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COMBINED ARMY NATIONAL GUARD OCS AND ARMY ROTC ADVANCED CAMP

by

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As the active Army drops to its lowest strength levels since the period just prior to World War II, a functioning Total Army becomes increasingly important to our national security. We must find ways to enhance the integration of the active and reserve components in order to maintain the military capabilities our country needs in the post-Cold War world. The combined Army National Guard OCS/ ROTC Advanced Camp test this past summer was a direct contribution to a more integrated Total Army.

During the summer of 1993, Army National Guard officer candidates from nine western states attended the ROTC Advanced Camp at Fort Lewis to complete their final active duty training period prior to receiving commissions as second lieutenants. The officer candidates were part of a test of combined Army National Guard OCS Phase III (active duty) training and Army ROTC Advanced Camp. The test, a joint venture of the National Guard Bureau and U.S. Army ROTC Cadet Command, was designed to examine the feasibility of a combined camp as a means to improve training opportunities, increase training standardization and reduce training costs. Although several states have participated in consolidated OCS active duty programs before, this test marks the first time that Army National Guard officer candidates have participated in the same active duty training as their ROTC counterparts.

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Army National Guard Officer Candidate Programs

The National Guard, unlike the other reserve components, has over the years relied on its own commissioning program to provide many of its officers. The rationale for this is that the states need to provide a commissioning opportunity for Guardsmen who are unable to leave their jobs for the time required to attend the the Army's resident OCS course at Fort Benning, Georgia. As a result, most states and territories have established officer candidate programs to provide a source of commissioned officers for state units.

State OCS programs are conducted in three phases over a one-year period. Phase I, a two-week active duty period, develops individual and squad-level tactical skills. Phase II, an inactive duty (weekend drills) period, continues leadership and tactical training at the individual and squad levels. Phase III, the final active duty period, consists of squad- and platoon-level tactical training and leadership. At the conclusion of Phase III, the candidates are commissioned by their respective states.

Army ROTC Advanced Summer Training

The Army currently conducts two ROTC Advanced Camps, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and Fort Lewis, Washington. Cadets from schools east of the Mississippi River attend the Fort Bragg camp and those west of the Mississippi go to Fort Lewis. The advanced camp lasts for six weeks and is usually attended by cadets between their junior and senior years of college. The camps generally run from June to August, on a staggered schedule to permit maximum use of facilities.

The program of instruction for ROTC Advanced Camp consists of approximately 386 hours of instruction in individual military skills, weapons instruction and tactical leadership training. Cadets are evaluated on individual performance (land navigation, physical fitness, weapons qualification, etc.), performance in the cadet chain of command, and leadership performance during tactical training.

The Army devotes substantial resources to support the ROTC Advanced Camps. As a result, the training committees are staffed with exceptionally well-qualified instructors, many of whom have combat experience, and the training and support facilities are first class. In addition to officers and noncommissioned officers from Cadet Command's ROTC battalions at colleges and universities across the country, the staffs are supplemented by personnel and units from the active Army and the reserve components.

Camp Adventure, Fort Lewis, Washington

The commander of Camp Adventure was the 4th ROTC Region Commander, BG John Dailey. The majority of the camp instructional and administrative staff came from ROTC battalions in the 4th Region. Additional support was provided by units from the 7th and 4th Infantry Divisions, Army Guardsmen from the Washington and Oregon state military academies and the test states, Army Reservists from the 76th Training Division, and 140 newly graduated Regular Army second lieutenants.

Army National Guard representation on the camp staff was primarily from the OCS regiment. Army Reservists supported the individual skill training committees, i.e., weapons, land navigation, etc. The tactical training committees were staffed primarily by personnel from the ROTC units. The camp commander did not assign Reservists and Guardsmen, other than those on full-time ROTC duty, to the tactics committees. He believed that to do so would detract from the effectiveness and standardization of training and evaluation because of the personnel turnovers caused by short active duty tours.

During the summer of 1993, approximately 2,400 ROTC cadets, Army Nurse candidates, and officer candidates took part in the summer training at Camp Adventure.

OCS Consolidation Test

The National Guard Bureau initially directed the consolidation of eight state OCS Phase III programs at Fort Lewis in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington and Wyoming; a ninth state, Nebraska, volunteered to participate in the program. A total of 115 officer candidates attended the camp.

The Army National Guard officer candidates were organized as a regiment of two companies at camp, which is similar to the ROTC cadet camp organization. The regimental staff and company tactical officers were provided by the Army National Guard.

The OCS regiment entered the camp training cycle at a later point than the ROTC cadet regiments because the candidates had completed most of the individual skill training previously, but then followed the same training progression as the ROTC cadet regiments. This meant that the cadets and officer candidates would be trained to the same standards by the same instructors and evaluators, in the same training areas. The joint program of instruction consisted of 182 hours of individual, squad and platoon tactical training.

The Army National Guard retained overall responsibility for the evaluation of the officer candidates and the final commissioning decisions. Company tactical officers were responsible for the normal, day-to-day performance evaluations of the candidates. However, the training committee staffs also provided oral after-action reviews and written evaluations of the officer candidates' performance during tactical training in the same manner as they did for the ROTC cadets.

Some Observations

The cost effectiveness of the combined camp concept is clearly evident from a straight comparison of relative support costs. In 1992, the support costs alone for a combined Washington and Oregon OCS Phase III exceeded \$120,000 for 40 officer candidates. In contrast, in 1993, the National Guard paid approximately \$49,000 as its share of support costs for almost three times as many candidates at Camp Adventure.

National Guard officer candidates who participated in the test uniformly praised the caliber of the training, stating that it was some of the best training that they had ever received. Senior National Guard officials who visited the training were impressed with the quality of training, training facilities, and training support. Most of them also expressed strong support for the benefits gained by joint training with ROTC cadets. Finally, senior staff members from the Oregon and Washington State Military Academies, who had been responsible for conducting OCS Phase III training, stated that there was no way that they could duplicate the training setup at Camp Adventure with their own resources. In their opinion, a joint OCS/ROTC camp, with its extensive active Army support, provided a superior training experience for the candidates.

Based on the demonstrated success of the test, the Army National Guard and U.S. Army ROTC Cadet Command have begun planning to consolidate all Army National Guard OCS Phase III training with the ROTC Advanced Camps at Fort Bragg and Fort Lewis. As the consolidation proceeds, there will be increased opportunities for integration of Army National Guard and Army Reserve personnel on the camp staffs and training committees. Given the obvious fact that instructor stability for the duration of the Advanced Camp is an essential element of training effectiveness, the National Guard Bureau should examine ways to assign Army National Guard personnel to ROTC Advanced Camp for extended periods of active duty, which would make it more feasible to assign them to instructional committees.

Not only does a combined camp provide officer candidates access to quality training facilities and training support that the states cannot duplicate, but it also provides many intrinsic advantages. The officer candidates have the opportunity to work with soldiers from active Army troop units, candidates from other states, ROTC cadets, and the officers and noncommissioned officers of ROTC Cadet Command. Many ROTC cadets will be assigned to troop units in the Army National Guard, either directly after they graduate and are commissioned or after serving a tour of active duty. They will have a common bond and a shared experience with their fellow officers who were commissioned through a state OCS program.

Consolidating OCS Phase III training and combining it with ROTC Advanced Camp is a cost-effective approach that benefits the National Guard and the Army. The obvious success of the test can be attributed to the vision and efforts of many dedicated individuals from the Army National Guard and U.S. Army ROTC Cadet Command. The best appraisal of the test was the often-voiced comment, "You can't tell the candidates and cadets apart."

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