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Abstract

In 2003, the Infantry Training Brigade (ITB) at Fort Benning, GA put in a Request for Forces (RFF) for one complete Battalion of Drill Sergeants and the HQ's element. This RFF was a result of the President and the Department of the Army's decision to grow the Army because of Operation Enduring Freedom and the need for a larger deployable force. The RFF went up to DA and then handed down to the 84TH Training Division and was tasked to 1/329th Infantry Regiment that was HQ out of Bloomington, Indiana with a detachment of two companies at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. The need was for the entire Battalion HQ's staff and 5 companies to mobilize to FT Benning, GA in June of 2004. The ITB had one empty (starship) Battalion on Sand Hill that the 1/329th would occupy and post their Flag. This would give the Army an additional 3000 Soldier's coming out of Infantry One Stop Unit Training (OSUT) and move them closer to the additional 17,000 Soldiers they had intended to grow the force by. I was an E7, Senior Drill Sergeant in D Company 1/329th and was set to mobilize with my company to carry out our designed METL mission.

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Arrival at FT Benning

We arrived on 17 June 2004 and signed in at the 641st where we began the process of going on active duty. We were given a brief, a folder with documents to be completed, and a schedule for the next 3 days. Over the course of three days we had gone through the complete Soldier Readiness Process (SRP) and had been given off post quarters to sign for. We went through medical, dental screening and examinations. We updated our records for SGLI and DEERS information. We completed wills and power of attorney as needed. We updated expired CAC ID cards with pins and settled our finance records bringing us on active duty. We then were able to get our belongings from the temporary three person rooms from the barracks and move out to our assigned apartments. We went to the apartment offices and signed for fully furnished apartments and did a walk thru inspection, and noted any deficiencies. We were to report to building 3305 on Sand Hill on Monday morning at 0500 for an APFT test.

Building 3305

We showed up to the building that morning and took our APFT with a liaison from ITB HQ's. Once the APFT and the surprise 100% urinalysis were completed, we were released for personal hygiene and breakfast. Upon return, keys were issued for each company to take the first look at their new AO. This building has set empty for the past two years with the exception transient groups of National Guard and Reserve Soldiers moving thru FT Benning. They stayed

in these buildings without supervision in regards to maintenance and cleanliness. It was very obvious that we had a tremendous amount of work to do since we picked up our first Soldiers at the end of July, just over 30 days away. We knew we still had two weeks of Right-Seat-Ride program that was put together by ITB for us to get us certified on many of the skills and license we would need to do our job. So now we had just over two weeks to get the building where it needed to be.

We were Delta Company and we naturally were given Delta Company AO. As a group we walked through the buildings as a team and talked about what the expectation would be in two weeks. The expectation was all areas would be scraped (paint was chipping off of the walls) and painted. We would hot wash the latrines and refinish the wooden benches and towel racks. We would paint the shower stalls. We would go to DRMO and get furniture. We put in orders to get rid of most of the mattresses, the one in the bays were dirty and had rips and tears in them. Some of the bunks were in need of replacing. We had 4 different styles of wall lockers that were in bad shape throughout the company area. We had to make a CQ desk, chain of command display boards and get computers. These barracks had trash in the ceiling tiles and walls, it was a mess.

We knew what had to be done and collectively put our frustrations to the side and went to work. Within 6 days of picking up, we had gotten new furniture, computers, mattresses, bunks, matching wall lockers, refinished shower benches, cleaned, sterilized the bays and did a very thorough inspection for old leftover contraband items in every nook and cranny we could find. We repainted all walls and doors, built shelving for storage rooms and supply rooms, built a CQ desk, chain of command boards, and policy letter boards. We went to main post and ordered instructional signage for the bays to be posted. The company looked amazing when we were

done. It was ready for inspection and the example was set for what the AO should look like at all times for out soon to be new recruits. We worked two straight weeks, 7 days a week well into the night to get it done. We would spend out next 6 days drawing equipment to issue, equipment to train with, creating the in processing paper work for the initial packets on pickup day and we still had to plan and prepare ourselves for the mission with just 6 days until pickup.

