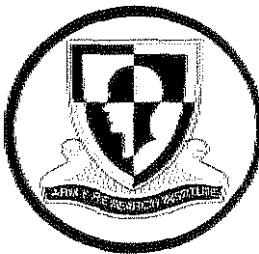


## ARI Research Note 2012-02

# A Case Study of the Impact of Religious Accommodations on Initial Military Training

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U.S. Army Research Institute



**ARI - Fort Benning Research Unit**  
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**October 2011**

**United States Army Research Institute  
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences**

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# A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS ON INITIAL MILITARY TRAINING

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Research Requirement:

Deputy Chief of Staff G-1 (DCS, G-1) directed ARI to determine, based on an examination of a newly accessed Soldier granted religious accommodations (uniform/grooming standards), the effect of specific religious accommodations (RA) on: (a) attaining individual Soldier skill/task proficiency, (b) individual health and safety, and (c) unit cohesion, morale, good order and discipline in Basic Combat Training (BCT) and Advanced Individual Training (AIT). Case study began upon Soldier's arrival at BCT on 2 September 2010, and concluded upon his graduation from AIT on 1 April 2011.

### Procedure:

The U. S. Army Research Institute (ARI) researchers observed transition events in the Reception Battalion and training events previously selected by the DCS, G-1 and the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), Deputy Commanding General (DCG) – Initial Military Training (IMT) throughout BCT and at the end of AIT. ARI also interviewed BCT and AIT company command teams, administered a unit cohesion and morale survey to the BCT and AIT companies near end-of-cycle, and conducted small group interviews with BCT Drill Sergeants, senior AIT Platoon Sergeants (PSGs), AIT academic instructors, and Soldiers from the identified training companies' Platoons. IAW the approved plan, ARI did not directly observe in-processing or training events during the majority of AIT. However, a researcher observed the Religious Accommodation (RA) Soldier during the final week of the capstone field exercise at Camp Bullis at the invitation of the 232nd Medical (MED) Battalion (BN) Commander (CDR). Performance, injury/illness, disciplinary data was collected directly from the RA Soldier's company command teams. Additional data was collected and analyzed from ARI's ongoing Tier 1 Performance Screening Initial Operational Test and Evaluation project. Researchers also interviewed two Sikh officers, who previously completed training at Fort Sam Houston, about their experiences and lessons learned regarding approved RA. Finally, the RA Soldier was interviewed prior to his graduation from AIT after all small group interviews were completed.

### Findings:

Soldier skill/task proficiency. No overt differences were noted in the interactions between the RA Soldier and other Soldiers, cadre, or staff during observations of BCT. The RA Soldier was one of 156/183 Soldiers to graduate from his BCT company. The 14% attrition rate was consistent with previous rates within this training BN. The Soldier's performance during observed events and key graduation milestones, e.g. record fire and Army physical fitness test (APFT), seemed unaffected by the RA. Researchers noted but were unable to determine if the Soldier's observed hesitancy to aggressively participate in combatives was due to his RA or

personal preference. Although this hesitancy was also exhibited by other Soldiers observed during combatives training, the Soldier's concerns were further explored during his interview at the end of AIT.

Health and safety. Based on training observations and information provided by the unit, the Soldier's RA had no significant impact on his own, or any other Soldier's, health and safety. The Soldier was able to prepare for each day in accordance with the approved accommodations in the same amount of time as his peers under both barracks and field conditions.

Unit cohesion, morale, good order and discipline. Reception and BCT BDE, BN, and company leaders were proactive in informing all personnel of the upcoming RA. This action seemed to facilitate an understanding of the religious accommodation among Soldiers and cadre for ease of assimilation into the unit. Per BN directives, the BCT company CDR met with the Soldier on, at first, a bi-weekly basis to verify his accommodations were being fulfilled and to identify any potential issues. Based on training observations, information provided by the unit, interviews, and analysis of data gathered by an ARI developed Platoon Cohesion and Morale index, the Soldier's RA had did not have a significant impact on unit morale, cohesion, good order, and discipline.

A Drill Sergeant was disciplined in part for derogatory comments made regarding the Soldier's RA during a haircut formation. Following this incident, the company CDR met with the Soldier on a weekly basis until the completion of BCT. No other disciplinary actions directly or indirectly related to his RA were reported.

#### Utilization and Dissemination of Findings:

Results of this effort were provided to the DCS, G-1 in July 2011.

# A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS ON INITIAL MILITARY TRAINING

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## A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS ON INITIAL MILITARY TRAINING

### Introduction

On 30 Aug 10, Department of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff G-1 (DCS, G-1) approved a request for religious accommodation for wearing a turban and retaining unshorn hair, including beard, in keeping with the tenets of the Sikh faith.

