The Sovereign Military Order of Christ the King

RECRUIT TRAINING

Introduction

SMOCK Boot Camp (formally known as "Boot Camp Alpha" or simply "BCA") is a twelve-week intensive training and formation program modeled after the United States Marine Corps Basic Training. Designed to forge strength of body, mind, and spirit, SMOCK Boot Camp challenges participants to embrace discipline, endurance, and excellence in every aspect of their personal and professional lives.

This demanding program combines rigorous physical conditioning with intellectual and moral formation, cultivating leaders who are resilient, honorable, and service-oriented, and who are committed to defending the honor of Christ, the honor and safety of His Church, and protecting God's people.

The BCA experience is not merely a test of endurance; it is a transformative journey. Participants emerge not only stronger and more capable, but also more grounded in purpose, equipped to serve and lead with confidence in any environment.

BCA is designed to cultivate physical strength, intellectual discipline, moral integrity, and professional excellence through a structured and immersive curriculum. Participants engage in a comprehensive regimen that integrates physical conditioning, theological and ethical formation, etiquette and manners, language studies, defensive tactics, protective services, and emergency medical services (EMS) and paramedic training.

Each element of the BCA curriculum is carefully designed to promote resilience, leadership, and a spirit of service, preparing participants to meet the demands of diverse professional, community, and personal environments and missions with confidence, competence, and professionalism. Graduates of BCA emerge as an elite cadre of well-rounded individuals capable of leading with integrity, compassion, and solid skill sets.

BCA emphasizes the development of the whole person—body, mind, and spirit. Through disciplined instruction, practical training, and communal and spiritual formation, participants are equipped not only with technical and academic skills, but also with the character and composure required of those who lead and serve with distinction, integrity, and honor.

Upon completion of boot camp, graduates will have demonstrated endurance, integrity, and commitment essential to the SMOCK ethos: excellence through discipline, service through strength, and leadership through formation.

Preparing for SMOCK Boot Camp

Squires who have made the decision to join the Professed Corps of the Sovereign Military Order of Christ the King, once professed as Knights of Obedience, are required to undergo a twelve-week intensive training program (boot camp).

Secular members of the Order, who have attained the rank of Knight of Obedience, may choose, if their life obligations permit, to undergo boot camp training.

All Knights, whether professed or secular, who aspire to become Knights of Honor and Devotion (also known as Knights of Distinction) or who wish to join the Noble Guard, or who wish to become armed Knights Defenders, MUST undergo and successfully complete Boot Camp.

The intensity and comprehensiveness of SMOCK Boot Camp is on par with that of the United States Marine Corps; more challenging, both physically and mentally, than any other personal training program you can imagine. There are more than 70 training days in a period a little longer than twelve weeks. The more you prepare in advance, the better off you will be.

A significant portion of your twelve weeks at SMOCK Basic Training will be taken up with marching, drill, ceremonies, and standing in formation. Your arms will thank you if you take some time before arriving at boot camp to study about and practice the basics of the drill. It is

also a good idea to start ahead of the game by memorizing SMOCK officer and enlisted ranks. While all members of the SMOCK Professed Corps are Knights of the Order, there are administrative and organizational ranks within the Brotherhood of Knights. You will also want to memorize the SMOCK General Orders.

There are seven SMOCK Core Values that will be continually hammered into you during your twelve-week training. You will live, eat, and sleep SMOCK Core Values. Memorizing these seven core values in advance may give you a little extra breather time while others are trying to commit them to memory.

Physical Preparation

Do not forget to work out and prepare physically for the rigors of running, pushups, load-bearing exercises and rucking with 40-50 pounds in a backpack for as much as 10 miles. You will have to pass a basic fitness test of pushups, sit-ups, and a 3-mile run as well as an advanced SMOCK Readiness, Endurance and Fitness Test that involves some new exercises such as deadlifts, a 250m (drag, carry, sprint) shuttle run, hanging knee ups, an overhead medicine ball power throw, T-pushups, and another 3-mile run. If you are unable to perform basic exercises, you may spend a significant amount of time in the physical conditioning platoon, or PCP.

What to Bring

Do not bring anything with you except your important papers (such as driver's license, social security card, medical cards, and banking card) and the clothes on your back. Everything you need will be issued to you, including personal hygiene items and letter writing supplies.

Over-the-counter medication is not allowed in basic training. If you bring any with you, it will be taken away. All prescription medication will be re-evaluated by the Medical Director and Chief Physician of Boot Camp Alpha.

All tobacco products are forbidden, and smoking is prohibited to all Knights and recruits.

Do not bring your cell phone, computer, iPad or other electronic device with you. If you do, these items with be taken from you at intake processing and secured for the duration of your training.

