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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

ROYAL THAI ARMY  
PERSONNEL, EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

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**ABSTRACT**

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This essay examines the basis of the Royal Thai Army (RTA). It examines: where the RTA personnel come from, what do they learn and how do they train? Additionally, the paper discusses how the RTA developed their Army from the past to the present. The paper focuses on the role played by the US, and US assistance to Thailand.

ROYAL THAI ARMY  
PERSONNEL, EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

Thailand. The word literally means "Land of the Free" and popularly evokes striking images of graceful temples, emerald ricefields and lushly forested mountains. While accurate, these images represent only a tiny fraction of the composite Thai canvas.

Bordered by Malaysia to the south, Burma to the west and north, Laos to the north and northeast and Cambodia to the east, Thailand is approximately the size of France with a population of 50 million.

Thailand history is as complex as a slow Thai classical dance. Thai beliefs, attitudes, political structures and customs have been molded by a remarkable series of dynamic scholars, innovators and warrior-kings who led the nation through severe tests to emerge as one of Asia's more potent forces.

In the past, Thailand armed forces were organized in squads, platoons, regiments, and divisions. The main combat forces were:

- Foot Soldiers, infantry. Their arms were swords, spears, lances and bows, they moved by walking.

- Horse Soldiers, cavalry, rode on horses. Their arms were swords, lances and bows.

- Elephant Soldiers, the early "tank corps" of the Thai army, were armed with lances and bows. Normally, when the king went to the battlefield, he controlled his troops from the back of an elephant.

Later, technology and theory were developed. In 1855, King Mongkut, Rama IV reorganized the army along European lines with the assistance of British officers. Thailand sent many students to study in Western European Countries.

e.g. United Kingdom, Russia, Germany and France. All of them went back to Thailand after graduation to assist in developing the army.

Thailand has had a long relationship with the United States (US). Thailand is one of the oldest and most consistent of all US allies. The history of the Thai-US relationship is unique and rather mysterious. It was Thailand who initiated the long history of alliance and mutual military support with an offer of military assistance in the form of a gift of elephants to President Lincoln during the American Civil War.

In World War II the Japanese invaded and quickly occupied Thailand, establishing a puppet government which declared war on the United States. However, due largely to the influence of Mr. Seni Pramoj, Thai Ambassador to the US and leader of the Free Thai movement, the US Congress, in a unique resolution, refused to accept the declaration of war. This fact is a matter of common knowledge and great pride among modern Thai people. During World War II, the US supported the Free Thai movement through the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), treating Thailand as an occupied friend rather than an enemy nation. Following the war, the US used its influence to prevent Britain from demanding territorial or other reparations from Thailand.

In 1950 the US began formal economic and technical assistance to Thailand and established a Joint United States Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG) in Bangkok to implement US military assistance toward modernization of the Thai Armed Forces (TAF). The aid consists of equipment, hardware, education and training. It can be said the Thai Armed Forces imitated almost everything from the US (organization, education, training). US textbooks were translated into Thai.

The Thai Armed Forces (TAF) are divided into three branches:

1. The Royal Thai Army (RTA).
2. The Royal Thai Navy (RTN).

### 3. The Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF).

The RTA is one of the most important organizations in Thailand. It is essential for the stability of the country, especially at a time when politics, both internal and external, change quite drastically. As stated by the Thai Constitution, the mission of the RTA is to protect and maintain the monarchy as well as protecting the country from external threats in periods of war, and to maintain peace in periods of stability. So it is very necessary for the RTA to be ready for any problems or situations that may arise. As King Rama VI stated, "If the country wants to be in peace the Armed Forces have to be ready."

There are many factors contributing to Army success. These are:

1. Personnel
2. Education
3. Training
4. Intelligence
5. Logistics
6. Operations, etc.

The main factors affecting readiness of the RTA are Personnel, Education and Training.

1. Personnel. Personnel in the RTA can be divided into three categories.

These are:

- a. An Employee. Employees receive a payment from the budget other than those allocated for a salary. Most employee personnel are retired soldiers or civilians.

- b. Civil Servant of the Ministry of Defense. Civil Servants are assigned to work in the Ministry of Defense. They are civilian personnel who have the desired qualifications required by the Government.



c. Active Military Personnel. This is the major group of personnel that will be combined into units used in operations. This group is divided into three levels:

(1) Officer. Personnel who have a military rank from Second Lieutenant to General. In the past, the TAF had Field Marshals or Generals of the Army, but the Government abolished those ranks. Officers enter the RTA from different sources. These are:

(a) Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy (CRMA). This is a Thai cadet school. Most of the officers in RTA are graduates of CRMA. The RTA takes students who finished Mathoyom Suaksa 6 (high school level), for study in the Armed Forces Academy Preparatory School (Pre Cadet School) for one year. After that, they will study four more years in CRMA. Upon completion, they receive a Bachelor of Science degree, and enter the RTA as second lieutenants.