### Problem Definition

Department of Defense Instruction 1300.17, Accommodation of Religious Practices within the Military Services, U.S. Army Regulation 670-1, Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia, and Army Regulation 600-20, Army Command Policy, establish policies regarding Soldier hair and grooming practices, as well as the wear of any religious apparel, articles, and jewelry. Under normal circumstances these standards prohibit a Soldier from wearing a turban and keeping his hair, including a full beard, uncut while serving in the U.S. military.

According to a letter (26 Jan 09) to the then Secretary of Defense, Dr. Robert Graves, the Executive Director and the Legal Director of the Sikh Coalition pointed out that Sikhs' external uniform "...unify and bind them to the beliefs of the religion..." and "...remind them of their commitment to Sikh teachings..." (pg 3). As such, they emphasized that uncut hair (kesh) and turbans are key articles of faith and central to a Sikh's identity. They also pointed out that Sikhs proudly served in the U.S. military until a change in policy in 1981 prohibited exemptions to the uniform requirements for visible articles of faith. They cited examples of previous exceptions that showed the turban, hair, and beard requirements of Sikhism did not impede the performance of military duties.

Based on the merits of his appeal, the DCS, G-1 granted the requesting Soldier a religious accommodation to wear a turban, beard, and unshorn hair as an exception to AR 600-20 and AR 670-1. In addition to emphasizing that he had to be held to the same standards as other Soldiers for all aspects of training, the Memorandum (30 August 2010) indicated the Religious Accommodation (RA) Soldier<sup>1</sup> was allowed to wear religious headgear while in uniform, if the headgear met these conditions:

- Turban will be subdued in color (black)
- Authorized to wear the Army flash with pin on Distinctive Unit Insignia centered on his headgear. No other writing, symbols, or picture are authorized.
- His headgear must be of a style and size that does not interfere with the wear or proper functioning of protective clothing and equipment.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the authors recognize that the uniqueness of this individual case and the level of public media attention focused on the Soldier throughout his initial military training make it exceedingly difficult to protect the individual's identity, the reference "RA Soldier" is used throughout this report whenever original references identified the Soldier by name in order to provide as much protection of the Soldier's identity as possible.

- Authorized to wear a black turban in garrison and will wear the under turban in the field, during physical training, or in a deployed environment.
- The under turban will be subdued in color (black to match the Army Combat Uniform) and size will allow for the wear of the Kevlar helmet or the U.S. Advanced Army Combat Helmet (ACH).
- If the under turban does not allow for the wear of the Kevlar helmet or the ACH, he will be required to remove the under turban when the Kevlar helmet or ACH is worn.
- The Soldier will provide the turban and under turban.

Similarly, the Soldier's accommodation to wear a beard and unshorn hair prescribed that it be neat and well maintained, as well as:

- His beard will be rolled and tied to a length not to exceed 2 inches while in garrison.
- His beard will be rolled and tied to a length not to exceed 1 inch while in the field, during physical training, or in a deployed environment.
- His hair will not fall over the ears, eyebrows, or touch the collar of his uniforms.

### **Technical Objectives**

The intent of this DCS, G-1 directed effort was to conduct a case study of this newly accessed Soldier who had been granted religious accommodations for Sikhism to determine the effect of the approved religious accommodations on:

- The RA Soldier's ability to attain prescribed skill and task proficiencies
- The RA Soldier's health and safety, and
- Unit cohesion, morale, good order and discipline

The case study began upon the RA Soldier's arrival at Basic Combat Training (BCT) on 2 September 2010, and concluded upon his graduation from Advanced Individual Training (AIT) on 1 April 2011.

### **Method**

The U. S. Army Research Institute (ARI) researchers observed key transition events, such as in-processing haircut and initial equipment issue, in the BCT Reception Battalion and training events previously selected by the G-1 and DCG-IMT throughout BCT. Specifically, research team members observed the following:

- Army Values overview
- Team Development Course (TDC)
- Combat Lifesaver (First Aid 2 (Control Bleeding and Treat Burns))
- First Aid 6 (Perform Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation – CPR)
- Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) defense training and NBC chamber exercise
- Initial combatives session

Of these events, the initial overview of Army values and CPR were observed in classroom presentations only.

ARI researchers did not conduct any direct observations of in-processing or training events during the majority of AIT, per the DCS, G-1 and DCG-IMT approved research plan. Performance, injury, illness, and disciplinary data were collected directly from the AIT Company command team. However, at the invitation of the 232nd Medical (MED) Battalion (BN) Commander (CDR), researchers observed the RA Soldier participating in the capstone field exercise at Camp Bullis, TX. These observations were conducted during the final week of the field exercise and allowed researchers to observe the RA Soldier interacting with his fellow Soldiers and cadre under various field conditions.

ARI researchers also interviewed BCT and AIT company command teams, administered a unit cohesion and morale questionnaire (Appendix A) to the BCT and AIT companies near the end-of-cycle, and conducted small group interviews with BCT Drill Sergeants, senior AIT Platoon Sergeants (PSGs), AIT academic instructors, and Soldiers from the identified training companies' Platoons. Additional data was collected and analyzed from ARI's ongoing Tier 1 Performance Screening Initial Operational Test and Evaluation project. ARI also interviewed two Sikh officers who previously completed training at Fort Sam Houston, about their experiences and lessons learned regarding approved RA. Finally, ARI interviewed the RA Soldier prior to his graduation from AIT after all small group interviews were completed.

