

Fielding the Armor Force of Tomorrow: **Soldierization in the 1st Armor Training Brigade at Fort Knox**

by Lieutenant Colonel Eugene J. Palka and Colonel Fred A. Treyz III

“Soldierization” is the tough, comprehensive process that transforms civilians into soldiers (TRADOC Reg 350-6). But soldierization is far more than a transition; it is a remarkable transformation that has no parallel in the larger society. Most impressive is the significant physical and mental development that occurs in a relatively short period of time. Proud parents attending initial entry training (IET) graduation ceremonies at Fort Knox frequently proclaim, “You drill sergeants have done more for my son in eight weeks than we could in 18 years!” Although such a claim is difficult to substantiate, there can be little doubt that the soldierization process does have a profound and enduring impact on new soldiers in training. From the time they arrive at the reception station, until their graduation from IET, trainees are challenged mentally and physically, and are inspired to adopt the Army’s core values. The process is at the heart of the 1st Armor Training Brigade’s mission, and it enables the brigade to fill Armor units around the world with highly motivated, disciplined, and physically fit soldiers who are trained in basic and military occupational specialty (MOS) skills and prepared to join their first units.

Soldierization is not a series of tasks, but the result of *total immersion* in a positive environment. The environment is the IET arena, and includes the reception station and, either one-station unit training (OSUT), or the combination of basic combat training (BCT) and advanced individual training (AIT). High standards, discipline, teamwork, quality training, ethics, and values are all contributing features of the positive environment. Active and involved leaders serve as role models for the soldiers in training, administer the training in accordance with the program of instruction (POI), and implement the soldierization process.

Aspects of Soldierization

Critical aspects of soldierization include teamwork, attitude building, tough training, good health habits, and physical fitness. Capable leaders develop these aspects using a variety of strategies at the company level.

Teamwork is an absolute necessity for any type of unit to successfully accomplish its mission. To foster bonding and increase levels of performance, team building commences at the outset of IET and sets the stage for the integration of the IET graduate into his first unit. In one respect, teamwork develops during specific training events within the POI. A challenging physical fitness program can facilitate team building and enhance cohesion, as well as improve stamina and muscular development. Assignment to details also provide an excellent means to develop teamwork. Regardless of whether the task is to clean the platoon bay or latrine, cut the grass, or maintain a vehicle, soldiers are detailed in teams (buddy team, fire teams, or squad) in order to promote cooperation, communication, and working toward a common goal. Each detail is a team-building opportunity.

Attitude building develops via effective leadership from positive role models. Drill sergeants and company cadre lead by example and seek to inspire soldiers in training to develop a winning spirit and to adopt Army core values. There is an emphasis on ethical standards, good order and discipline, initiative, and commitment. Individual counseling occurs often, and formal classes within the POI address topics such as: The Code of Conduct, equal opportunity, standards of conduct, etc., in order to develop healthy attitudes.

Tough training is inherent in BCT, AIT, or OSUT and is the “keystone” of soldierization. Trainees develop self-

confidence, the warrior mentality, and physical and technical competence through successful completion of professional and challenging training. Units ensure tough, quality, and realistic training by complying with the POI, conducting effective planning and coordination, and implementing a trainer certification program. The latter is a quality control measure that ensures competency among the drill sergeants and enables the trainers to maintain the “cutting edge.”

Good health habits are a necessity throughout the soldier’s career, yet for many soldiers in training, the development of good health habits represents a significant change in lifestyle. Trainees must be taught to value protective health measures. A combination of caring leadership, quality medical and dental services, and formal classes from the POI educates and convinces the trainees of the necessity to maintain their bodies, uniforms, and living areas. To ensure compliance, inspections are frequent.

Physical fitness in the IET arena equates to far more than passing the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). The IET goal is to develop the soldier’s “total” fitness through a progressive physical training (PT) program and formal classes on nutrition and injury prevention. In many cases, behavior modification is necessary to rid the soldier in training of personal habits which may hinder his physical development. Tobacco cessation, and alcohol and drug abuse prevention are integral parts of the IET total physical fitness program.

