Getting Ready for Officer Training School (OTS)... After Selection

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AUTHOR: ANONYMOUS PS & AFOTSGUY

AS OF: 16 FEBRUARY 2017
Table of Contents

Uniforms and Supplies .................................................................................................................. 3

Required Items ............................................................................................................................. 3

  Air Force Blues .......................................................................................................................... 3

  Mess Dress ................................................................................................................................. 4

Physical Training Uniform (PTU) ................................................................................................. 4

Airman Battle Uniform (ABU)/RABU ......................................................................................... 4

Additional Items .......................................................................................................................... 5

Optional Items ............................................................................................................................. 5

Highly Suggested ........................................................................................................................ 6

Helpful Links ............................................................................................................................... 7

About OTS: ................................................................................................................................ 7

Schedule ...................................................................................................................................... 8

Week 0 – TFI ................................................................................................................................. 9

  Random Rules .......................................................................................................................... 10

  Random Thoughts .................................................................................................................... 10

Week 1 - TFI/TFOT .................................................................................................................... 10

Week 2 – TFOT ............................................................................................................................ 10

Week 3 – OTS Physical Training (PT) ....................................................................................... 11

  Peer Reviews ............................................................................................................................ 11

  Flight Dynamics ....................................................................................................................... 11

  Wing Boards – Graded Leadership Position ........................................................................... 11

  CWT1 ...................................................................................................................................... 13

  Project X .................................................................................................................................. 13

Combatives ................................................................................................................................. 13

Week 4 – Informative Briefing, Background Paper, SPT 1, Combatives, and LANES .................. 14

  Informative Briefing ................................................................................................................ 14

  Background Paper ................................................................................................................... 15

  Student Publication Test (SPT) 1 ............................................................................................. 16

Week 5 – Summary, M9 Firing .................................................................................................. 17

  Week 5 Summary ...................................................................................................................... 17

  Basic Expeditionary Leadership Problems (BELPS) .............................................................. 18

  Practically Applying the OODA Loop ....................................................................................... 19

Week 6 – CWT2, LRC, and the Major Accident Response Exercise (MARE) .............................. 21
Week 6 Overview

Leadership Reaction Course (LRC)

Major Accident Response Exercise (MARE)

Week 7 – Wargames, Commandant Inspection, SPT #2, and Final Briefings

Wargames

Commandant Inspection

SPT #2 This one was basically the same as SPT #1! Know your stuff and you'll do fine. At this point in training there wasn't much else to do than study for the SPT so I didn't feel very pressured by this test.

Final Briefings (TMO, Peer Evaluation #2, Random Classes)

Week 8 – PFA, Career Day, AEF, and Assault Course

Physical Fitness Assessment

Helpful Questions and Answers (Q&A)

Uniform and Packing Suggestions

Attachments

OTS Dorm Manual

OTS Manual (OTSMAN)

The HAWK

Course Syllabus

Required Reading before Arrival
**Uniforms and Supplies**

**Required Items**

The Required Items section is a list of items required for all personnel attending OTS. These items do not have to be purchased beforehand, but it is strongly encouraged to prevent delays at the OTS Clothing Sales and BX at Maxwell AFB, AL. Having the items prior to arrival will also allow you additional time to do other things (i.e. study, clean, organize your room, and so-forth).

**Air Force Blues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Purchased</th>
<th>AAFES Price</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elastic (F) Blue Belt with silver buckle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$11.85</td>
<td>$11.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F) Tie Tab</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$8.50</td>
<td>$8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirt Garters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Lapel Insignia (w/out circle)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6.55</td>
<td>$6.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F) Blues Poly Pants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$36.00</td>
<td>$72.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F) Blues Wool Pants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$36.00</td>
<td>$36.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F) Officer Flight Cap</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$14.20</td>
<td>$14.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Metal) Shiny Gold Lieutenant Bars</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6.85</td>
<td>$13.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Name Tag (Blues)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Name Tag (Service Dress)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F) Officer Blues Service Coat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$148.95</td>
<td>$148.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-Sleeve (F) Blue Shirt - Princess Cut</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$26.95</td>
<td>$53.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Sleeve (F) Blues Shirt - Princess Cut</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$31.95</td>
<td>$63.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-Sleeve (F) Blues Shirt - Normal Cut</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$16.01</td>
<td>$16.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>(F) Blues Skirt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$40.00</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Lt Officer boards (Blues Service Coat)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$9.45</td>
<td>$9.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Weight Blues Jacket (nothing sewn on)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$77.49</td>
<td>$77.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Quarters (Black Shiny Shoes)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$71.00</td>
<td>$71.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Socks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ribbons (2 of each ribbon – for shirt/service coat)</td>
<td>Depends</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2.00</td>
<td>Depends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ribbon Mounting Rack</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2.40</td>
<td>$4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Oak Leaves (Pack of 2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1.45</td>
<td>$2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double Oak Leaves (Pack of 2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2.60</td>
<td>$5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Badge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6.55</td>
<td>$13.10</td>
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</table>
### Mess Dress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Purchased</th>
<th>AAFES Price</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mess Dress Blues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cummerbund</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$13.60</td>
<td>$13.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Tab/Tie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$8.50</td>
<td>$8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Mess Dress Skirt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$82.00</td>
<td>$82.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Mess Dress Shirt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$44.95</td>
<td>$44.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder Boards</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$48.75</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumps</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$55.00</td>
<td>$55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini Medal(s)</td>
<td>Depends</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5.85</td>
<td>Depends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini Medal Rack</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2.40</td>
<td>$2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini Occupational Badge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6.55</td>
<td>$6.55</td>
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</table>

### Physical Training Uniform (PTU)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>AAFES Price</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT Uniforms (PTUs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTU Shorts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>$16.16</td>
<td>$11.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTU Shirts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>$7.18</td>
<td>$8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPTU Pants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$39.74</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPTU Jacket</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$61.87</td>
<td>$6.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White and/or Black Socks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>depends</td>
<td>depends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Airman Battle Uniform (ABU)/RABU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Purchased</th>
<th>AAFES Price</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABUs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert Sand Belt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$3.88</td>
<td>$3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RABU Pants</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>$40.69</td>
<td>$122.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RABU Blouse</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>$33.22</td>
<td>$99.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sand T-Shirts (pack of 3)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$13.68</td>
<td>$17.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RABU Cap (Cover)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6.02</td>
<td>$12.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABU Boots</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$120.00</td>
<td>$120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABU Name Tapes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2.85</td>
<td>$8.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABU &quot;U.S. Air Force&quot; Tapes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2.85</td>
<td>$8.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sage Green Socks (Pack of 3)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$6.18</td>
<td>$12.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabric Subdued Occ. Badge (pack of 2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$4.10</td>
<td>$8.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fabric) Subdued Gold Lieutenant Bars (ABUs)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2.45</td>
<td>$7.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Metal) Subdued Gold Lieutenant Bars</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>$4.10</td>
<td>$8.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Additional Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Purchased</th>
<th>AAFES Price</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duffle Bag</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$24.23</td>
<td>$24.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Gloves</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toothbrush</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toothpaste</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deodorant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaving Kit/Razor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Wash</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shower Shoes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lock (recommended “Speedlock” by MasterLock)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry Detergent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Optional Items