## Measures

**Cohesion and Morale:** A measure of unit cohesion was adapted for use in the BCT/AIT environment from an existing instrument used in previous ARI research (Mael, 1989; Siebold, 2007; A. Hunter-DeCostanza, Personal Communication, 8 September 2010). A measure of morale was developed by the research team to capture BCT/AIT Soldiers' beliefs about the positive significance of their decision to join the Army as well as the impact they believe the decision has had on their current self-concept, personal growth (in training), sense of purpose, and future career opportunities (beyond training).

### **Tier 1 Performance Screening Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (Tier 1):**

Beginning in May 2009, the Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System (TAPAS), a non-cognitive test, has been administered to all Tier 1 Non-Prior Service (NPS) applicants testing on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) at Military Entrancing Processing Stations (MEPS). Findings demonstrate that ARI's non-cognitive measures add to the capability of the ASVAB and high school diploma for predicting "can do" performance (e.g., course grades, job knowledge test scores), "will do" performance (e.g., teamwork, Army physical fitness test (APFT), disciplinary incidents), continuance intentions, and attrition.

## Participants

ARI researchers administered the tailored Platoon Cohesion and Morale Questionnaire and the Tier 1 survey to 160 new Soldiers completing BCT at Ft. Jackson, SC, in October 2010, and to 342 Soldiers completing AIT at Ft. Sam Houston, TX, in April 2011. In accordance with

command limitations placed upon the type of data that could be collected and analyzed during this effort, no demographic data were collected.

### Data Analysis Overview

Standard psychometric procedures were used to determine if the items used on our questionnaires were combining to measure a coherent underlying idea (such as morale or cohesion) and were doing so in a way that would enable us to calculate an internally consistent index. The instruments were found to be very good to excellent according to common scientific/statistical standards. After establishing that our measures were reliable, we moved on to in-depth analyses of the data. The data were analyzed using univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Bonferroni post-hoc tests to identify statistically significant differences between platoons.

### Results

#### Platoon Cohesion and Morale Questionnaire

A standard Likert style scale with response options from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree was used (see Appendix A). Examining the data from the Cohesion and Morale questionnaire administered during BCT, the reliability for the Cohesion index (13 items) was  $\alpha=.85$ , and for the Morale index (14 items),  $\alpha=.83$ . The measures were found to be internally consistent. Univariate ANOVAs were conducted for both the Cohesion and Morale indices. Differences in average scores between companies were examined using Bonferroni post-hoc tests. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Average Scores on the Cohesion and Morale Indices by BCT Platoon*

Index	Platoon (N)	Mean	sd	Range
<b>Cohesion</b>				
2nd (n=52)	3.46	.51	2.23	4.31
3rd (n=56)	3.80	.49	2.92	4.85
4th (n=52)	3.47	.53	2.31	4.54
Overall (N=160)	3.58	.53	2.23	4.85
<b>Morale</b>				
2nd (n=52)	4.07	.51	2.00	4.93
3rd (n=56)	4.19	.45	2.86	5.00
4th (n=52)	4.13	.45	2.79	4.93
Overall (N=160)	4.13	.47	2.00	5.00

The RA Soldier was assigned to 4th Platoon (PLT). While a significant difference in scores was noted in the Cohesion Index [ $F(2, 157) = 7.71, p < .001$ ], it was 3rd PLT that differed significantly from 2nd PLT and 4th PLT. There were no significant differences in Cohesion

between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> PLTs. There were no significant differences in morale noted between the three PLTs,  $F(2, 157) = .88, p = .42$ . We concluded that the overall results from our BCT tailored cohesion and morale indices provided no evidence that the approved religious accommodations had any significant impact on the morale and cohesion of the RA Soldier's PLT (4<sup>th</sup>) compared to the two other PLTs in his training Company.

Examining the data collected using the Cohesion and Morale questionnaire in AIT, the reliability for the Cohesion Index was  $\alpha=.90$  (13 items), and for the Morale Index, reliability was  $\alpha=.91$  (14 items). The terminology used on a few items was changed to reflect differences between the BCT and AIT training environments. Otherwise, the instruments used for BCT and AIT data collections were equivalent. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the AIT data collection.