All of the above aspects are interwoven into all phases of IET. Cadre members take advantage of every available opportunity to reinforce the above aspects, since these are essential for the trainee’s personal and professional development.

Implementation Strategy

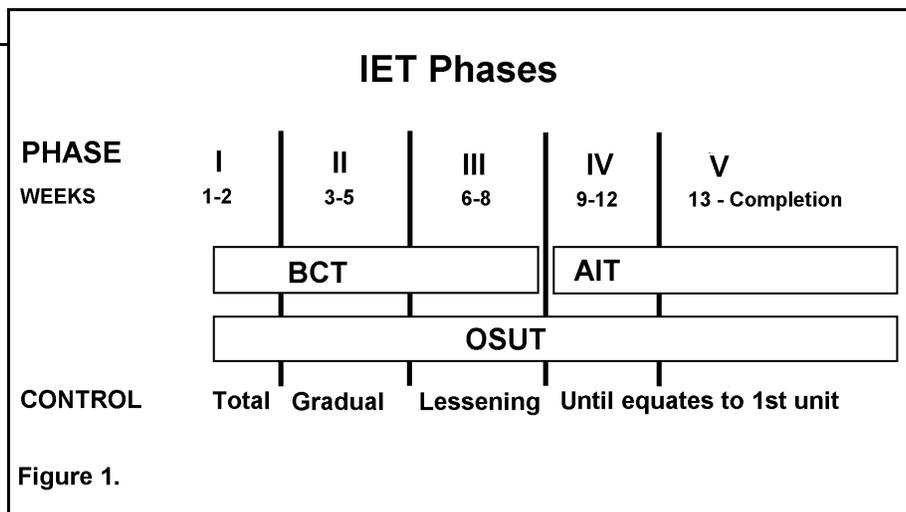
Soldierization is designed to help the soldier in training understand the Army way of life and *willingly* adhere to the rules and regulations which govern behavior. The “soldierization design” is also geared toward helping individuals develop values and beliefs consistent with those expected of the military professional. Moreover, the design instills loyalty and commitment to the unit and to the Army.

There are several interrelated components which comprise the underlying soldierization implementation strategy. These components form pillars which support the entire process.

- The IET cadre employ an **insist/assist philosophy** to develop soldiers in training. The cadre “insist” that the trainees achieve established standards in the areas of training, physical fitness, and personal conduct. Yet, simultaneously, the cadre employ effective coaching, mentoring, and reinforcement training to “assist” the trainees in achieving the standards. Assisting trainees with goal-setting, and providing performance counseling are fundamental requirements to successfully implement the philosophy.

- A **positive leadership climate** is essential throughout the IET arena. The practice of “tearing a trainee down and building him back up again” has long been abandoned. Instead, the goal is to inspire the soldiers in training through competency and leadership by example. All trainees are treated with respect and dignity. Moreover, the cadre recognizes the different backgrounds and learning abilities of the trainees, and is willing and able to communicate at different levels during the training process for a given subject.

- **Management of stress** is a fundamental concern throughout the duration of IET. Stress should occur between the trainee and the task, not between the trainee and drill sergeant. In this way, stress provides the motivation to learn, and therefore serves as a positive influence. Every private is assigned a “battle-buddy” to facilitate teamwork, to enhance learning, and to assist each other in handling stress. Drill sergeants must look out for each other in a similar fashion. They must continually keep an eye out for fatigue, frustration, and anger among their colleagues, and provide reinforcement or relief as necessary. Specific “stressors” identified during internal after-action reviews enable



cadre members to anticipate these leadership challenges.

- **After-Action Reviews (AARs)** occur at each cycle’s end. Because each training cycle has a different personality, frequent, informal AARs are important throughout the cycle, “adjusting fire” as necessary. AARs must focus not only on the soldiers in training, but on the cadre. In fact, the end-of-cycle formal AAR should focus largely on the cadre in order to capture and subsequently apply the lessons learned, thereby improving the training’s overall quality.

