

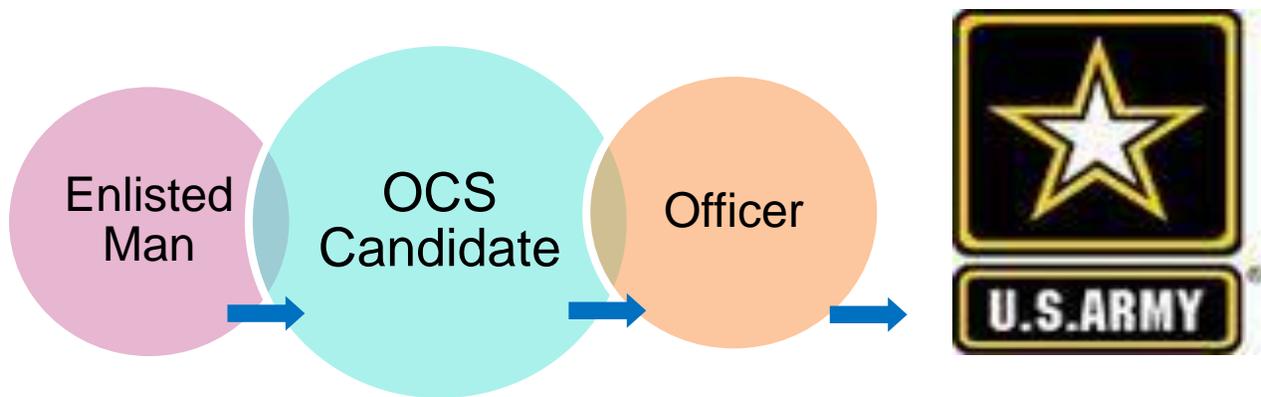
Fort Monmouth Army Signal OCS History



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ARMY SIGNAL CORPS OCS

Leadership is a prerequisite in the successful prosecution of war. Military operations require split-second decisions that must be derived from a solid foundation of cogent reasoning to insure satisfactory completion of a mission.

Although the non-commissioned officer is a vital link in the chain of command, it is equally important that an Army have qualified and well trained commissioned personnel to implement operational plans.

The unprecedented size of the new Army following the passage of the Selective Service Act would require an unusually large number of commissioned officers and it was early recognized that the training of suitable personnel would be a task of high priority. Looking to the procurement of some thousands of new lieutenants in the first year, the preparatory work on an officer candidate school was begun in April 1941, when a group of officers in the Signal Corps School at Fort Monmouth prepared a series of course outlines for a suggested curriculum. This work was under the supervision of Captain Charles

F. Olin, assisted by 1st Lt. William B. Latta. The Officer Candidate Department of the School was officially activated on 2 June 1941, with Major George L. Richon's appointment as Director.

Planned as a three-month course, the first class began 3 July 1941, with 490 candidates reporting. Of these, 52 were denied admittance and reclassified. The remaining 438 were divided into 12 academic sections for instructional purposes.

The brick barracks previously occupied by the 1st Signal Company and the 51st Signal Battalion became the original home of the new Officer Candidate Department. The curriculum of the first class was rather general and included physical training; dismounted drill; military law; military sanitation and first aid; military courtesy and customs of the service; interior guard duty; equipment, clothing, and shelter tents; defense against chemical attack; pistol marksmanship; signal supply; administration; mess management; map reading; organization, tactics, and signal communications; motor transportation; inspections; training methods; orientation.

A recommendation for an extensive reorganization of the Department was submitted by Major Richon to the Assistant Commandant of the School on 4 August. It was proposed that the course be divided into junior and senior periods of instruction, each of six weeks' duration. These periods would then be segregated into eight sections of approximately 3D candidates each. Finally, it was suggested that the students in the Department be attached

for administration, quarters, and rations to two lettered companies of the 15th Signal Service Battalion.

The first "casualties" occurred on 14 August 1941 when Major Richon reported that 42 candidates had been dropped. They were relieved either at their own request or reclassified by a faculty board. The student strength at that time was 396.

Graduation exercises for the first class were held on 30 September 1941. On that date 335 new Second Lieutenants were commissioned in the Signal Corps, Army of the United States. After a short delay, Class 2 entered on 10 October, consisting of 250 candidates. The third class, 248 strong, reported while Class 2 had just half completed the course, on 26 November. As of 31 December 1941, a total of 434 candidates were in training in the Officer Candidate Department of the School.

While the authorized strength of the first three classes had been set at 250, this was increased to 500 for Class 4 in January 1942. Meanwhile, the 173 survivors of Class 2 were commissioned on 9 January. It was apparent that the caliber of candidates admitted to the school would have to be materially raised if the percentage of failures was to be reduced. The entrance requirements restricted matriculation to four classifications: college graduates of engineering courses; college graduates of other courses; men who had completed more than one year of college; and, finally, those who had graduated from high school.