Table 2. *Average Scores on the Cohesion and Morale Indices by AIT Platoon*

Index	Platoon (N)	Mean	sd	Range
<b>Cohesion</b>				
1 <sup>st</sup> (n=55)	3.58	.55	2.46	5.00
2 <sup>nd</sup> (n=42)	3.84	.60	1.85	4.85
3 <sup>rd</sup> (n=45)	3.46	.62	2.00	5.00
4 <sup>th</sup> (n=61)	3.84	.57	2.62	5.00
5 <sup>th</sup> (n=73)	3.87	.56	2.46	5.00
6 <sup>th</sup> (n=55)	3.76	.65	1.77	5.00
Total (N=331)	3.74	.60	1.77	5.00
<b>Morale</b>				
1 <sup>st</sup> (n=55)	4.03	.49	2.64	4.86
2 <sup>nd</sup> (n=42)	4.11	.58	2.14	5.00
3 <sup>rd</sup> (n=45)	3.86	.64	1.93	5.00
4 <sup>th</sup> (n=61)	4.05	.59	2.21	5.00
5 <sup>th</sup> (n=73)	4.20	.52	2.64	5.00
6 <sup>th</sup> (n=55)	4.10	.54	2.64	5.00
Total (N=331)	4.07	.56	1.93	5.00

Excluding 7th PLT (10 Soldiers in injury, hold over, or chapter status) from the analysis, the overall model for Cohesion [ $F(5,325)=4.12, p=.001$ ] and for Morale [ $F(5,325)=2.24, p=.05$ ] were still significant. Bonferroni post-hoc indicated a difference in Cohesion for 3rd PLT as compared to 4th PLT and to 5th PLT. There was a marginally significant difference ( $p=.051$ ) for 3rd PLT compared to 2nd PLT. There were no significant differences among the other Platoons for Cohesion. For morale, the post-hoc test by Platoon indicated a significant difference only for 3rd PLT compared to 5th PLT. No other comparisons among Platoons were significant. The overall results from our AIT tailored Cohesion and Morale indexes provided no evidence that the religious accommodations had any significant adverse effect on the morale and cohesion of the RA Soldier's PLT (4<sup>th</sup>) compared to the other PLTs in his training Company. Excluding 7<sup>th</sup> PLT, 3<sup>rd</sup> PLT had the lowest average levels of cohesion and morale as measured by our indices.

## Tier 1 Performance Screening Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (Tier 1)

To examine the effect of religious accommodation on performance, Soldier responses to the Army Life Questionnaire (ALQ) and supervisor ratings of performance were examined at the AIT Platoon level.<sup>2</sup> Three Platoons were excluded from analysis due to invariant responding (all items rated '6,' insufficient sample (n=3), or a Platoon of Soldiers in holdover/hold-under status.) Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) yielded an inconsistent pattern of findings regarding Platoon performance differences. That is, while results showed significant differences between the Platoon of interest (i.e. 4<sup>th</sup> PLT) and other comparison groups, these findings were inconsistent across performance domains. Bonferroni post-hoc tests comparing scores on the Performance Rating Scales across platoons indicated that 4<sup>th</sup> PLT scored significantly below the average of all other Platoons on 3 out of the 9 scales (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Averages across Performance Ratings Scales by Platoon*

Performance Rating Scales	Platoon Mean (sd)				
	2 <sup>nd</sup> (n=26)	3 <sup>rd</sup> (n=18)	4 <sup>th</sup> (n=45)	6 <sup>th</sup> (n=29)	Total (N=118)
Effort	4.85 (1.19)	4.89 (.58)	4.29 (.76)	1.55 (2.03)	3.83 (1.82)
Physical Fitness and Bearing	4.77 (.82)	4.72 (.83)	4.13 (.46)	5.00 (1.00)	4.58 (.83)
Personal Discipline	4.81 (.75)	4.33 (.97)	3.89 (.57)	4.41 (.82)	4.29 (.82)
Commitment and Adjustment to the Army	4.38 (.75)	4.39 (.78)	4.13 (.59)	4.90 (.90)	4.42 (.79)
Support for Peers	4.85 (.83)	5.67 (.49)	3.98 (.62)	5.24 (.99)	4.74 (.99)
Peer Leadership	4.69 (.88)	4.11 (.32)	3.96 (.60)	4.10 (1.05)	4.18 (.81)
Common Tasks /Warrior Tasks Knowledge and Skill	4.38 (.90)	4.00 (.00)	3.42 (1.51)	2.93 (2.22)	3.60 (1.58)
MOS Qualification and Skill	4.54 (.71)	4.56 (.62)	3.36 (1.55)	0.28* (1.03)	3.04 (2.03)
Overall Performance	3.15 (.67)	2.78 (.73)	3.02 (.58)	3.10 (.31)	3.03 (.58)

\*Note: Rater for this platoon rated almost all Soldiers as '0' on the scale. For this reason, the .28 mean rating should be interpreted with caution.

As indicated in Table 3, there appear to be consistent differences when comparing ratings of 4<sup>th</sup> PLT to the remaining Platoons. Some of the stronger differences are found in: 1) physical fitness and bearing [ $F(3, 114)=8.84, p<.001$ ], 2) personal discipline [ $F(3, 114)=8.79, p<.001$ ], 3)

<sup>2</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> Platoon was excluded from these and all subsequent analyses, since it was comprised of Soldiers in hold-over status waiting to outprocess.

support for peers [ $F(3, 114)=28.46, p<.001$ ], and 4) military occupational specialty (MOS) qualification and skill [ $F(3, 114)=79.9, p<.001$ ]. However, when focusing on overall performance, which is a composite index across the scales, there were no significant differences between 4<sup>th</sup> PLT and other Platoons in the Company, [ $F(3, 114)=1.69, p=.17$ ].

