

# PART 6

## INSPECTION PROGRAMS

### 6.1 Purpose of the Inspection Program

Dormitory and uniform inspections test cadets' ability to live in a challenging military-style environment, their teamwork skills, and the team's overall esprit de corps. The program also (re-)motivates cadets in these instructional areas. Consequently, inspections are "high stakes" activities marked by elevated (but carefully managed) stress levels and standards of military bearing. Daily inspections are learning tools, with the majority of the learning taking place not *during* the inspection itself but in the *preparation* for it.

### 6.2 Inspection Program Guidelines

The following guidelines govern how encampments structure their inspection program. Note that three inspections are programmed into the standardized Phase II curriculum. Inspections also continue during Phase III.

- a. Progression.** Inspections begin at the flight level, then progress to the squadron level, and conclude at the group level. There are 3 flight-level inspections, 2 or 3 squadron-level inspections (depending upon encampment duration), and 1 group level inspection. As the inspection echelon increases, so too should the cadets' performance.
- b. Team-Focus.** Individual performance is important, but the learning goal is primarily team-oriented. Accordingly, the inspection focuses upon the teamwork involved in the cadets' ordering their living quarters.
- c. Format.** Dormitory inspections are always to be "stand-by" inspections, with the students physically present and "standing-by" their bunks (or whatever placement is deemed best). Cadets are inspected as flights. For sake of fairness, flights will have an equal amount of preparation time. Likewise, with squadron and group inspections, the inspection party will devote an equal amount of time to each flight. Flights that are awaiting inspection or awaiting the next activity should use that downtime for meaningful activity (ie: working on cadet hand-books, drill, or hip-pocket training).
- d. Inspection Party.** Inspection is an inherent function of command. Accordingly, encampments will not create a permanent inspection party, sometimes called standardization and evaluation teams, for *stand-by inspections*. In a cadet environment, the cadets' youth and the short duration of the encampment necessitates their receiving as much individualized attention as possible. Flight and squadron commanders are best positioned to provide that personalized mentoring and therefore they lead the inspection party, not a stan/eval team.
- e. Standardized Scoring.** Encampments will adopt a single scorecard to be used during each inspection. This practice provides for a consistent measurement of cadet performance. If the flight is developing into a team as expected, it will score progressively higher marks on the standardized scorecard. For the purposes of consistently scoring inspections that impact honor flight awards, encampments may assign that scoring function to a group-level stan/eval team, but as mentioned above, stan/eval teams do not conduct stand-by inspections.

#### INSPECTIONS as LEARNING & SCORING SYSTEMS

Results from this guide's field tests showed that inspections pursue two main goals.

The primary goal is for students to learn and develop teamwork skills. Cadets learn if their performance is up to standard, and learn what they can improve upon. Inspections also educate commanders, too, because they are tests of the team's effectiveness. Commanders learn which students are excelling and which need more training or motivation. Therefore, only commanders conduct stand-by inspections.

The secondary goal of inspection is scorekeeping in a competitive environment. Inspections measure teamwork, so if each flight's performance can be measured and scored dispassionately according to a single standard, then inspection results can be major factors in award programs.

To achieve both goals, the suggested best practice is to have a stan/eval team conduct an inspection without students present, being careful not to disturb anything in the dormitory. Later that day, commanders would conduct their actual stand-by inspections. If this dual approach is impractical, encampment commanders are free to forego use of a stan/eval team.

**f. Learning vs. Maintenance.** While cadets will need to clean their dormitory and perform simple up-keep, the inspection program is not intended as an exercise in the janitorial and sanitary arts. Again, the goal is to teach teamwork, not to make the floor clean enough to eat from.

### 6.3 Inspection's Team Focus

What does it mean for the inspection program to have a team focus? The encampment is obliging cadets to live together, to work and learn together, and to find creative solutions around the interpersonal stresses that such an environment naturally produces.

**a. Areas of Collaboration.** The evidence of teamwork is found in the team attending to its common areas as much as each individual's living space. Attention to detail in identifying areas that need standardization, and then carrying-out that standardization across the whole flight, is another sign of teamwork. Efficient time management, coupled with a division of labor and perhaps specialization is another indicator. For example, perhaps two cadets working together can make beds better and faster than individuals working alone, and perhaps one cadet has a natural gift for shining shoes and therefore does nothing but that task. Those are some of the areas a well-designed inspection program focuses upon, not on finding the cadet possessing the best janitorial skills.

**b. Clustering of Individual Scores.** In a team environment where everyone is working together and playing to their strengths, the gap between the lowest-performing individual and the highest-performing should be narrow. Put another way, if one cadet's area is stunningly perfect and another's is a horrible mess, that wide gap in performance indicates a lack of teamwork.

### 6.4 Inspection Procedures & Methods

**a. Report-In.** Subordinate unit commanders report to and greet the inspecting party upon the party's arrival at the unit's quarters. Wings that follow the tradition of the unit commander presenting a white glove to the inspecting party as a sign of confidence are encouraged to continue that practice during the final inspection.

**b. On-Deck Cadets.** Cadets in the "on deck" position (ie: a few minutes from their turn), stand at parade rest, until the inspection party enters their area. Local leaders fine-tune this rule to fit local circumstances.

**c. Inspection Party Size.** The inspection party should be limited to 3 cadre and a training officer or other senior staff member. A larger party can convey an undesirable "gang" feeling and unhelpfully crowds the area. Subordinate commanders can observe the inspection by trailing the inspection party, coming up behind it as it works through the flight.