- **Phased training** is the formal structure applied in the IET arena to organize and facilitate soldierization. There are five phases of IET; a soldier progresses through phases I through III in BCT, and through phases IV and V in AIT. OSUT includes all five phases, but in some OSUT courses, phases III and IV may be combined. Additionally, the authorization to determine actual phase lengths rests with the installation commander. No matter which route the trainee proceeds along, BCT/AIT or OSUT, drill sergeants have total control over the soldiers during phase I. From First Call until Taps, trainees are under constant supervision and scrutiny. Control gradually lessens during phase II, and continues decreasing until the amount of control near the end of phase V is equal to the amount of control the soldier will experience in his first unit.

Phase Objectives (Soldierization Milestones)

TRADOC Reg 350-6 outlines specific objectives for each of the five phases (Fig. 1). Movement between phases is viewed as a “gate,” or rite of

passage, for the soldiers in training. Specific phase objectives serve as “soldierization milestones” and enable the unit to focus efforts and to gauge the progress of every trainee at any point in the cycle.

Phase I objectives include enabling the trainee to pay attention to detail, conform to platoon standards, master basic skills, maintain self and platoon areas, and develop physical fitness. Trainees feel the greatest impact of the soldierization process during phase I because of the drastic change in lifestyle and environment. The emphasis during phase I is on gaining the soldier’s attention, getting the soldier to conform, and developing teamwork. The trainee’s focus is on his immediate platoon.

Training events during phase I provide a solid foundation for all soldiers, regardless of MOS. Classes on soldier responsibilities, customs and courtesies, equal opportunity, military justice, and the Code of Conduct are reinforced by extensive counseling. The intent is to educate trainees and inspire them to adopt the Army’s core values. Other blocks of time are for communications and first aid training, which include several of the basic skills that all soldiers must master. The warrior ethos is also developed during phase I via hand-to-hand combat, rifle bayonet and pugil stick training, foot marches, the conditioning obstacle course, and PT.

Phase II objectives challenge the soldier to conform to company standards, display self-discipline, qualify (or familiarize in OSUT) with the M16A2, and develop physical fitness. Whereas discipline was imposed during phase I, the cadre begin to orient on developing the trainees’ self-discipline during phase II. The soldiers’ perspectives

broaden as they look beyond their platoons and begin to conform to company standards.

Phase II training looks toward basic warrior skills while supporting specific phase objectives. Basic rifle marksmanship is the focus of phase II training. BCT soldiers qualify with the M16A2, whereas 19K and 19D OSUT trainees familiarize with the rifle and qualify with the 9mm pistol. Other warfighter training includes: hand grenades, foot marches, NBC equipment, individual tactical training (fire and maneuver), the bayonet assault course, and familiarization with a variety of U.S. weapons, including the M60 machine gun, the M203 grenade launcher, the AT-4, and the claymore mine.

During **phase III**, soldiers must conform to Army standards, by passing the APFT (meet BCT standards), passing the End of Cycle Test (EOCT), completing all BCT POI requirements, and thinking, looking, and acting like soldiers without detailed supervision. By the end of phase III, soldiers begin to notice an increase in privileges. The phase III graduate is trained in the basic skills, has passed the basic training PT test and qualified with his rifle or pistol, and has participated in several capstone exercises which effectively integrate the individual tasks taught earlier in the cycle.

Specific training highlights for BCT units during phase III include a number of live-fire exercises at the buddy team and squad level, an end-of-cycle test comprised of twenty "hands-on" tasks, a field training exercise, the confidence course, and additional foot marches.

Phase III during 19D OSUT is eight weeks long and contains the majority of the MOS-specific training. Training highlights include driving, demolitions, mine training, Bradley gunnery, an FTX, a scout skills test, MK19 training, HMMWV familiarization, and a cavalry focus exercise.

Phase III for 19K OSUT is three weeks long, the same as for BCT, but the training is MOS-intensive. Training consists of advanced communications, inspecting and stowing ammunition, the .50 caliber machine gun, mines, an armor crewman test, and maintaining the 120mm main gun.