*The Optional Items section is a list of items that the OTS Staff recommends you bring. On a personal note, some of these items should not be recommendations (i.e. feminine products for females).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Purchased</th>
<th>AAFES Price</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT Sweater</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>$25.95</td>
<td>$25.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Leggings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Wipes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand Sanitizer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q-Tips</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FitBit/Watch with Timer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shampoo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditioner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain/Allergy Medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washcloth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaki Pants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Belt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Ties (females)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sock Bun (females)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampons (females)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makeup (females)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face Wash</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplements</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lysol Wipes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dryer Sheets</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Highly Suggested**

The Highly Suggested section is a list of items that OTS graduates before you are recommending you purchase due to the item(s) helpfulness during your OTS training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Purchased</th>
<th>AAFES Price</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optional Items</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough Drops</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Portable Printer/Scanner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12” Ruler</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Sharpie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Sharpie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Own Pillow (with White Pillow Case)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your own White Towel/Washcloth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet Bowl Tablets</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rechargeable Batteries for Flashlight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scissors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Lighter (for burning strings)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nail Clippers (for clipping strings)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunscreen/Lotion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foam roller (You will get sore)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
See attached Dorm Manual on room and clothing requirements (folding and placement)

Helpful Links
Aim High Erin: http://www.aimhigherin.com
Kellac Uniforms: https://www.kellac.com/h/home.php
Visit the Facebook site: 24th Training Squadron - Officer Training School
Do you want NeverWet for your Boots? Go here: http://www.neverwet.com
Schedule

The following is a sample of the TFIT/TFOT Schedule. Please keep in mind this may change at the drop of a dime. This document is not all-inclusive and should not be used as a sole source of scheduling.

**Week 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TB-1</td>
<td>TB-2</td>
<td>TB-3</td>
<td>TB-4</td>
<td>TB-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DD-ABU</td>
<td>DD-ABU</td>
<td>DD-ABU</td>
<td>DD-ABU</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Week 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
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<tr>
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<td>TB-2</td>
<td>TB-3</td>
<td>TB-4</td>
<td>TB-5</td>
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<td>DD-ABU</td>
<td>DD-ABU</td>
<td>DD-ABU</td>
<td>DD-ABU</td>
<td>DD-ABU</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- This document is not all-inclusive and should not be used as a sole source of scheduling.
- The schedule may change at any time.
Week 0 – TFIT

TFIT is essentially learning the basics of OTS and the military way of life. During this week, you don’t necessarily begin “class” yet. A critical issue with TFIT, for the future of your OTS Flight, can be that some Guard personnel did not attend TFIT and this is essential for transition throughout TFOT. Those individuals are expected to be at the same level of knowledge as every other member with the HAWK and OTS procedures.

During this week, you will in-process and the staff will yell at you and will seem quite angry. The training days (TDs) are Monday through Friday but you will have scheduled events/activities on Saturday. Sunday is, for the most part, a free day to get caught up and attend religious services, if you would like.

Upon arrival...females, have your hair up within regulations. In addition, you should have your shoelaces tied and tucked in. This goes for your shirt as well. Ensure you have a pen on you (i.e. in a pocket) and once you receive your HAWK and OTSMAN, ensure you always have them on you.

If you bring a massive amount of suitcases and bags, you may have to bring it up 2-3 flights of stairs. A big point to think about is - You have to be able to carry it all up in one shot! So, if you have a vehicle, think about leaving the blues/mess dress in your car to go retrieve at another point in time.

After you arrive you will get a small speech from the staff and the Squadron Commander, you will be told to bring your stuff upstairs and put on your filled “hydration sources” (camelback). “Standardize” how you will all put it on (i.e. under your left arm and pointing upward).

The days throughout this week will be rough. You will have a few auditorium lectures and will struggle to stay awake. During days 2 and/or 3 you will do clothing purchases. Even if you have already purchased, everyone will go. Make sure
you bring money/a credit card because you may realize you have forgotten something. You may be told to practice drill on the first Saturday. Do this! Help your fellow people out that are struggling. It will save you a lot of heartache throughout the week, when possible.

Random Rules
1. Your dorm room should be propped at all times unless you are showering or changing.
2. If you are out of your room, your lights will be out, blinds/shades closed, and door closed.
3. No talking in Gilbert Hall or dorm hallways. Enter a Flight Room or Dorm Room to Talk.
4. Lights out at 2300
5. Lights on at 0430
6. Do NOT step on the brass at the beginning of the hallways!

Random Thoughts
1. Sleep in your PT gear.
2. Get used to sir/ma’am being the first thing out of your mouth when speaking.
3. Be sure you are at attention when you talk to staff.
4. Get your sleep!!! Try to go to sleep earlier than 2300 when possible.

Week 1 - TFIT/TFOT
You will begin TFOT soon... Just do what you are told to do (with Integrity when no one is around). This week you will likely have the Confidence Course. This course is about 10 obstacles (i.e. beam walks, monkey bars, etc.). you have twice to try to complete it, but as long as you try your hardest it is no big deal if you do no complete it in its entirety. It is primarily for Team Building.

You will march a lot this week. The lectures in Boyd Hall were primarily still in processing in nature. STAY AWAKE! Stand up in the back if you feel yourself nodding off. Do not use cough drops until you are explicitly told you can do so. There are cameras that will be watching you in the hall.

The Blue Line Ceremony will occur on the first day of TFOT. First thing in the morning, you will go out to Welch Field and the Squadron Commander will give a speech on why you are at OTS. Concluding this ceremony, you will be asked to cross the blue line if you were ready to commit to completing the training. Surprisingly, you may actually see a few who did not cross over the Blue Line and will be eliminated from the training.

There was not too much homework this week. But this Saturday should be used to Practice Drill and get any remaining AAFES items you may still need.

Week 2 – TFOT
Pennant Test, PFB, and Academics

This was this first week people began to feel “settled” into OTS. Things will pop-up on the schedule on Sunday, so streaming your personal church service on Sunday is recommended after this week. The pennant test is this week. The pennant is the flag portion of the guidon. The guidon is the flagpole (staff with pennant) which the “Guidon Bearer” carries for the flight in the front right of the flight when they march. If you do not have the pennant (flag), you cannot march around without OTS staff.

This pennant proves you will not discredit the Air Force. Immediately after everyone completes the test, you will receive results whether you pass or fail. If you pass, your flight will march itself wherever it needs to go the remainder of the course. Your Flight Leader (FL) will call commands and someone who knows how to hold the guidon very well should be
in that position. The timed test has physical boundaries on the drill pad. About 1/4th fail, so ensure your flight is good to go. It means less time that the OTS staff is around you when marching.

You will also take your first PT test (Day 1 or 2 of TFOT) - PASS THIS!

**Week 3 – OTS Physical Training (PT)**

**Peer Reviews**

Toward the end of week 3 (remember Week 0 was the first five days) you will have something called peer evaluations or peer feedback. I am sure every flight will receive different variations of instruction, but our flight was told to compile a list of strengths and weaknesses for each of our fellow flight members. The strengths and weaknesses will be discussed as a flight with all flight members present. Each cadet will take turns being in the spotlight and everyone will go through their list out loud for all to hear. Keep your feedback constructive and professional. Some of the other flights will be extremely brutal and will use this as an opportunity to rip into each other. My advice for this is to be thoughtful but don’t be afraid to share your observations. The only way you will make each other better is if you are honest with each other. If you are receiving feedback, don’t take it personally. Take notes so you can truly understand what you need to work on and honestly ask yourself how you can improve. Another aspect of the feedback you will receive is perception. I learned a lot about myself because I was told by others how my various actions were perceived during training.