Delta Company Demons

We had worked extremely hard to get the company together and ready for pick-up day. We had completed our Right-seat-ride certifications, prepped out company AO, packets, equipment, and most importantly we had truly become a cohesive team thru this processes. On Monday prior to the first trainee pickup day on Friday, building 3305 was reflagged to carry the name and colors of our reserve unit. The 1/329th Infantry Regiment, with its long history from many men and battles from 4 different conflicts, now its colors will proudly be flown in efforts with another conflict. We had come together and decided that we would call ourselves the Delta Demons to help embody the spirit of the Warrior Ethos. We were the first company to pickup Soldier's, we had a strong and prepared team to set the example for the rest of the Battalion to follow.

Expectations

We had learned through the experience of getting the building ready that when it came time to train and teach these recruits that we had to “inspect what you expect”. We had many

trial and error situations on what was the best way to train these future Infantrymen within our guidelines of the TSP and POI furnished by TRADOC. We kept a best practice history and lessons learned thought each cycle and then covered them as highlights at the end of each cycle we completed. The Battalion Commander had used our company as the standard on how to conduct training and the expectations of how a cohesive unit should operate. We helped to conduct training meeting with other companies, attending training events, and sitting in on end of cycle reviews with the Battalion command team with other companies.

Hard work pays off

After all of the hard work we put into getting the company ready, prepping ourselves, rehearsing every event, we had saw the hard work pay off by the end of the cycle when we stood on the graduation field with 208 of the 216 Soldiers we picked up 14 weeks prior. Those young men had transformed into warriors and were ready to serve their country at war. To watch the looks on the faces of the parents as they finally got face to face with their new Soldier was very rewarding. We were tired, it had been a long 20 weeks of 6 to 7 days a week and 14 to 18 hours days. With two weeks to go prior to graduation I was notified by the company First Sergeant that I had been selected as the Drill Sergeant of the cycle. I had easily validated at that moment the hard work up to that point.

Active versus Reserve Component

Upon first arrival to Fort Benning and Sand Hill (ITB AO), we were considered the new kids on the block and there was talk that we are just reservist's and the assumption was we would not be of the same caliber of trainers nor be in the same physical shape as the active component. After we got the building in shape and our Right-seat-ride certification completed, all companies had identified 4 of the eight Drill Sergeants, one Supply NCO, and one of the top 3 (Commander, 1SG, or XO) to go down range to one of the active component Battalion's companies in a one-for-one exchange. The Idea is to keep some continuity of training and to give experienced operators and enablers to the new companies in the 1/329th.

Once the word got out that active component Soldiers would be selected, removed from their active component company and leadership and sent to a new "Reserve" company, the rumor mill and idea of the Reservists became the topic of discussion and naturally unpopular idea. Once the active component Soldiers arrived at 1/329, one of the first things that the companies did every morning in preparation to picking up troops, was physical training. The active component was surprised at the great physical shape we were in and raised an eyebrow from both perspectives. We ensured we welcomed them in with open arms and quickly showed we valued their opinion and input on planning and coordination of the training plans, they felt a part of the team and integrated with us. By the end of two years, 99 percent of the active component Soldiers in 1/329th did not want to return to their previous AC unit, we had earned one another's mutual respect. It was quickly realized on both sides that like the Reservist, the active Army has their one or two bad apples in the bunch. It also became a shared idea that the Reservists from many different backgrounds of civil jobs brought an additional wealth of knowledge and differing styles of leadership that helped to transform these new citizen recruits to Soldiers.

Conclusion

Departing Fort Benning, ITB and all of those relationships we had forged through hard work, determination, and cohesion was hard. It almost felt like you were personally giving up something you personally built, even though we know it took everybody to get it done. Two years went by very quickly when you are so busy. We had award ceremonies to honor those who went above and beyond. In talking with my members of my unit, the biggest reward outside of the personal satisfaction of seeing those new Soldiers graduate was when our active component leaders and peers stood up and said my impression of a Reservist was wrong, and that they would proudly serve with us any day, in any situation, and that we were equally valuable as they.

The Army achieved its goals of the increased numbers so they could fill the ranks of the new Stryker Brigades being stood up across the Army Posts.