Phase IV objectives are to conform to Army standards, master common skills learned in BCT (or phases I-III in OSUT) and continue to develop physical fitness. Phase IV represents the first exposure to MOS training if the soldier

has progressed along the BCT/AIT track. Along the OSUT route, the soldier may have already encountered MOS training, but it becomes the focus in phase IV.

Training highlights which occur in phase IV of 19K OSUT include tank maintenance, driving, the M1 tank gunner's station, stowing ammo on an M1, and maintaining the main gun. Tank gunnery, an armor crewman test, and a situational training exercise are the capstone exercises.

Phase V requires the soldier to pass the APFT (meet DA standards), pass the EOCT, complete all POI requirements, and think, look, and act like a soldier. The difference between the last objective in phase V, versus phase III, is that the soldier is now expected to personally take full responsibility for his actions at all times. Ethics, Army core values, self-discipline, maturity, and a concept of duty are expected to guide the soldier, rather than an overwatching cadre member.

Throughout each of the five phases, soldiers in training are evaluated against standards. Failure to meet the standards may warrant remedial training, a new start, a rehabilitative transfer, or, in the worst case, an entry level separation (ELS). The key to producing quality soldiers while combating attrition rests with the drill sergeants. They place emphasis on the trainee completing every task to standard, and they provide motivation, clearly defined objectives, and constant feedback.

The training events contained within the respective POIs provide the necessary grounding in basic soldier skills for all trainees during phases I through

III, and produce specific MOS-qualifying skills in AIT or OSUT battalions during phases IV and V. Competent leaders, however, must also employ the training events as vehicles to help develop the trainee's mental fitness and character, in addition to the tactical, technical, and basic soldier skills.

Soldier Evolution in 1ATB

Civilian recruits who arrive at Fort Knox for IET evolve along two basic routes (Fig. 2). All receptees initially report to the reception battalion and begin the soldierization process. After 3 or 4 days of intense soldier indoctrination and in-processing, trainees move along one of the two routes. They either proceed to basic combat training with the 1-46th or 2-46th Infantry, and subsequently to AIT with 1-81 AR, or to other installations for AIT; or, they proceed along the OSUT route, with 19D trainees proceeding to 5-15 CAV, and 19K soldiers reporting to 2-81 AR. From the Fort Knox perspective, the soldierization process start point commences upon arrival at the reception station. Graduation from either AIT or OSUT completes the formal soldierization. When the graduate arrives at his first unit, the process is subsequently validated. We submit, however, that soldierization is *not* complete until the soldier retires or leaves the Army. There can be no doubt that professional military schooling, progressive duty positions, and reassignments contribute immensely to any soldier's personal and professional growth.

Soldierization amounts to much more than skills training. Whereas the civilian job may provide a "way of work,"