Continuing increase in the demand for officers due to the rapid activation of new Signal Corps units necessitated a new quota of 750 entrants in March. Finding enough qualified personnel meant lowering the rather high requirements. Consequently, the standards were

revised downward and it was only necessary that a man have four months' service if he came from a replacement center, or six months' service if he had received his basic training elsewhere. In addition, he had to have a minimum Army General Classification Test score of 110 plus a combination of academic, trade, or correspondence school training and practical experience in civil life, or the Army, which would reasonably assure his satisfactory completion of the course.

A complete and drastic revision of the entire curriculum was effected for Class 5, which began 5 March 1942. At least one course had been changed in each of the preceding four classes and new courses in electricity and mathematics had been started in January, but the new changes affected every phase of instruction. The junior and senior periods were abolished, and the term divided into three instructional periods: basic, intermediate, and advanced. Student capacity was boosted to 1000 in April and a record high of 1021 candidates reported for Class 6 on 20 April, 862 of whom graduated on 13 July. The staff and faculty at this time totaled 101 officers and two warrant officers.

As Army inductions became heavier throughout the country, the tempo of officer candidate training increased proportionately. Class and Department quotas multiplied almost daily. The interval between classes was cut to two weeks in August when 1100 men reported for Class 7.

The Signal Corps, basically a technical service, had set a high standard for commissioned personnel. The Chief Signal Officer, in April 1942, had expressed the desire that all officers be basically signal communications specialists, 5000 of whom must be procured during the calendar year 1942. This placed a heavy burden upon the Officer Candidate School.

Breaking down the candidates of Classes 5 and 6, the Commandant replied that only 2.55% of these held degrees in electrical engineering or electronic physics; nearly 21%

had specialist training or experience in communications or allied fields. Men without college training and no communication or electrical experience numbered 53% of the total.

As the Officer Candidate Department passed its first anniversary in June 1942, the enrollment exceeded 4000. The Department had graduated and commissioned 1643 candidates in the first year and, at the end of the fiscal year 1942, had an enrollment of 3455. The overhead consisted of 221 commissioned instructors and staff members, 46 enlisted assistants, and 36 civilian employees. In addition to the brick buildings, use was being made of the barracks area formerly occupied by the Replacement Training Center.

Field exercises were added to the program in August. These allowed the candidates to gain practical experience that might otherwise be lacking. A signal company supporting an infantry division was simulated and the 16-hour exercise offered training in message center and messenger procedure, wire construction, and radio and wire communication. Command posts were established for the forward and rear echelons of a division headquarters and three combat teams. The candidates moved from one to another, alternating duties among the four phases of communications.

Reorganization of the training program for Class 11 was the last revision for almost a year and the curriculum remained practically unchanged until the inauguration of the four-month training cycle. Additional held work was added including a night compass exercise in the basic period. Two 8-hour communications held problems were introduced into the intermediate semester.

The Signal Corps School was re-designated Eastern Signal Corps School on 20 June 1942. As such, it included a department for the training of officer candidates, which was renamed Officer Candidate School. Lt. Colonel Richon was named Assistant Commandant of the School and Director of the Officer Candidate section. The organization of that division was left fundamentally unchanged.

All training functions at Fort Monmouth were consolidated in early November 1942. As the Eastern Signal Corps Training Center, the new organization was commanded by Brigadier General George L. Van Deusen. Colonel William O. Reeder assumed command of the Eastern Signal Corps School and Colonel Richon retained charge of officer candidate activities.

In the fall of 1942 an average of over 2200 new candidates were entering the School each month. A considerable percentage of these were not communications specialists and their qualifications were adaptable only to supply and administrative functions. As a result, a considerable pool of such graduate officers had accumulated and, on 21 November, The Adjutant General advised the candidate examining board that "Signal Corps requirements for administrative officers have been fully met and no Candidates qualified for administrative duties only should be selected for the Signal Corps Officer Candidate School."

It had been decided to allow ROTC students to enroll in the Officer Candidate School to complete their training prior to being commissioned. This was necessary due to curtailment of training camp archives by the War and on 19 November one such candidate was included in Class 16. Not until Class 19, on 11 January 1943, when 25 ROTC men entered, did the next reserves enroll. When Class 30 entered in September 1943 they numbered almost 50% of the total, or 70 out of 151 enrollees.

As the calendar year 1942 concluded, 13 classes had entered the School. Of the 12,027 students, 9554, or 79%, had graduated. The enrollment as of 31 December was 4500 candidates. Class 20 was the last of those with strength of 1000 enrollees. The next group

was cut to 500 and Class 25 went down to 334. With that group the interval between the classes was extended again to one month.

