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RESEARCH STUDY 59-5

**Preliminary Analysis of
Ranger Course Student Evaluation**

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PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF RANGER COURSE STUDENT EVALUATION

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BRIEF

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF RANGER COURSE STUDENT EVALUATION

Requirement:

At the request of the Commandant of the Ranger Department, United States Army Infantry School, a study of the Ranger Course grading system was undertaken with particular reference to the weighting of five component evaluations--Patrol Grades, Spot Reports, Tactical Officer Rating, Map Reading and Compass Course Grade, and Buddy Report Rating--in determining final course grade and class standing. Suggestions of measures which might be taken to improve Ranger Course student evaluation procedures were also requested.

Procedure:

In a preliminary analysis of the course grades of 205 students completing Ranger training, final grades were found not to reflect the relative emphasis intended by Ranger training personnel. Based upon a statistical analysis of the component ratings, a system of multiplying factors was developed to give each component the intended weight. These factors were suggested to insure that each of the five component evaluations would contribute to final grade in the proportions intended by the Ranger School.

Suggested Modifications in Evaluation Procedures:

1. Physical Fitness test scores should not be revealed to training personnel who have a part in evaluating the students.
2. Grade for a given training phase should not be made available to training personnel of the following phase. Student performance during each phase should be rated independently.
3. A standard format should be used in writing observation reports.
4. The Tactical Officer Rating should be based on independent observation of student performance. It would be desirable for the same tactical officer to remain with a class through all three phases of the course.
5. Squads should be reconstituted at the end of each phase so that each man may be rated by as many of his fellow students as possible.
6. Rendering the same number of spot reports on each student could help to standardize the contribution of the Spot Report Rating.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF RANGER COURSE STUDENT EVALUATION

This Research Study is an interim report of an analysis of the Ranger Course student evaluation system undertaken at the request of the Ranger Department, United States Army Infantry School. In the preliminary aspect of the study reported, the weighting system used in computing final course grades was analyzed to find whether the final grade does in fact represent the weights assigned by the Ranger School to the various component ratings. In addition to providing a means of insuring that the assigned weights were achieved in computing final grades, the study resulted in suggestions for modifying current rating procedures to increase the accuracy of student evaluations. Some of the suggestions were the product of observations made by a Personnel Research Branch psychologist who participated as a trainee in the full Ranger Course. Other suggestions developed from an examination of student records provided by the Ranger School. The analyses reported were preliminary in nature, dealing only with gross aspects of the present grading system.

RANGER COURSE STUDENT EVALUATION

The stated purpose of the Ranger Course is to develop to the maximum the military leadership potential of selected officers and enlisted men throughout the Army. During the eight weeks of the course, emphasis is on realistic and somewhat hazardous field work with a minimum of formal classroom instruction. The dominant vehicle of instruction is the patrol which offers a framework within which the student may be placed in a command position and confronted with varied problem situations. Command within the patrol is rotated so that all members have the experience both of command and of participation as a subordinate.

Training is given in three phases at three different locations: a two-week orientation at Ft. Benning; and Waterborne and Jungle Operations phase at the Florida Ranger Camp (19 days); and the Mountain Operations phase at the Mountain Ranger Camp in North Georgia (20 days). Throughout the course, students are evaluated periodically and at unscheduled occasions of their performance and combat leadership potential. The final Ranger Course grade, based on the accumulation of evaluations from several different sources, serves to determine the class standing of students completing the course.

The difficulty of arriving at unbiased and discrimination assessments of individuals under conditions attending Ranger training has led to a complex system of evaluative procedures. The current analysis of course grades was undertaken at the request of The Ranger Department to determine how student evaluation procedures could be improved in order to differentiate more effectively among men completing the course.

Evaluations of student performance are consolidated in the five components of final course grade described briefly in the following paragraphs:1/

Patrol Grades

Score on this aspect of training is essentially an average of ratings for each of the patrols on which the student acted as leader. It is considered by far the most important component of the final grade.

Spot Reports

The spot report is a means of evaluating the patrol performance of students when they are not in a command position. It is also utilized to make unscheduled reports on the student's accomplishment, repeated misconduct, or behavior of any kind thought by training personnel to call for comment. In practice, the number of spot reports made varies with individuals. Each spot report carries an adjectival rating with corresponding numerical values.