As a private exercise, you may be asked to rank all your flight members from best to worst. It may ultimately tie into how we are stratified by our Flt/CC. Stratifications are an important aspect of providing honest and valuable feedback.

**Flight Dynamics**

You will need to learn how to work with your flight because these are the people you will be living with on a daily basis. The peer reviews will break down a lot of barriers with your flight. After finishing the exercise you will be much more comfortable with providing feedback to help each other improve. OTS injects another aspect into flight dynamics with something they called morale reports. As part of this exercise you will be required to identify the best and worst cadets for the week and why. If you think someone is pulling your flight down, let the person know so your feelings do not leak into your other subconscious actions. Your subconscious actions can do a lot of damage to the success of your flight or of an individual.

As you are identifying the worst flight mates for the week it is important to remember there is a difference between someone who doesn’t want to be at OTS and someone who is simply struggling with the course. You should make the distinction very clear in your morale report. If you give the impression that a person is not trying it will be perceived that they do not want to be at OTS. If they later fail a graded measure, that information can be used against them when they are going up for review for disenrollment. Instead, try to always clearly state that a person was struggling with something and explain your plan to help that person out. This still will meet the intent of the assignment by informing the staff of potential problems, but it reinforced a positive development opportunity instead of a negative opinion.

**Wing Boards – Graded Leadership Position**

Per the syllabus, everyone was required to fulfill a graded leadership position. The leadership positions you could perform ranged from cadet leadership positions to the MARE (EMLEX) or AEF. In general, you are given a job and you are graded with your ability to execute that job. The job had a specific "staff adviser" which acted as your supervisor as you carried out the duties of the job. This is also the person who gave you your pass/fail grade.

Since Week 0 and Week 1 may be so chaotic that you may choose to establish a temporary cadet wing leadership until
You can identify suitable cadets. The initial positions are as follows:

**OG/CC** - In charge of making sure cadets are always where they needed to be. Basically, wherever the schedule said we had to be, this person ensured we were there.

**MSG/CC** - Responsible for ensuring you have the right equipment for wherever we had to be. This person also oversees DFAC operations.

**HAWK/Hoya/Tiger/Spartan-1** - Operationally they make sure the cadets in their student squadron are where they need to be IAW the schedule. Administratively they will take care of all paperwork and other required issues which come up until all flights were established and the Flight/CC took over.

**Stand-O** - They are in charge of standardization and ensuring all cadets are clear on dorm inspection requirements.

The wing boards were the formal process for selecting the above and several other graded leadership positions. The list of graded leadership positions is provided in a regulation you are given upon arrival at OTS. In general, each Flight/CC nominated one person to be boarded and each of the 12 positions. The actual board is a formal military board in which you entered a room and answered whatever questions the board wanted to ask you. We were boarded in two groups (first 8 or 10 cadets then second 8 or 10 cadets.) You are graded on how well you adhered to board protocol, your compliance with regulations, and your answers.

It is up to you to decide what type of graded leadership you want to tackle. Pick something that will challenge you and help you become a better leader, but not something you are completely unprepared for. You also want to complete your graded leadership position sooner rather than later. In general, I recommend everyone go for one of the boarded cadet wing leadership positions during the first round if they appeal to you. If they do not, the cadet wing leadership is required to fill non-boarded but graded cadet leadership positions. Go for one of these positions because they are more diverse and provide more options.

The two other types of positions are Emergency Management Leadership Exercise (EMLEX) and AEF which is 3-4 day "deployment" exercise. Our EMLEX was a Major Accident Response Exercise or MARE. They tried to have the Guard personnel fulfill these positions because the Guard often actually responds to these situations. Basically, they established an Emergency Management organizational chart in advance and on game day the cadet wing responded to the emergency. The people in the graded leadership positions were graded and everyone else played the part. The last one is AEF which was the same basic idea. The top AEF positions were boarded but everyone else was appointed prior to deployment. Once we deployed the leaders were graded and everyone else played their part.

The main thing you don't want to happen is to reach the end of the course and know you still need a graded leadership position. Many of our cadets didn't finish their position until AEF week which was close to the end of the course. If they had failed something already it put a ton of pressure on them to pass. While other cadets were chilling because they met graduation requirements already, they were stressing out about passing their position.

I wouldn't worry too much about passing or failing your graded leadership position. If you give it your best effort and use the tools at your disposal, you will probably pass. If you are struggling listen to the feedback from your instructor or peers, work harder, and power through it. There were a few people who failed their position but they were all given the
opportunity to try again with another position.

CWT1
As I alluded to in my week 2 posts CWT1 was scheduled for first thing Monday morning. I was a little overwhelmed by the spectrum of responsibilities I had to manage at OTS. There were so many things that you had to worry about and divert your attention for and there was literally not enough time. Not all of the tasks or responsibilities were hard. Laundry was an example of something that was easy but time consuming. Doing laundry meant you had to babysit the laundry room so you didn’t hog the machines. It also meant rolling clothes would be in your future and that would require even more time.

All of the "graded measurements" are tasks which you have to take seriously. There were a lot of people who failed at least one graded measurement. There were also a lot of people who failed more than one. I do not want to scare you because in my opinion if you made it to OTS you have what it takes to pass. My goal is to hammer in the idea that you need to take the academics seriously.

CWT1 was a written Air Force test developed by OTS. The curriculum they give you is the testable material from which the test is written, and the SOBs are what help you prioritize your studies. If I could do it all over again, I would have spent more time studying for CWT1. I knew exactly what I needed to do, but I allowed myself to become distracted and not complete my studies to the level I wanted to. There is no doubt in my mind this effected my score. Luckily I still achieved a decent score, but it would have been easy for me to fail.

Project X
Prior to OTS I had zero knowledge of Project X. Basically your small team is dropped into a high pressure scenario and told to solve a problem. This is not graded but it is a great leadership training experience. This is also the introduction to Leadership Reaction Course which is a graded measurement. I know I talk about how the graded measurements are important, but don't get too tied up in this. Everything at OTS is important. Believe it or not, almost everything you do at OTS will produce a numeric score which will be recorded for you. Be sure you are attacking everything with a positive attitude, doing your best, learning from your mistakes, and you will come out ahead no matter how you got there (even if you failed something).

Here is a blog post with specifics about Project X. I read through it and it is still valid info.

Combatives
While Project X is a very hush-hush graded measurement, combatives is much more public. The point of combatives is to teach you how to defend yourself if you get in a scuffle with someone else. COMBATIVES IS NOT A GRADUATION REQUIREMENT. I say this because if you are unable to participate, you will still graduate. On the flip side if you injure yourself, your PT test IS a graduation requirement. Don't hurt yourself but have fun. I wasn't really "feeling" combatives until we started sparring. Once it was game time and it was just my opponent and I fighting for dominance, I had a blast. Tackle combatives like everything else in OTS: have a positive attitude, be motivated, learn as much as you can, and apply 100% effort. And don't get hurt.
Week 4 – Informative Briefing, Background Paper, SPT 1, Combatives, and LANES

Informative Briefing

Everyone freaks out about the briefings. Don’t do it! It really does make it much harder. The people who majorly stressed out about the briefings are the same people who struggled with passing. They were so worried about filling it with the best information that they forgot about getting all of the points for the small things such as verbal references, quotes, or slide layout. The people who did the best at the briefings were the ones who quite literally just threw it together. They did the research, kept the sources to the minimum (three for me), and put it all on a slide. Once you KNOW your material, the delivery just happens. Don’t recite your briefing over and over in your head because it will then be recited from memory which you could fail for. Your briefing needs to be prepared but not memorized. This is not a ceremony, it is you researching a topic and telling your chalk-mates about what you learned. Have fun with the briefing! It will make the entire experience better for everyone.

