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**History of the
Military Training Instructor**

by

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The Military Training Instructor (MTI) is the person most responsible for turning civilians into an Air Force citizen. The history of the MTI is over 50 years old, but, there is little information formally written about their history. This is an attempt to chronologically follow the story of the MTI from the days of the Army Air Force to the present, stopping to cover significant events as thoroughly as possible. Because there is little reference directly to the MTI, some of the information is inferred from the history of Basic Military Training (BMT). Every enlisted member of the Air Force has vivid memories of their first meeting with their MTI. The challenge of taking the raw recruit and making him an airman is the first step in the success of the United States Air Force. This task was formally assigned by the architect of the Air Force, General Henry H. Arnold.

With war rapidly approaching, the Army Air Force (AAF) concentrated on getting recruits from the recruitment center to specialized training as quickly as possible. This left little time for basic military training, which was left to the discretion of the training base commander. (2:9) This changed when General Arnold issued a memo to the Training Command in September 1941 that stated: "As a result of general observations made by various officers, it appears a standardized intensive course of recruit instruction is vitally necessary at this time. The lack of military knowledge on the part of recruits is a general condition, no particular station

being at fault. However, it is obvious that the tremendous expansion of the Air Corps has unfavorably affected the interior discipline.” (12:16) Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, had the most successful basic training program and wasn’t included in the charge made by General Arnold. (12:16) This was probably because the first Drill Instructor’s School was established at Jefferson Barracks in August 1941. The school was highly successful. The subjects taught were “administration, supply, military courtesy, military discipline and related subjects.” (4:2) The Jefferson Barracks program became a model for other instructor training. The term drill instructor (DI) was used for several years in referring to the military instructor. The role of the DI: condition the new men to life in the AAF. Because of a shortage of permanent party, and a need to get personnel to support the war in Europe and the Pacific as quickly as possible, many were were assigned immediately to instructor duty immediately after completing basic training themselves. It was said in a report on the History of the Army Air Force, “Sympathetic, fair, understanding, intelligent and capable drill instructors quickly won the respect of their men. The drill instructor was first and foremost a teacher, and if successful, he became the idol of his men.” (1:59)

The end of World War II allowed the AAF to give training more emphasis. BMT was formalized by Major General Barton K. Yount, the first commander of Army Air Force Training Command. He issued a training directive on 29 Feb 1944, institutionalizing the requirement for a standardized course for all personnel entering the AAF. It required instructors be thoroughly trained by a standard set of procedures to ensure quality training was provided to the recruits. Subject areas DIs were required to be knowledgeable of and train were: (1) Articles of War, (2) Organization of the Army, (3) Military discipline, customs and courtesies, (4) Medical Aid, (5)

Close order drill, (6) Individual security, (7) Guard duty, (8) Care of the uniform, (9) Safeguarding information, (10) Chemical defense, (11) Marksmanship, (12) Map reading, (13) Army orienteering, (14) Physical training, (15) Night operations, (16) Marches and bivouac. (12:4)

To simplify and unify training, on 1 Jul 1946, all BMT was moved to San Antonio, Texas, at what later became known as Lackland AFB. Prior to this move, BMT was accomplished in conjunction with technical training at bases across the AAF. (16:46) This simplified and unified the training received by the DI. The first instructor's school was established here on 7 Oct 1946. The emphasis was placed on public speaking for the instructor. The school was expanded to a six week course on 7 Jul 96, with a curriculum that included teaching techniques. (16:3) In 1948, the Women in the Air Force (WAF) began BMT at Kelley Field, adjacent to Lackland. The first WAF flight completed their training on 21 Dec 1948. (16:2) The training for WAF was eleven weeks. The training for men lasted thirteen weeks. On 1 Jun 1949, segregation ended at BMT, when the last "Negro Only" BMT squadrons were integrated on 1 Jun 1949. (16:2)

