weeks of collective training with the Division. The Armored Center halted this additional unit training for armor replacements when the 20th was ordered to make final preparations for overseas movement. Realism in training was a goal constantly pursued by the Replacement Training Centers and the inclusion of small unit collective training was but one method in pursuit of this end.³²

Another change made to training during the course of the war was the inclusion of battle courses designed to expose soldiers to combat conditions prior to their first engagement overseas. AGF developed and instituted four standardized courses which placed soldiers in a realistic combat environment. Some courses such as the infiltration course, where soldiers crawled under live machine gun fire, or the overhead indirect fire course, in which soldiers experienced incoming artillery fire from covered positions, used weapons effects in close proximity to train the soldiers. Others, such as the close combat course and village fighting course, placed the soldiers in tactical situations that required them to employ their personal weapons in conjunction with maneuver. The village fighting course is noteworthy in that the Army used tactical measures exclusively to control the trainees during execution of the course, creating a level of realism that could not be achieved with excessive administrative safety measures.³³

Material

To be able to execute the training outlined above soldiers at the Replacement Training Centers required equipment in sufficient quantities and of a type commensurate with what they would operate once assigned to a tactical unit. On a macro level, the Army failed to provide modernized equipment in the appropriate numbers for training as much of the Nation's production effort before hostilities focused on aircraft and shipping production.³⁴ As an example, the Armored Force cited a lack of equipment as a severe impediment to the training offered at its RTC. In the opening months of 1941, only one tank was available for replacement training at Fort Knox. By July, the situation had improved slightly but not nearly enough with twenty-seven out of one hundred light tanks on hand but still no medium tanks available for training.³⁵

While issues like these eventually were resolved as American industry increased its capacity, material would continue to exert an influence on training. This was most prevalent in the new arms and services – Armor, Anti-aircraft, and Tank Destroyer – where equipment was continuously modernized and upgraded. The anti-aircraft artillery's (AAA) experience highlights this challenge, by 1945 only one type of anti-aircraft weapon available at the start of the war was still in service. All other systems used in AAA units have been developed and fielded after the start of hostilities. Not only did the RTCs need to have the latest equipment on hand, the instructors had to be proficient enough on these new systems to pass their knowledge on to the trainees.³⁶

Personnel and Leadership & Education

As with any military enterprise, the quality of leadership is a critical factor in the success or failure of that endeavor. Anecdotal evidence indicates the Army failed to staff the replacement training commands with the best personnel the Army had to offer. One commander complained that his greatest challenge was finding quality “enlisted men to act as instructors, because “everybody higher than a moron” had been pulled out for one reason or another.”³⁷ Another problem the Replacement Training Centers faced was stability with cadre and instructors. Instructors generally served in their positions for one year and then transferred to another position following a period of overlap with an incoming instructor.³⁸ While certainly, a fair and sensible policy it did present problems with quality of instruction and continuity.

In light of these transitions, AGF made efforts to ensure instructors were well versed in their subject areas and prepared to present first-rate instruction to their trainees. When the RTCs were first operational, cadre presented all instruction at the squad and platoon level. As mentioned above, this later transitioned to a committee

system allowing instructors to specialize in their topic area so they could gain expertise and depth in a specific subject as opposed to a shallow understanding of numerous training tasks. Another method employed to ensure instructor proficiency was using consolidated instructor training courses during the interceding period between training cycles. This not only allowed new instructors an opportunity to perfect their craft, it also helped to standardize instructional material and practices across a formation.³⁹

In some cases, AGF pursued alternate sources when qualified instructors were not available at the center or school. An Army Ground Forces study of the Armored Force Command and Center indicates that it established a relationship “between the School and private industry” and students were sent to manufacturing plants for instruction. In one instance of cooperation between industry and the Army, the Ford Motor Company went so far as to provide both instructors and training aides to the Armored School to train the force on the Ford engines being installed in the M4A3 Medium Tank. Additionally, the center employed a number of civilian instructors for their technical expertise.⁴⁰

The resourcing, training, and organization of instructors was certainly a critical aspect in the training system. Student to instructor ratios could have a significant impact on the quality and throughput associated with training. RTCs adjusted ratios based on the complexity of the topic. In formations that taught specialty skills, the instructor to student ratio was approximately 1:9 for a company specializing in radio instruction or approximately 1:6 for mechanics. By contrast, for a company training riflemen, the ratio was 1:10.⁴¹ Maintaining these ratios was a battle for the RTCs as reducing overhead at the training centers and schools was a method used to add quickly non-commissioned

officers and officers to the replacement pool.⁴² AGF directed this measure in February of 1944 and the training units vigorously protested in light of the effect it would have on training efficiency and quality. Ultimately, the need for replacements was too great and the U.S. Army followed through with the directive.