Our informative briefing was scheduled for the first thing on Monday morning, which was great because it gave us the weekend to prepare. About a week prior to the briefing we had a class called Informative Briefing Requirements that laid out everything we needed to know about the briefing. One of the biggest things for us was that we were not with our normal flight for the briefings, we were in a different group called a chalk. Our chalks had a few people from every squadron which was great because we got to know some of our other class mates. The Cadet Wing (CW) MSG/CC was tasked with putting the chalks together. Being in a chalk also meant most of the chalk was with a different Flight Commander. This was also great because it allowed us to get to know some of the other staff.

The briefing is not very much different than the briefing I had to do for Airman Leadership School (ALS). ALS is a course Senior Airman (E-4) have to go through in order to sew on Staff Sergeant (E-5). Bear in mind I went through ALS in 2008 so things may have changed since then. In general you will choose a topic that you want to inform your audience about. There were a list of canned topics but we were also able to choose our own. The execution and grading of the briefings varied drastically from Flt/CC to Flt/CC. Every Flt/CC was different and did things a little differently, but some things were the same for all. Everyone had to use the same OTS Form to grade the briefing, and everyone did an informative briefing IAW the course curriculum.

If you have to do a briefing about the domains in a country, there is strategy involved with choosing your domains. You want to pick domains that you can find information about (but not too much information), and domains which can all be tied together. One of the biggest things people struggle with is transitioning from one topic (or domain) to another during the briefing. Don’t pick the same domains that everyone else picks. Pick the ones that interest you because you will speak much better about topics you are interested about. The briefing should not sound like Ferris Bueller’s teacher, but should sound like you just discovered these awesome things about your country and MUST tell your friends about it. The not too much information part is key as well. If you have too much information, you will be tempted to talk for too long. There are only a few automatic failures, but going under or over your time limit is one of them. I think every chalk had someone who was close to failing, or failed because of the time limit. You will only need 1-2 facts about each domain to fill in the speech.

As far as the rest of your briefing, everything you need to know is on the grading sheet (OTS Form 6) and the AU Style Guide. The style guide is kind of like the Tongue and Quill, which is the go-to reference EVERYONE uses for Air Force correspondence (and other topics). The biggest thing here is to pay attention. In order to receive max points you have to know the requirements.

Final Thoughts

- The briefing must be 5-9 minutes.
- DON'T OVER-PREPARE. Do your research, put your slides together, and deliver your speech.
• My research was 100% online.
• My sources were news sources, CIA factbook, encyclopedia. They will tell you this 100 times but Wikipedia is off limits.
• If you shoot for 1-2 facts per source, 1-2 slides per source, 1 slide intro, 1 slide conclusion, you will probably be right around 7 minutes.
• Be mindful of verbal pauses such as "um, so, okay." Lots of people lost points for these.
• The briefing is part of your GPA, but the Advocacy Briefing is worth more than the Informative Briefing.
• Most failures were due to busting the time limit.
• Our chalk probably lost 10 points per person on average because we didn’t standardize our slides! This is one of the few times in OTS when standardization actually matters. We all sat in a room to standardize together but another option is to have one person go through all of the slides prior to submission. 10 points was huge since I think 80 was passing.

Background Paper

The background paper outline should mirror your briefing outline exactly. When I was tackling the paper/briefing task I spent the majority of my time doing my research. Like I said keep your sources short and only use each source to make a point. Once you make your point, move on to your next point with your next source. This is the best way to keep the length of your briefing or paper where it needs to be. Instead of having one/two slides per source, you will have one paragraph per source. Once you add in a paragraph for the intro/conclusion you will have five paragraphs. When I put mine together I may have been able to split a paragraph into two paragraphs, but I chose to keep them as one to clearly define when I was addressing my next point. I recommend you do the same.

Some people started with the paper and then did the slides, and others did the slides then did the paper. Because of the nature of PowerPoint, I chose the latter because it helped me collect my thoughts. I did my research on my first point and put the main idea on the first slide. After I got most of my ideas on the first slide, I would do my research on the next point and draft the second slide. I did the same for the third then I begin adding in the pictures and making all three of the slides "pretty." This method prevented me from having to make an outline because my outline was in the slides. I tell you this because once I finished my three slides, I had everything I needed to knock out the paper. I had the research in my head so all I needed to do is put all of my points on paper in paragraph format. Since I am a fairly quick writer I did just that. I actually knocked out my paper in about 30 minutes and scored high 90’s but I don’t recommend that approach. I mis-prioritized my time but thankfully it didn't affect me more than a few points from my overall grade. I essentially knocked out my three paragraphs then I went back and added in the intro and conclusion. I did my in-text citations as I went so I didn't have to go back and add them later. Luckily when I was done I was at about 1.5 pages.

The requirements for the paper are defined on OTS Form 9. The majority of what is on the Form 9 are requirements from the Tongue and Quill and the AU Style Guide. The Tongue and Quill is also known as "Air Force Handbook (AFH) 33-337" and can be found on AF ePubs here. I just found the AU Style Guide on Google. I lost the majority of my points for the paper and briefing from requirements out of the Style Guide. I was unable to adequately read the style guide due to my leadership position, so I winged it. Again, luckily it didn't affect my score more than a few points. Off the top of my head, I didn’t format my superscripts correctly for my references in relation to the period, I didn’t use the correct abbreviation for USAF or US Air Force (I still can’t remember how the guide wanted it), and I put my identification line all pages instead of the first page only.

We had to upload the paper into Blackboard the night before so the system could do the plagiarism check with
SafeAssign. My college did not use Blackboard or SafeAssign, so I had no idea what it was. If you are like me, it is an automated process which compares the text in your paper with some sort of probably massive online database. It will then highlight text which may have been plagiarized and tell you what percentage may not be authentic. The process takes 15 minutes or so, but all I needed to know that night was that when I uploaded my paper it time-stamped it with the time the system accepted the upload, not the time SafeAssign was complete. This was great for me because I uploaded with only three minutes to spare. Since we uploaded to Blackboard no hard-copy was required for us, but we did have to turn in our OTS Form 9's right before we started our briefing, right along with our OTS Form 6. It took our instructor about a week to grade our stuff.

Final Thoughts

A background paper is NOT a fully researched academic article. You of course have to do research and talk intelligently about a topic, but the purpose of the exercise is "Can you write a background paper?" not "Can you write an academic article which gives me all the information I want to know about this topic?" It is honestly more about following instructions that producing a quality product. The people who got caught up in providing the best info or having the best academic sources were the ones who had trouble. Start your paper by learning the requirements established by the Tongue and Quill and Style Guide. Read every line of the OTS Form 9, and knock out your paper. After you get your first draft, go through every line of the Form 9 again and correct as necessary. Since you are reading this blog I assume you have time, so I recommend you start with Chapter 16 of the Tongue and Quill. After that read the AU Style Guide so you don't end up like I did!