Reception Battalion

Upon your arrival at Boot Camp Alpha, you will begin the process of intaking. It is important that you arrive at recruit intake and processing ON TIME. Tardiness is not tolerated. If you are told in your orders to be at the processing center for a 0700 or a 2300 intake and processing appointment, you better be there on time. If you miss your appointment without good and verifiable reasons, you will be automatically terminated and will not be eligible to reapply to the Order for six months.

You will most likely begin the process late at night or in the early morning hours. Expect to be up the entire first night and all the next day.

You will spend between five to seven days in Receiving. While in the Reception Battalion, you will get your shots, process your paperwork, be issued your uniforms, and that very favorite of all -- the haircut. Between times, you will go to chow (three times per day), and you will wait. You will know your group is getting close to getting out of Purgatory when the Drill Sergeants start to notice you.

The good news is that in processing the Drill Sergeants do not yell at you (that much) except for the ones assigned to test you with the Initial Physical Fitness Test (IPFT). If you fail this test, you will get to spend some time in a remedial physical conditioning platoon (PCP) where brand-new Drill Instructors get to practice on you for a while. To pass (and avoid the Physical Conditioning Platoon) recruits are required to do two dead-hang pull ups, 44 crunches in two minutes, and a 1 ½ mile run in 13 ½ minutes.

During your first couple of days of basic training, you will undergo a complete medical examination. You will also be given nine shots: Adenovirus, Types 4 and 7; Influenza (flu shot), Pneumonia; Measles; Meningococcal; Mumps; Polio; Rubella; Tentanuis-Diptheria; and Varicella. If you have already received these shots, you must provide documented proof that you have received them. If you have not received one or more of the shots listed, you will be given them.

Refusal to be vaccinated will result in dismissal/discharge from boot camp. The COVID-19 vaccine will not be administered, unless specifically requested by the recruit.

Recruits will also be given an eye examination. If you require glasses to have 20/20 vision, you will be given a pair of basic black frame eyeglasses with the appropriate prescription lenses. These will be provided to you at no cost. These will be the only glasses you may wear while at basic training. However, if you do not need glasses to see, you will not be required to wear them. Once you graduate from basic training, you can wear your civilian glasses again, insofar as they conform to SMOCK military dress and appearance regulations.

BCA has a strict drug testing policy and compliance protocol. All recruits will be subject to an initial drug screen during processing. If you test positive for drugs at induction, you're out! There is no second chance. BCA administration may allow you to retest after thirty (30) days if you tested positive for marijuana, but the chances are slim, even in New York State where BCA is located and recreational marijuana use is legal.

If you test positive for any drug(s) other than marijuana, you will be discharged from training and be barred from entry into the Order. If you test positive for marijuana, you will be sent home and told to return in thirty (30) days. If you still test positive, you will be sent home and told that you may reapply to the Order in twelve (12) months.

The use of marijuana for medical purposes must be evidenced by appropriate and verifiable documentation.

While at BCA, all recruits will be subject to drug testing during their twelve weeks at Boot Camp. During boot camp, drug testing occurs in two ways: individual and unit random testing and probable cause testing. If you fail a drug test, you'll be sent packing! There is zero tolerance for drug use in SMOCK.

After your stint in Receiving, you will be transported to your new home to meet your Senior Drill Instructor and his two assistants.

The First Few Weeks After Reception

From Week One to Week Three. The first thing you will notice about your new drill sergeant is that he appears to be a different species from the ones hanging around the Reception Battalion. He will appear to be much larger, much meaner, and very much louder. SMOCK Drill Sergeants absolutely love push-ups. "Drop and Give me Twenty" is a favorite phrase (shouted, of course).

On this first day, pretty much everyone will get "dropped." You will be dropped individually, in pairs, and as an entire platoon. Consider it time to work out and relieve some stress.

Week One of basic training is called “forming.” The Drill Instructors form recruits by a process known as TOTAL CONTROL AND IMMERSION. Total control is where Knights only do what they are told to do by their Drill Sergeants. During this period, recruits learn the basics: how to march, how to wear and care for their uniforms, and general military and ecclesiastical etiquette and discipline, This period allows recruits to adjust to the recruit training way of life before the first actual training day.

During the first week, you will also start Physical Training, which usually takes place at 5:00am. The typical day throughout Basic Training runs from 0430 to lights out at 2100 (9:00 PM).

The first few weeks of Basic Training are definitely NOT the time to find a better way of doing things. Knights arrive at the Basic Training Unit from the Reception Battalion and are immediately immersed in an environment where every move they make is scrutinized by the Drill Sergeant.

During the first week or so, nobody will be able to do anything right. However, by the end of the first week, you will be able to do what you are told, when you are told, and exactly how you are told to do it. The word, "why?" will be surgically removed from your vocabulary before that first week is finished.