This emphasis on consolidated training was short-lived . The outbreak of the Korean War on 25 Jun 1950 changed priorities. (2:56-63) Lackland and BMT were overrun with new recruits in 1950. Setup to handle 28,000 people, Lackland had over 70,000 troops in Jan 1951. Some of the BMT requirements were sent to Sheppard AFB, Texas, and a new training center established at Sampson AFB, NY. Lackland had to construct tent cities to handle the overflow. This increase in personnel significantly challenged the normal training process. The quality of training did not declined, although the total training days of BMT fluctuated between sixty-five

days, and fourteen days. It was finally settled on forty-eight days to handle the increased numbers. (6:26)

It was during this time that the term Drill Instructor (DI) was replaced by the term Tactical Instructor (TI.) In a 1951 historical report of the Air Training Command (ATC), references to the duties of the TI are made. It states that he must be of the highest caliber of conduct and standards of appearance. The TI was required to set an outstanding example for his men to follow. Among the TI's duties were leader, problem-solver, trainer, teacher, marksman, and minister. He awakened his flight at 0400 hrs each morning and stayed with them through retreat at 1800 hrs. The TI was expected to perform all duties with fairness and impartiality. (10:9-11)

Between the end of the Korean War in July, 1953 and 1957, BMT adjusted in length between 8-11 weeks, depending on the needs of the Air force and budgetary restraints. But in 1957, all male inductees selected for technical training would complete four weeks BMT at Lackland AFB, and the remaining seven weeks at the technical training center. Female trainees were required to complete the eleven week course at Lackland AFB, which was a throw back to the AAF program of the early 1940s. (2:115) WAF training was changed on 2 Jul 1953 to match the training length of the male recruits. (16:6) However, female trainees were not trained along the same program. Their course included make-up and hygiene, and did not include marksmanship. It should be noted that in 1957, reference was made to the Military Training Instructor. However, the most significant change for the MTI that year was that all MTIs were required to be experienced NCOs. The practice of using recent graduates for MTI duty had

continued since the AAF, but an inspection revealed recent graduates lacked the leadership skills necessary for the position of the MTI. (2:115)

In Oct 1964, training was once again consolidated. In Mar 1966, the BMT course of six weeks was implemented by Lieutenant General William Moymer, Commander of ATC. (8:1) This six-week program was a result of the build-up in Southeast Asia and the Republic of Vietnam, and has remained in effect through the current date. The MTI saw their tours of duty involuntarily and approval was granted to select non-volunteers to fill critical shortages. (5:2) The size of the flights assigned to each MTI was sixty-five. (2:161)

Another significant event for the MTI was the introduction of the campaign hat on 31 Aug 1967 for males. (16:7) The female MTI was distinguished by an aiguillette, which caused them to be mistaken for security police or aides. It would be several years before the female MTI received the distinctive "bush" hats. (7:35)

MTI shortages seemed to be a continuing problem for Lackland AFB. The 1970s saw drastic measures implemented to meet quotas by enticing volunteers. One significant act was the implementation of Proficiency Pay on 1 July 1971, in the amount of \$50 per month. This had been recommended as early as August 1966, but budget constraints held this program in check. (11:155) In addition, to stress military training through an individual's career, general military knowledge was included as part of promotion testing in the form of the Promotion Fitness Examination. This inclusion was a result of an ATC recommendation. (11:171) However, ATC was still required to recruit 200 non-volunteers for MTI duty.

The 1970s had some unique challenges for the MTI. The attrition rates in 1972 almost doubled from the previous year. The reason was an increase of the drug usage problem, which

wasn't identified until after recruits arrived for BMT. The MTI was the primary source for identifying and dealing with the discharge process. (11:170)

Another challenge was the integration of male and female airman into single squadrons. In Jul 1974, male MTIs began supervising female flights. The use of profanity by male MTIs was not readily acceptable to female trainees. (4:1-5) The obstacle course was added to the WAF BMT program. (16:8) A test was done in Jan-Feb 1975, using female MTIs to supervise male flights. The test did indicate problems. However, to make integration a reality, the use of female MTIs with male flights would continue. (4:1-5) On 1 Jul 75, nine female MTI volunteers were assigned on a permanent basis to supervise males in the 3702 and 3708 BMTS. (16:8) Integrating the trainees proved more difficult because of the difference on training programs. There were fifty-six hours of training that did not match between male and female flights. The first sexually integrated flights graduated on 1 Mar 1978. It wasn't until 1990 that all BMT squadrons were fully integrated, training both sexes.