Student Publication Test (SPT) 1

I showed up at OTS with a brief understanding of the academic requirements and I knew I had to march, but I had no idea about the others things such as Project X, LRC, BELPS, etc. SPT fell into this I had no idea category. Our syllabus told us there would be two SPT tests, and it described them as "Cadets are tested on their knowledge of the OTSMAN 36-2604 and HAWK aircraft knowledge. There are two tests. Minimum passing score is 80 percent." This really is all you really need to know, but because I love you guys I will go into more details.

Our SPT was administered in masse like our CWT. I think our test was 50 questions, 40 multiple choice from the OTSMAN and 10 from the HAWK. We were given an answer sheet and the questions were put up on a PowerPoint slide. As they flashed from slide to slide we read the questions and wrote down our answer. In order to ace the OTSMAN portion, we needed to know every line of the OTSMAN. Keep in mind there are two SPT tests so it may benefit you to think about which questions are more relevant to the point you are in with training. Either way, the questions were from very in the weeds parts of the OTSMAN so we really had to know our stuff. For the HAWK portion they flashed a picture from the HAWK air and space craft section and we had to write down either the alphanumeric designation or the name/nickname. For example, if they showed a picture of a F-15 the responses they would accept were "F-15" or "Eagle". For us if we wrote "F-15 Talon" or "F-16 Eagle" it was wrong, so only write down what you know. The satellites, missiles, and helicopters were all fair game as well so know the entire section. We passed our answer sheets to a person next to us and knew our scores before we left. I think those who failed received an OTMR. From what I gathered, the main impact of the OTMR was the student ranking in the middle and end of the course.

Academics, Combatives, and LANES

The rest of the week was filled with more classes which would be testable for CWT 2, Combatives, and Lanes. Like I said before I had a blast sparring during Combatives. We were divided into weight classes and they made us do exercises which would exhaust us. Then we would pick a partner and spar. On the last day we were all in giant circles and three
sets of partners would have little mini death matches. Have fun but don’t get hurt.

LANES was essentially an introductory course to field tactics. Our class was divided into four groups and we cycled through stations. In the Land Navigation taught us how to get our pace count and how to use a compass. Small Unit Tactics was about the low crawl, high crawl, and some patrolling formations the AF adapted from the Army. Tactical comm was about hand and arm signals, and Patient transport was about how to move a dead or injured comrade from Point A to B. It was essentially a course designed to teach us tactics which we would be expected to use the following week during BELPS. We did ours in the field next to the volleyball courts so we all got soaked because the grass was wet from the rain. It was also fun trying to clean the dorms after we were all covered in grass clippings.

**Week 5 – Summary, M9 Firing**

**Week 5 Summary**
Week 5 was a busy week mostly because our class was divided by squadron. There were a lot of events which were not large enough to support the entire class at once (such as M-9 firing) so the entire week each student squadron rotated from one event to the next. I know the course director was still adjusting to the needs of having a large class so this may play out differently for future classes.

The most predictable of the entire week were the academic classes. This was the final week of classes which led to the culmination of CWT 2 which was the following Monday. Most of the class was divided doing their own event in the morning but we were back together for the afternoon. One specific benefit I remember with this is getting coffee in the morning because we were in the flight room then closing out the day in the auditorium.

**M-9 Firing**
One of the other main events for the week was M-9 firing. This will probably not be as new to the prior service but I remember the non-priors being quite nervous, especially those who had never handled a pistol before. We fired the M-9 Beretta 9mm pistol which is the standard pistol in the Air Force inventory. Here is a link to the Wikipedia page for those who are not familiar with it. We "fired" the official Air Force course which meant if we qualified we could officially carry and be issued an M-9. This doesn’t have much practical use for most because the majority will not carry an M-9, and those who will carry one will have the opportunity to re-fire in tech school. In a practical sense, firing the official course meant those who made expert could wear the Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon.

Detailed course information can be found in AFMAN 36-2227v1, Combat Arms Training Program Individual Use Weapons, starting at paragraph 2.9. Here is the Air Force ePublishing link: click here.

In general you are given 90 rounds and fire 45 for practice and 45 for qualification. You fire three or six rounds in varying positions at 8, 15, and 25 meters, while also reloading at different times. Here are the qualification standards from the above AFMAN. I also put a picture of the target template below. The actual target has either a chalk circle or a pencil circle drawn on it (chalk for practice, pencil for qualification).

2.11.2. Standards:

2.11.2.1. Qualified: 35 hits on target (77.7%)
2.11.2.2. Expert: 41 hits (91.1%) on target with at least 25 hits within the 10-inch (vital area) circle (81.3%) and 6 hits within the 6-inch (head) circle (46%). NOTE: A triple-number score is annotated when any score 41 or higher has been
achieved (examples: “41/25/8”, “44/30/10”, etc.) The first number is the amount of hits on the entire target, the second number is the total number of hits inside the 10-inch vital area and the third number is the total number of hits within the 6-inch head area of the target. A score of “41/20/3” would indicate a qualified score.

**Order of Events**

The range is on base so we took a 10 minute bus ride to the range. We showed up first thing in the morning and a Security Forces CATM instructor taught us the M-9 nomenclature and firing fundamentals, which took most of the morning. It was very laid back in relation to OTS so enjoy it. They also had a snack bar in the back so a lot of people enjoyed that too. Be sure you pay attention and still remain respectful though. Both will help you out. Oh, and don’t fall asleep. Infractions for my class resulted in someone having to recite the Airman’s Creed (at least it was without the yelling).

They divided us until three relays and we rotated through the course. Those who weren’t eating were either cleaning weapons or eating lunch. My squadron got through the course fairly quickly. Be sure you move to and from your target quickly because seconds add up with three relays. Once we were all done we got back on a bus and went back to the OTS complex for the remainder of our scheduled day. I think we got back to the complex around noon so it was a half-day event.

**Tips for Success**

- Seriously, take your time. There is technically a time limit but it is not enforced. My first shot took literally five seconds due to the longer trigger pull for double action (they will explain that in your class).
- To get expert you have to pay attention to the circles. The catch is you can’t see the pencil circle during the qualification round so use the practice round to memorize where the circle is in relation to the edges of the target.
- Do some shooting prior to OTS if you can. It seriously helped me (I got expert). I fired a larger caliber handgun prior to OTS so the M-9 felt like a water pistol.
- Qualifying on the M-9 isn’t a graduation requirement so relax and have a good time.

**Basic Expeditionary Leadership Problems (BELPS)**

The final main event of Week 5 was BELPS. BELPS was another leadership training scenario outlined in the syllabus. Here is the info from our syllabus:

**Objective:** Apply concepts of leadership, followership, problem solving methods, communication, team building, and motivation techniques in a small group under time constraints. Cadets will also assess their role in the group and how they react to group dynamics. Each cadet will have an opportunity to lead a team in a problem solving session and therefore flight size may impact scheduled hours.

**Description:** The BELPS evaluation is a problem solving, scenario-based exercise designed to evaluate the cadet’s leadership in a field environment. This evaluation is the first opportunity for the cadet to receive feedback regarding strengths/weaknesses in the area of field leadership and is designed to provide the cadet with a ‘benchmark’ regarding areas of improvement.

