

Changes to Army Warrant Officer Training

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1. Greetings from the Warrant Officer Career Center (WOCC), Fort Rucker, Alabama! During the two years I've been the WOCC Deputy Commandant, some drastic changes have taken place in WOCC programs—and changes will continue. The following information will help bring you up to date on these changes.

2. Changes to the Warrant Officer Candidate School (WOCS) over the last couple of years have been the most significant in the School's 50-year history. These changes have come about primarily to ensure that the WOCS fulfills its charter to educate Candidates in the skills they'll need to effectively lead Soldiers in the contemporary operational environment (COE). As a leadership School, WOCS has an obligation to help Candidates develop or polish skills that are relevant to an Army at War, skills they will need to effectively operate and survive on today's ever-changing battlefield in the Global War on Terrorism. The transformation the WOCS has undergone positions it to more fully and effectively support the Total Army's need for Warrant Officers. Additionally, improvements to the School will help ensure that Warrant Officers will consider their WOCS experience as invaluable in their pursuit to become effective technical, warrior leaders. Following are some of the more significant changes:

a. The WOCS curriculum has been completely redesigned to provide two different versions of the program; one version is approximately six weeks and four days long and the other is approximately four weeks long. Both versions are tough and demanding in order to best serve a nation and an Army at war. The version a Candidate attends depends on that Candidate's background and experience.

(1) Candidates who are sergeants (E-5s) who haven't attended the Warrior Leader Course (WLC), previously known as the Primary Leadership Development Course, and those in lower grades attend the 6-week, 4-day version of the course.

(2) All other Army NCOs attend the 4-week resident version after having completed a distributive Learning (DL) phase. The DL phase consists of refresher courses aligned with the WLC and contains the same material that Candidates in the long version cover during the first 11 days of the 6-week, 4-day version. Students access the DL material through Army Knowledge Online (AKO). They may complete the DL phase anywhere they can access AKO.

(3) The phase of WOCS (Phase 2) that all Candidates complete in residence consists of academic classes on subjects relevant to the COE such as leadership, officership, ethics, history, and oral and written communications; these are all topics that are important in helping Candidates develop into effective Warrant Officers. Throughout all resident training, training, advising, and counseling (TAC) officers mentor candidates and provide them feedback on the effectiveness of their leadership and officership skills.

b. The WOCS program has been made more rigorous through the addition of a number of COE-relevant activities and the strengthening of the academic classes. The object of the added rigor is to better prepare Candidates for the challenges they will face as Warrant Officers and junior leaders. Added activities include weekly marches with full backpacks, close quarters combat and room clearing techniques training, combative skills training, a 5-day field leadership exercise (FLX) conducted at a forward operating base "FOB Freedom," Tactical Operations Center (TOC) familiarization training, warrior task and battle drills training, and urban orienteering exercises.

c. In addition to the Fort Rucker WOCS program, WOCS is now also conducted by the Special Forces (SF) Command at Fort Bragg, NC, and, for Reserve Component (RC) Soldiers, at Army National Guard (ARNG) Regional Training Institutes (RTIs). The SF program is a 2-year test program. Some details of the RTI WOCS program are as follows:

(1) The RTI WOCS program was implemented in FY06 as a way to provide RC Soldiers who're unable to attend the resident program at Fort Rucker another avenue to become Warrant Officers.

(2) Soldiers complete the RTI WOCS program in three phases. First, they complete the same DL phase that Soldiers who will attend the Fort Rucker 4-week resident program complete. Next, they complete five drill weekends of inactive duty for training (IDT) at the RTI sites. In the final phase, to complete requirements for becoming Warrant Officers, Candidates from a number of sites join at one location to complete 15 days active duty for training (ADT). In FY06, Candidates completed this phase at Camp Atterbury, IN. This FY, the ADT phase of the training will also be conducted at Fort McClellan, AL.

(3) To be eligible to complete WOCS through the RTI program, ARNG and USAR Soldiers must be E-5s who've completed the WLC or NCOs in higher grades. All aviators must attend the 4 or 6 week resident course at Fort Rucker.

(4) In FY06, the WOCS RTI program was conducted at 13 different locations, and a total of 119 Candidates completed the program. This FY, 248 Soldiers are participating in the program at 20 different sites. (5) The WOCC is taking a number of measures to ensure that Warrant Officer Candidate training at the RTIs meets the same standards as the training at Fort Rucker. These measures include having Warrant Officers who will be TACs in the program complete a TAC certification program at Fort Rucker. Additionally, either I or the Deputy Commandant, ARNG, or the Deputy Commandant, USAR, and a member of the WOCC QA staff visit each RTI site to provide assistance and evaluate that site's program. During FY06, the teams concluded that the program was providing Soldiers the education and training they needed to be effective Warrant Officers.

3. In response to direction from the CG, TRADOC, the WOCC is now conducting WOSC and WOSSC classes ("Power Projecting" classes) at sites other than Fort Rucker in support of modularity and ARFORGEN.

a. Conducting classes off site provides more flexibility for the WOCC, Soldiers, and Soldiers' units; it also enables recently deployed Soldiers to complete the courses while remaining with their families.

b. The projected classes may be simultaneous or stand-alone, with the WOCC providing instructors and coordinators as appropriate. Whether simultaneous or stand-alone, the classes are identical to the classes at Fort Rucker. The simultaneous classes are conducted via Video Teletraining (VTT) and are totally interactive.

c. The first off-site WOSSC was at Fort Campbell, KY, in Dec 06, and was primarily for Senior Warrant Officers stationed in the vicinity of Fort Campbell; four CW4s and two CW5s completed the course. The VTT technology worked as advertised, and students were able to simultaneously view instructors as well as PowerPoint and video presentations. Additionally, using AKO, students were able to view and download student information; biographies; curriculum materials; and Observation, Insights, and Lessons (OIL) Briefings. Feedback from participants indicated that this power projection of classes was beneficial and appreciated and that they considered this method the way to proceed in the future.

d. The next Power Projection of WOSC classes is tentatively scheduled for early FY08, again at Fort Campbell, KY. Long range, in addition to conducting simultaneous classes in the CONUS, the WOCC would like to project WOSSC classes in the stand-alone configuration to OCONUS locations such as Korea and Germany after testing the configuration at a CONUS location.

4. Working with the Combined Arms Center (CAC) and all 15 branches populated by Warrant Officers, the WOCC is spearheading a complete redesign of Warrant Officer Education, to include changes to both Warrant Officers' technical training and professional military education (PME). COAs for the redesign have been approved by the CG, CAC, and the WOCC is well along in redesigning the WOSC curriculum that is scheduled for implementation in early FY08. Implementation of a redesigned WOSSC is projected to be completed approximately six to nine months after the redesigned WOSC is up and running. Concurrently, the 15 branches are conducting needs analyses to determine changes that should be made to Warrant Officer technical training. Completion and implementation of the redesign of all facets of Warrant Officer Education will result in much more effective preparation of Warrant Officers to succeed in the roles they're being required to assume in an Army at war.

5. COL Glenwood Norris, the WOCC Commandant, will be relinquishing command of the Center to COL Mark Joneson on 22 Jun 07 and moving on to the Space and Missile Defense Command as the Command IG.

6. Until we talk again, WOCC continues to be out front, training our Warrant Officer Corps!