Facilities

In order to provide structures to house, train, and feed the influx of personnel within its growing ranks, the U.S. Army embarked on one of the largest construction projects in its history. Spearheaded by the Construction Division of the Army Corps of Engineers, the Army would ultimately produce housing for over six million men by November 1944. This is an exceptional undertaking considering in 1939, the Army could not adequately house the 200,000 men in its ranks. Fighting for resources within this massive construction effort were the Replacement Training Centers and in spite of the speed with which construction proceeded, it still constricted options. The competing demands for construction between the newly forming divisions and RTCs was a key factor in the Army's decision not to expand its replacement-training program. As such, the onus for initial military training on new soldiers was placed on the divisions. This was a significant change from the Army's pre-war intention of completely removing this responsibility from tactical units.⁴³

For efficiency and easier oversight, the Army built Camps using standard designs for facilities and camp layouts. Building accommodations were much improved over those available to soldiers in previous conflicts and included proper ventilation, central heating, latrines with hot and cold water and drinking fountains. This was in part an acknowledgement of the amount of time soldiers and units would spend in the camps before deploying overseas as well as an understanding that morale was an important

consideration for a large conscripted force, whose members were constituents with congressional representatives interested in their welfare.⁴⁴ Beyond having adequate housing and space for training, the camps needed to be located close to a sufficient transportation network to ensure an efficient flow of construction materials, troops, and supplies. Additionally, the Army needed to build camps at locations with suitable environmental conditions such as fresh water and good drainage. Looking at one camp in detail highlights how much effort went into the RTC's piece of the Army's construction endeavor.⁴⁵

Construction of the Engineer Replacement Training Center (ERTC) located at Camp Belvoir, Virginia began in the fall of 1940. Cadre began to arrive and organize for their mission in the beginning of 1941 with the first group of 250 trainees arriving in March. To accommodate the 30,000 plus personnel that would eventually train at Belvoir, a significant construction project was accomplished under the direction of the post construction quartermaster. In the final sum, 253 buildings were built and within this figure, there were thirty-six mess halls, 163 barracks buildings, eleven recreation halls, and four theaters. Complementing these structures were miles of sidewalks, roads, utilities, and waterworks. To accomplish its mission of preparing engineer replacements for combat, a total of 120 bridges, 400 timber obstacles, and 36 antitank ditches were constructed as training aides between March 1941 and March 1942. With the exception of a combat firing course, all training sites were developed within two miles of the barracks and supported the execution of a diverse set of tasks to include "sites for demolitions, field fortifications, roads, obstacles, weapons training areas, and fixed and floating bridges." To accommodate the training on floating bridge construction,

a 2,000- foot channel was dredged which allowed six companies to train the task at the same time.⁴⁶ Getting the building and facility layouts correct was a key aspect in establishing the ERTC and other centers.

For the Replacement and School Command, the organization, allocation, and design of facilities had a significant impact on the quality and efficiency of training. Building designs for the training centers were adapted to the larger size of units found in the replacement centers; as such billets and mess halls were built to accommodate more personnel. This reduced the overall cost of housing and feeding soldiers as they processed through their first step on the road to joining a tactical unit. In general, training regiments were assigned a permanent location for housing their students as well as training areas and facilities. This encouraged a sense of ownership with the cadre and a desire to improve continuously the training aides and locations in their assigned areas resulting in higher quality instruction.⁴⁷

