

Old Reliable Academy is Doorway to the 9th

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LONG THANH — Soldiers entering and leaving the 9th Infantry Division pass through the Old Reliable Academy located at this headquarters base camp.

Though the name is new, the command, formerly called the 9th Replacement Company Provisional, has been the first home for thousands of replacements and the last stop for hundreds of Old Reliables rotating to the United States during the last seven months.

Sergeant Major of the Old Reliable Academy, James R. Ivey of Pueblo, Colo., explained that though the unit is also responsible for co-ordinating transportation for Rest and Recuperation (R&R) personnel and assisting all returning hospital patients during reassignment, the training of replacements remains the largest task of the academy.

To handle the influx of new Old Reliables, the Academy, commanded by Major James W. Moss, employs a staff of 68 officers, noncommissioned officers and enlisted men assigned to the division Support Command.

What can the incoming soldier expect at the Old Reliable Academy?

Ivey described a three-and-a-half day training schedule at the Academy as being a combination orientation to Vietnam, refresher course on weapons, and review of tactics, first aid, and general subjects.

All replacements entering the 9th Division, including officers up to the rank of captain, must complete the training.

The soldiers are outfitted with a complete issue of jungle clothing and equipment. The supplies issued range from jungle boots to mosquito netting.

The first day's training includes a trip to the Academy's rifle range. Last week approximately 450 replacements received instruction and live fire practice with the M-16, M-79 grenade launcher, and M-60 machine gun.

Classes in "First Aid and Medical Evacuation" and "VC Mines and Booby Traps" complete the first day's schedule.

The second day is devoted to classroom training covering topics from the use of the magnetic compass to the rules set down by the Geneva Convention Accords.

On the third day, the trainees don their jungle gear and are led by instructors of the Academy into the jungles of Bien Hoa Province for a 20-hour ambush patrol.

When they return the replacements shower and gather their belongings.

Following a graduation exercise which includes a briefing by either the division commander, or one of his assistants, or the chief of staff, the men are transported to their new units.

During the span of the next year, many of the replacements will return to the Academy for transportation to and from R&R. Nearly 12 months later, many of the same men will return for out-processing and reassignment to the States.

note: Original edition of The Old Reliable saved by PFC Don Westphal.

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