Data were also collected using the Army Life Questionnaire (ALQ), which measured factors such as affective commitment, reenlistment intentions, and attrition cognition, among other variables. A complete set of reliable data were available for analysis, so 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> PLTs were compared on each of the ALQ factors. The averages for each PLT are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Platoon Averages Across Army Life Questionnaire (ALQ) Scores*

ALQ Factors	Platoon Mean (sd)						Total (N=225)
	1 <sup>st</sup> (n=40)	2 <sup>nd</sup> (n=26)	3 <sup>rd</sup> (n=19)	4 <sup>th</sup> (n=48)	5 <sup>th</sup> (n=55)	6 <sup>th</sup> (n=37)	
Affective Commitment	3.31 (.57)	3.32 (.56)	3.46 (.60)	3.71 (.66)	3.76 (.72)	4.07 (.65)	3.64 (.69)
Normative Commitment	3.52 (.66)	3.49 (.79)	3.93 (.62)	4.19 (.64)	4.19 (.85)	4.22 (.82)	3.97 (.80)
Career Intentions	2.94 (.86)	3.17 (.80)	2.88 (1.01)	2.90 (1.24)	2.99 (1.19)	3.34 (1.06)	3.03 (1.07)
Reenlistment Intentions	3.20 (.67)	3.28 (.76)	3.39 (.94)	3.26 (1.03)	3.39 (1.08)	3.48 (.97)	3.33 (.94)
Attrition Cognition	2.08 (.73)	2.12 (.77)	1.72 (.42)	1.59 (.65)	1.58 (.60)	1.61 (.68)	1.75 (.69)
Army Life Adjustment	3.59 (.76)	3.37 (.60)	3.57 (.75)	3.90 (.68)	4.11 (.56)	4.13 (.65)	3.84 (.71)
Army Civilian Comparison	3.44 (.64)	3.32 (.69)	3.74 (.65)	3.89 (.64)	3.82 (.63)	3.88 (.73)	3.71 (.69)
General MOS Fit	3.44 (.74)	3.41 (.68)	3.68 (.88)	3.83 (1.00)	3.78 (.91)	3.96 (.94)	3.71 (.89)
Needs Supplies Army Fit	3.40 (.56)	3.35 (.54)	3.64 (.63)	3.98 (.62)	3.98 (.61)	4.23 (.61)	3.82 (.67)
Training Achievement	.32 (.53)	.42 (.58)	.05 (.23)	.27 (.45)	.31 (.50)	.35 (.48)	.30 (.49)
Training Failure	.53 (.72)	.38 (.50)	.53 (.61)	.58 (.65)	.78 (.69)	.59 (.93)	.60 (.71)
Disciplinary Action	.30 (.65)	.12 (.33)	.42 (.84)	.58 (.74)	.29 (.66)	.32 (.53)	.35 (.65)
Army Physical Fitness	248.9 (26.8)	246.1 (29.5)	238.7 (34.4)	243.5 (26.8)	240.6 (25.7)	246.5 (31.2)	244.1 (28.2)

Using MANOVA to compare across PLTs on the Army Life Questionnaire, significant differences were found for Affective Commitment [ $F(5, 219)=7.62, p<.001$ ], Normative Commitment [ $F(5, 219)=7.70, p<.001$ ], Attrition Cognition [ $F(5, 219)=5.26, p<.001$ ], Army Life

Adjustment [ $F(5, 219)=7.68, p<.001$ ], Army Civilian Comparison [ $F(5, 219)=4.73, p<.001$ ], and Needs/Supplies Army Fit [ $F(5, 219)=12.56, p<.001$ ]. Bonferroni post-hoc tests were conducted on the ALQ means summarized in Table 4. 4<sup>th</sup> PLT did not significantly differ from any other PLTs on the Affective Commitment measure. However, we found that 4<sup>th</sup> PLT was significantly higher on Normative Commitment compared to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT, and indicated no significant differences with the remaining PLTs. 4<sup>th</sup> PLT had significantly lower Attrition Cognition than did 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> PLTs, and did not differ from the remaining PLTs on this measure. On Army Life Adjustment, 4<sup>th</sup> PLT scored significantly higher than 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT, and exhibited no other significant differences compared to the remaining PLTs. Again 4<sup>th</sup> PLT scored significantly higher on Army Civilian Comparison when compared to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT, but was no different from the remaining PLTs. Finally, with respect to the Needs/Supplies Army Fit measure, 4<sup>th</sup> PLT again scored higher than 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT, but did not differ from the remaining PLTs.