(b) Foreign Military Academies (FMA/Foreign Cadet School). Normally, the RTA will send the cadet who was at the top of the class in the first year (Pre Cadet School) to study in FMA. Sometimes the RTA selects students to get scholarships for FMA. The length of study varies according to the institute. These FMA are shown here:

Country	Name of Institute
Australia	Royal Military College (Duntroon)
Federal Republic of Germany	University of the German Army
France	Ecole Specrate Militaire, Saint Cyr
Japan	Defense Academy, Kanagawa-Ken
Philippines	Philippines Military Academy
United Kingdom	The Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst
United States of America	The Citadel
	Norwich University
	United States Military Academy (West Point)
	Virginia Military Institute

(c) University or College. Personnel who have education ranging from Bachelor degree to Ph.D., earned locally or abroad, and have the Civil Service Commission assurance that they meet the institute's qualifications, can become officers. When they serve in the RTA, their rank and assignment depend on their degree.

(d) Civilian Transfer. Personnel who were considered by the RTA to be fit for the job, and who demanded to serve in the army, can become officers.

(e) Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Appointment. Every year the RTA has a percentage of NCOs, who have displayed good behavior, leadership, knowledge, a high capacity to learn and a lot of experience, who receive a promotion and become officers.

(f) Reserve Officer. Some retired officers can be asked to work with the RTA.

All of these officers have a different minimum year service requirement based on how they entered service. The retirement age, if they did not pass away or resign, is sixty years. The following table depicts the minimum years depending on source of commission:

Source	Years Service - Minimum	Retired Age
CRMA	10	60
FMA	Double study times	60
University or College	2	60
Civilian Transfer	-	60
NCO Appointment	-	60
Reserve Officer	-	60

(2) Noncommissioned Officer (NCO). NCOs are assigned under officers. Their military rank ranges from Lance Corporal to Master Sergeant First Class (US, Private First Class E2 - Sergeant Major E9). The sources of NCOs are:

(a) Army Noncommissioned Officer School (ANCOS) and Army Service School (ASS). The RTA takes students who finished Mathayom Suaksa 6 (high school level) and Mathayom Suaksa 3 (high school level) studies in ANCOS or ASS for one year. After graduation they will serve in the RTA. Their ranks are sergeant for MS 6 and corporal for MS 3.

(b) Civilian. Civilians with basic education (MS 3) and a special knowledge, are sometimes qualified by the RTA to serve in units.

(c) Reserve Private. The reserve private may volunteer to serve in the RTA after retiring from active duty. He must have a basic education level Pathom 7 (high school level) and must have been qualified by the unit.

The sources of NCOs and minimum requirement for service are shown here:

Source	Years Service - Minimum	Retired Age
ANCOS or ASS	2	60
Civilian	6 months - 2 years	60
Reserve Private	-	60

(3) Enlisted men. These personnel come from a draft. Under the Constitution (in 1930, Thailand was transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy), all Thai men must be soldiers. Thai enlisted men either volunteer or are accessed by conscription. Every male, age twenty, is required to report to his district office on a specified date for a military medical examination. Exceptions are workers in official branches, cadets and NCO students.

The physical and medical standards are described in RTA Regulations. RTA Regulations are the comprehensive standards that must be met by all personnel in all the TAF and by all draftees. A man must be:

(a) Free of contagious or infectious diseases which would be likely to endanger the health of other personnel.

(b) Free of medical conditions or physical defects which would require excessive time lost from duty by reason of necessary treatment or hospitalization, or most probably result in separation from the service by reason of medical unfitness.

(c) Medically capable of satisfactorily completing required training.

(d) Medically adaptable to the military environment without the necessity of geographical area limitations.

(e) Medically capable of performing duties without aggravation of existing physical defects or medical conditions.

The term "medical" includes disorders of a psychiatric nature. Thus, if they have been either hospitalized or under prolonged care by a physician for certain psychiatric disorders at anytime, or if they have, in the twelve months preceding their examination, had a brief but serious psychiatric problem, they will probably be rejected.

If they pass the physical, they are liable for six months to two years service. Personnel who study in the Territorial Defense Course will serve in the RTA from six months to two years. The exact time served depends on how many years were taken in the course.

