



Drill Sergeant of the Year competitor Sgt. 1st Class Ryan McCaffrey completes the pushup event of the Army Physical Fitness test at Fort Jackson, S.C. Senior Army leaders urge Soldiers to take on a generating force assignment to remain competitive in the Army, said Command Sgt. Maj. Charles E. Smith, command sergeant major of Human Resources Command at Fort Knox, Ky. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Andrea Smith, U.S. Army)

# Competition Necessary For The Future of the Force, HRC Officials Say

By Martha C. Koester — *NCO Journal*

**A**s the Army downsizes its active-duty force from 510,000 Soldiers to 450,000 by 2015, U.S. Army Human Resources Command's top NCO said it's now more critical than ever for Soldiers to do what they can to stay in the Army.

Decisions on who will stay in the Army will be made using various tools – such as the Qualitative Service Program or QSP, in which NCOs in overstrength and stagnant military occupational specialties will be considered for involuntary separation; the Qualitative Management Program or QMP, which reviews Soldiers' performance and conduct – as well as through natural attrition. But once the target number is reached, does it mean Soldiers can rest assured in their future? Not at all, said Command Sgt. Maj. Charles E. Smith, command sergeant major of Human Resources Command at Fort Knox, Ky. That's when remaining competitive becomes imperative.

“How do you stay competitive? You have got to do things to keep you ahead of your peers, and that's why you have got to continue taking on those exciting assignments, such as the generating force (training units

and schoolhouses, drill sergeants and instructors) and operational Army (all of the combat and combat support units)” Smith said. “The senior leaders of the Army do not want noncommissioned officers or leaders as a whole to just stovepipe – staying in your MOS and going straight to the top. They want you to have a variety of assignments so you can stay more competitive, because the end state is that Army leadership wants to be able to put an NCO anywhere in the Army.”

Broadening assignments are a critical part of the Army's strategy in developing and growing new leaders. In February, Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the Army chief of staff, approved the Strategic Broadening Seminars program, which allows NCOs to attend graduate-level courses at various learning institutions including the Institute of World Politics in Washington, D.C., and the University of North Carolina. The Strategic Broadening Seminars program was set to begin this summer.

“It's very important to [Odierno] and the senior leaders that NCOs are broadened just as much as officers” Smith said. “The intent is that we want [NCOs] to speak



“We as branch managers and the Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate have to take a better interest in ensuring that we are developing those junior NCOs,” said the directorate’s former senior NCO, Sgt. Maj. Rodney Allen, left. (Photo by Martha C. Koester, NCO Journal)

at a strategic level when you are talking to those three- and four-star generals. The bottom line is, with a combination of broadening and staying competitive, hopefully we can have a well-rounded NCO for the future. We want to build the future leaders of the Army.”

However, remaining competitive in the Army won’t be easy, officials said.

“We want Soldiers to continue to take on different assignments,” Smith said. “We want you to continue to exceed physical fitness requirements. We want you to be healthy, and we also want you to continue your educational opportunities. Because again, the Army is looking for that smart person who has all the different abilities and can go out and operate independently.”

### Branch Managers Are Key

While the Army reshapes the force, key personnel at HRC such as branch managers become vital to the mission. The Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate there is working to ensure a balance in assignment operations while the Army downsizes its ranks, said the directorate’s former senior NCO, Sgt. Maj. Rodney Allen, EPMD.

Though the force is being downsized, some elements are being grown, such as Army Cyber Command, which will host newly designated MOSs, such as cryptologic network warfare specialists and cyber network defenders. “One minute we are telling a Soldier, ‘We really need you to be in the Army,’ but at the same time we’re telling them, ‘At this particular junction, we have to downsize,’” Allen said.

EPMD wants to keep Soldiers motivated, Allen said. The Army wants them to stay, but Soldiers are expected to meet and exceed standards, he said.

So, with Soldiers in certain overstrength MOSs being scrutinized, opportunities may exist for them in other

MOSs, and branch managers are available to help Soldiers with the details. For example, Soldiers may reclassify into an MOS that has a critically short supply of personnel, enabling them to remain in the Army as long as the Soldier meets qualifications.

“That’s another thing that branch managers are responsible for – making sure that Soldiers stay competitive,” Allen said. “Because as the Army continues to draw down its size, staying in the Army is going to be very difficult.

If you’re not competitive or willing to take those hard assignments or do those things that set you apart from your peers, then you’re going to find yourself on the low end of the totem pole, and you may be asked to leave.”

Structured Self-Development is another important component in the NCO leader development strategy for Soldiers. Part of remaining competitive means completing SSD requirements on time in order to be considered for promotion. As the Army changes, Soldiers need to stay on top of all qualifications, and they need to make time to get it done, Allen said.

“In my career management field, I had 256 folks who did not get looked at for sergeant first class in this last board because they did not complete one of the Advanced Leader Course [components] or the SSD portion,” said Sgt. Maj. Michael Barbieri, a Military Police Corps branch manager at HRC. “It doesn’t take much to do [to complete SSD requirements]. Like Sgt. Maj. Allen said, you have got to make time and we’ve got to make sure that the leadership is making those Soldiers take those steps.”