## Discussion

Based on analyses of data collected during this single case study, the identified RA did not have a significant impact on mission accomplishment, military readiness, unit cohesion, morale, discipline, safety, and health. Despite some negative reactions by personnel outside the units, unit leaders and personnel seemed able to assimilate the approved accommodations into their training environment without altering prescribed training requirements and standards.

**a. Soldier skill/task proficiency:** No significant overt differences were reported in the interactions between the RA Soldier and other Soldiers, cadre, or staff during BCT and AIT. Attrition rates were consistent with previous classes for these training companies. Although PSGs rated his Platoon, on average, as the lowest in their physical fitness and bearing, commitment and adjustment to the Army, support for peers, and peer leadership in the Tier 1 assessment, there was nothing to indicate his RA directly contributed to these lower ratings above the performance of individual Soldiers. This data also showed his Platoon's overall average performance rating was comparable to the mean for four Platoons within the AIT company. In addition, training observations, unit records, and interviews provided no evidence that his RA adversely impacted his or any of his peers' performance during training.

When asked about his hesitancy to participate aggressively in combatives training during BCT, the RA Soldier indicated it was due to his concerns about being injured in training. He also indicated that if his turban was to come off during training, he would complete the training, then recover and retie his turban (and hair if needed). He also indicated he would view any deliberate attempt to grab or dislodge his turban as disrespectful and would ask for training to cease. Since this reaction to Combatives training could be more unique to the Soldier's personality and individual preferences than reflecting the probable reactions of other Sikhs in the same situation, it is unclear how to interpret this finding within the context of a single case.

**b. Health and safety:** Based upon information gathered in the interviews and provided by the units, the Soldier's RA had no significant impact on his or any other Soldier's health and safety during BCT and AIT. The Soldier was able to prepare for each day in accordance with the approved accommodations in the same allotted time as his peers under barracks and field conditions. The Soldier's willingness to remove his "kara" (plain metal bracelet worn on the

dominant arm/wrist) whenever needed minimized the risk of injury due to wearing a bracelet during training.

Acting on recommendations and guidance provided by Battalion (BN) and Brigade (BDE) leaders, based on information provided by one of the Sikh active duty officers later interviewed in this effort, the BCT company allowed the Soldier to use petroleum jelly to acquire a good seal on his ProMask during Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) training. No attempt was made to test if he could achieve an adequate seal in the chamber without using petroleum jelly. However, the Sikh officer originally providing the recommendations indicated in his interview that the M45 Pro Mask seals better than the M40, even without petroleum jelly being used.

Although he developed a rash that first appeared under his beard due to an allergic reaction during the AIT capstone field exercise, he was medically evaluated and treated for his condition, then approved to continue training. Reports indicated this was not an unusual event among Soldiers during this field exercise and the physical environment at Camp Bullis.

**c. Unit cohesion, morale, good order and discipline:** BCT and AIT unit leaders were proactive in informing their personnel about the RA Soldier and his accommodations prior to his arrival. This created a level of understanding among Soldiers and cadre that facilitated his assimilation into the training units. His briefings at BCT and AIT were reportedly well received and very beneficial, as they addressed most initial reactions and curiosities Soldiers had about his situation and faith.

A BCT Drill Sergeant was disciplined in part for derogatory comments made regarding the Soldier's RA during a haircut formation. Following this incident, the company CDR met with the Soldier on a weekly basis until the completion of BCT. No other disciplinary actions directly or indirectly related to his RA were reported.

The only other incident that was reported by Soldiers within the BCT company was during the interviews. They described how derogatory comments were directed at the Soldier during Hispanic Heritage events by Soldiers and a few Drill Sergeants outside their BN. While highlighting potential issues when Soldiers with similar RA interact with a larger, less informed base population, his peers' negative reaction to and correction of these Soldiers reflected a high degree of unit cohesion and morale within his company and Platoon. Many of the Soldiers described how they took advantage of opportunities to ask him additional questions about his faith and background praised him for being open to questions, despite knowing he had to have been asked the same things over and over again. One group of female Soldiers (outside his Platoon) indicated they felt honored that their company was selected to have the RA Soldier in it for basic training.

Although not specified in the approved RA, Reception and training units allowed the Soldier to retain and wear his "kara". During his interview prior to graduating from AIT, the RA Soldier reported he also had a small ceremonial sword (kirpan), similar to a charm with no sharp edges, which he wore with his dogtags after returning from holiday leave. He assumed it was appropriate based a conversation with his AIT Reception company command team and his

approved RA, in addition to his observations that other Soldiers frequently wore a cross or other religious artifact with their dogtags.

The training units also approved his request for meditation time once a week (Sunday), although he normally attended a Sikh temple off post during AIT. His BCT unit also approved and supported his request to observe the Diwali ceremony on 5 November (during the capstone field exercise, Victory Forge) requiring a few Sikh passages in Punjabi, approval for calling home and asking his mother to pray for him, and 6 candles to use during a 30 minute meditation (1 candle for each member of his family).