RTC camp and building design would prove to be a limiting factor later in the war. When the RTC contemplated the proposals outlined above, for transitioning to a tactical unit based organization for replacement training, facilities were one factor militating against its adoption. Buildings had been built for the larger size of the training units and by housing smaller tactical based formations, either space would be wasted or units would need to be broken up and spread across multiple structures, thereby reducing efficiency and oversight. Another consideration was that of training specialty personnel. Within a tactical unit, commanders found personnel in low densities spread throughout the formation. For replacement training, they had been consolidated into a company size unit composed of the same occupational specialty. RTCs housed these specialist

companies in locations close to the shops and facilities that supported their unique instruction. However, if the RTC reorganized the training along the table of organization for a tactical unit, the specialist would need to be consolidated each day from across the training post for their instruction, resulting in a loss of training time and increased transportation requirements. Once the die was cast with the design and layout of the RTCs, making changes could be painful and hard to execute.⁴⁸

Conclusion

There are three significant tensions evident in the U.S. Army's initial military training system present in World War II that will likely come to the forefront in the event a mobilization of similar magnitude is called for. The first is the inherent tension between demands for replacements, from either a rapidly expanding force or the theater of war, against the time it takes to train sufficiently newly inducted soldiers. Related to this aspect is the fact that both tactical formations and training units will be in competition for resources such as training areas, skilled personnel, and equipment. The second tension is the competition between training efficiency versus the development of an environment that more closely matches the recruit's intended tactical organization. Closely tied to this is a secondary desire to establish cohesive units that can move forward as packages to the theater of war vice being sent as individual replacements. The final aspect of tension contrasts the desire to standardize training at both the enterprise level and at the branch level to develop soldiers with a broad knowledge base that can serve as versatile replacements against the need to develop sufficient expertise so that a replacement can contribute in a meaningful way upon joining a unit without requiring extensive on the job training. Within each of these areas, the U.S.

Army can take actions now to mitigate the deleterious effects of these tensions and be better prepared for mobilization and expansion when the time comes.

The first tension to be addressed is the length of training. In the Army's World War II experience, program length fluctuated, starting in 1942 at a low of eight weeks then growing to its final length of seventeen weeks. The WWII experience indicates there is a direct relationship between a soldier's proficiency upon graduation and the amount of time invested in their initial training. This is predicated on the proviso that the time invested will be well spent with quality instructors, a well-developed program of instruction, and properly resourced training. There are inherent costs and demands related to the length of the training program, if not the extreme conclusion would be to leave soldiers in their initial military training environment indefinitely.

In a mobilization environment, emergency calls for replacements would seem inevitable. Given a fixed number of training sites and replacement training centers, a simple way to meet frenzied requests for trained soldiers and increase throughput is to decrease the amount of time allocated to replacement training. By cutting the duration of training in half, each training center could theoretically produce twice as many replacements in the same amount of time. Taking a less extreme example, with the seventeen-week program used at the end of WWII, a training battalion or company could execute three cycles per year. However, by cutting four weeks from this program the same battalion or company could add another full cycle. When faced with an emergency call from overseas as the U.S. Army experienced in 1944 these measures to reduce program length would be hard to resist. There are, however, other ways to solve the throughput dilemma.

Another method to increase throughput is to develop additional capacity in the training base. When reviewing the WWII experience, this entails some significant investments across several resource areas. First is the allocation of training sites and locations, this proposition is not without complications considering prime locations will also be needed to train tactical units or may be sought by other services. Second, is the provision of equipment for use by the trainees. To ensure graduates can integrate immediately into a unit in combat this would entail use of the most up to date versions available. Finally, to increase throughput requires either the addition of more instructors or a reduction in the instructor to trainee ratio. AGF considered the maintenance of a low ratio of instructors to students as an important variable in the quality of training. The Army must give further consideration to the quality of these instructors, as indicated above, without dedicated and proficient personnel to lead the training, investments in time and other resources will be wasted. All three areas required to increase capacity represent significant commitments in time and money. Moreover, all of these resources will be in great demand from tactical units expanding to meet their wartime mission.

The U.S. Army can set conditions now to hedge against the tendency to shorten initial military training in response to emergency situations. The Army must create insurance through the promulgation of regulations, programs of instruction, and policies. This is an important step as it establishes a baseline against which the Army can take meaningful decisions. However, this is not enough, there are two fundamental problems with relying on regulations to prevent the curtailment of IMT in war time. First, regulations and policies are only good if commanders inspect and enforce them. Second, when viewed as an impediment to progress in an emergency, regulations can

be amended, rescinded, or temporarily suspended. In order to truly guard against the erosion of training time in initial military training other measures are required.