Tactical Officer Report

A tactical officer rates each student at completion of each phase of training. Each student is therefore rated by three tactical officers, and the three ratings are averaged to yield a single rating.

Map Reading and Compass Course Grade

Each student takes a written map reading test and is required to negotiate a compass course during the first week of training. The average of the two grades is used in computing the final course grade.

Buddy Report Rating

At the end of each phase, every student rates all other men in his squad by placing each one in the upper, middle, or lower third of his squad. Each rating carries a numerical value. All buddy ratings received by a student at the end of each phase are averaged. At completion of the course, ratings for the three phases are averaged.

1/Memorandum No. 7, Ranger Course Student Evaluation, Ranger Department, US Army Infantry School, 9 April 1959, gives a complete account of procedures for each evaluation.

COMPUTATION OF FINAL COURSE GRADE

The Ranger Department currently utilizes a grading system based on a 1000-point maximum. In computing final course grade, each of the five components is allotted a maximum number of points, representing the weights assigned by the Ranger School. The current method of computation is outlined in Table 1. The specific purpose of the present study was to determine how closely the intended weighting of the various components was achieved by current procedures, and to provide a weighting system based on an analysis of component ratings received by students which would give each component the weight assigned. The study applied to weights now in effect. Should later readjustment of the weights be required by consideration of such criteria as measures of success as a leader, the method employed can be reapplied.

Table 1

COMPUTATION OF FINAL RANGER COURSE GRADE

Component	Maximum Points Allowed	Multiplying Factor	Assigned Weight
Patrol Grades	500	5.0	50%
Spot Reports	200	2.0	20%
Tactical Officer Rating	150	1.5	15%
Map and Compass Test	100	1.0	10%
Buddy Report Rating	50	.5	5%
Final Grade	1000		100

ANALYSIS OF COURSE GRADES

Final course grades of 205 Army enlisted men and officers, members of Ranger Course classes 7 and 9, were examined to determine whether the computed final course grades did in fact represent the assigned weight of each of the components.

Such a determination is made through statistical analysis of the extent to which individual grades vary from the average scores for the group. If there is little or no such variation, and the average grade is the grade for everyone in the class, then there is no differentiation among individuals in the group. Whatever weight or multiplying factor is applied, the grades remain as close together as they were before. When a composite grade is made up of two evaluations, one making little or no differentiation among individuals and the other yielding a wider range of scores, the latter will be the sole determiner of the resulting composite grade. It follows that components can be given the desired weighting only when the multiplying factor has been predetermined in relation to the extent to which grades on each component deviate from the average, that is, by the amount of dispersion characterizing the set of scores. The statistical measure employed is the standard deviation, which can be regarded as an average of the amounts by which individual scores differ from the average score.

Table 2 permits a comparison of course grade components in respect to the size of the standard deviation of scores on each component. The Spot Reports rating was found to have a much larger standard deviation than any

Table 2

AVERAGES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF COMPONENTS OF FINAL RANGER
COURSE GRADES FOR TWO CLASSES

	Patrol Grades	Spot Reports	Tactical Officer Rating	Map and Compass Test	Buddy Report Rating
Class No. 7					
Average Grade	70.60	67.00	79.42	73.47	83.29
Standard Deviation	5.49	48.23	7.35	12.09	6.42
Class No. 9					
Average Grade	73.20	110.38	77.77	73.01	74.66
Standard Deviation	5.91	38.82	3.93	14.06	10.78
Combined Total					
Average Grade	72.11	92.18	78.46	73.20	78.28
Standard Deviation	5.88	48.05	5.71	13.27	10.14

of the others. It was therefore operating as a major determiner of course grade and of class standing. The result obtained was counter to the intention of Ranger Department personnel that Patrol Grades be the major determiner of class standing. The disparity between the assigned and the actual weights is evident from Table 3.

Further Suggestions For Modifications of Ranger Course Student Evaluation

1. Academic Testing at Fort Benning

The student participates in class room activities during the Fort Benning phase which are applicable to formal testing procedures. Such courses as aerial movement and resupply, troop leading procedures, patrolling techniques, and demolitions lend themselves to testing. At the present time there is no way of measuring the knowledge the student has gained from these courses of instruction. The testing would not only measure achievement but would also act as a motivator for the students to keep alert during the formal class periods.

