

USAIS Adopts New Way of Instilling Warrior Ethos in Recruits

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Generations of Army veterans are familiar with what's known as the "shark attack" — that shock-and-awe pile-on of shouting and in-your-face personalized commentary visited by bull-necked drill sergeants on new recruits fresh off the bus for basic training. But as far as the U.S. Army Infantry School (USAIS) at Fort Benning, GA, is concerned, the shark attack has had its day.

USAIS has come up with an entirely new approach to the first formative hours of turning civilians into proud members of the Infantry force. Called "The First 100 Yards," it's done on the first day the recruits report to the units they've been assigned to for Infantry One Station Unit Training (OSUT). It was developed earlier this year by the Infantry School and senior NCOs at the 198th Infantry Brigade.

The First 100 Yards uses a series of training activities to instill — on the first impressionable day of a recruit's training — the Infantry's core warrior values and attitudes, and to foster pride in the Infantry, partly by drawing on its battlefield history. Details of The First 100 Yards are outlined in a video narrated by the Infantry School's senior enlisted leader, CSM Robert K. Fortenberry.

"We've taken a close look at how we instill the 'spirit of the bayonet' and the spirit of the Infantry, from the first moment our Soldiers arrive here as their initial training event on day one," CSM Fortenberry says in the video.

"It is critical," he says, "that our newest generation of Soldiers have the experience at the beginning of their journey to becoming an Infantry Soldier. This lays the foundation for the next 22 weeks of Infantry training..."

The First 100 Yards puts the new arrivals through a series of activities that include introducing them to the Infantry's history and its "spirit of the bayonet" offensive ethos, as well as a series of mentally and physically demanding activities, which include, among others, a mock battlefield re-supply mission, physical fitness tasks, and a demonstration of the weapons, equipment, and methods Infantry Soldiers use in combat.



Trainees undergoing Infantry One Station Unit Training haul supplies during The First 100 Yards, an exercise on their first day of training at Fort Benning, GA, in October 2020. (Photo by Patrick A. Albright)

The First 100 Yards is designed, says CSM Fortenberry, around the following tenets:

- An understanding and appreciation of the “Spirit of the Infantry,” by exposing trainees to physical hardship while also developing “a belief in oneself, belief in your teammates, and a belief in the leaders with whom they serve,” he says.
- “Intuitively knowing that when an Infantry leader says, ‘Follow me,’ that they, the Infantry, will accomplish all missions and defeat any enemy, under any conditions.”

Watch CSM Fortenberry’s video on The First 100 Yards at <https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=hbqOZTRtbkY>.

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