To guarantee the length of basic training, the Army must establish measures to ensure capacity can meet the demand so it is not forced to cut course lengths to speed up replacement output. The Army can do this in three ways. First, there must be sufficient locations and facilities present to accommodate the throughput needed to meet demand. At the conclusion of World War II, the U.S. Army had developed considerable capacity in this regard; however, this has significantly diminished over time. Taken together the U.S. Army has closed approximately fifty percent of the mobilization training stations it operated in World War II.⁴⁹ Narrowing the focus to initial military training sites, IMT was executed at thirty-four locations during the war; the U.S. Army has consolidated this to twenty-two locations currently in use. The comparison however is not exact, as the majority of RTCs conducted programs equivalent to one-station unit training, where this occurs at only four locations today.⁵⁰ Finally, several branches that operated multiple RTCs have consolidated their training in one location. Currently, the Army executes all initial infantry training at Fort Benning, Georgia. In World War II, the Army spread this function across eight Infantry Replacement Training Centers.⁵¹ The same is true for the Field Artillery and Engineer branches with each running three RTCs during WWII; whereas both currently execute their IMT at a single location. In this regard, calls from the Armed Forces for additional base realignment and closure hearings may be short sighted. While the expense to maintain these bases and facilities is perceived as onerous, perhaps it is better to view them as an investment that will allow faster mobilization without sacrificing the quality of training provided. Once the

Army cedes these locations to state or civil use they will likely not be recovered in wartime without considerable time and effort.⁵²

Secondary to having the proper locations for training, is having people with the correct experiences available in the U.S. Army to facilitate mobilization efforts. There are two aspects to this requirement. The first is to ensure that senior leaders across the U.S. Army have prior experience generated through assignments to the training base. Within the non-commissioned officer corps, this is generally not an issue as NCOs rotate through drill sergeant and advanced individual training instructor positions as part of their normal career progression. However, the Army often forces officers to choose between assignments in the training base or in tactical units since positions are seen as equivalent for qualification. However, Army culture affords tactical units greater prestige. As an example, once qualified as a basic training company commander, an officer may not have a chance to serve as a tactical company commander; which would enhance opportunities for promotion. The Army would potentially benefit from an assignment structure like the Marine Corps where officers serve in command billets alternating between the tactical force and institutional force gaining experience in both areas.⁵³ This would generate a broader experience base concerning best practices and an appreciation for the importance of initial military training thereby avoiding mistakes when the Army must expand the training base.

The other aspect related to personnel and the training base is having enough instructors available to expand the IMT system. The Army currently fulfills this mission with the Army Reserve's 108th Training Command. It maintains a cadre of instructors that in an emergency can quickly grow the training base. However, when considering

the reduction in training divisions from fifteen down to two that has occurred over the past sixty-five years a review of the capacity they provide may be in order.⁵⁴ These organizations can also serve to alleviate the final aspect that becomes an issue for capacity expansion, having the proper equipment to enable training. These reserve companies and battalions can serve as custodial agents for the equipment needed to enable training. This will ensure training aids are on hand in sufficient quantities to execute quality and up to date instruction. This is no doubt an expensive proposition – maintaining extra equipment sets that the Army may only use-intermittently – but this must be seen for the investment in the future that it is.

The second aspect of tension that will require a well thought out and considered decision up front is the overarching philosophy for training. In World War II, tension existed with the desire to immerse soldiers in the most realistic environment possible while engendering a sense of cohesion balanced against the requirement for efficiency and throughput. Throughout the course of World War II several proposals were made to adjust the nature of the replacement training system, most revolving around the idea of organizing replacements along a similar structure as tactical units. As outlined above, this involved preparing and sending cohesive tactical units at company, battalion or regimental level for introduction into combat as a fully formed unit to merely training individual replacements in a company that mimicked overseas units. The Army rejected these proposals because in many cases it was too hard to overlay a new approach on the existing structure starting with simple matters like the design of billeting and mess facilities within the training base and extending to the receiving units in theater that preferred to integrate individual replacements over whole units into their formations.