The second anniversary of the Officer Candidate School in June 1943 showed a total of 21,754 enrolled and 15,198 graduated, or 70%. The capacity had been reduced to 1000 with classes of 333 entering at monthly intervals for three-month courses. Class 27, in June, was the last of the three-month periods. Early in June it had been announced that, effective 1 July, the course would be extended to four months, providing one-month of field work in addition to the academic instruction.

The quota for Class 28 was reduced to 150 and enrollees were selected only from ROTC, electronics training groups, or overseas veterans. Typically, Class 30, 18 September, had 35 overseas men, 19 of the electronics personnel, and 54 ROTC candidates.

Administrative staffs of the Officers' and Officer Candidate Schools were combined on 16 August 1943. Colonel Richon, as Assistant Commandant of the School, was in charge of both Departments.

Class 28 completed the first of the new four-month courses in October. Some curricular revision was made shortly thereafter. The junior period was set at 49 days of instruction, the senior at 29 days of instruction, and 18 days were devoted to field exercises. A 25-hour command post exercise and six hours of marches, camps, and bivouacs were included in the problems.

Camp Misery, a sub post of Fort Dix, was established as a base for an 18-day field exercise in October 1943. Class 28 made the first trip to this area by motor convoy on 18 October.

The Adjutant General established the capacity of the Officer Candidate School at 150 in August. These were to enter at 17-week intervals, beginning 1 October. This quota allowed approximately 75 electronics and ROTC men and 12 overseas candidates per class, which made it extremely difficult for men on foreign service to be accepted.

Recognizing the inequity of the situation, expansion was authorized in January 1944 to accommodate troop unit and overseas candidates. A total of 1500 students was authorized for the first 17 weeks of the year 1944, beginning with a class of 250 in January.

Enrollment increased nearly 500% during the first quarter of the new year. It remained practically static throughout the second quarter, with some downward trend. There were 543 graduates during the first six months; 117 in Class 32 on 20 April; 144 in Class 33 on 2 May; and 282 in Class 34 on 21 June 1944.

Capacity was again increased, reaching 2000 early in June when the class quota was raised from 420 to 500 candidates. It was cut to 1200 in September and further reduction to less than 500 per class contemplated before December 1944. The 285 graduates of Class 37 raised the total of graduates from the Officer Candidate School during its more than three years of existence to 18,891. This figure, with Class 48, on 7 September 1945, would reach a grand total of 20,749 Second Lieutenants commissioned from the School during its wartime existence.

Enrollment decreased again in the last quarter of the year, dropping over 60%. From 1301 candidates on 1 October, it fell to 1034 on 1 November, 738 on 1 December, and 536 on 1 January 1945. Class totals dropped to 120 in November and December.

Colonel George L. Richon was relieved on 3 November 1944 and replaced by a Southwest Pacific veteran, Colonel Hugh Mitchell, who took command of the Officers' and Officer Candidate Schools.

The Chief Signal Officer, in November, informed the Commandant: "A review of current officer candidate training indicates that certain changes are necessary to achieve greater uniformity of mission, selection and instruction. The first step in the revision of the current course is to establish a 'basic training' phase which will become common to the course given in all ASF Officer Candidate Schools and probably will not be given under Signal Corps supervision. After training in basic subjects, the candidate will be selected and then trained for a particular branch. The proposed course length of this phase, for planning purposes, will be ten 44-hour weeks."

The Candidate School was instructed to prepare a course of instruction for a 10 hour Signal Communications course to include only material considered most essential to a well informed officer regardless of the branch to which he was, or might be, assigned. This was to be given to all candidates during basic training. The revised course was designed to provide an entirely new program of Signal Corps officer training for post-war use. Ten weeks of Branch immaterial" training, including the short Signal Communications sub-course, would be given to all ASF candidates. This would be followed by 14 weeks of Signal Corps officer candidate training, at the end of which the successful students would be commissioned.

A study on candidate failures was made at this time. Of the approximately 25% who did not graduate, 11% were rejected because of academic deficiencies, 8% for lack of leadership, 2% because of lack of technical education or communications experience; and 4% for miscellaneous reasons, including lack of adaptability, summary dismissals, and dismissals for physical reasons or conduct unbecoming an officer candidate.

Other interesting percentages showed that 88% of candidates who were Warrant Officers were commissioned. More than 75% of Master end First Sergeants were graduated; 79% of Technical Sergeants; 84% of Staff Sergeants; 67% of Sergeants; and 75% of Corporals.

Lt Colonel William F. Starr was assigned to the Staff and Faculty of the Eastern Signal Corps School on 13 January 1945 and became Assistant Commandant and Director of the Officer Candidate School on 29 January relieving Colonel Mitchell.

As the War approached an end, plans were being considered to increase the officer candidate training cycle to a 6-month period. The huge war-time Army could not be demobilized immediately following victory and the need for commissioned officers would remain, even with the cessation of hostilities both in Europe and in the Pacific.