The standards of acceptance for MTI duty remained high in the 1970s. According to a Historical Record of the 3700 BMTS, 1 Jan - 31 Dec 1976, the following criteria were established:

- 1) a minimum rank of Sgt for males, and a minimum rank of A1C for females.
- 2) a composite Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery score of 60 or better.
- 3) an interview with a psychiatrist.
- 4) 8 or 9 in all categories on the last 5 Airman Performance Reports.
- 5) recommendation of the installation commander.
- 6) excellent physical condition. (8:31)

In 1976, all male MTIs were volunteers. The only non-volunteers were females. (8:31) Only 52 percent of the female MTI corps were volunteers. Reasons why more females didn't apply were identified as the rough image of the MTI, and that it was unappealing to women with small children because of the demanding hours. A concentrated effort was made to actively recruit female MTIs by printing articles in the Air Force Times and Airman magazine. Finally on 23 Sep 1977, the female MTI did receive approval to wear the campaign bush hats, giving them the recognition they deserved. (7:36)

Even with the high standards, mistakes were made. In 1976, one hundred and twenty-eight MTIs were eliminated out of a total of seven hundred and ninety-two. Thirty-two were eliminated because of misconduct. The chain of command recognized the duties of the MTI were highly stressful. In order to protect the MTI, several policy changes were instituted that year. The first was that any counseling done with a trainee concerning discipline or training be conducted in the presence of a witness. The second change was to require the MTI to undergo psychiatric evaluation on an annual basis. These implementations reduced the number of allegations of misconduct against the MTI by twenty-five percent. (8: 32-34)

In 1980, ATC tested their ability to handle a surge in training. The experiences of Korea and Vietnam gave cause for concern. Two flights, numbers 410 and 411, doubled their normal flight size, with 100 personnel in each flight. The two flights lost only four trainees, a testament to the ability of the MTIs assigned. (2:230) The MTI was required to be with their flights for the first forty-eight hours of training. Two MTIs were assigned per flight. This taxed the motivation for retention in the MTI program. To fill the requirement, BMT instituted the "plowback" program, where top graduates were sent immediately to MTI training. (9:71)

Two other significant events happened that year. A monument was erected at the Lackland AFB parade ground and officially dedicated on 20 May 1980. The second major event was the three-millionth recruit trained at Lackland AFB that year. (16:9) These achievements recognize the overwhelming success of the MTI program in meeting Air Force needs for quality Air Force Citizens.

In 1987, the Air Force cut accessions of new airmen. For the first time during the 1980s, the MTI program was staffed by all an volunteer NCOs force. However, they are once again experiencing a shortage of highly qualified, motivated NCOs to fill requirements. The MTI program has remained fairly stable, but as with the rest of the Air Force, they are always seeking continuous improvement. 1 January 1995 saw the establishment of a totally redesigned physical conditioning program. (16:10) The names of the squadrons changed three times within seven months during 1996. (16:20) A tracking program for trainees to follow them from BMT through technical training to their first duty station (Lackland Form 205) was established in Oct 1996. The MTI program went from a locally trained program to a formal technical training course, with fourteen weeks of instruction, in Oct 1996. Upon completion, the instructor is a fully certified MTI ready to assume their first flight. (17:1)

The qualifications in 1996 are much the same as they have been since 1976 possession of high standards of dress and appearance, high standards of conduct, ability to speak distinctly, recommendation by unit commander, and favorable recommendation by a psychologist. (4:152) The role of the Military Training Instructor remains the same as it did in 1941, when General Arnold identified the need for an “intensive course of military instruction,” to be first and

foremost a teacher, and if successful, become the idol of his men. These principles are espoused in their code, which is still being used today. (16:11)

MTI CODE

The training instructor hat that I wear is a symbol of honor, integrity and excellence in military department. My job is one of the most important in the Air force and I will spare no efforts to properly prepare young men and women for military duty.

I am dedicated to the principles of fairness, firmness and honesty in my dealings with those entrusted to my charge. I am pledged to strive for perfection and to reject mediocrity both in my own personal behavior and in the performance of those for whom I am responsible.

I am an Air Force Military Training Instructor.

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