



Sgt. Maj. Ron Culbreath, chief of the Sergeants Major Branch at U.S. Army Human Resources Command at Fort Knox, Ky., describes the assignment process for sergeants major and command sergeants major. (Photo by Martha C. Koester)

HRC Refines Army's leadership Mold of the Future

By Martha C. Koester

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In this era of Army transition, noncommissioned officers at U.S. Army Human Resources Command at Fort Knox, Ky., are on the front lines in determining the right Soldier for the right unit at the right time. With new career tools and processes on the way, Soldiers will be better prepared for what lies ahead by taking ownership of their records now, said Sgt. Maj. Jonathan A. Uribe-Huitron, chief of the Enlisted Promotions Branch at Human Resources Command. That means noncommissioned officers must take responsibility for ensuring that their records are correct and current.

The Army's promotion system is the Army's way to shape its future leaders, Uribe-Huitron said. "By following the leader development strategy, the U.S. Army Human Resources Command wants to guarantee that

leaders have a certain level of knowledge, experience and training for their skill set," he said.

However, if Soldiers are wondering what they need to do in order to improve their chances for promotion, Uribe-Huitron said it's all outlined in DA Pamphlet 600-25, the NCO Professional Development Guide. "[It tells the Soldier] that they should have completed X, Y and Z in military education; in civilian education, they should be doing this; as far as key positions, they should have done that; and so on, and so on," he said.

Soldiers in competition

Because vacancies may be limited in some career management fields within the evolving Army, flexibility is important for Soldiers at any level, said Sgt. Maj.



Sgt. Maj. Felix RamosRosario (left), HRC's Command Management Branch sergeant major, urges the senior enlisted population of the Army to remain flexible when competing for promotion. Sgt. Maj. Rodney Allen, former senior NCO at HRC's Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate, says programs such as Centralized Selection Lists, the Qualitative Management Program and the Qualitative Service Program are going to have a significant impact on Soldiers. (Photo by Martha C. Koester)

Felix RamosRosario, sergeant major of the Command Management Branch at HRC.

In fiscal year 2015, which begins Oct. 1, the Army is due to begin an initiative in which sergeants major wishing to serve at the command sergeant major level will have one opportunity to serve at the battalion level and one opportunity to serve at the brigade level. As an exception, there are additional opportunities to serve at the command sergeants major level, but only at installations where the mission is to train battalion command sergeants major and to set the conditions for units to deploy successfully. Such positions are located at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.; Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La.; Joint Multi-national Readiness Center in Grafenwöhr, Germany; and 1st Army Division East and Division West. Some NCO academies also require this second-time exception.

After filling the brigade and battalion positions at the command sergeant major level, sergeants major are then eligible to compete for nominative positions, may be assigned in other broadening type assignments or may elect to retire. In years past, command sergeants major were selected for up to a third or fourth battalion or up to a second or third brigade.

"The [one battalion, one brigade] concept promotes competition," RamosRosario said. "The limited vacancies make it a lot harder for individuals to get an opportunity to serve at the command sergeant major level"

Though the Army is downsizing, opportunities still exist and the Army leadership strives to put the right person in the right place at the right time, said Command Sgt. Maj. Charles E. Smith, command sergeant major of Human Resources Command. Competition counts, and "that's why Soldiers always have to stay a little bit ahead of their peers," Smith said.

NCOs wishing to compete at the senior-most level should know that remaining flexible regarding their career options will go a long way, officials said.

"The best advice I can give is to remain flexible when competing because the No. 1 message is that serving as a command sergeant major or a sergeant major in a key billet, at any level, any location, in any unit across the Army is an extraordinary privilege and honor," RamosRosario said.

Maintaining updated records

The biggest issue affecting NCO promotions that regularly challenges HRC branches such as the Enlisted

Promotions Branch is that NCOs are not doing their due diligence to update their records, Uribe-Huitron said.

“NCOs seemingly wait until the last minute to update their records, and there’s a specific calendar [for semi-centralized promotions to sergeant and staff sergeant] that we have to follow,” Uribe-Huitron said. “Everything has to be updated by the eighth of the month because we pull an order of merit list. . . . We’re not looking on the ninth, the 10th, the 11th. [We have a certain amount of time] to do the various processes so we can meet the Army requirements.”

Soldiers must update their records thoroughly and not at the last minute, Enlisted Promotions Branch officials urge. Soldiers often wait until the day eligibility closes, which does not allow enough time for a thorough review, officials say.

Where enlisted promotions are concerned, it’s all about ensuring data accuracy, Uribe-Huitron said. Soldiers competing for senior NCO positions in the Army can be derailed by an out-of-date record.

“A Soldier should always continue to have his or her records updated, because when you’re competing for a brigade command sergeant major position . . . we are looking for key indicators,” RamosRosario said. “There are Soldiers in our inventory who have failed to keep their records updated [with requisite skill identifiers], and we could not identify them to either be eligible or to compete for a brigade.

“So, it never ends. It doesn’t matter how long you have been in the military – even if you are trying to transition out and complete your certificate of release or discharge, or if you need to update Exceptional Family Member Program paperwork. Updating things like that are critical so we can manage who is eligible for what board, where we can assign a Soldier post-board, etc.”