2. Minimum Grades

At the present time the grades given to a student patrol leader can range from 0 to 100 points. The final patrol grade is computed by averaging all the patrol grades for each student. It is recommended that a base grade be set at the low end of the grade distribution. At the present time a student can receive, let us say a grade of 30 as a patrol leader. The student not only fails this problem, but the grade affects his average for the whole course. The one very low grade can wipe out the future success of the student as a patrol leader, and since patrol grades are a major determiner of success as a Ranger student, one very low grade can cause the student to fail the course.

It is suggested that a minimum fail score of 60 points be established. This would not only cause all graders to use the same standard level, but would also benefit the student in that he would not be operating under the stress of past failures.

3. Use of Critical Incidents for Instructor Manual or Training Program

In order to standardize the scoring system, and make it less subjective it is suggested that a Instructor's Manual or periodic training program be established. In order to standardize the evaluation it is suggested that each instructor submit a list of critical incidents which occur on each specific problem. A critical incident is an observed behavior of the patrol leader which adds or detracts from the success of the mission. Each problem in the course calls for some set of unique behaviors on the part of the Patrol leader. Another source of information would be old observation reports.

If each instructor submitted a list of specific incidents, these could be compiled in such a way as to pin point those critical requirements of each tactical problem.

These would be contained in an Instructor's Manual as guide posts for evaluation. Certainly more beneficial, would be periodic training programs for all instructors. These critical incidents by problem would be openly discussed and all instructors would begin to grade with a common base.

4. Equating Scores Between Classes

Since student performance varies greatly from class to class it might be considered beneficial to have a constant scoring system so that a minimum cut score for all classes can be established.

Many educational institutions use a system which involves the use of a conversion table. It is possible through the use of this table to convert any final class grade to a meaningful standard score which represents student performance when compared against all students irrespective of class.

In order to establish this conversion table it would be necessary to analyze the grade distributions for at least 10 to 12 Ranger classes. From the analysis of this data a table of Army standard scores can be established.

Although there is considerable merit to such a procedure it may have a certain amount of artificiality if the basis of grading has undergone rather extensive changes from class to class.

Table 3

ASSIGNED AND ACTUAL WEIGHTS OF RANGER COURSE GRADE COMPONENTS

Component	Assigned Weight	Actual Weight
Patrol Grades	50%	25%
Spot Reports	20%	50%
Tactical Officer Rating	15%	10%
Map and Compass Test	10%	10%
Buddy Report Rating	5%	5%

PROPOSED MULTIPLYING FACTORS

Using the data obtained for Class 7 and Class 9 combined, multiplying factors were computed which would effectively weight component grades in the desired proportions. The recommended multiplying factors, and the percentage composition of the resulting final grades, are presented in Table 4. The multiplying factor does not indicate the relative weight of the component; it is rather a means of controlling the weight the component has in the composite grade to insure that the assigned weights are actually achieved.

Table 4

RECOMMENDED MULTIPLYING FACTORS AND RESULTING WEIGHTS FOR COMPONENTS OF RANGER COURSE GRADE

Component	Multiplying Factor	Effective Weight
Patrol Grades	6.50	50%
Spot Reports	.60	20%
Tactical Officer Rating	2.00	15%
Map and Compass Test	.60	10%
Buddy Report Rating	.30	5%

APPLICATION OF OLD AND NEW WEIGHTS COMPARED

To illustrate the application of the proposed multiplying factors, the final grades of two students enrolled in Class 7 were computed using both current and proposed weighting factors. The component grades of the two students, before weighting, were as follows:

	<u>Student A</u>	<u>Student B</u>
Patrol Grades	82	71
Spot Reports	141	200
Tactical Officer Rating	93	87
Map and Compass Test	90	100
Buddy Report Rating	91	83

After applying the current multiplying factors, the final grades of Student A and Student B were 827 and 825 respectively. In spite of the fact that Student A was superior to Student B in the Tactical Officer Rating and Buddy Rating, and far superior in Patrol Grades, the supposed major determiner of total grade, only 2 points separate the final grades of the two students.

