

DRIVER'S SEAT

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A Reflection of Success: The Excellence in Armor Soldier

The Excellence in Armor (EIA) program identifies outstanding Armor/Cavalry soldiers during One Station Unit Training (OSUT) and during service in Armor/Cavalry units. The purpose of the program is to fill the commander's hatches of tanks and Bradleys with highly motivated, intelligent soldiers whose performance is consistently outstanding.

Approved in October 1987, the program has grown into a model that other branches attempt to emulate. Soldiers from PV1 to SFC are eligible for selection and enrollment, which can take place either in OSUT or at a permanent duty assignment. Presently, 3,190 Active Duty soldiers and 876 Reserve Component soldiers are on the rolls.

The selection process in OSUT starts with the drill sergeant. He will recommend a soldier during the tenth week of training, based on performance, motivation, and leadership potential. The soldier's eligibility is then confirmed by a battalion or squadron board. Upon confirmation of eligibility, the soldier will receive fifty hours of additional training in Skill Level 1 and 2 tasks. Prior to graduation from OSUT, the soldier must meet the following criteria to be enrolled in the EIA program:

- Score 230 points or better on the APFT
- Qualify Sharpshooter or better with individual weapon
- Pass all end of block tests
- Pass all Armor Crewman Tests (19K) ACT I, II, III, or the Scout Gunnery Test (19D) with no more than one no-go per test
- Pass all Armor Stakes
- Possess a high school or equivalent diploma (this can be waived by the battalion or squadron commander)

Upon successful completion of all areas, the soldier is placed on the rolls of

EIA soldiers maintained by the Office of the Chief of Armor, Fort Knox. His DA Form 2-1 is annotated on line 19, reflecting his EIA enrollment and the effective date. His PCS orders will indicate his membership in the EIA program, and a letter will accompany him to his gaining commander, announcing his successful completion of the EIA program during OSUT. The impact is clear; the new soldier will arrive at his first duty station with additional skills through training that could prove vital to the overall success of the unit's mission.

Not all soldiers become enrolled during OSUT. A soldier can earn enrollment anytime during his career through the recommendation of his commander and the successful completion of the following:

- Receive a commander's evaluation emphasizing his technical proficiency and his potential for leadership
- Score 260 points or higher on the APFT
- Pass all elements of the CTT
- Pass the Scout Commander's Certification Level I (19D SCCT I) test
- Pass the Tank Commander's Certification Level I (19K TCCT I) test
 - M1 Series Tank/FM 17-12-1-2/TCGST
 - M3 Bradley/FM 21-1/GST
 - M998 (HMMWV)/FM 17-12-8/GST
- Qualify Sharpshooter or better with assigned weapon.

NOTE: OSUT soldiers have one year to meet the above standards. Should they fail to do so, they must be dropped from enrollment. Under special circumstances, the battalion commander may request a waiver for a deserving soldier who fails to meet the standards through no fault of his own, for example if the soldier has a temporary profile which prohibits him from taking a record APFT. Once the soldier

is enrolled, his DA Form 2-1 is annotated to reflect this. The end result is the identification of soldiers who represent the elite of the Armor Force.

NOTE: Should a soldier fail to maintain the required standards, the commander must remove him from the EIA rolls, and the soldier may never be re-enrolled, regardless of his future achievements.

EIA soldiers have the opportunity to receive special incentives:

- OSUT commanders have the authority to promote 10% of the class to PV2 upon the completion of the basic training phase, and that 10% may be promoted to PFC upon completion of the MOS-specific phase.
- A sergeant who is a BNCOC graduate may request to take the SCCT/TCCT II test through the local education center. This is a comprehensive two-hour examination on Skill Level 3 and 4 tasks. Upon achieving a score of 70 points or higher, he is eligible to receive fifty points toward promotion under the military education area for his staff sergeant promotion packet.
- All senior NCO selection boards are briefed about the EIA program and that soldiers who are enrolled should be considered a "cut above" the rest of the soldiers of the same grade.
- Identification of EIA soldiers improves their morale and allows them to be recognized as outstanding performers by their leaders, peers, and subordinates.

Although, the program is barely ten years old, a trend in the selection rate of EIA members is taking shape. The selection rates on the last three promotion boards are listed at Figure 1.

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These statistics bear out the fact that members of promotion boards do consider EIA membership a discriminator for promotion selection, all other factors being equal.

Like any other program, EIA cannot survive and flourish without command involvement. The master gunner of the organization can be an integral part of

that involvement. He can administer the program for the unit, and is in an ideal position to advise the commander about soldiers who demonstrate the leadership potential, motivation, and technical expertise necessary to be an EIA soldier. Follow these guidelines to establish and maintain a successful program:

- Identify and challenge incoming soldiers
- Establish and support a unit EIA program
- Accelerate SPC/SGT/SSG promotions and attendance at service schools for EIA members
- Maintain quality soldiers within the program

The EIA program is an effective way to identify outstanding performers and at the same time enhance their chances for promotion. Properly administered, it will demonstrate that good performance will be rewarded, which can only lead to increased morale and unit effectiveness. The long-term effect is the retention of quality NCOs within the Armor Force.

If you have any questions about the program, please feel free to contact the Office of the Chief of Armor at the following address:

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ATTN: ATZK-ARP
Fort Knox, KY 40121-5000

Phone: DSN 464-1439/5155 or commercial (502) 624-1439/5155

Board/Year	Considered	Selected	EIA Members
SFC/96			
19D	496	11	2 (18.1%)
19K	808	111	62 (55.8%)
MSG/96	532	48	13 (28.3%)
SGM/95	155	64	4 (6.3%)

Figure 1