At the present time the RTA has a Women's Army Corps (WAC). Most of them are nurses, the products of the Army Nursing Obstetrics and Health School (ANOHS). They are graduated from Mathayom Susksa 6 (high school level) and study in ANOHS four years. After completion, they receive a Bachelor degree in Nursing and serve in the RTA as second lieutenants. In addition, some WAC personnel are qualified by the RTA to be assigned in support units e.g., Adjutant, Finance, Doctor, Dentist, Band, etc. as employees, NCOs and Officers.

However, although the RTA has personnel, personnel alone can not bring the RTA to the desired readiness. The RTA needs to have service education and training programs for their personnel.

2. Education. The purpose of education is to learn about military life, and how to use weapons, tactics, maneuvers, commitment and spirit, etc.

a. Officers. Officers will continue their education through step by step military courses.

(1) On the Job Education. Officers will study on the job. Their unit will provide the courses. It takes two months for qualification. The courses are: Forward Observer, Map Reconnaissance Officer, etc.

(2) Special Courses. Officers can participate in special courses, if they pass the PT test, examination and physical inspection. These special courses develop the skills and knowledge needed for specific assignments. They may be general or branch related. E.g. an officer who wants to work in the Special Warfare Center must be graduated from the Airborne Course or the officer who wants to become a pilot must pass the Aviation Course. These special courses are:

- |                                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| (a) Ranger Course               | (10 weeks)      |
| (b) Army Aviation Course        | (1 year)        |
| (c) Airborne Course             | (4 weeks)       |
| (d) Motor Officer Course        | (2 months)      |
| (e) Information Systems Course  | (3 months)      |
| (f) Precommand Course           | (2 months)      |
| (g) Logistics Management Course | (4 months) etc. |

(3) Basic Course. The Basic Course provides basic instruction in career specialties and leadership fundamentals to all lieutenants. The period of study is four months.

(4) Advanced Course. The Advanced Course provides leadership training and career specialty training to first lieutenants, captains and majors for more advanced assignments. Study time is six months.

Both Basic and Advanced Course officers study at Service Schools.

(5) Army Command and General Staff School (ACGSS). ACGSS prepares captains, majors and lieutenant colonels for high-level staff assignments and possible battalion command. The course takes one year.

(6) Army War College (AWC). The purpose of the AWC is to qualify officers, colonel and senior colonel (US, brigadier general) to contribute with distinction to the preparation for and potential conduct of war in support of national policy. The course takes 10 months.

There are two other high level courses. Both are organic to the Supreme Command Headquarters. The RTA can send officers to the courses. These high level courses are:

- (a) Armed Forces Staff College (9 months)
- (b) National Defense College (8 months)

b. NCO. NCOs who graduated from ANCOS, ASS or civilians after assignment are eligible for education. The unit commander considers them for on-the-job education courses. The course provides job-related training for NCOs and specialists throughout their careers. The courses take two months.

Examples are:

- Motor NCO Course (2 months)
- Intelligence NCO Course (2 months)
- Signal NCO Course (2 months), etc.

The major course for NCOs is the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Course. This course prepares NCO's for high-level responsibilities in both troop and senior staff assignments (3 months).

There are special courses NCOs can study if they passed the required tests. These courses are:

- Ranger Course (10 weeks)
- Airborne Course (4 weeks)
- Army Aviation NCO Course (1 year)

c. Enlisted Men. The RTA does not have a Training Center. After being drafted or volunteering for the draft, enlisted men will be trained in basic military skills at the unit. At the same time they will be taught about discipline, rules, military regulations and basic policy.

d. Summary. The RTA has five main courses for education.

(1) Professional Development Course. This course provides an education to Officers and NCOs. The course consists of the Basic Course, Advanced Course for Officers; and Senior NCO Course for NCOs.

(2) Skill Progression Course. This course provides both officers and NCOs with educational skills essential for progressing in Army careers. In coordination with the education services officer, commanders determine which soldiers should be enrolled in the program.

(3) Functional Course. This course provides an opportunity for personnel to develop or improve their technical expertise. The study is short term. The course is prepared by the Technical Staff.

(4) Specialist Course. This course is not provided at the Technical Staff Service School. It provides special training for personnel who received a special mission.

(5) Orientation. This course provides an introduction to education, techniques, new weapons or prepares RTA personnel for new assignments.

3. Training. The Purpose of training is to prepare soldiers, teams and units for job performance. Training will increase a soldier's knowledge and

skill. If training is to meet its purpose, certain conditions must be present. The soldiers must:

- realize they need training.
- understand what they are expected to learn.
- have an opportunity to practice what they have learned.
- get reinforcement of what they are learning.
- progress through training presented in a logical sequence.
- be willing to learn.

a. Basic Training (BT). The purpose of BT is to transition new soldiers from a civilian to a military environment, develop discipline, commitment and spirit, and teach them certain basic combat survival skills while toughening them mentally and physically.

