



Recently promoted Sgt. Felipe Zamora, a paratrooper assigned to the 407th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, passes through the archway, symbolizing his induction into the noncommissioned officer corps during an induction ceremony Aug. 27 on Fort Bragg, N.C. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Hull)

Shake-Up In Promotion, NCOPD Policy A 'Step' In Right Direction

By Staff Sgt. Timothy D. Hughes — NCO Journal

The path to promotion in the Army's Noncommissioned Officer Corps has been reshaped as the Army has rolled out its initiative to systematically realign the structure of its "backbone."

Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh recently signed Army Directive 2015-31, which affects Soldiers vying for promotion to the ranks of sergeant through sergeant first class.

The change in the system shifted the synchronization of the noncommissioned officer professional development system and promotion eligibility requirements as part of the Army's Select, Train, Educate and Promote (STEP) program.

"Under STEP, NCOs will have to meet Army standards for the knowledge, skills and attributes for the grade they wish to hold, before they will be promoted," said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Daniel A. Dailey.

"For years, that wasn't the case," said the 15th sergeant major of the Army. "During the height of the deployment years, NCOs could advance with no additional primary military education.

"Under this realignment, we are reaffirming that America's sons and daughters are being trained and mentored by men and women with quantifiable standards of knowledge, skills and attributes associated with the grade and position they hold," he said.

Lessons learned

The change was prompted by the NCO 2020 survey, which was compiled from NCOs throughout the NCO Corps and validated during subsequent studies by the Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership; and the Research and Development Corporation.

“We learned ... that a more rigorous and effective system is needed for developing NCOs today — not based on a desire to separate from past traditions — but instead based on getting back to a focus on building a competent and professional NCO Corps,” said Sgt. Maj. James Thomson, the sergeant major for the Institute for Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command.

According to Thomson, four key roles and competencies of the NCO, both now and in the future, will be to lead by example; train from experience; enforce and maintain standards; and take care of Soldiers, their families and equipment.

“Until now,” Thomson said, “development of NCOs focused on leveraging their experiences in the operational realm and providing individuals with exposure to technical training in the institution.

“Now, following a long period of war and deployments, Soldiers can benefit greatly from a revitalized set of processes designed to shape their professional growth and optimized performance,” he said.

Training

The change in the promotion system will have a ripple effect on how Soldiers are enrolled in NCOPD schools.

“Under the STEP career model,” Thomson said, “HRC will [send only] those selected for promotion to sergeant first class to attend SLC. So the scheduling is going to be, when the E7 list comes out, HRC is going to schedule all those [Soldiers] to go to school.

“Every month, when they get the new list from the E6 board,” he said, “those folks will be scheduled to go to school. We actually think that we’ll gain efficiencies in our school scheduling and attendance processes.”

There will be no new additions to school backlogs as of Jan. 1. because Soldiers will not be scheduled to attend school if they are not in a promotable status, Thomson said. However, there will be a backlog for Soldiers who have not attended schools that will be required for their rank.

“There are some staff sergeants today who have not been to ALC,” Thomson said. “After [Jan. 1], they will be in what we call the ‘legacy backlog.’

“We are going to give every one of those [Soldiers] in that legacy backlog one opportunity to complete their [Professional Military Education],” he said. “If they don’t complete it, if they don’t take that opportu-

nity, they will not have an opportunity to go again, nor will they be competitive for any future promotions.”

The realignment will serve as a potential promotion opportunity for Soldiers who are doing the things needed to qualify for promotion.

“As Soldiers choose not to attend their requisite schooling or meet the prerequisite standards for PME success like [the Army Physical Fitness Test] and height/weight,” Dailey said, “they are self-selecting to be removed from the promotion lists. This will allow those who are committed to the Army profession a chance to demonstrate initiative, and they will be the ones to get promoted.”

The STEP program is one of several ways the Army plans to improve its NCO Corps.

“There is more work to be done,” Dailey said, “including adding levels of PME and adding rigor to the course work in those classes, which also can lead to ultimately more college credits. With these and other advancements in the works, we are on a path to maintain the undisputed title of ‘The Most Highly Educated Enlisted Force in the World.’”

New requirements

Beginning Jan. 1, Soldiers competing for the rank of sergeant must be graduates of the Basic Leader Course and individuals competing for the rank of staff sergeant must be a graduates of the Advanced Leader Course in addition to meeting or exceeding the promotion point cut-off score, which is published monthly. Those who meet point requirements but have not completed school requisites will not be promoted, but will retain their promotable status.

Staff sergeants who are selected for promotion by the fiscal year 2016 Regular Army or Reserve sergeant first class selection board will be required to have completed Senior Leader Course to be fully eligible for promotion, regardless of their sequence number. Soldiers who are eligible by sequence number but have not completed SLC will retain their sequence number, but will not be selected for promotion until they have completed the course.

The realignment will also affect National Guard Soldiers. Those Soldiers selected for higher-grade positions but who have not completed the NCOPD requirements will have 24 months to complete the level of NCOPD required for promotion pin-on or they will be removed from the position that fill.

“One key line of effort for the [NCOPD] is a focus on ensuring that NCOs have exposure to the right types of education and broadening experiences as a part of their career life-cycle,” Thomson said. “Systematic changes to the way the Army trains and develops NCOs are also necessary to achieve strategic goals and objectives the Army has in mind for its operating concept in the future.

“NCOs must become more knowledgeable regarding their role within unified land operations, joint force planning, and the tenets of operational art,” he said.

Additional reading

To read the full text of Army Directive 2015-31, [click here](#).



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