



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
SECRETARIAT FOR DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY SELECTION BOARDS
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FORT KNOX, KY 40122

AHRC-PDV-S

23 June 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR Director of Military Personnel Management, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff G-1, 300 Army Pentagon, Washington, DC 20310-0300

SUBJECT: Field After Action Report – Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Regular Army (RA) and Army Reserve Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Sergeant First Class (SFC) Promotion Board

1. References.

- a. AR 600-8-19, Enlisted Promotions and Reductions, dated 25 April 2017.
- b. Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-25, dated 11 September 2015.
- c. DAPE-MPE-PD, Memorandum of Instruction (MOI) dated 15 May 2017, Subject: FY17 RA and AGR SFC Promotion Board.

2. General: The FY17 RA and AGR SFC Promotion Selection Board convened at the DA Secretariat, Fort Knox, Kentucky on 05 June 2017, to select the best qualified noncommissioned officers for the purpose of promotion to Sergeant First Class (SFC).

3. Board Issues and Observations.

- a. Issue: Files outdated and or missing critical information

(1) Discussion: The SFC promotion board is the first DA select board that NCOs compete for promotion. SSGs must ensure that they certify their board files and verify that all necessary documents are on file and updated. A large number of discrepancies were identified, which may be due to the experience level of the NCOs competing, a lack of mentoring by supervisors, and/or unit HR supervisors not assisting in reviewing files. Some of the discrepancies included missing DA photos, awards on the ERB not matching awards on the DA photo, and a host of errors on the ERBs such as outdated APFT and ABCP data, incorrect or inaccurate duty descriptions and positions, missing combat tour information, and missing military and civilian education information.

(2) Recommendation: Raters and senior raters must take the time to mentor rated NCOs on how to maintain their board files and prepare for promotion boards. Unit HR supervisors should conduct a review of the board files and provide feedback to NCOs and their supervisors on necessary changes and corrections. The NCO

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competing for promotion must be intimately involved and understand that the accuracy or inaccuracy of their board file is a direct reflection of them. Early after being promoted to Staff Sergeant the review process of that Soldier's file should and must begin.

b. Issue: NCOs failing to maintain APFT and or ABCP standards

(1) Discussion: NCOs who consistently demonstrated physical fitness excellence and maintained their weight in accordance with AR 600-9 were viewed favorably and were frequently considered best qualified for promotion and to lead Soldiers. Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) failures and enrollments in the Army Body Composition Program (ABCP) were viewed as unfavorable. NCOERs that reflected the last APFT scores and failures to meet standards in accordance with ABCP requirements assisted panel members in quickly differentiating between NCOs who exceeded standards from those who failed to meet standards. On the converse, many raters and senior raters continued to give favorable ratings as high as Most Qualified to NCOs who failed to meet APFT and/or ABCP standards. This was seen more-so in the technical MOSSs.

(2) Recommendation: Unit leaders must continue to place high emphasis on fitness and ensure their programs lead to improvements. Individual fitness directly impacts individual readiness. Raters and senior raters must consider the total Soldier concept when writing the evaluation of the rated NCO. Leaders must hold subordinates accountable for not meeting standards regardless of rank, duty position, or special skillset they provide.

c. Issue: Senior Rater inconsistencies

(1) Discussion: Although the new NCOER form has drastically changed the way NCOs are rated against their peers, some senior raters send ambiguous messages. Many senior raters failed to provide any comments on promotion potential. Some senior raters expended Most Qualified block checks on NCOs who failed to meet APFT, ABCP, or other standards that were reflected in the values portion or by the rater. On the converse, some NCOs were highly enumerated, but received a qualified block check, notwithstanding the immature profiles of some senior raters, this also delivered an ambiguous message. Many narratives were not clear and concise, which forced board members to attempt to interpret the senior rater's intent. In some cases, derogatory events that occurred and were either founded by investigation or adjudicated with a conviction during the rating period were not reflected on the NCOER by the rater and/or senior rater. Vague senior rater comments such as "promote when eligible" and "promote when ready" were not helpful to the board. Senior raters need to know where the rated NCO currently sits on his or her career timeline in comparison to peers. A recommendation to "promote ahead of peers" is valid if the NCO is in the secondary zone or not yet eligible for promotion. However, to recommend "promote ahead of