Application of the new multiplying factors revealed the greater difference in the two men. Computation of the final grades using the proposed factors is shown below:

	<u>Student A</u>	<u>Student B</u>
Patrol Grades	$82 \times 6.50 = 533$	$71 \times 6.50 = 461$
Spot Reports	$141 \times .60 = 84$	$200 \times .60 = 120$
Tactical Officer Rating	$93 \times 2.00 = 186$	$87 \times 2.00 = 174$
Map and Compass Test	$90 \times .60 = 54$	$100 \times .60 = 60$
Buddy Report Rating	$91 \times .30 = 27$	$83 \times .30 = 25$
Final Grade	<u>884 pts</u>	<u>840 pts</u>

Student A surpassed Student B by 44 points when grades were computed using the suggested factors. The difference in grade was attributable to the proper weighting of the patrol grades, which counted for 50 percent despite the magnitude of the multiplying factor.

Use of the new weighting system could be expected to result in generally higher grades. A new pass-fail cutting score would therefore have to be established.

SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS IN RANGER STUDENT EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Further analysis of the rating system suggested certain measures, in addition to rectifying the weighting procedure, which might be taken to insure more independent evaluations and more standard application of rating procedures. Specific conditions which may be operating to weaken the evaluations, together with suggested modification in procedure, are discussed in the following paragraphs:

Physical Fitness Score as a Possible Influence on Ratings

Enrollment in the Ranger Course calls for a minimum score of 225 points on the Army Physical Fitness Test. Theoretically, the score is used merely in determining individual qualification for Ranger training and no distinction should be made between a student who scores at the minimum acceptable level and the student who scores high. However, the relative physical fitness qualifications of the students are generally known to cadre and could easily influence cadre evaluations of the men, especially during the early Fort Benning phase. To eliminate any possible "halo" influence, it is suggested that Physical Fitness Test scores remain with the Senior Tactical Officer and that the scores not be disclosed to any other training personnel.

Method of Recording Grades

Current practice is to forward student grades and ratings for each phase to personnel responsible for the succeeding phase. Thus, cadre evaluating the student on the second and third phases know just how other training personnel have rated him, and may tend consciously or unconsciously to approximate the previous ratings. Forwarding all grades to Fort Benning at the conclusion of each phase would avoid the possibility of such influence. All consolidation of reports and grade computation could take place at the Fort Benning center. The student would be rated independently for each training phase. Differences in his performance during the three phases would have a better chance of being reflected in consolidated phase ratings and ultimately in his class standing, with consequent greater differentiation among students completing the course.

Observation Reports

Observation reports are used by instructors to record the performance of students placed in command positions on patrol problems. They are used both as a grading tool and as a basis for student counseling. For this reason no rigid format nor restriction on content has been imposed, and completed reports are characterized by a considerable variety of content and organization. Standard instructions to personnel rendering the reports would help control the subjectivity of instructor ratings. A brief manual for the preparation of observation reports is presented in draft form as Appendix A. The instructions it contains would order the report content more uniformly and insure the inclusion of standard items

of information, at the same time permitting the writer to spell out his reasons for assigning a particular adjectival rating. Samples of observation reports prepared according to the suggested procedure are shown in Appendix B.

Spot Reports

The use of the spot report as a means of motivating student effort is not questioned. However, the spot report component was found to have undue weight in the final Ranger Course grade, possibly attributable to the varying number of reports per student. Spot reports might be more useful in student evaluation if each student received the same number of such reports and if the reports were more evenly distributed throughout the three phases of training. Unless the number of reports can be controlled in some way, it would probably be better to reserve the spot report for a guidance tool. In any case, the spot report has no value when used to report single instances of gigs. It might legitimately be used to record repeated offenses for which gigs were given.

Tactical Officer Rating

The rating is administered at the completion of each training phase, with a different officer assigning the grade for each phase. At present, it is standard practice for the tactical officer to review the student's personnel folder before assigning a grade. The tactical officer rating is thus a reflection of student performance as recorded by the instructors rather than a product of independent observation.