Additionally, there were three significant adjustments to training and normal training operations noted during BCT. First, a member of the company's leadership team arrived early at each training site to ensure civilian and military cadre were briefed about the Soldier's RA in order to minimize their initial reactions to his appearance. Next, although it required the cadre to adjust their manning for some training events, the unit had a Drill Sergeant escort the RA Soldier to any appointment outside the BN to ensure there was no overreaction to the Soldier's RA. Finally, as discussed earlier, the company allowed the Soldier to use petroleum jelly to acquire a good seal on his ProMask during CBRN training without attempting to determine if he could meet training standards and achieve an adequate seal in the chamber without using petroleum jelly.

The only significant adjustment to training noted during AIT was when "treated" for a head wound in the role of a casualty during AIT, bandages were secured over his turban rather than removing it. His field craft instructor indicated this did not significantly deviate from established standards and requirements. Based on the instructor's conclusion, it is not clear if this would present a unique health and safety issue should a Sikh Soldier experience such an injury in the field or in combat.

Based on training observations, information provided by the units, interviews, and analysis of data gathered through the Platoon Cohesion and Morale questionnaire and the Tier 1 assessment, the Soldier's religious accommodations did not have a significant impact on unit morale, cohesion, good order, and discipline. Without additional data indicating the accommodations granted to this Soldier were the primary reason his PLT was rated significantly below average on several of the ALQ and the Tier 1 assessments, it is not possible to clearly determine their exact and unique impact on the ratings.

While there were some reported reactions to his accommodations, especially by Soldiers outside his training companies, most seemed directly related to curiosity and misidentifying him as a Muslim based on his appearance and cultural stereotypes (i.e., only Muslims wear turbans and beards). This reaction is generally consistent with research examining the symbolism of variations in organizational dress and its impact on organizational identity (e.g. Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997), as these Soldiers could have been negatively reacting to the similarity of his appearance with well publicized images of our current adversaries than perceiving his dress and appearance as approved variations of Army standards. The dominant perspective gained from all sources was that the RA Soldier was generally treated the same as other Soldiers during training, other than the overt media interest in his situation.

## **Limitations**

While illuminating in many ways and one of the first systematic case studies conducted in the Army that focused on the impact of religious accommodations, the critical fact is that this is a single case study. As with any case study, any consideration of the conclusions and recommendations emerging from this effort must remain cognizant of that restricted context. Combined with more extensive data, this effort could provide valuable insights into potential reactions and solutions for command teams facing the challenge of integrating Soldiers with similar accommodations.

## **Recommendations**

A consistent point of emphasis raised in all command team, Drill Sergeant, and PSG interviews, was the importance of ensuring training personnel, cadre, staff, and Soldiers were well informed. These individuals stressed that in addition to reviewing the approved RA and how they reflected other approved accommodations, it was essential to provide additional information on the Soldier's background and faith to ease his integration within the company and to minimize the potential for personnel to overreact to his appearance during this time of conflict. Based on the training company's feedback, having the Soldier personally brief the company in the beginning of BCT was especially effective in addressing many of their initial concerns about how other Soldiers would react. As the incident reported during interviews with Soldiers from his BCT company suggests, consideration should be given to addressing how or if personnel outside the assigned unit should be informed about approved RA when they are expected to elicit reactions based on stereotyped threats or images of adversaries.

Interviews with officers, who had previously completed training with similar RA, as well as the RA Soldier, echoed the major themes from interviews with training personnel and Soldiers. It is important to emphasize that the Soldier will be treated no differently, other than allowing for his approved RA, during training. Based on their experiences, such RA should in no way impede a Soldier's ability to meet established Army standards. Although the Soldier, and his unit, should expect a great deal of understandable curiosity early in training or his assignment, this lessens over time as people become more accustomed to his appearance and informed about his background and the tenets of Sikhism.

During his interview, the RA Soldier also emphasized that other Sikhs considering joining the Army must be prepared for the challenges they will encounter in regards to their personal routines. They must not overreact to the constraints placed on them and must learn to manage their time with the prescribed schedules, as there is sufficient time available to do what they need to do. However, given the Soldier's responses when questioned about his hesitancy during combatives training in BCT, it is also important that the training cadre and future Sikh Soldiers understand how they should react should their turban become dislodged, either accidentally or deliberately, during a training event, especially combatives.

Just as with other Soldiers, units should be prepared to address requests for accommodations for unique religious practices and observances. As the units were initially

surprised by his need to wear a bracelet (kara), future accommodations may need to be more specific to ensure required articles of faith, such as the kara and kirpin (sword), are identified and clarified if they will be allowed and in what form. Based upon this single case study, individuals receiving similar accommodations must be willing to remove their kara voluntarily when needed for safety or training requirements.