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peers” when the NCO is in the primary zone of consideration and is fully eligible does not help to distinct that NCO from the rest of the eligible population. Additionally, many NCOERs were completely out of balance between raters and senior raters. A rater would left justify a Soldier and quantify their performance, but the senior rater would box check them as qualified with no significant comments in the write-up. Conversely, raters would box check Soldiers as straight success, or even a needs some improvement, but the senior rater would list them as most or highly qualified with strong write-ups. While the system is built to allow a rater and senior rater to disagree, when they are written totally opposite each other it calls into question the evaluation. The reality is that many SSG evaluations are written by junior leaders. Both reviewers and senior leaders must ensure that there is professional development of raters and senior raters who do not possess the acumen to clearly articulate an NCOs performance and potential in the form of succinct and well written evaluations.

(2) Recommendation: Senior raters must be cognizant of the rated NCOs career timeline. Senior raters should quantify by ranking the rated NCO against his or her peers and should clearly indicate potential for promotion and education. The best must clearly be distinguished from the rest so the board does not have to interpret the senior rater’s intent. The senior rater narrative should be consistent with the block check, and both the block check and narrative should reflect failures to meet a standard. Derogatory events that occurred during the rating period should be reflected by the rater and senior rater in the block check and the narrative.

d. Issue: DA Photos missing, outdated and or not in accordance with AR 670-1.

(1) Discussion: A large number of missing and outdated DA photos gave the perception that NCOs either did not understand the importance of having an updated photo on file or lacked genuine concern for advancement. Notwithstanding authorized exceptions, rarely was a missing photo accompanied by a letter to the President of the Board with an explanation. Ill-fitting uniforms gave an unprofessional appearance and/or the appearance that the NCO was overweight. Grooming standards on males and females were out of tolerance on several NCOs in areas such as sideburns, mustaches, haircuts, colored earrings, excessive makeup, and hair below the bottom of the collar. NCOs who are not in accordance with AR 670-1 in their DA photo send the message that they are not in accordance with the regulation on a daily basis.

(2) Recommendation: Staff Sergeants should be mentored on the importance of having an updated DA photo that is in accordance with regulations. They must understand that the ownership for the quality of the photo rests with the Soldier. NCOs should prepare themselves appropriately by having another senior NCO assess and provide feedback on their appearance. NCOs should stand at the normal position of attention and stop holding out their arms unnaturally. The NCOs in these positions presented an awkward appearance and the board members easily recognize this.

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NCOs must ensure they are in accordance with AR 670-1 in terms of uniform and grooming standards.

e. Issue: Disciplinary action not annotated on NCOERs

(1) Discussion: Of concern were Soldiers who had derogatory information in their file that was not reflected on the corresponding NCOER for the respective rating period. These NCOERs did not reflect the event, i.e. did not provide comments relating to the infraction, and/or a "no" block check in values and/or "did not meet standards" on the back side of the NCOER. In some cases the opposite was true where a SHARP, alcohol, or disciplinary incident was referenced on an NCOER with a corresponding box check but there was no accompanying supporting documents in the Soldier's unrestricted file.

(2) Recommendation: Raters and Senior Raters must ensure they capture all aspects of a Soldiers performance during the rating period.

f. Observation: Military and Civilian Education

(1) Discussion: Those who consistently pursued opportunities for self-improvement through military and civilian education were viewed favorably by the board. NCOs who demonstrated completing minimal education requirements to become eligible for promotion were viewed less favorably. NCOs with qualifications and certifications such as Master Resiliency Trainers, Equal Opportunity Advisors, Victim Advocates, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Master Fitness Trainers, etc. were viewed as much more competitive and prepared for responsibilities at the next level. Leadership training such as Ranger, Sapper, Airborne, Air Assault, Pathfinder, etc. and membership in professional clubs such as the Sergeant Audie Murphy or Sergeant Morales clubs were also viewed as highly favorable.