The Army currently addresses the requirement to expose soldiers to some level of collective training with the final weeks of basic combat training being devoted to battle drills and team performance.⁵⁵ This is carried a step further in some training programs where a tank crewman or artillery cannon crewman work as a team. However, what the Army does not address is the aspect of cohesion. Advocates in World War II for building full companies and battalions for onward movement and incorporation into formations already in theater cited the British and German experience in WWII, which relied on this method.⁵⁶ This approach was attempted in peacetime from 1981-1996 by the U.S. Army under the COHORT (Cohesion, Operational, Readiness, Training) and Unit Manning System (UMS) programs. The Army never fully adopted COHORT and it was terminated in the mid-90s due to a loss of senior leader support stemming from the difficulty of integrating COHORT units at the battalion, division, and theater levels with units manned by the individual replacement system.⁵⁷

One option that will maintain the flexibility and efficiency inherent in the current system while also addressing cohesion is the recent plan to develop security force assistance brigades. Under this construct, the Army will organize brigades without the junior enlisted soldiers along the same structure as an armored brigade combat team or infantry brigade combat team with a primary mission to conduct security force assistance operations.⁵⁸ If the requirement emerges for the brigade to transition from its security force assistance mission to a conventional one the formation will be fleshed out with a full complement of junior soldiers. While some team building would still be required, the level of cohesion in these units would certainly be greater than one built from the ground up or one that is continuously integrating replacements into its ranks.

This allows for rapid expansion of the force while also addressing some aspects of the cohesion problem.

A third aspect of tension in the IMT system revolved around the degree of specialization developed in training. During the course of the war, the Army wrestled with the correct level of branch immaterial versus branch specific training. Standardized branch immaterial training early in the training program made replacements interchangeable and served as a hedge against fluctuating requirements, but left less time to develop branch skills. This tension existed within the branches themselves as well. Should infantrymen be trained as generalists with a broad range of capabilities within the branch or focus on being an expert rifleman, machine gunner, or mortar crewman? Likewise, should an armored crewman be able to drive, load, and gun or focus on one aspect and do that better? In the end generalization typically won out, this allowed gaining units more freedom to assign replacements where they were needed, with at least some exposure to the particulars of their newly assigned position.

The Army has partially addressed this tension with the current training system. All soldiers now attend a standardized two-month basic combat training program prior to their advanced individual training. This builds enough commonality in the system that soldiers can move to a different AIT program if they are no longer physically able to complete their projected specialty's program or if requirements change and the demand for a selected branch increases. However, the U.S. Army currently provides advanced individual training for 160 different military occupational specialties (MOS). Just as in World War II, the ability to forecast accurately the proper number of replacements by type is still a challenge. Ultimately, the more complex the system the more difficult it is

to get the right person to the right job at the right time. As such, the Army should make efforts to streamline and simplify the number of MOS trained. While it may not be possible with the Army's current occupational specialties to consolidate and achieve a fifty percent reduction like the one AGF did in 1944, a great effort to simplify the system will pay dividends in wartime.

The U.S. Army has recently received an increase in end strength, and the concomitant growth in the training base that will follow, only serves to highlight the importance of studying the U.S Army's World War II IMT experience. Moreover, the simultaneous announcement of the return of two-year enlistments – and the increased personnel turnover these shorter contracts represent – only multiplies the demands this personnel growth will place on the training base.⁵⁹ The U.S. Army's experience with the initial military training of replacements in World War II presents several important lessons that will apply to this forthcoming expansion as well as future buildups. By examining the organization, training methods, and doctrine used, several tensions begin to emerge in the process that when left unaddressed created turmoil and tension that forced the U.S. Army to adopt less than optimal measures to meet the demand for replacements. However, the Army can avoid many of these tensions by modifying contemporary policies and procedures related to facilities, organizations, and personnel. The Army must see these changes for what they are – an investment in the future – that will pay dividends if the U.S. Army is called to expand its ranks on a grand scale as it did seventy-five years ago. These dividends will come in the form of system that can rapidly create fighting power while also giving newly inducted soldiers the training they need and deserve.

Endnotes

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