

Reality-Based Training: Empowering Warrant Officers, Enhancing Learning, and Developing Strong Leaders

By Chief Warrant Officer Four Shaun M. Collins

The Military Police/U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (USACIDC) (commonly referred to as “CID”) Warrant Officer Advanced Course (WOAC) is where Chief Warrant Officer Two and Chief Warrant Officer Three CID special agents receive the training necessary to assume duties as special agents in charge and operations officers within CID organizations. In the past, WOAC has been taught in the same manner as the vast majority of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) courses—using lectures and Microsoft PowerPoint slides. However, during the past couple of years, WOAC has undergone some tremendous changes that will better prepare our leaders to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Based on student critiques and input, the U.S. Army Military Police School (USAMPS) conducted a critical task selection board and reevaluated the training mechanisms employed within the course. As a result, an updated list of curriculum topics has been generated. More importantly, a revolutionary educational environment has been created.

In past iterations of WOAC, students complained about the “Battle Brief” portion of the course, in which they were required to analyze historical military battles and articulate lessons learned from military tactical perspectives. Students indicated that the briefings did not contain viable learning lessons because they could not foresee themselves as commanders who were directing battle action from the top of a hill. A subsequent analysis of the training intent revealed that, although TRADOC requires the inclusion of battle briefs in all Army WOAC curricula, there are no restrictions or guidelines regarding the nature of the briefs. Therefore, it was decided that the battle briefs could be conducted on law enforcement “battles” rather than on traditional military battles. Now students are required to research and analyze historical law enforcement battles (such as those that took place at Waco, Texas, and Ruby Ridge, Idaho). These battles are more professionally relevant to the students. The students have indicated that they derive meaningful learning points from this approach—learning points that can be employed in

their daily duty assignments and used to train their units to be more mission-capable. In addition to the clear increase in student interest in the battle briefs, TRADOC has also expressed interest. Following an inspection of the training program, the battle briefs were designated as a TRADOC best practice.

Another critical change involved the manner in which WOAC was presented. Although PowerPoint presentations were once considered revolutionary, they have since become so overused that students routinely refer to them as “death by PowerPoint.” The students described the traditional, “canned” WOAC presentations as dry and mundane and asserted that they stifled innovation and original thought. These complaints were researched and found to be valid. More effective mechanisms for encouraging creativity and gaining student buy-in to the learning process were explored. As technical experts with vast knowledge and recent experience in various course areas, WOAC students should be encouraged to pool information and share ideas in this ever-changing technical field rather than be subjected to lectures based on a narrow learning perspective. Consequently, the course has been transitioned from a lecture-based environment to an environment that is characterized by discussion and peer instruction led by a facilitator who ensures that students work through the critical concepts and issues. This approach allows students to address theories, issues, and problem solving at a college graduate level. The revised instructional methods have ignited interest from Webster University to enter into a consortium agreement with USAMPS to award graduate college credit for course alumni. This is likely to spawn a congruent credit award from the American Council on Education.

Additionally, the focus of WOAC student research projects and papers has evolved from general leadership topics to research projects that require students to address CID policy and operational or training issues that they believe need improvement. A significant portion of the

course focuses on effective ways for students to influence organizational change, which helps them develop research papers. Faculty members then assist students in “actioning” their proposals through appropriate channels, thus empowering the students to use the academic requirement to leverage actual organizational change. Because the papers are no longer just an academic exercise, students exert substantially more effort in researching, developing, and completing them—focusing on solutions rather than merely problems or abstract ideas. Students must identify the root problem to ensure that their proposals do not simply address a symptom, thereby missing the greater issue or ignoring potential second- and third-order effects of their proposals. They are taught how to remove emotional responses from their presentations, use logic and reasoning to build well-developed courses of action, and intelligently articulate organizational benefits.

Topics on which students have written proposals include, but are not limited to—

- CID Warrant Officer Online Proposal Workshop Forum.
- Restructuring Protective Services Program.
- Formalized Curriculum for CID Interns.
- Retaining Quality CID Agents.
- Realignment of Drug Suppression Teams.
- Use of Reserve Instructors at USAMPS.
- Protective Services Battalion Assignment Management.
- Technical Listening Equipment—One Party Consent Monitoring.
- Revising Evidence Description Doctrine.
- Using Major Procurement Fraud Unit to Revitalize Installation Fraud Programs.
- Active Component/Reserve Component Organizational Mentorship Relationships.
- Establishing a Progressive Training Program in CID.
- Establishment of Joint Data Repositories and Reporting Systems.
- Agent/Agency Liability Related to Use of Force.
- Future Handgun Systems.
- Reserve Component Training Models.
- CID Command Relationship Management.
- Combined DNA Indexing System Database Input and Submissions.
- USACIDC Weapons Policies.
- Assignment of Apprentice Agents to Protective Services Battalions.
- Apprentice Agent Evaluation Process.
- CID Recruitment.
- Creation of a Sworn Statement Guide for Agents.

Note. Senior leaders who have issues that they would like to see developed into written proposals should contact Chief Warrant Officer Four Shaun Collins at <shaun.m.collins@us.army.mil> or (573) 563-7867 to nominate the topics for evaluation and staffing. This presents a great opportunity for senior warrant officers to help shape the future of CID and the Military Police Regiment.

Chief Warrant Officer Three Bryan Janysek and Chief Warrant Officer Three John Spann further proposed that WOAC be used as a cold-case review forum for serious, unsolved CID investigations (a practice also employed at the Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI] National Academy). CID adopted the proposal, and cold-case review became a graded WOAC practical exercise. To date, two unsolved murder investigations (ranging from 12 to 16 years old) have been reviewed; and the results have been phenomenal. Students have put an unprecedented level of effort into the cold-case review and have produced top-quality results, which has benefited the students themselves and CID field elements. This tactic will almost certainly help solve real-world cases.

WOAC provides an opportunity to train future CID special agents in charge and operations officers on the skills they need to excel, but it also provides a great opportunity to exploit a “think tank” comprised of literally hundreds of years of investigative experience in each class. The students, who consist of mid- to senior-level CID warrant officers, want to make a meaningful difference and eagerly embrace the opportunity to do so in this forum. As future senior leaders and operations officers within CID, they have a tremendous stake in the health and future of the organization. We are collectively impressed with the caliber of these students and look forward to the benefits that can be gleaned from inspiring them to find ways to develop needed changes within the command and helping them present their solutions with a sound and unified voice. Our overarching message to the students is: “Don’t try to make a difference . . . Be the difference.”

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