As for the practical description of the above, our Flt/CC tasked our FDO to make a schedule of all Flight personnel which rotated us as leader, time keeper, observers, and participants. The leader was in charge of the participants, the observers were safeties for the scenarios and also helped enforce the rules, and the time keeper held the stop watch
and enforced the time penalties. At the beginning of each scenario the leader was handed a card with a problem to solve. An example of a problem was to move from one marker to another on the grass by using directions for navigation by compass. Some limiting factors could have been to not make noise or members not being able to see. Although the objective is to complete the scenario, it is more important to effectively lead your time through the objective. The grading sheet only awarded one point for mission success but the rest of the points were on different aspects of leadership.

We completed BELPS out in a field on base about a 10 minute bus ride from the campus. Since everyone was required to be the leader BELPS stretched over two days. At the beginning of the day we headed to the field first thing in the morning and we rotated through all of the different scenarios. Our Flt/CC was our grader for every scenario which I really appreciated. A scenario would involve organizing in the unofficial BELPS/LRC/Project X formation which identified basic spots for everyone to stand. We would be given the pre-brief and at the horn we would start the scenario. After the scenario the leader would receive a debrief and a score from the grading form, and we would all reset for the next scenario. The score was unofficial for BELPS but it gave us a good idea of what we needed to do for our official score the following week for Leadership Reaction Course (LRC). The scoring method is exactly the same.

Practically Applying the OODA Loop

- **Observe** - Something that really helped me with BELPS and LRC (Leadership Readiness Course/Week 6) was practically applying the OODA loop in my head. The OODA loop stands for Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act. When you are waiting for your scenario card you have no idea what to expect. When thrown into a scenario I can become a jumpy person and I can blindly charge forward without properly assessing my surroundings. To prevent me from doing this I would **Observe** by stopping and literally reading the card to myself. I have a hard time comprehending what I read out-loud under pressure so reading it to myself really helped me. I would then give my group a brief summary of our mission, objectives, and LIMFACs (limiting factors). I would then direct my team to **Observe** our surroundings and take inventory of anything we were given for the scenario.

- **Orient** - During the **Orient** stage I oriented my team and resources into how we fit into the scenario and how we could most efficiently and effectively accomplish the mission. I brainstormed with my team about how we could apply the resources we were given to accomplishing our mission. I asked my team for general strengths and weaknesses for different tasks which may come up during the scenario. I transitioned into the **Decide** stage by re-stating our mission and asking my team for inputs or recommendations on how we proceed.

- **Decide** - Once I received all of the inputs I had to force myself to make a decision. I used all of the information given to me thus far to decide on a basic plan. I tried to establish smaller objectives such as getting to the first rally point in X minutes or moving injured personnel by Y minutes. Don't be afraid to make a decision even if you have no idea what to do. Use your best judgement and make the call with confidence.

- **Act** - It is finally time to act. Now that you have walked your through the previous three steps the **Act** stage will feel much smoother. Take note that **Act** isn't necessarily the final stage in your scenario. At different times you may be given new information or challenges so you may have to start the process over again. The main thing is to be confident in your decisions and make sure you are leading your team in a forward direction. Your forward direction may be as simple as stopping and reassessing your plan to make sure you are on track.

**LIMFACs (Limiting Factors)**

- Time is a big factor because you will always be fighting the clock, but don't let this stress you out. Sometimes you have to go slow to go fast. If you fail to plan you will either not efficiently execute at the beginning which will consume time or you will receive penalties (which eat a ton of time). Conversely if you make a solid plan then reassess as necessary you will make more efficient use of time.
• Tactics - this one is hard because it is dependent on what your evaluator is looking for. Be smart with tactics. Always move with a sense of urgency but also consider your time constraints. Only low crawl if you have to because it eats a ton of time.
• Penalties - similar to Project X if you break a rule you will receive a penalty. Don't get flustered. During the penalty reconsider if your original plan is working. Don't just keep moving forward to eat more penalties and hope you will make it through.
• Bad leaders/bad participants - you know who they are. You guys are a team so help each other out however you can. If your leader is making a bad decision ask your leader, 'sir I really think we should do it this way because xyz, what do you think?' Don't disrespect your leader, but don't let your leader drive you off a cliff. If your leader has no idea what to do, help them out. At the same time, for the participants everyone is good at something. Take advantage of your teams strengths.

Tips for Success

• It is absolutely essential that your entire team knows what is going on at all times. State your mission and LIMFACs clearly at the beginning of the scenario and make sure everyone understands their role. This is a very easy way to show the grader that you are keeping control of the situation.
• You will be required to delegate throughout the scenario. Get creative with your delegations but be sure you are holding people accountable. Designate a time hack to help you keep track of how much time you have left in the scenario. If you have to move an object from point A to point B designate a person to make sure it is moved safely (even if it is the person who is carrying the object). Designate a person to establish security of your team and keep your team safe while moving.
• Talk to yourself to clearly tell the evaluator what you are doing. For example I would say "Cadet Smith, I am delegating you the authority of security. It will be your job to make sure we are all facing outward and moving tactically, do you understand?" This makes sure you get credit for all of the things you are doing by pointing out your actions to the evaluator.
• Maintain control of your team. If you delegate your authority make sure you are checking in with them on how well they are accomplishing their role. If your team is doing what you don't want them to do yet tell them to stop then clearly define what you want them to do to reassert your authority. If someone is giving you inputs but you don't need them anymore politely tell them you have considered all variables and at this time you believe you need to just start moving forward.
• If you are moving along and your plan is being executed just like you planned, tell your team their execution is flawless. If your compass guy is always right on point tell him he is doing a great job with the compass. Don't just randomly tell your team they are doing a great job because that is considered cheer leading.
• Participants - Don't play dumb. Just because your leader is in charge doesn't mean you are a nobody. Don't make decisions, but say 'hey leader I think this may work.' At first my flight thought we had to play dumb and it made the leaders job impossible because he or she both didn't know what to do and couldn't use the talents of his or her team. This one is really important.
• Get flustered but don't show it. Everyone will be flustered, but you will be expected not to show it. You must look confident at all times. If you get flustered you will lose credibility in the eyes of your team.

Application to Reality

I found these exercises to have extremely valuable application to the real world. It doesn't matter what you are in charge of, the lessons I learned and re-stated above can apply to anything. Leading people in the real world involves having confidence in yourself, knowing your mission, and knowing what resources (including people) you have at your disposal. It involves holding your people accountable if they are not complying with your directions. Throughout OTS continuously consider how you can apply lessons learned during the course to life after OTS.
Week 6 – CWT2, LRC, and the Major Accident Response Exercise (MARE)

Week 6 Overview
Week 6 was the week when I finally started to feel like we were on the downward slope to graduation. Our Consolidated Written Test (CWT) 2 was first thing on Monday morning and it was really no different than CWT 1 except that it contained different information. I think everyone’s scores from CWT 1 to CWT 2 were about the same. Being done with both CWTs meant we were almost done with all of our graded measurements, although I remember the major graduation requirement of the Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) and leadership position still looming on the horizon for some.

Being done with the CWT also meant we no longer had any major academic classes. There were a few here and there that reinforced what we had learned earlier in the course but the majority of our time was spent doing initial out-processing appointments such as drafting and reviewing our DD-214 (Separation from Active Duty form), assignments briefing, or briefings which outlined upcoming events such as the MARE. To further reinforce that we were approaching the end, we had a picture day. We took an official photo in Service Dress with 2d Lt pinned on our shoulders. We also took our flight photos which included everyone in our flight including our Flight Commander. Like everything else these days, this was an opportunity for a business to make some money. If you wanted a printed flight photo I think it was $10. If you wanted your printed flight photo and digital official photo on a CD with the copyright I think it was $30. The price seemed a bit steep to me but it was convenient and I was only going to attend OTS once, so I went for the $30. I will mention that Public Affairs on any Air Force Base will take an official photo of you for free if you need it for a biography or won an award.

