

The Infantry Master Trainer Strategy: *Transforming Marksmen into Master Trainers*

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The Infantry Master Trainer Strategy (IMTS) is a comprehensive modernization initiative aimed at overhauling U.S. Army Infantry School (USAIS) programs of instruction (POIs) to create formation-based master trainers for infantry formations. It was developed to govern and standardize institutional training for weapons and systems-based Infantry functional training across the force, ensuring consistency and excellence in leader development and readiness. IMTS replaces three current POIs — the Marksmanship Master Trainer Course (MMTC), Heavy Weapons Leader Course (HWLC), and Stryker Master Gunner Course (SMG) — with a new progression of master trainer courses:

- Rifle Squad Weapons Master Trainer Course (RSWMTC)
- Rifle Platoon Weapons Master Trainer Course (RPWMTC)
- Stryker Master Trainer Course (SMTTC)

Genesis of the Strategy

The need for IMTS arose after leaders observed that Career Management Field (CMF) 11 NCOs lacked institutional competencies to plan, prepare, execute, and assess direct fire training for their respective organizations and were

unable to serve as subject matter experts (SMEs) on the wide array of weapons organic to their units.

The MMTC and HWLC were designed specifically to produce marksmanship master trainers capable of leading direct fire training and serving as SMEs for individual and crew-served weapons. Despite consistently high graduation rates, infantry units continued to lack personnel meeting the intended outcomes of these courses.

Confronting Systemic Challenges

In response, USAIS conducted a deep analysis of the disconnect between POI outcomes and operational needs, identifying two primary challenges:

Misaligned Student Population: A large portion of MMTC and HWLC students were non-CMF 11 Soldiers. CMF 11 Soldiers made up only about one-fifth of MMTC students and one-third of HWLC students. Although these courses produced many graduates, most did not return to U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) units — the formations that required their expertise most urgently.

Curriculum Limitations: The POIs leaned heavily toward technical instruction and lacked emphasis on developing master trainers capable of designing and executing compre-

*A Soldier in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) fires the M7 rifle at Fort Campbell, KY, on 15 April 2024.
(Photo by Jason Amadi)*



hensive unit training plans (UTPs) at echelon. As a result, course graduates possessed strong individual weapon competencies but were not equipped to elevate collective proficiency across squads and platoons.

Strategic Realignment in IMTS

To address both challenges, the IMTS team proposed a deliberate and synchronized overhaul of existing training architecture.

Redefining the target audience —

The redesigned POIs specifically target CMF 11 NCOs in the ranks of E5-E7 who are in leadership roles at the squad and platoon level or are approaching such responsibilities. These NCOs are best positioned to lead formation-based training strategy.

Aligning with ALC and Retaining Institutional Access

— To eliminate reliance on mobile training teams and reduce disruption to FORSCOM training cycles, the new courses were synchronized with Advanced Leaders Course (ALC) rotations. CMF 11 NCOs attending ALC at Fort Benning now have the opportunity to complete RSWMTC or RPWMTC either prior to or immediately following their ALC cycle. This logistical solution ensures access to the target demographic in one central location and creates a long-term institutional pipeline to produce master trainers.

Course Development and Integration

The IMTS strategy led to the creation of two foundational master trainer courses and one advanced course — all designed to build upon each other and emphasize both technical proficiency and institutional training design.

RSWMTC – Successor to MMTC – The current version of MMTC (v4.0) concentrates on the Army pistol and rifle. The **Rifle Squad Weapons Master Trainer Course** expands that focus to all infantry squad weapons and integrates training plan development into its curriculum. RSWMTC's principal aim is to produce NCO master trainers capable of assisting commanders in designing formation-based UTPs for organic weapon systems at echelon. Students develop technical proficiency across weapon systems and learn to translate that knowledge into executable, realistic, and measurable formation-based training strategies at the squad level.

RPWMTC – Successor to HWLC – The **Rifle Platoon Weapons Master Trainer Course** succeeds HWLC (v5.0), which was built around technical mastery of platoon-level systems such as the M2 .50 caliber machine gun, MK19 grenade launcher, Carl Gustaf, Javelin, M41 Improved Target Acquisition System (ITAS), and tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided (TOW) missile system. RPWMTC retains this technical instruction but extends course duration from two weeks to four weeks. The additional time is devoted



A student in the Heavy Weapons Leader Course conducts a MK19 live-fire training at Fort Benning, GA, on 15 December 2022. (Photo by Patrick A. Albright)

to UTP development and culminates in a capstone assessment where students demonstrate their ability to create, execute, and assess live-fire training events aligned with their UTPs at the platoon level.

SMTC – Replaces SMG – The **Stryker Master Trainer Course** replaces the Stryker Master Gunner course and produces SMEs on planning and implementing direct fire gunnery training and integrating weapon platforms found within Stryker brigade combat teams. SMTC prepares students to design company- and battalion-level UTPs and emphasizes the integration of live-fire exercises, collective simulations, and systems training — giving graduates the skills to elevate operational readiness across entire formations.

Conclusion

The Infantry Master Trainer Strategy directly confronts a lack of formation-based master trainers in the NCO Corps by transforming three legacy POIs into a cohesive, progressive system that produces NCOs not only with technical weapons knowledge but also with the institutional training acumen required to influence entire units. By strategically aligning the new courses with ALC and refining curricular content to prioritize training development, IMTS ensures that the Army's Infantry leaders are equipped to build lethality, foster marksmanship excellence, and prepare their formations for combat.

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