Total Control continues the second week, along with courses on SMOCK Core Values (including classes on sexual harassment and race relations), and other military and church related subjects (self-defense, first aid training, protection services training, language, public speaking, theology, and etiquette, etc.).

During the second week is also where you get to practice hacking, coughing, and crying in the "Gas Chamber." This normally occurs in the afternoon, shortly after lunch. No matter how hungry you are that day, eat a very light lunch. While in the chamber, you will take your mask off two times (once, you merely lift the mask to state your name, rank, and identification number). The second time, if you can get away with keeping your eyes closed and not breathing this nasty stuff, go for it. However, it is far more likely that the Drill Sergeant will make sure you open your eyes and take at least a small breath before you are let out of the chamber.

During the final week of Phase I, the Drill Sergeants will (very slowly) start to move the emphasis of training away from the individual, to "team." You will be assigned a "Training Buddy. Your Training Buddy is like your Siamese twin. You will go everywhere and do everything together. Of course, as with all weeks, physical training and drill continue during week three.

During weeks 4-7, you will spend most of your time learning various skills. You will learn the traditions and customs of the Orthodox Catholic Church. You will also begin your language studies.

You will be required to learn at least one of the following languages: Greek, Russian, Arabic, Ukrainian, Romanian, Albanian, Georgian, Polish, or Serbian. In addition, all recruits are required

to learn Latin, Hebrew, Italian, Spanish, and French. At the end of their first year as a Knight of Obedience, Knights are expected to speak the mandatory languages of Italian, Spanish, and French and their one selected language fluently. The language requirement will be adjusted for those recruits who speak one or more of the languages listed.

Sometime during the 8th week, you will notice that the Drill Sergeants are not yelling as much as they used to. In fact, at times, they seem almost human. You will continue daily PT, as well as practice basic drill and ceremonies, and continue your academic, language, social, and theological studies.

Weeks 8 and 9, while challenging, will be the most fun you will have during boot camp. During Week 10, you will take your final PT Test. The Final PT Test consists of the Standard SMOCK Annual PT Exam. You will need to score at least 150 points to pass Basic Training.

This will be your time in the desert. You will learn how to set up tents, go on night patrols, and perform night operations. You will also learn to appreciate the dining hall, as all your meals in the field will consist of dried food and fasting according to the monastic practice of xerophagy.

Week 10 of Basic will culminate with the field training exercise (FTX) with a special tactical field exercise. Recruits then go through Victory Forge, a final three-day field journey prior to graduation. This exercise ties everything you have learned in Basic together. The Drill Sergeants will advise (and keep you from getting hurt), but tactical decisions will be made by the platoon leaders and squad leaders. At the end of the Field Event, you will return to a short, informal ceremony marking your transition from recruit to Knight of Service.

The Final Week (Week 12) is spent preparing for the graduation ceremony. Basic training in SMOCK is designed to lay a foundation for discipline and for living the life of a strong, genteel, and chivalrous gentlemen and warrior. Your real training, however, will begin after basic when you transition to Advanced Individual Training (AIT).

Drill Instructors

SMOCK Drill Instructors never use profanity or utter insults, nor are they allowed to touch a recruit in any manner (other than for safety reasons). So, how do they maintain discipline? It may be by forced workouts like pushups, sit-ups, or running. The offending recruit may have to shine the boots of his fellow recruits in the platoon for one or more days. He may lose his privileges for a time. Or he may be "quarter-decked."

Drill Instructors work in teams of three. The Senior D.I. gives most of the commands and orders. The second hat singles out those men who seem to be having problems, and the third hat administers the physical discipline, known officially as IPT (Incentive Physical Training), unofficially as "quarter-decking."

IPT consists of prescribed exercises (a maximum of five minutes outside "the pit,", no maximum inside) Exercises one can expect if one is "quarter-decked" are: bends and thrusts, leg lifts, side lunges, mountain climbing, running in place, side straddle hops, pushups, and prostrations (done in the chapel). Drill Instructors use a combination of individual and group IPTs to keep the platoon on its toes.

Physical Training

Almost every single day of SMOCK boot camp, a recruit will experience and undergo Physical Training (P.T.). This normally consists of six limbering exercises, followed by the "daily dozen" (side straddle hops, bends & thrusts, rowing exercise, side benders, leg lifts, toe touches, mountain climbing, trunk twisters, push-ups, bend and reach, body twists, and squat benders), up to 15 reps each, and up to three sets of each. It is in addition to required runs and long-distance marches.

Recruit training uses a progressive physical training program, which builds up recruits to SMOCK Standards. Recruits will experience Table PT, a period of training in which a drill instructor leads several platoons through a series of exercises while he stands on a table. Recruits will also run, either individually or as a platoon or squad. Other PT consists of obstacle courses, circuit courses, and conditioning marches.