The right Soldier for the job

Dealing with the senior enlisted population, the Sergeants Major Branch at HRC follows a professional development road map to ensure that the right sergeant major is going to the right formation at the right time, said Sgt. Maj. Lon Culbreath, chief of the Sergeants Major Branch at HRC. In developing the future leaders of the Army, branch officials know that, though Army readiness takes priority, it doesn’t have to be at the expense of the service member and his or her family’s preferences.

“In the career branches, you have to set Soldiers up for their next promotion; you have to set them up for their next school, whether it’s going to be Drill Sergeant School or to keep them competitive in the Army,” Culbreath said. “In the sergeant major arena, you have to balance Army readiness a lot more with Soldier preference because for a lot of these Soldiers, it’s their last assignment.”

Plans are in motion to downsize the Army’s active-duty force from 510,000 Soldiers to 450,000 by 2015, and positions Armywide are at a premium.

“As we complete the Army structure and we reduce our force, certain positions and certain units are going away,” RamosRosario said. “So, we have reduced the number of opportunities [sergeants major can] serve at a particular level, whether it is battalion or brigade. There are opportunities to serve, but they are few and far between.”

Along with tools such as promotions and the centralized selection list process, the Qualitative Management Program, or QMP, and the Qualitative Service Program, or QSP, will help to shape the future of the force.

Soldiers must make sure their NCO Evaluation Reports have quantifiable bullet comments and substantive information that set him or her apart from their peers, said Sgt. Maj. Wayne A. Penn Jr., sergeant major of the Transition Branch at HRC.

“Under QSP, the Army is really looking to retain the best of the best of the best,” Penn said.

As the Army transitions to a smaller force, its focus will remain on the business of building strong leaders, HRC officials said. Though some senior NCOs may face involuntary separation through a number of tools, Soldiers are advised to remain competitive and flexible under the Army’s leader development strategy.

“Every decision that a Soldier makes should be a calculated one,” RamosRosario said.

“At [HRC], we have a very huge mission, and our mission is very important because we affect many Soldiers,” said Sgt. Maj. Rodney Allen, the former senior NCO of the Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate at HRC. “As the Army prepares to draw down, programs, such as CSL, QMP, QSP, are going to have an impact on Soldiers. [At HRC,] we strive here to make sure that we’re making the best decisions, using the most extreme precision that we can to guarantee we put the right person in the right place at the right time.”

Tips from the Enlisted Promotions Branch

More than 26,000 telephone calls and 40,000 e-mails are answered each fiscal year at the Enlisted Promotions Branch at U.S. Army Human Resources Command at Fort Knox, Ky., said Sgt. Maj. Jonathan A. Uribe-Huitron, chief of the Enlisted Promotions Branch at HRC. The branch helps contribute to Army readiness by providing the Army with a system for Soldier advancement, which ensures a continuous supply of well-trained people to fill vacancies of the next higher grade. Branch personnel works to ensure the Army has a fair and equitable system that is consistently merit-based. Noncommissioned officers may reduce the likelihood of their promotions being hampered by keeping the following tips in mind. ■

Junior Enlisted Promotions

- Boards convene as early as the 20th of the month preceding the board month and are completed no later than the fourth day of the board month. The president of the board is a command sergeant major or sergeant major unless the membership consists of both officers and NCOs, in which case the president will be the senior member.
- Leaders should assist Soldiers in reviewing their promotion point worksheet, or PPW, and enlisted record brief, or ERB, for accuracy. Soldiers must be integrated onto the PPW by the eighth day of the board month.
- It is the Soldier's responsibility to ensure that his or her record is current, that all required updates are complete and that the information is accurate in the ERB and the PPW.

Senior Enlisted Promotions

- Soldiers' eligibility for promotion consideration is based upon the parameters established by the Army G1.
- Promotion eligibility will be announced in a military personnel, or MILPER, message, which will also include the parameters for the board.
- Who is eligible for promotion is determined by a query of the electronic records in the Total Army Personnel Database, or TAPDB, or the Total Army Personnel Database Reserve, or TAPDBR.
- If a Soldier's electronic record is found to be incorrect, it will not be pulled into the eligible population. It is the Soldier's responsibility to notify the Enlisted Promotions Branch as stated on the MILPER message.
- Soldiers must read the MILPER message to ensure that they meet eligibility requirements.
- Soldiers may access their My Board File using the link cited in the respective MILPER message. If a Soldier

cannot access their board file, this means that the Soldier's records indicate that they are ineligible for consideration based upon the parameters established in the MILPER message. Soldiers who meet the eligibility requirements cited in the MILPER message but who cannot access their board file should contact the Enlisted Promotions Branch.

Source: Enlisted Promotions Branch

CSL selection changes

The Command Selection List system fills the Army's brigade- and battalion-level command sergeant major and sergeant major key billets with the Army's best-qualified senior noncommissioned officers.

Beginning in fiscal year 2016, command sergeants major and sergeants major will be required to "opt-in" to compete. This will also mean that they are "all-in" and will therefore compete in all sub-categories in which they are eligible.

Using the command preference designator, or CPD, sergeants major and command sergeants major will rank their CSL sub-category preferences and associated units. The board will create one Order of Merit List for each functional category, of which there are now four: operations, generating, training and key billets. Primary choices are then aligned to sub-categories based on OML order and NCO preferences.

HRC has consolidated its officer and enlisted Command Management Branches. This puts the program management of all CSL billets, boards and slating processes now under the Officer Personnel Management Directorate.

Sources: U.S. Army Human Resources Command, <https://www.army.mil/standto>



<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

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