(1) Officer and NCO. Officers and NCOs receive BT at the Army Service School. Officer personnel who were accessed from civilian jobs receive BT at the unit. If a unit cannot provide BT, the soldiers are sent to train with another unit.

(2) Enlisted Men. The RTA does not have a Training Center. Each unit trains its enlisted men. BT is the training in basic military subjects given to all enlisted men. To successfully complete BT, they must qualify with the M-16A1, qualify with the grenade, pass the Army Physical Readiness Test (APRT), and the individual end-of-course test. The length of BT is eleven weeks.

(3) On the Job Training (OJT). OJT is a training process whereby enlisted men acquire knowledge and skills through actual performance of duties under competent supervision in accordance with an approved program. Examples are ammunition bearer, leader, cook, gunner, etc. The course takes one week.



(4) Basic Technical Training (BT). Enlisted men will be taught branch qualification. The branches are infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineer, transportation, etc. The period of training is eight weeks.

(5) Foot Marches. Foot marches are a method of moving troops from one place to another. They are classified as tactical or administrative. Training in foot marches is conducted to develop a unit which will be capable of marching to its destination and arriving in condition to accomplish its assigned mission. Training objectives are achieved through the development of unit discipline, leadership, team work, morale, health, endurance, and mental and physical stamina.

Normally each unit will accomplish a foot march one time each three months. All soldiers, officers, NCOs and enlisted men are trained for administrative foot marches. The fitness training is conducted with soldiers wearing full field equipment marching along the shoulders of a road, usually between six and twelve miles with a ten minute break every hour. The average speed is usually four km/hr.

b. Advanced Training (AT). AT is given to soldiers after completion of BT. Soldiers are organized in units. AT will be provided from small units (Squad) to high level (Division). As a result of the current situation, RTA has a mission for counter-insurgency and operations under the nation's defense plan. The mission affected the unit's cycle training. Now, company level was the highest level for training. AT can be divided into two steps.

(1) Basic Unit Training (BUT). BUT in squad, section, platoon and company level is very important. Training time is eleven weeks. Units must be trained with the soldiers capable of efficiently fighting both conventional and unconventional warfare.

(a) Conventional Warfare. In conventional warfare, each unit must have the ability to have an operation, maneuver and combine forces with another unit in the higher level framework.

(b) Unconventional Warfare. In unconventional warfare, each unit must have the ability to operate in a special warfare situation. The emphasis is training so small units can operate by themselves both daytime and nighttime or in bad weather and terrible terrain. The training consists of ambush, counter-ambush, raid, infiltration, etc. Companies must have the capability to accomplish their mission of counterinsurgency more efficiently.

(2) Advanced Unit Training (AUT). AUT in battalion, regiment, and division level will include command post exercises, to make sure units can operate relative to the plans and guidelines of higher levels. In addition to unit training, battalion level will have Joint Training Exercises (JTX). JTX are high-cost, high-overhead exercises. They exercise two or more Services. More environmental than a technique, they are essential for fighting on the modern battlefield and for promoting interoperability. For every exercise units must have infantry officers, cavalry officers, or artillery officers for joint training. Units should practice or test plans assigned by RTA. The period of training is twenty-two weeks.

(3) Command Post Exercise CPX. This exercise is designed to train leaders and staff officers to plan and execute tactical operations without requiring the presence and participation of their unit. It can be conducted in the field or as a map exercise at home station. (The exercise takes 4 weeks).

c. Individual Training. Officers, NCOs or enlisted men must acquire the skills and knowledge for which they are individually responsible. Individual training sustains skills taught in the unit or service school and develops additional essential skills. Developing basic individual skills

before training more advanced skills results in better comprehension and more efficient use of resources. Commanders conduct most individual training. However, some technical and leader training is conducted within the Technical Staff Service School. Examples are:

- (1) Enlisted Training Course.
- (2) Trainers' Course.
- (3) Private Training, OJT Individual Repeated.
- (4) Individual Skill Progression Training.
- (5) OJT of small unit in operation.
- (6) Commander and Staff Training.
- (7) Private Training for upgrade to become private first class.
- (8) Individual nuclear, biological and chemical defense training.

Individual Training most emphasized:

- (1) Personal physical readiness.
- (2) Efficiency and leadership (all command level).
- (3) Capability to use small arms.
- (4) Individual training for fighting.
- (5) Individual NBC defense training.

Conclusion. All above was a description of RTA personnel, education and training systems. Almost all of them the RTA initiated from the US, but adapted to the environment and the country's situation.

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