It is suggested that one officer be assigned to serve as tactical officer for all phases of training so that he would become sufficiently familiar with the students to evaluate them adequately. If the suggested procedure--or an effective means of insuring independent evaluation--cannot be instituted, the Tactical Officer Rating should be eliminated from the grading system, since it makes no real contribution to the grade.

Buddy Report Rating

Buddy ratings are obtained at the end of each of the three training phases. Because squads are formed of the same men from phase to phase, the same men rate each other each time and the second and third phase ratings may have limited value. If at the start of each training phase the squads and two-man buddy teams were broken up and the men reassigned, ratings from a greater number of different individuals would be obtained for each student. In general, the more ratings from different individuals obtained for each ratee, the less bias is reflected in the rating and the more reliable the rating.

APPENDIX A
PREPARATION OF OBSERVATION REPORTS

APPENDIX A

PREPARATION OF OBSERVATION REPORTS

The following instructions will be observed in preparing Observation Reports on the performance of student patrol leaders.

An outline of patrol activities is provided for use in making your reports. Under some of the activities are listed major aspects of performance that should be observed and evaluated in reporting on each activity. Include all patrol activities in which the student acted as leader on a particular patrol. For each patrol activity included, describe all major aspects of performance listed.

Points to be observed are presented for each activity to help you recall behavior and events significant to the evaluation of the patrol leader's performance on that particular occasion. There is no requirement that you comment on all the points listed. Feel free to comment on additional pertinent points which do not appear in the lists.

In the case of reports carrying an adjectival rating of SATISFACTORY or EXCELLENT, comment on minor deficiencies will be useful in the subsequent critique of student performance.

When the adjectival rating is UNSATISFACTORY, record in detail all aspects of performance covered by the report. All applicable points to be observed must be covered.

Your Observation Report will be more meaningful both as an evaluation and as a critique of performance if you will observe the following principles of good rating:

RATING PRINCIPLES

1. Prepare the report immediately after the patrol has been completed.
2. Base your recorded observations and evaluation only on the student's behavior during the patrol covered by the report. Attempt to approach each report with a fresh view of the student's performance.
3. Keep your report independent. Do not discuss your observation or opinions with anyone else before making the required evaluation.
4. Do not decide on the adjectival rating until you have recorded your observations of all relevant aspects of performance. Base your rating on the evidence.
5. Over a period of time, try to spread your ratings so that you make proper use of EXCELLENT AND UNSATISFACTORY ratings.
6. Try not to be influenced by your personal feelings toward the student you are rating.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION OF OBSERVATION REPORTS

<u>PATROL ACTIVITY</u>	<u>MAJOR ASPECT OF PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>POINTS TO BE OBSERVED</u>
A. WARNING ORDER	1. MANNER OF DELIVERY	Use of notes and visual aids Ability to maintain interest and communicate
	2. FORMAT	Situation Mission Uniform and equipment common to all Specific instruction for subordi- nates for preparation of patrol Chain of Command Tentative time schedule
B. PATROL ORDER	1. MANNER OF DELIVERY	Use of notes and visual aids Ability to maintain interest and communicate
	2. FORMAT	Situation Mission Execution Administration and Logistics Command and signal
C. REHEARSAL		Selection of area and rehearsal plan Uniform and equipment Content of rehearsal Control
D. INSPECTION		Uniform and equipment Special equipment Method of inspection

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION OF OBSERVATION REPORTS - Continued

<u>PATROL ACTIVITY</u>	<u>MAJOR ASPECT OF PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>POINTS TO BE OBSERVED</u>
E. ACTIONS AT OP AND LP		Dismounting and contact with guide Security Questioning and coordination Dissemination of information Movement up to OP or LP Passage through OP or LP Supervision of compass or pace men
F. ROUTE TO OBJECTIVE		Rate of movement Action at danger area (wire, mines, streams, etc) Security Control Breaks or halts Maps, compass and pace checks Use of subordinate leaders Dissemination of information Action upon enemy contact Use of rally points Disposition of dead or wounded (friendly and enemy) Use of artillery Assumption of command
G. ACTIONS AT OBJECTIVE		Security Reconnaissance Final plan Dissemination of information Movement Control Execution of plan Redistribution of ammo Withdrawal

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION OF OBSERVATION REPORTS - Continued