Leadership Reaction Course (LRC)
I believe I mentioned in my previous post that LRC is basically a combination of Project X and BELPS. LRC is the evaluation process you completed at BELPS in the Project X complex/scenarios. I thought it was much easier because the scenario was more clearly defined and there were no arbitrary rules such as taking cover for mortar attacks. Most people did better at LRC than during BELPS so I wouldn't worry about it too much. If you think you are close to the failing line just be sure to share your concerns with your flight mates. They will be more than willing to help you out. Check out my Project X post for more information about the specifics of the scenarios. The score you receive for LRC will tie directly into your end of course feedback and overall academic grade, which I will discuss in a separate post.

Major Accident Response Exercise (MARE)
The MARE was similar to the base MARE exercises many prior service personnel may have experienced. In general a MARE involves a major accident such as an aircraft crash where there are a lot of casualties. Sometimes the closest base will be tasked to respond and the response is what was simulated by OTS. The Cadet MSG/CC was tasked with breaking the entire cadet wing into chalks for the MARE. All of the chalks performed a function such as security or medical and people who needed leadership positions fulfilled their graded leadership roles. They tried to have the ANG personnel fulfill these positions because they are the ones who are more likely to respond to a MARE in their career.

During any major emergency response the most important thing is communication. It is absolutely crucial that the leadership at the top has the ability to communicate with the teams on the ground. Due to the limited training of everyone involved, lack of communication will likely be a problem for the MARE. The biggest thing is to know your mission, do your best to keep your leadership advised, and respond accordingly.

A lot of the chalks were tasked with being actors for the exercise. They were tasked to play dead or injured bodies at the exercise site, and many people got shivers when they rolled up hearing all of the screaming and chaos. This is a valuable lesson to learn from the training. It is always interesting to learn how you react to certain situations.
I don't really have a lot of advice for the MARE except to treat it realistically, have a good time, and learn what you can. The MARE will have no value if everyone treats it like a game. Try to immerse yourself in the situation so people can receive realistic training.

The MARE lasted an entire afternoon and it was near the OTS complex (walking distance.) People received assorted props such as flak vests or weapons, radios, or props associated with the chaotic scenario depending on their role. The site had actual debris scattered everywhere so I thought it was fairly realistic. After the MARE we went straight to retreat.

**Week 7 – Wargames, Commandant Inspection, SPT #2, and Final Briefings**

**Wargames**

Wargames is essentially a computer game which simulates all of the different Air Force capabilities in a computerized environment. I thought it was similar to the game Command and Conquer but with realistic weapon systems (fancy AF word for aircraft). There may be other versions out there but the one we trained on just had all of the main aircraft (B-1, B-52, F-16, F-15, F-22, KC-135, etc). The idea is to familiarize us all with the Air Force weapon system capabilities in a simulated war environment.

The simulator is located off of the OTS campus but within marching distance. During the week each flight had a designated time to use the simulator to play the wargame. Each flight had our own room and we played against a computer. My flight divided the different missions (counter air, offensive air, refueling, bombing, etc) by flight member. The simulation took several hours and it was very laid back. We were able to bring snacks (and even encouraged to do so by the staff!) The main motivation with doing well was the honor flight competition. I don't know the specifics, but I know the wargames contributed to part of the score.

**Commandant Inspection**

The commandant inspection was basically a giant open ranks on the bomb run/parade grounds. The commandant had a few words to speak (it was fairly informal but he was still at a podium) and then the entire cadet wing followed the appropriate protocol to conduct a wing-wide open ranks inspection. Cadet leadership conducted the open ranks inspection and the commandant randomly walked through the formations to ask random cadets questions. I will not spoil the fun by telling you what he asked. Afterward we marched back to the dorm and continued our day. The actual inspection was actually the weekend prior to graduation week but I have already typed this so oh well.

**SPT #2**

This one was basically the same as SPT #1! Know your stuff and you'll do fine. At this point in training there wasn't much else to do than study for the SPT so I didn't feel very pressured by this test.

**Final Briefings (TMO, Peer Evaluation #2, Random Classes)**

The rest of our time was filled by miscellaneous classes and mandatory briefings. The briefings of note were TMO and another peer evaluation. TMO is the organization which helps you move your stuff from wherever it is to wherever you are going, so this is one you will actually want to pay attention to. Basically every time the military moves you the government will pay to move your stuff as well. There are three basic ways to do this.

1) The government does it all and contractors show up at your house to pack up your stuff and move it from point A-B. They will actually take your furniture apart, pack it up in boxes, and put it back together. The entire process takes a few months to get from almost any base to any base in the world. They are fairly efficient.
2) You can hire your own contractor to the same as above. Honestly it is all ensured so I typically just have the government do it all.

3) You can move yourself. You may save some money this way but it is a lot of work.

My main tip for moving is to record all of the serial numbers of your valuables and take video of everything you own before they show up. Once they move you if anything is broken or missing you have to file a claim and they pay you replacement value! Do your claims ASAP because there is a time limit. My other main advice for moving is be sure you think about it early. It is a complicated process and everyone's situation is different. Be sure you plan everything out and ask every question so you don't put yourself in a difficult situation. An example of a difficult situation would be your mom having to tell the movers what you want to take with you as they pack your bedroom because you are in training and aren't there. This involves you telling your mom what you want, a power of attorney, just one more thing to deal with, etc.

Week 8 – PFA, Career Day, AEF, and Assault Course

Physical Fitness Assessment
For many of us the PFA was the final major graded obstacle between us and graduation! We did it first thing Monday morning and I made it through with no problems. If you refer back to my PT posts this is the test that counted and was uploaded to the AF fitness database so I wanted to make it count. The only difference with the process is that we did height/weight measurements the same day then we went out to the track and did the test. Another difference was that the class was divided into two major groups. One group did it early morning and the other did it late morning. I think they did this due to the large number of people testing and to decrease congestion on the track.

Career Day
Career day was a day where a seasoned officer from your career field (usually a Capt/Maj) came to talk to us in one of our flight rooms or auditorium depending on how many people were in your career field. There were only a handful in my career field and we actually had three mentors. It was interesting but not life-changing. I am a leech for information so most of what they said were things I had heard before. If you want career advice for the 13S career field (or any career field in general), continue to follow my blog. I plan to cover most if not all of the things they did. I think we had two hours blocked off for the career day and it was very relaxed so there was nothing to stress about.

AEF Week
AEF was one of the few events of OTS I knew something about prior to my arrival. I was pretty nervous about it for really no reason at all - I think I just didn't really feel like getting dirty again. We had several briefings about AEF on Monday. The briefings consisted of safety, mission, overview, etc. After we finished SMT for the day we packed up and got on a bus in the evening to ship out to AEF. I think it took about an hour to get out there.

AEF week itself consisted of full day Tuesday and Wednesday, then half a day Thursday. Thursday afternoon we spent time cleaning up the camp and we were sent on buses back to the OTS complex on Thursday afternoon. The camp itself consisted of deployment tents with cots, an equipment building, and a public shower/bathroom building. We had way more amenities than enlisted Security Forces so I really had nothing to complain about. The showers were hot mostly and we had running water for hygiene. From my perspective it was great.