“To be competitive, you have to want to be competitive,” Allen said. “You’re going to have to trust that your branch managers have your best interests in mind because there is nothing we can get out of not developing a Soldier in the NCO Corps. The NCO Corps ... is our future. We as branch managers and the EPMD have to take a better interest in ensuring that we are developing those junior NCOs.”

### Assignment Process Perspective

In an effort to better connect with Soldiers, Allen said the Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate took part in an initiative to change the culture of the assignment process. Career-specific sergeants major, such as

Barbieri, were brought in to guide Soldiers and help make decisions in certain career management fields.

These sergeants major can really guide Soldiers and give them the institutional knowledge on how to get ahead, Allen said. He also strongly advises Soldiers to find a mentor.

“Every Soldier needs a mentor – someone who is going to hold you accountable,” Allen said. “If you’re held accountable, then you’re going to perform. That mentor is very instrumental in the development of a Soldier.”

If a Soldier takes all of the necessary steps to remain competitive, it increases his or her chances of staying in the Army. However, every Soldier should know that every MOS is subject to scrutiny through the Qualitative Service Program.

“It’s basically a numbers game with the QSP, based on force structure requirements versus available inventory,” said Sgt. Maj. Wayne A. Penn Jr., Transition Branch sergeant major in the Force Alignment Division. “There are options to reclassify into a critically short MOS, but only for Soldiers in the rank of staff sergeant, who are not eligible for retirement under the Temporary Early Retirement Authority.”

“The QSP and QMP – they’re here, and they’re real,” Allen said. “Soldiers have to understand that everyone is

subject to it. The misconception is that you have to have a bad record [in the Army] to get selected; it’s not the case. If the Army has authorized [fewer Soldiers for a selected position], we have to get rid of [Soldiers]. We have to make that determination of who those Soldiers are, and some of those Soldiers are probably great Soldiers. They’re probably Soldiers who had the mindset to be in [the Army] for 20 years and get that retirement. ... So, everybody is subject to it, from staff sergeant all the way to command sergeants major.”

Unlike the QMP program, which is designed to ensure that senior NCOs continue to serve in a manner consistent with good order and discipline, Soldiers don’t necessarily have to have derogatory information in their records to be identified for the QSP program, Penn said. These could be Soldiers who are otherwise eligible for promotion.

“Their records are good, but we have that imbalance with the number of Soldiers we have versus the number of positions we have,” Penn said. “So, unfortunately, under this program, we are going to have to ask a lot of stellar Soldiers who have done the right thing over the years to leave our Army.”

Penn strongly encourages Soldiers to update their records as often as possible.

“Make sure your NCO evaluation reports contain quantifiable bullet comments and include substantive information that will separate you from your peers,” Penn said. “Because at the end of the day, under this program, the Army is really looking to retain the best of the best of the best.”

Since June 2012, more than 1,200 Soldiers have been identified for involuntary separation through the QSP program, Smith said.

### **Data Accuracy Campaign**

In the Army’s current climate of drawing down, it’s also very important that Soldiers review their records for accuracy and completion, said Sgt. Maj. Myrna Magapan, the sergeant major of HRC’s Army Personnel Records Division. It’s the Soldier’s responsibility to update and review his or her record annually as it may have a significant impact on promotions, selections and assignments, she said.

On average, most Soldiers only have about 50 percent to 60 percent of the supporting documents that belong in their records, Magapan said. Errors in a Soldier’s Enlisted Record Brief involving mailing addresses, awards, overseas service and deployment histories are common. A Soldier’s ERB also offers other pertinent data, such as marital status, awards and assignments information.



Human Resources Command uses road shows to engage the Army community. “We speak to them about where the Army is right now and where we are going in the future,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Charles E. Smith, center, is shown at a road show in Daegu, South Korea. (Photo by Cpl. Dong-weon Kim, U.S. Army)

“It’s [vital] that you have an accurate record because it’s important when considering future assignments, promotion, retention, separation or professional development opportunities,” said Sgt. Maj. Galin Bowens, the sergeant major of HRC’s Field Services. “With the downsizing of the military, it’s very important that you have a correct and accurate record because it’s very competitive out there. You never know what might happen.

“It’s very important [to have all documents in order] if a Soldier’s record is going before a board or if commanders are reviewing a record for future assignment or separation.”

Along with important changes ahead related to the Army’s downsizing is a new NCO Evaluation Report system, which remains a work in progress. The new Officer Evaluation Report was unveiled in April, but the NCOER has been under revision for the past two years, said Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Jackson, sergeant major of the Army’s Adjutant General Directorate. The rating system dates back to 1987.

Though changes in the NCOER may be forthcoming, NCOs are advised to do whatever they can to remain competitive in the evolving Army.

“Soldiers have got to go out there and go get it,” Smith said. “They can’t sit and wait. Wait on it, and someone is going to pass you by.” ■

---



<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>  
<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

