
Defense Report

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Improving Cohesion and Unit Pride —It Sharpens the Army's Cutting Edge

Historically, Army personnel policies have been less than successful in instilling the group cohesion that holds squads, platoons and companies together under pressure. Fostering a genuine sense of comradeship in groups above the squad level has been the glue that has helped make armies successful over centuries. Soldiers, in battle, fight for each other more than anything else.

The individualism of American society may help promote independent self-reliance, but in some ways it probably acts as an obstruction to the achievement of desirable cohesiveness in formations of soldiers. Then, too, the man-for-man replacement practice that has been used by the Army has further aggravated the problem with the ensuing personnel turbulence having an adverse influence on morale and cohesion. This turbulence is considered by top Army leaders to be the number one enemy of readiness.

Acknowledging the fact that close units fight better, the Army has begun a new approach to knitting units together. Its goal is to capitalize on the powerful combat multiplier available from cohesive and well-bonded units.

By recruiting, training, stabilizing and deploying units rather than individuals, the Army's COHORT (cohesion, operational readiness and training) program is designed to foster teamwork, esprit de corps and fighting spirit in companies and battalions, especially in infantry, armor and artillery units.

The process begins when soldiers enlist for a specific company and take their basic training together. Once initial training is completed, the new soldiers are joined by the company officers and sergeants for a stateside phase of combat effectiveness training to be followed by overseas deployment together. The key to the bonding process of COHORT is that everybody remains in the unit for its three-year life cycle. Upon completion of the overseas phase, the unit returns to the United States where the members who have completed their enlistments are separated and the career soldiers are individually reassigned.

Through this method of strengthening the cohesiveness of its combat units, the Army is helping ensure their survival and success under the extreme lethality of the modern battlefield.