

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Marine Corps Warfighting Lab
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134

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From: Capt Brendan B. McBreen
To: Director, MCWL

Subj: OBSERVATION OF NCO TRAINING IN BRITISH ARMY AND ROYAL MARINES

Ref: (a) Job Specification, Rifle Platoon Commander, HQ DOI, British Army, Oct 93
(b) Job Specification, Rifle Platoon Sergeant, HQ DOI, British Army, Apr 90
(c) Job Specification, Rifle Platoon Section Commander, HQ DOI, British Army, Apr 90
(d) Training Objectives, Platoon Commander's Battle Course, HQ DOI, Br Army, Apr 94
(e) Training Objectives, Platoon Sergeant's Battle Course, HQ DOI, Br Army, Mar 93
(f) Training Objectives, Section Commander's Battle Course, HQ DOI, Nov 93
(g) Joining Instructions for Regular Army Courses, HQ DOI, British Army, Apr 95
(h) Job Specification, Royal Marines Corporal, HQ Royal Marines, Nov 96
(i) Training Objectives, Junior Command Course, RMCTC, Mar 97
(j) Junior Command Course Syllabus, RMCTC, Mar 97

1. From 7 to 14 March, 1998, I observed the NCO training practices of the British Army and Royal Marines. Paragraphs 2 through 5 of this report contain observations made at each of the four training sites visited. **Paragraph 6 contains recommendations for NCO training that are applicable to the Marine Corps.**
 - a. In the Marine Corps, a Squad Leader is a Sergeant's billet. In British practice, a Section Commander, the leader of an eight-man section, is normally a Corporal. In terms of experience, time-in-service, and responsibility, a British Corporal can be equated to a Marine Corps Sergeant.
 - b. This report is infantry-specific. No examination was made of NCO training outside the infantry field.
2. Infantry Training Command (ITC) Warminster. HQ Infantry. Met with director, Brigadier Monro. Given overview of British Army training systems by Col Gaskell and LtCol Lloyd. Briefed on platoon commander's training by Col Glyn-Ower and staff. Points included:
 - a. "Regimental system fosters NCO development." Officers and men serve off and on in same unit for twenty years. This encourages careful promotion within units.
 - b. Bn Commander promotes soldier up through Sergeant. Army standards are only for guidance. Centralized promotion starts at Color Sergeant (equivalent to Staff Sergeant).

- c. “Adventure Training is a key aspect of Army leadership and morale development.” German Army concluded that adventure training in the British Army was a key component to excellent NCO development. Army maintains an island base solely for adventure training: mountain climbing, kayaking, ski trekking, sailing, orienteering, and parachuting. In addition, 190 external expeditions were mounted last year by infantry soldiers. Huge training benefits accrue because each expedition must plan and arrange all their own support: transportation, costs, logistics, resupply, medical help, and emergency plans. Costs are split evenly between Army, unit, and individuals.
 - d. Training policy is directly related to personnel policy. All infantry soldiers follow a strict personnel track. A typical Color Sergeant with 16 years service will have spent 12 years in a battalion, accumulating approximately one year of that time undergoing individual training required for advancement. The other four years will have been in other duties, principally as an infantry instructor.
 - e. The director of infantry sets personnel policy, training policy and performance standards. Close coordination between units and support structure is maintained by this billet.
 - f. The director of infantry publishes a billet description for each billet in the infantry. This serves two purposes. It becomes the target document for all training courses, as well as the promotion criteria for all units. References (a), (b) and (c) are the billet descriptions for Platoon Commander, Platoon Sergeant and Section Commander. References (d), (e) and (f) are the training objectives for these billets. “You can’t write a course without first writing the standards.” Units know what the schools teach, what skills their men will graduate with, and know what training they are responsible for.
3. Infantry Training Command (ITC) Wales. Briefed on Section Commander’s Battle Course (SCBC) by LtCol Butler. Observed portions of training areas and soldiers undergoing training. Points included:
- a. SCBC is 13 weeks. Emphasis is on Weapons, Section Tactics, and Instructor Training — “How to command and train in peace and in war.” Unit nominates and prepares Lance Corporals using published Army standards. Graduation is required before unit can promote soldier to Corporal. Upon promotion, soldier must serve 2.5 years as section commander for MOS credibility and further promotion.
 - b. Course is tailored for general war high-intensity conflict. Unit is responsible for mission-specific, environment-specific training. Course is 65% fieldwork. “Overemphasis on simulators needs to be avoided.” The orders process is emphasized. A mission orders doctrine needs well-trained small-unit leaders.
 - c. Training is arduous. Course is evaluating the soldier for ambition, commitment, robustness and professionalism. Highly qualified NCOs instruct on 1:10 student ratio. Course failures are 15%, mostly for physical reasons.