(2) Recommendation: NCOs and supervisors should become familiar with DA Pam 600-25 to ensure they understand the responsibilities incumbent with the rank by MOS and understand the appropriate level of military and civilian education that should be completed by rank. It is imperative that supervisors of NCOs afford them opportunities to attend schooling. NCOs should pursue every opportunity for self-improvement to set themselves apart from their peers. Improvement above and beyond what is provided by DA Pam 600-25 is a clear demonstration of exceeding standards.

g. Observation: Letters to the President of the Board

(1) Discussion: A number of Soldiers submitted letters to the president of the board that provided irrelevant information and failed to effectively communicate their message. Some of the letters presented gave a perception that NCOs wanted to explain

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every possible discrepancy in their file whether or not the discrepancy could be explained away with supporting documentation. Letters should address discrepancies that will impact the board. For example, events such as winning the NCO of the quarter/year or being inducted into the Audie Murphy Club should be noted as they are not reflected on the ERB.

(2) Recommendation: NCOs should carefully consider their purpose for writing to the President of the Board and should have senior NCOs or officers review the letter to ensure it appropriately addresses the desired message. Ultimately, it is the NCO's decision on what he or she believes should be directly addressed to the President of the Board and board members.

4. Conclusion or general comments.

a. It is important that senior leaders at all echelons conduct talent management of subordinate leaders to prepare them for future roles of greater responsibility. Commanders and Command Sergeants Major should assist in managing the careers of subordinate NCOs to ensure they are aware of the requirements for advancement. Leaders must take a holistic approach of ensuring a thorough review of an NCO's military file, done early into the NCO's promotion to Staff Sergeant, facilitating dialogue and providing an appropriate career path in accordance with DA PAM 600-25. They should identify talent and potential for promotion to ensure the best are promoted while safeguarding the institution. Raters and senior raters should continue to groom NCOs for senior leadership assignments based on their talents, and mentored on educational goals, to include credentialing. Additionally, it is incumbent upon Soldiers to ensure that any form of possible derogatory information in their file that is related to an incident is concluded to fruition within a timely manner of the incident. Soldiers cannot delay in providing necessary documentation negating the incident if they are found to have not been responsible.

b. Sergeant First Class positions require NCOs to be proficient in their MOS and in the execution of tactical training. They should market their abilities through high performance of their duties, completing and exceeding standards in NCOES schools, pursuing broadening assignments and duties, maintaining high levels of physical fitness, and living in accordance with the Army Values. NCOs who consistently demonstrate a high level of competence in all facets are best qualified for promotion.

c. The new NCOER form shows a sharp contrast from the old form in that senior raters are trending toward more enumerations. Senior raters are also providing clear comparisons between the rated NCO and his or her peers. This, however, is an emerging trend that will continue to develop into the norm over the next few years. Raters and senior raters must understand that they owe it to the rated NCO, as well as to the Army, to provide an honest assessment. A staggering amount of ambiguously

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and poorly written senior rater narratives exist that force board members to interpret the senior rater's intent. Senior raters should clearly communicate an enumeration against peers, evaluate overall performance, and rate potential for promotion and further education in succinct sentences.

d. Derogatory and Disciplinary Data: This "best qualified" promotion board was extremely competitive in each CMF/MOS, which makes it very difficult, but not impossible, for a Soldier to overcome disciplinary or derogatory file information. Depending on each panel member's individual voting philosophy, derogatory information, in some cases, may be overcome with a significant positive trend in performance and potential within the past five to seven years from the derogatory incident.



SEAN M. JENKINS
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