The basic day consisted of getting up and eating an MRE, getting your equipment, and walking out or setting up
Once you made it to camp it was game-time so you were back in whatever scenario they gave us. Our scenario spanned the three days so it was an evolving story line. They gave us different missions during the scenario and we all had paintball masks for safety. They had limited paintball guns so they passed them out depending on who needed them most. After the day was over we walked back to the normal camp and cleaned up then ate hot chow in the equipment barn. The DFAC had hot food in trucks and I thought it was delicious.

I was an idiot when I packed for AEF so I didn't have my hygiene bag, I just threw it all in ziplocks. My hygiene bag definitely would have came in handy because we were in tents. We all had our cell phones in our tents and there were plenty of plug-ins to go around. The only other thing I would have brought it I had it was my own personal paintball mask. The ones they have fogged up really bad and that REALLY sucked when you were trying to perform a mission.

**Assault Course**
The assault course was a blast! I was really nervous about it but there was no need to be. We basically jogged through several obstacles and cleared them as a team of two. The course ended with the rope over the water which I am sure you have seen videos of. I had a good time.

**Helpful Questions and Answers (Q&A)**

1. What time should I report in? **1500-ish is a good time**
2. Comment: USE THE CROSSWALKS WHEN GOING TO REPORT IN!
3. How much luggage may I bring? As much as you need (you do not have to carry your bags BMT style; you can roll your suitcase if needed). If possible, leave **blues items in the car**
4. What should I wear to report in? Khakis or nice pants, tucked in button up or collared shirt, belt, no watch or jewelry (other than a wedding band), **tuck in your shoe laces**
5. Comment to Prior Es: Do not stand at attention when the instructors are lining us up after check-in
6. How much civilian attire should I pack? What you arrive in will be okay for a few weeks (we won’t be wearing them) -If you have a car you might want a couple of outfits stashed there for phasing up
7. The checklist says pajamas... any specific kind? They suggest sleeping in PT gear. There are times where instructors will come into the dorms and tell you to be outside in one minute and you cannot be in your civilian pajamas outside. -Also, they suggested not changing into PT gear right away after the duty day (wait until all instructors are gone), because they can call you outside at any moment and you would need to put your ABUs **back on in less than a minute.**
8. For females, can we bring things like hair dryers, curling irons, make up? Yes, and there is time to put make up on in the morning.
9. Suggestion: They highly suggest bringing your own pillow with a white pillow case. I asked about a blanket and they suggested not bringing that because they don’t know where you would store it. I asked because I am ALWAYS cold. They said the AC is blasting all the time so bring a sweater to sleep in and/or the PT sweatshirt.
10. Should I have cash on hand? **Yes, like $20-40-ish**
11. Does the color of your undergarments matter? No, no **one cares about your bloomers.**
12. Are prepositioned items provided upon arrival? If you don’t already have them, they will take you down to the BX and make you buy everything then and there. They suggest bringing those items with you (just one less thing to worry about)

13. The dorm manual talks about having an attache for your computer. I’m assuming we can't carry backpacks to put our laptops and other class items in? No, the attache must be uniform. Purchase upon arrival. The opening for large pocket is about 15"x12". The biggest issue is weight, that thing gets really freaking heavy while marching around.

14. Comment: Have a set of butter bars with you or in your car because you wear them for pictures.

15. Has anyone hear any confirmation that OTS is going to be 2 weeks shorter or was that just a rumor? Again, this is just a rumor. The course syllabus has not changed. This may be affective for FY18 but our current class will likely do the full 29 March – 02 June 2017 period.

16. Does anyone know, or heard from grads, if you can wear calf compression, knee compression type devices during PT? I've heard if they can't see it under PT gear you are good.

17. For those who wear steel toed boots everyday, are you planning on buying some non steel toes and breaking them in prior? If so what kind? Ordered the Nike boots. Super light and comfy but not sure how durable they are. Only wore them a few days but I have custom orthotics so I don't usually have to break boots in. They don't come in steel toe though so not sure how much I'll get to wear them after OTS. I have been told the under armor are nice also. I don't think you can go wrong with either. I got a pair of rocky C4Ts

18. Since the skill badge was mentioned in the clothing list, are you having them sewn on to your ABU tops along with your name tapes and USAF tapes? Most people say yes. Remember though, if you get wings, those always go on top. Also, do not to sew on officer's badge (unless same as enlisted) until completion of the course and/or tech school.

19. Has anyone actually started to study? Some have some have not. If you are going to study anything, study the OTSMAN first. It is higher on the priority list than the HAWK.

20. Do you know what documents I need to bring to OTS to enroll in join spouse? Husband is AD and I know instructions to enroll civilian spouses in DEERS says to bring marriage/birth certificates. I'm currently in DEERS if that matters. Bring copy of original marriage/birth certificates and of his ID.

21. Do I need to pack my clothes they way they will be inspected? No, plenty of time for rolling your socks there

22. Priority for graded items:
   1) Academics (SOBs)
   2) Research Papers
   3) Briefings
   4) OTSMAN
   5) Room inspection
   6) Drill and Ceremony
   7) HAWK
   8) PT
23. A few suggested items:
   headphones, allergy/pain meds, scissors, MOLESKIN (they could not emphasize this enough),
   ABSOLUTELY NO SNACKS

Uniform and Packing Suggestions
1. View this site and see how Zachary Ian packed his duffle bag (if using one of those instead of suit case); it may help: [https://www.facebook.com/groups/1330569503637484/permalink/1518297878197978/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1330569503637484/permalink/1518297878197978/)
2. How is everyone packing? Some are bringing one duffel of personal items and civvies and a backpack with a laptop and some personal items. Some others are bringing a suitcase, garment bag, and a backpack.
3. Is everyone planning to bring the "winter months" clothing requirements? Some people are some people aren’t. Reporting instructions cite Oct-April for cold weather gear.
4. Is anyone bringing a princess cut blues shirt, just in case? Some said no, but if everyone has one eventually all females are able to wear them. Note: You can get these and tuck in like the original blues shirt (with usage of garters).
5. Anyone find any quick tips or hints on rolling socks and shirts? Shirts... Make sure when you turn over the bottom, do it at 3 inches, otherwise when you get to the end you will have to little or too much fabric. Read the OTS Manual.... It is specific. How many pairs of ABUs is everyone bringing? The consensus was 3 pairs.
6. Does anyone know about how OTS feels about vibram fingers? As far as I know (and from what I know from 2903) you can wear them. I do not ever recall reading in there that you cannot. I am active duty and there are always 1 or 2 people around the base who do in PT uniform.
7. Suggestions: Try to roll your shirts/socks prior to arrival. As well, it helps to zip lock like items together (for ease of packing/unpacking as well as keeping the roll “intact”).
8. Suggestions: Females- When we report in on the 29th, make sure you hair is good to go. And by that I mean in bun (if it's long enough) even though we’re going to be in civilian clothes.
9. Suggestion: Sew everything on prior to coming (excluding rank). Also, clip and burn your strings. This will save you a lot of time the first few days and make more time for cleaning/homework.

Attachments
OTS Dorm Manual

OTS-Dormitory-Man
ual-1-Dec-2016.docx
OTS Manual (OTSMAN)

OTS Manual.pdf

The HAWK

The HAWK.pdf

Course Syllabus

TFOT Syllabus.pdf

Required Reading before Arrival

MOTS005.pdf   MOTS006.pdf