<u>PATROL ACTIVITY</u>	<u>MAJOR ASPECT OF PERFORMANCE</u>	<u>POINTS TO BE OBSERVED</u>
H. RETURN TO FRIENDLY LINES		Rate of movement Actions at danger areas (wire, mines, streams, etc) Security Control Breaks or halts Maps, compass and pace checks Use of subordinate leaders Noise discipline Dissemination of information Actions upon enemy contact Use of rally points Disposition of dead or wounded (friendly or enemy) Assumption of command Establishment of contact with friendly front lines Entry into friendly front lines

APPENDIX B
EXAMPLES OF COMPLETED OBSERVATION REPORTS

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLES OF COMPLETED OBSERVATION REPORTS

RANGER	JONES	JAMES	J.	DATE	
	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	MI		
PROBLEM	8244	CAPACITY	PL	PHASE	I

OBSERVATIONS:

A. WARNING ORDER

1. Manner of Delivery -- Fair
 Lack of Force
 Read order directly from paper---never glanced up---used notes as crutch rather than aid
 Due to above lost interest of group--men sleeping and talking

2. Format
Enemy situation too detailed. Did not talk about specific area of operation
Equipment -- Fair
 Insufficient maps, only one machette, no radio requested
Specific instructions for subordinates
 Failed to give second in command detailed instructions for the preparation of the patrol
 Time Schedule -- good, except time of evening meal was omitted

B. PATROL ORDER

1. Manner of Delivery -- Good
 But still lacks force

2. Format -- Good
Enemy and friendly situation not detailed enough
Execution-- Good
 Alternate route of return not covered
 Actions at rally points--could have been more detailed
 Command and signal--O.K. but failed to give intra-patrol password

C. REHEARSAL -- Unsatisfactory

Area selected--poor, no attempt to indicate objective
 Control--weak, men were joking around--not paying attention
 Did not have evening rehearsal

SUMMARY

Ranger Jones displayed a fair knowledge of patrol techniques but lacked the force necessary to get things done. Needs more work in controlling and communicating with men.

SATISFACTORY

75

1st Lt. W. A. White

PRINT NAME AND GRADE

DATE COUNSELLED _____

REPORT OF OBSERVATION

RANGER JONES JAMES J. DATE 1959
LAST NAME FIRST NAME MI
PROBLEM 8237 CAPACITY PL PHASE II

OBSERVATIONS:

E. ACTIONS AT OP AND LP

Security--Poor, allowed men to talk and make excessive noise while dismounting

Dissemination of information--Poor

Did not inform patrol of information gained at OP

Passage through OP--Poor

Lack of noise discipline--did not count men through--wasted time passing out unnecessary instructions

Laying Dog--Good, but failed to keep noise discipline and did not listen long enough

F. ROUTE TO OBJECTIVE

Rate of movement--Poor

Moved too fast to maintain proper security and control

SUMMARY

Ranger Jones has difficulty in controlling men because he is in too much of a hurry. He lacks basic knowledge of patrolling techniques. He was not aggressive enough to discipline men because of the noise they made.

UNSATISFACTORY

60

1st Lt. W. W. Williams

PRINT NAME AND GRADE

DATE COUNSELLED

REPORT OF OBSERVATION

RANGER JONES JAMES J. DATE _____
 LAST NAME FIRST NAME MI
 PROBLEM 8238 CAPACITY PL PHASE III

OBSERVATIONS:

G. ACTIONS AT OBJECTIVE

Reconnaissance--Poor--Jeopardized mission by allowing reconnaissance team to move too close to objective

Final Plan--Good, but failed to allow subordinates sufficient time to disseminate information to patrol members

Movement--Excellent

Used cover and concealment to great advantage

Execution of Plan--Good, but failed to set up proper security at edge of objective to allow prisoner snatch team enough security to accomplish their mission

Withdrawal--Poor

Security team did not cover assault teams withdrawal--did not use proper techniques of fire and maneuver in withdrawal

SUMMARY

Ranger Jones completed his mission by doing an acceptable job at the objective. It seems that he gets started well but cuts everything short--he does not give situations enough time to develop.

SATISFACTORY

70

1st Lt. R. B. Smith
 PRINT NAME AND GRADE

DATE COUNSELLED _____