- d. The Section Commander's Battle Course and the Platoon Commander's Battle Course are referred to as the "flagship" courses of the infantry branch. All infantry NCOs have a common experience preparing for and meeting the high standards expected of the courses. All NCOs, regardless of unit deployment schedules, attend school when assigned. Reference (g) contains the extensive course prerequisites.
 - e. Section Commander's Battle Course reinforces concept of NCO as principle trainer for all individual skills. Students are evaluated on their ability to present training. In addition, the course certifies all graduates as level 3 range NCOIC. This permits the NCO to sign for ranges and ammunition and conduct static live-fire training on his own. It also permits him to act as safety NCO / coach on larger ranges and unit live-fire evolutions.
4. Royal Marine Commando Training Command (RMCTC) Lympstone. Briefed by commandant, Brigadier Nichols. Observed entry training. Briefed on Royal Marine (RM) NCO training courses by Maj MacLennan. Points included:
- a. RM spend 30 weeks on entry-level infantry training. Physical standards are very high. Some entry-level training standards would be NCO standards in the USMC.
 - b. RMCTC has 25 years of required-for-promotion NCO training courses. Intent is to take the onus off the busy units and standardize the training. NCO courses are a service to battalion commanders. Units nominate students and are responsible for preparation. Six week preparation time is standard.
 - c. An "Operational Performance Standard" is written for each billet. This becomes the target for the school training. On-the-job-training (OJT) is NOT considered equivalent to school training. Reference (h) contains the Job Specification for Royal Marines Corporal. Reference (i) contains the Training Objectives for the Junior Command Course. "Course must teach the accepted qualifications of the billet in order to have credibility with units."
 - d. The 12-week Junior Command Course syllabus is included in Reference (j). This course is similar to the Army's section leader's battle course. "Course must be a prerequisite for promotion." The goal is to prepare the Marine for his next higher rank the day he graduates. A Marine must pass the course before his unit can promote him to Corporal. The emphasis is on section attacks and patrolling. There is no live-fire. Everything is done in a field environment.
 - e. "Assessments must be bomb-proof." If individual is returned to unit, extensive supporting material must support school's decision. Policy for assessment must be balanced to avoid personality conflicts. Training Standards must be well-defined and understood. Grades of A through D are awarded. D is failure. 10% failed last year.
 - f. The Junior Command Course focuses on four areas:
 - (1) Personal Skills: Navigation, First Aid, Camouflage, Movement...
 - (2) Operational and Command Duties: Receiving and Issuing Orders, Supervising unit...

- (3) Administration: Weapons, Legal, Personnel...
- (4) Social Responsibilities: Mess, Funds...

g. The student is evaluated on a number of leadership traits:

- (1) Personality Ability to stand out with confidence
- (2) Judgment Ability to make an informed decision under pressure
- (3) Bearing Ability to maintain demeanor
- (4) Determination Ability to pass physical and mental tests
- (5) Integrity Honesty, loyalty, conviction and responsibility
- (6) Courage Physical and Moral. Refusal to let the little things go undone
- (7) Knowledge Ability to learn what the course provides

h. The Junior Course expects that each graduate is a leader who has the skills to plan, brief, control, support, inform, and evaluate.

5. Security Operations Training Group (SOTG) Folkstone. Briefed on battalion unit training for Northern Ireland mission, with focus on NCO preparation. Maj Allen showed the Hythe ranges, Maj Hill showed the Lydd Ranges. Points included:

- a. For Northern Ireland deployments, battalions undergo extensive training syllabus, both as unit training and in courses. Lydd and Hythe ranges are used by Northern Ireland Training Team during final two-week battalion training exercise.
- b. "One of the reasons the British Army is so good is because of Northern Ireland." Specific mission in specific theater leads to specific training requirements being met at very high levels. "NCOs command troops at every rank in real operations, with life-and-death consequences." The concept of the "Strategic Corporal" is the man who can make or break national policy with his decisions.
- c. Fire Teams, Sections, and Platoons are key units in security operations and therefore receive priority training. In fire team live-fire course, twenty-four cameras record every action taken, providing video debriefs. Three facilities were observed, all with video debrief capability. Standards expected of individuals and small-unit leaders were impressive.

6. Conclusions. Based on my observations described above, I recommend:

- a. That the MC publish a billet description for each infantry billet. This document would serve to define both school and promotion requirements. The billet description should include standards of physical fitness.
- b. That the MC tailor the Squad Leader's Courses and the Platoon Sergeant's Courses at SOI to meet the billet descriptions.

- c. That the MC require infantrymen to complete the Squad Leader's Course for promotion to Sergeant, and Platoon Sergeant's Course for promotion to Staff Sergeant. This policy should be phased into place over time:
 - (1) Immediately suspend awarding the 0369 MOS from all but those who complete Platoon Sergeant's Course. The course becomes an MOS-producing course. NCOs and SNCOs without the required school would remain 0311 (or weapons MOS).
 - (2) Create a new MOS 0368. Squad Leader's Course awards this MOS.
 - (3) Over time, require an 0368 MOS (which includes course completion) for promotion to Sergeant, and an 0369 MOS for promotion to Staff Sergeant.

- d. That the MC establish a Deputy Chief of Staff for Infantry or equivalent whose duties would be to coordinate infantry personnel assignment policies, training standards, school curriculums, and unit training. The current relationship between schools and units, SOI / T&E / MCCDC / HQMC / FMF, is far too remote and unwieldy.

- e. That the MC require that infantry battalions promote Marines up through the rank of Corporal based on published standards. That automatic time-in-service promotions for infantrymen be abolished.

Respectfully Submitted,

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