**d. Respectful Practices.** Inspectors are viewing and handling cadets' personal property, so the work of the inspecting party requires that they show respect to the students and their belongings.

The inspectors will intentionally disturb the original order of a cadet's belongings, if discovered to be out of place or improperly prepared, so as to call attention to the problem. They tug at bed linens, nudge shoes and small items out of position, and carefully move uniform garments to the bed, as they discover deficiencies. When doing this, the inspector verbally explains the reason for each deficiency.

Inspectors do NOT throw cadets' belongings, drop them onto the floor, or roughly handle any items. In respect for personal dignity, they do not touch cadets' undergarments or toiletries, only verbally calling attention to any deficiencies with those items.

In readying for their work as an inspection party, the training officer should remind the cadet cadre that eagerness to "trash" a room and enthusiasm to accumulate a record number of deficiencies are signs of immaturity and unprofessionalism.

**e. Thou / It Distinction.** The inspector's verbal remarks always focus on inanimate objects, not on the cadet's person. For example, "These hospital corners are too loose" correctly speaks of things. In contrast,

“Cadet Curry, you’re terrible at making hospital corners” improperly speaks of Cadet Curry as a person. Training officers will intervene and correct cadre who misstep in this area.

**f. Teaching Opportunities.** During flight-level inspections, the inspection party is encouraged to take a conversational, show-and-tell approach to their work. For example, an inspector might summon a cadet to the head of the bed, point to the pillow and ask, “This pillow is not set properly, do you know why?” After the cadet answers, the inspector might follow-up with, “Correct. Now let me see you set that pillow properly... Better – now that pillow is set right,” or alternatively, “No, that pillow still does not meet the standard. Watch this... See?”

**g. Opportunity for Praise.** A discerning inspection party can always find something that deserves complimenting. In contrast to the principle of criticizing inanimate object (see §6.4e above), cadre are encouraged to personalize their praising of cadets. “Cadet Curry, you’ve come a long way since the last inspection. Great job with the bunk!” is an appropriate, positive reference to Cadet Curry as a person.

## 6.5 Training Intensity & Stress Management During Inspections

Inspections ought to be “high-stakes” events accompanied by a moderate degree of anxiety due to the cadets’ desire to perform well. Also, military bearing in particular is on display, so the cadets’ precision in holding the position of attention and careful observance of military customs and courtesies is under close scrutiny. Consequently, in the early days of encampment especially, perhaps 10 to 20 percent of the students will struggle to manage their stress during the intense inspection process.

**a. Individual Considerations.** Cadre and training officers should be mindful of the age, grade, and relative experience of each individual cadet they inspect. Assessing these individual considerations can be problematic because sometimes low-ranking, younger cadets cope better than the oldest cadets in the flight.

**b. Effects of Deficiencies.** Because the object of the inspection program is to test the cadets’ teamwork skills and (re-)motivate them in the overall area of military-type skills, the quantity of deficiencies an inspection party cites is a function of each cadet’s training needs. Put another way, the object is not to precisely score each cadet’s performance and account for each and every gig. Citing 12 gigs is counter-productive when 5 deficiencies provides sufficient motivation to a struggling cadet, prompting him or her to pay closer attention to detail or ask roommates for help. In contrast, an older, self-confident cadet with several stripes can show resilience in the face of 12 deficiencies and may need such scrutiny to motivate him or her to get beyond complacency.

**c. Two-Deep Adult Leadership.** As mentioned earlier, one training officer serves on the inspection party and accompanies the cadre at all times. A second training officer (perhaps the training officer for the “sister” flight awaiting its turn) should monitor the cadets who are a few steps ahead of the inspecting party. Cadets typically experience stress as they *await* the inspecting party – an excessively stressed cadet who happens to be last in line for inspection could require an intervention well before the inspecting party arrives.

**d. Interventions for Excessively-Stressed Cadets.** All members of the inspection party are responsible for monitoring students for signs of excessive stress. The “wingman” safety system also has a part to play in identifying excessively-stressed cadets. Physical symptoms of excess stress are obvious enough: hyperventilating, tears, tremors, anguished facial expressions, verbal complaints of feeling faint, etc. Training officers will intervene as needed to support excessively-stressed cadets. Interventions should take a progressive approach when possible, though acute signs of high stress warrant a more direct approach. The following guidelines, ordered from the least to greatest degree of adult support, offer a framework for progressive intervention.

1. The training officer places his or her reassuring hand on the cadet’s shoulder and offers a few quiet words of encouragement.

2. The training officer directs the cadet to stand at ease, places his or her reassuring hand on the cadet’s shoulder, leads the cadet through a mindfulness exercise (a suggested relaxation technique is described in *Learn to Lead*, chapter 2), and shortly thereafter, challenges the cadet to resume the inspection.

*When necessary, the training officer may direct the inspection party to move on to another room / element, and return to the stressed cadet just prior to concluding the unit's inspection. Obviously, there are practical matters of logistics and time management in play.*

3. The training officer directs the cadet to take a seat, or to take a relaxing short walk down the hall or outside for fresh air, while quietly talking with the cadet to generate feelings of calmness and control. In extreme cases, the training officer excuses the cadet from the inspection, and a senior staff member physically remains with the cadet and counsels him or her.

*Someone on the senior staff, perhaps a chaplain, is apt to be known for having the best "bedside manner" with cadets. Encampment commanders are encouraged to identify that individual at the outset of encampment and designate him or her to serve in the lead capacity when a cadet requires special handling.*