Drill

In SMOCK Boot Camp, you will start drill almost immediately. A few hours studying basic drill and ceremony will help immensely.

As part of Drill, you should memorize the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, The Lord's Prayer, the Oath of Fidelity to Christ the King, the Prayer of the Order, The Hymn of the Order, The Eight Core Values of SMOCK, the SMOCK Officer Rank, and the Eleven General Orders for a Sentry, and the SMOCK Code of Conduct.

If you do not know how to swim, try to learn before you leave for boot camp. Before you graduate, you will have to demonstrate basic swimming skills.

Sleep and Free Time

In addition to eight hours of sleep, you will get some free time each day. The purpose of free time is to allow recruits to read, write letters, watch a little television, play pool, to socialize and bond with other recruits, and to take care of other personal needs. It is a period when no training is received by recruits, and no instruction is conducted by Drill Instructors.

Free time is intended to be a relief period from the close, constant association for both the recruits and DIs and to take care of personal hygiene and other personal needs. The SMOCK Training Regulation requires the DIs to give recruits one hour of uninterrupted free time each evening, beginning the first training day while in garrison Monday through Friday. There is no training at all on Saturdays or Sunday but attendance at divine services on both days is mandatory for all recruits.

Company commanders are to authorize free time between the hours of 12:00 noon and 4:00pm on Saturday and from 1:00pm to 8:00pm on Sunday. Recruits may not leave the garrison between the hours of 12:00pm and 4:00pm on Saturday.

Commanders may grant recruits leave to be off the garrison grounds between the hours of 1:00pm and 7:00pm on Sunday. If leave permission is granted, recruits must be accompanied by a Professed Knight. However, company commanders may also suspend free time for recruits because of punishment imposed by administrative or legal proceedings.

If a boot camp cycle takes place during the first week of Great Lent, Holy Week, or Bright Week, the training periods are adjusted, as during these weeks recruits will undergo spiritual exercises and attend Divine Services. Bright Week is a free week, an off week for recruits. After Paschal Vespers on Pascha, recruits may leave the garrison for a week of vacation. They must return to the garrison by 5:00pm on St. Thomas Sunday.

Divine Services

All recruits are required to attend daily Divine Services as well as Great Vespers or Vigil on Saturday evening and Matins and Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. In addition, all recruits are required to attend Divine Services on the eves and mornings of the Great Feasts of the Church.

On such days, from Great Vespers on the eve of the feast until 0500 the day after the feast day celebration, there is no training or instruction. While these are off days, recruits may not leave the garrison, however, from 1:00pm to 5:00pm, family members of recruits are invited and welcome to visit and join the Knights for "Family Day."

Each day begins with Matins and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Vespers is celebrated in the late afternoon, and Compline closes the day at around 8:00 pm

If boot camp takes place during Great Lent, classes and training are suspended during the first week. During the first week of Great Lent, recruits participate in a weeklong spiritual retreat. This retreat is comprised of spiritual exercises, lectures, charitable works, attendance at Divine Services (Matins, Presanctified Liturgy, the Great Penitential Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, and the Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos).

Similarly, recruits immerse themselves in the liturgies and other events of Holy Week, during which time all training is suspended.

Graduation

The culmination of twelve weeks of rigorous training at boot camp is marked by the solemn and splendid celebration of Graduation Weekend, a time of prayer, pageantry, and thanksgiving. Traditionally held on a Sunday, the festivities begin the evening before, when the entire community gathers to celebrate the Festal Vigil of the Lord's Day. This sacred service sets the spiritual tone for all that follows. During the Vigil, the bishop blesses the medals, swords, and insignia that will be presented at the next day's ceremony—symbols not only of achievement, but of sacred duty and lifelong commitment.

Graduation Day itself dawns in the beauty of worship. The morning begins with Matins and the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, celebrated with full solemnity and thanksgiving. Following the Liturgy, the community assembles once more for the Graduation and Investiture Service, a ceremony conducted with great dignity and splendor.

Clad in their full-dress uniforms, the graduates approach the bishop and the senior officers of the Order one by one. There, they receive the bishop's blessing and are formally invested with the insignia of the Order, marking their acceptance into a lineage of honor and service. Each graduate then makes a Profession of the Orthodox Catholic Faith and solemnly swears an Oath of Fealty—pledging their strength, faith, and life itself to the defense of Christ, His Church, and His people.

When the last blessing has been bestowed and the ceremony concludes, all return to the church for a Service of Thanksgiving, offering praise to God for His grace and guidance throughout the journey. The weekend reaches its joyful conclusion with a Grand Banquet, where graduates, families, and friends gather in fellowship to celebrate not only achievement, but the beginning of a life dedicated to faith, courage, and service.