DO YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH YOUR SIX-MONTHS TRAINEES—OR DO YOU JUST 'EM OUT AND FORGET 'EM?'

A SK any Army Guard Commander to single-out the one flaw in the six-months training program that causes the most trouble at the working level, and you'll usually get a reply like this:

"They don't train 'em like I ask 'em. I ask for a Supply Technician and he gets an Infantryman. I sign-up a new man and mark him down for training as a Tank Mechanic but he comes back from his six months with an ordinary Driver's MOS. So I have to start all over again looking for a Mechanic—or train one myself. How does the Army think I can run my outfit right if they don't train my men in the specialties I ask for?"

Does the Guard Commander have justice on his side? Do the impersonal and anonymous "They" who run the Army Training Centers cupiously switch recruits from one training channel to another without regard to local needs? The answer, from top level Guard sources as well as from the Training Centers themselves, goes like this: Yes, men earmarked for training in a specific MOS sometimes get osed up in alien fields—but not to appreciable numbers and certainly not through mere caprice. In many cases, say these same sources, the switch in training grows out of poor judgment or fluidly processing back at the Armory.

Not that the Army itself, and its Training Centers, are blameworthy. No operation is immune and far-reaching as the so-called "Take Six" program—meant the compulsory period of six-months active duty training given all new recruits in the Reserve Components—functions without error. Despite the best of intentions, orders will be miswritten, classes misclassified, and men sent to the wrong place at the wrong time for the wrong course of study. The only wonder of it, say the men responsible for making the system work, is that the suddenness be few in an operation with so many built-in opportunities for error.

214,000 GUARDMEN 'ALUMNI'
"Take Six" was born in 1955, by-product of the Reserve Forces Act of that year. Since then, approximately 214,000 National Guard recruits have signed their enlistment papers, then gone off to one of the Army Training Centers to learn their military ABCs. A smaller, but still imposing, number of Army Reservists have gotten their initial training at the same source. Out of the impressive total, says a National Guard Bureau spokesman, the overall picture is one of solid accomplishment—thousands of green recruits pouring into the hopper at one end of the Take Six Machine and six months later flowing from the spigot on the other end as soldiers with a good working knowledge of the military role assigned to them. The man you talk for Company Clerk usually winds up at Clerk's School; likewise the Mechanic, the Driver, the Rifflemen and all the other more common categories. But the very words "training" and "military" to them, say the same NCB source, are among the handful of men who must be trained in not-so-common or highly-specialized fields.

The training program is three-phased—Basic Combat (about six weeks), Advanced Individual, which is MOS training (about eight weeks), and Basic Unit Training (six weeks), where the combat soldier, the rifleman and the gunner learn to function as members of a team. Specialists require longer periods of MOS instruction receive this training at the same source. The GRs, studying infants, results in a reduction in the length of the unit training phase for these "hard-knocks" specialists. Approximately 80% of the Guard recruits are trained in a basic branch MOS—Infantry, Artillery, Armor, or Engineers. However, training for these widely understood, educational prerequisites usually are modest, and the Training Centers are geared to handle thousands of men with assembly-line precision. Mistakes, therefore, are few in number.

By contrast, men earmarked for training in a highly-specialized field—jobs like Helicopter Mechanic, Cryptographer, Electronic Repair Technician, Photography, to name only a few—must be separated from the great central flow of trainees and diverted into seldom-travelled byways where the processing techniques are not as well-refined. Usually, they must be sent from the Training Center to a school where the subject is handled in depth, and later the duties of the job you want him to fill. "Military training for the single greatest cause of Training Center fouling says NGB."

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