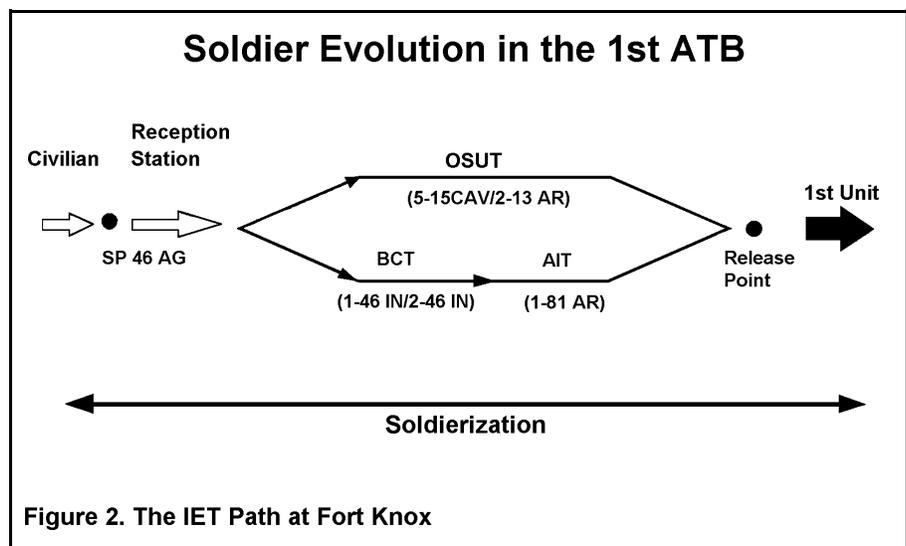


Figure 2. The IET Path at Fort Knox

1st Armor Training Brigade Interactive Web Site

by the 1st Armor Training Public Affairs Office

The 1st Armor Training Brigade is forging into the 21st Century with a new interactive web site that furthers its Total Army Quality program initiative to capture customer satisfaction.

Designed by the 1st ATB Information Management Office and Entelechy Inc., of Radcliff, the web site fosters feedback from the Armor Force with an interactive home page.

The home page will be a key link by which the 1st ATB communicates with leaders and soldiers in the Armor Force, according to 1st ATB leaders. The home page is currently active on the world-wide computer web and is accessible by anyone.

It also features a "Hot Loop," which allows for interactive discussion for selected respondents. There is also one all-users response page where anyone can respond to comments entered by the commander on the Commander's Bulletin Board. Responses are edited and then posted on the web site. The home page also allows selected access to the latest 1st ATB POIs.

The 1st ATB Home Page address is <http://www.entelechy-inc.com/docs/1atb/>

For more information on the 1st ATB Home Page, contact SFC Randy Jenkins at (502) 624-6275.

successful soldierization engenders service to nation, commitment, pride in belonging, loyalty, teamwork, and family indoctrination, to prepare the professional soldier for "a way of life."

Tankers and scouts can take heart in knowing that soldierization is alive and well within the 1st Armor Training Brigade at Fort Knox. The cadre's commitment to filling Armor, Cavalry, and Mechanized Infantry units around the world with quality soldiers is evident in the 1st ATB's Training Creed.

"I am a Soldier of Steel. My hallmarks are Pride, Motivation, Self-discipline, and Courage. My country depends on me to provide Army units around the world with trained soldiers. These soldiers must be physically fit, mentally and morally tough, tactically and technically proficient, and highly motivated. I accomplish this mission by setting high standards, respecting human dignity, and continually emphasizing the values of Duty, Honor, Country.

I am the inspirational leader and trainer upon which my country and the United States Army depend. I never ask of another that which I will not do myself. I train to standard and fight to win. No one else can do what I do as well as I can. My reputation is renowned throughout the world, and is championed by the soldiers I have trained, led, and inspired.

I will never lose sight of my mission, and I will always go the extra mile, seizing every opportunity to train leaders for the

21st century. My legacy can be found in Army units around the globe. I am a Soldier of Steel. My legacy will endure."

More than just a mechanism to develop unit pride and cohesion, the creed is our pledge to produce IET graduates who are highly motivated, disciplined, physically fit, trained in basic and MOS skills, and prepared to join the ranks. The 1st ATB will continue to aggressively pursue our soldierization mission, and we take pride in conducting successful battle handovers with units in the field as our IET graduates arrive in unit areas to validate and continue their soldierization.

Conclusion

Soldierization is not a by-product of IET. Rather, it is inherent in the purpose of initial entry training. The process is carefully designed for, and implemented by, competent leaders and instructors within the IET arena to produce soldiers who can fight and win. The cadre themselves are products of the process, and yet continue to grow and mature as professionals as they perform their duties.

In the 1st Armor Training Brigade, one of the largest and most diverse brigades in the Army, soldierization represents the thread of continuity which links each of the seven battalions to the brigade's fundamental goal of transforming civilians into soldiers. Soldierization is at the heart of every IET unit's mission, regardless of whether the unit conducts basic combat training, advanced individual training, or one

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station unit training. The process must be continually assessed in order to keep pace with changes in society, and to ensure we in the 1st Armor Training Brigade meet the needs of Armor units in the field, now and in the 21st century.