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## Acronyms

ACH	Army Combat Helmet
AIT	Advanced Individual Training
ALQ	Army Life Questionnaire
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
APFT	Army Physical Fitness Test
ARI	U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences
ASVAB	Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery
BCT	Basic Combat Training
BDE	Brigade
BN	Battalion
C/B	Chemical and Biological
CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear
CDR	Commander
CPR	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
DCG-IMT	Deputy Commanding General, Initial Military Training
DCS	Deputy Chief of Staff
IAW	In Accordance With
MANOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance
MEPS	Military Entrance Processing Station
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
NBC	Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical
PLT	Platoon
PSG	Platoon Sergeant
RA	Religious Accommodation
TAPAS	Tailored Adaptive Personality Assessment System
TDC	Team Development Course
TRADOC	U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command

**APPENDIX A**  
**PLATOON COHESION AND MORALE QUESTIONNAIRES**

## Basic Training Questionnaire: Platoon Cohesion and Morale

Directions: This questionnaire will ask you to rate aspects of your overall initial military training experiences. Please fill in the circle that best reflects the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement. Your answers will be combined with the other Soldiers in your Platoon to develop an overall picture of your unit.

Fill in the following information (DO NOT provide your name on this questionnaire):

Platoon: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Fill in the circle that corresponds to the choice that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Soldiers in this platoon uphold and support the Army values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Drill Sergeants in this platoon set the example for the Army values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Soldiers trust each other in this platoon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Soldiers in this platoon care about each other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Soldiers in this platoon pull together to perform as a team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Soldiers in this platoon can get help from their Drill Sergeants on personal problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Drill Sergeants and Soldiers in this platoon care about one another	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Drill Sergeants and Soldiers in this platoon train well together	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Drill Sergeants in this platoon have the skills and abilities to mentor and lead Soldiers in training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Soldiers in this platoon know what is expected of them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Soldiers in this platoon feel they play an important part in the Company's success	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Soldiers are proud to be members of this platoon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**PLEASE CONTINUE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13. Soldiers in this platoon feel they are serving their country	O	O	O	O	O
14. Soldiers in this platoon have opportunities to better themselves	O	O	O	O	O
15. Soldiers in my unit work well together to accomplish our mission	O	O	O	O	O
16. I feel good about my decision to become a Soldier	O	O	O	O	O
17. I am proud to be part of the Army	O	O	O	O	O
18. Basic training has enabled me to grow as a person	O	O	O	O	O
19. I am looking forward to completing basic training and moving on to the challenges of my MOS	O	O	O	O	O
20. I feel confident that I will do well as a Soldier	O	O	O	O	O
21. I like the challenges the Army presents	O	O	O	O	O
22. I feel I am a good fit with the Army	O	O	O	O	O
23. My current level of morale is high	O	O	O	O	O
24. The current level of morale in my platoon is high	O	O	O	O	O
25. The Soldiers in my platoon are satisfied with their overall training experience during BCT	O	O	O	O	O
26. The Soldiers in my platoon are satisfied with their decision to join the Army	O	O	O	O	O
27. The Soldiers in my platoon work well together to get the job done	O	O	O	O	O

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

## Advanced Individual Training Questionnaire: Platoon Cohesion and Morale

Directions: This questionnaire will ask you to rate aspects of your AIT military training experiences. Mark the box that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Your answers will be combined with the other Soldiers in your Platoon to develop an overall picture of your unit.

Fill in the following information (DO NOT put your name on this questionnaire):

Platoon: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Mark the box that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Soldiers in my platoon uphold and support the Army values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. AIT Cadre and Platoon Sergeants in my platoon set the example for the Army values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Soldiers trust each other in my platoon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Soldiers in my platoon care about each other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Soldiers in my platoon pull together to perform as a team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Soldiers in my platoon can get help from their AIT Cadre and Platoon Sergeants on personal problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. AIT Cadre, Platoon Sergeants, and Soldiers in my platoon care about one another	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. AIT Cadre, Platoon Sergeants, and Soldiers in my platoon train well together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. The AIT Cadre and Platoon Sergeants in my platoon have the skills and abilities to mentor and lead Soldiers in training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Soldiers in my platoon know what is expected of them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Soldiers in my platoon feel they play an important part in the Company's success	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Soldiers are proud to be members of my platoon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**PLEASE CONTINUE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13. Soldiers in my platoon feel they are serving their country	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Soldiers in my platoon have opportunities to better themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Soldiers in my unit work well together to accomplish our mission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I feel good about my decision to become a Soldier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I am proud to be part of the Army	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Basic training has enabled me to grow as a person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I am looking forward to completing basic training and moving on to the challenges of my MOS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I feel confident that I will do well as a Soldier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I like the challenges the Army presents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I feel I am a good fit with the Army	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. My current level of morale is high	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. The current level of morale in my platoon is high	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. The Soldiers in my platoon are satisfied with their overall training experience during AIT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. The Soldiers in my platoon are satisfied with their decision to join the Army	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. The Soldiers in my platoon work well together to get the job done	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION