

HEADQUARTERS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Office of Personnel Operations
Washington, D.C. 20310

EPADS

SUBJECT: Staff Study, Command Sergeants Major Program

1. PROBLEM. To improve the caliber and effectiveness of Sergeants Major occupying the top enlisted positions in the major commands of the Army.

2. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM.

a. There are 24 major commands in the US Army; DA, CONARC, ARADCOM, CDC, AMC, STRICOM, STRATCOM, ASA, Intelligence Command, MDW, five CONUS armies, seven major oversea commands, and two oversea armies. Additionally, there are 25 other large commands; US Army Ryukyu Command, five Corps, two Field Forces, and 17 Divisions. Each of these 49 commands is authorized a command Sergeant Major (SGM).

b. Sergeants Major are selected for assignment to the 49 higher commands of the Army by the following methods:

- (1) OPO-EPD nominates several SGMs from which one is selected by the command.
- (2) By-name requests to OPO-EPD from the commander.
- (3) Filling the vacancy from resources within the command.
- (4) Normal requisitioning processes.

c. There are 78 MOS in which an NCO can become a Sergeant Major. In the 24 major commands of the Army, 17 of the command SGMs are assigned in MOS 71L50, Administrative Specialist. In the 25 other large commands, only one 71L50 is occupying a command SGM position. The remaining SGMs possess combat arms or technical MOS.

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

3. DISCUSSION.

a. The Sergeant Major Position

Paragraph 25, AR 600-20 defines the position of Sergeant Major as follows:

"This is the position title that designates the senior enlisted position on the staffs of various commanders. In keeping with the trust, confidence, responsibility and authority bestowed upon this function, the sergeant major should be considered as a key staff member * * * * it is from the sergeant major of a major unit or installation that the activities of the local NCO channel emanate."

b. Duties of a Sergeant Major

(1) DA has not prescribed specific duties for Sergeants Major other than the duties inherent in the above definition. This is appropriate, since specific duties vary with the nature and level of the command and fall within the province of the individual commander.

(2) Basic guidelines on the duties of SGMs must be established so that comparisons can be made. Discussions with officers and NCOs, perusal of published instructions, and consideration of the traditional tasks of SGMs have produced the following:

(a) The Sergeant Major must be concerned in the things that concern his commander, such as operations, training, administration, supply, maintenance, and morale. To carry out his role as chief enlisted advisor to the commander, he must have first hand knowledge of what transpires in the command with respect to these areas of interest. This requires frequent visits to the lower echelons of the command.

(b) He should, by means of the NCO channel of communication, accomplish routine but important tasks and responsibilities defined by the commander.

(c) As a key staff member, he accompanies his commander to subordinate units, and takes an active part in such staff visits.

(d) As the senior NCO of the command, he works closely with other NCOs and EM of the command, keeps his finger on the enlisted pulse, and makes recommendations to the commander when required.

c. Qualifications of a Sergeant Major

(1) The position of Sergeant Major demands that it be occupied by the finest soldier in the command based on experience, dedication and professionalism. These qualities should earn for him the respect of his commander, his commander's staff, subordinate commanders and their staffs, and the other NCOs and EM of the command. Unless such respect exists, the Sergeant Major's effectiveness will be limited.

(2) Discussion with both officers and EM of various grades have produced these desired qualifications for Sergeants Major:

(a) Experience:

- 1 Combat service.
- 2 Service in several areas of the world, including current short-tour service.
- 3 A military background commensurate with the nature and level of the command.
- 4 Extensive troop duty.

(b) Dedication:

- 1 The desire to serve with troops.
- 2 A genuine concern for the men of the command, a willingness to help them with their problems, and the tenacity, diplomacy and understanding necessary to resolve such problems.
- 3 Sharing the experiences of the men in the command, both during and after normal duty hours.

(c) Professionalism:

- 1 Fine appearance and bearing.
- 2 Marked leadership qualities.
- 3 A continual search for knowledge which will assist him in performing his job and serving his command.
- 4 Loyalty and honesty -- both up and down the line.

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

5 The courage to stand up and fight for what he believes is right.

6 Demonstrated ability to do what the troops do, commensurate with his age and physical condition.

7 The ability to separate fact from fiction.

8 The ability to function effectively in his own rank, without resorting to "wearing the rank of his commander."

d. Additional Qualifications for Major Command Sergeants Major

(1) The SGMs of the major commands listed in para 2a above, must be the cream of the SGMs of the Army. Their selection should be based upon the above-listed qualifications plus other considerations pertinent to the high level of the assignment, such as:

(a) Family acceptability in such an environment.

(b) Ability to represent the command in the community with tact and diplomacy.

(2) SGMs assigned to these top level commands should represent the upper four percent of all SGMs in the Army.

e. Shortcomings in Command Sergeants Major

(1) As stated above, Sergeants Major must be the finest soldiers in their commands from the standpoints of experience, dedication, and professionalism. In an attempt to determine if our selection methods have been successful in approaching this objective, the records of 21 major command Sergeants Major were screened against the qualifications listed in para 3c and, in some cases compared with the records of Corps and Division Sergeants Major. Since record screening cannot produce valid data in the more abstract aspects of dedication and professionalism, the measurable qualities of performance of duty and motivation are substituted therefor.

(2) Records of the 21 major command incumbents indicate the following shortcomings:

(a) Experience:

1 8 of the 21 SGMs have never had a short tour, other than World War II and Korea service. 4 others have not had short tours since 1955.

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
4
FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

2 2 of 19 SQMs are Vietnam returnees (this excludes the SQMs presently assigned to MACV and USARV).

3 17 of the 21 SQMs have administrative MOS, and the majority have worked in such MOS for many years. Although their administrative backgrounds may be appropriate for assignment to high level commands, they generally lack the broad military backgrounds which would facilitate their effective usage within the command.

(b) Performance of duty:

1 7 of the 21 SQMs received more than 7 cuts in their last Commander's Evaluation Report (CER). (A "cut" is defined as a CER block left blank, which has higher value than the block in which the "X" is placed. The figures quoted herein refer to the total number of higher-value blocks left blank by both the rater and indorser.) 2 of the SQMs received 14 cuts, 1 had 13 and 2 had 12.

2 10 SQMs were cut for Job Performance and 9 for Job Knowledge.

3 8 of the 21 SQMs received a maximum rating on their last CERs. By comparison, 15 of 19 Corps and Division SQMs received maximum ratings on their last CERs.

4 The 21 SQMs of the higher commands averaged 4.1 cuts on their last CERs. By comparison, Corps and Division SQMs averaged 1.3 cuts.

5 13 of the major command SQMs scored less than 110 on their Enlisted Evaluation Score. By comparison, 9 of the 19 Corps and Division SQMs scored below 110.

(c) Motivation:

1 9 of the 21 SQMs requested troop duty as first choice on their preference statements.

2 Only 3 of the 21 SQMs volunteered for duty in Vietnam.

3 8 of the 21 requested staff duty as first choice.

4 4 of the 21 requested civilian component duty as first choice.

5 Personal discussions, examination of preference statements, and correspondence with most of the major command SQMs indicate

that the assignment desires of most of them hinge principally upon an area of choice, rather than the challenge of a particular assignment. Some of these SGMs own or are buying homes in the vicinity of military stations and their desire to return to, or not leave, these stations overrides all other considerations.

f. Faults of the Selection System

The methods of selection described in para 2b do not provide the best SGMs to the major commands of the Army.

(1) There is no roster of the best SGMs in the Army in existence. Moreover, DA has no means for determining the best qualified SGMs in the Army, since the records maintained are insufficient for this purpose.

(2) Although the by-name request is the most effective of the several selection methods, it often results in assignment inequities and conflicts between commands.

(3) Nominations by Senior Enlisted Control Branch (SECB), EPD-ORO to the gaining command are based upon availability of SGMs for the assignment. SECB nominates "good" SGMs, but can only compare them to the others who are available -- not with all SGMs.

(4) Selection from within the command works well at the lower echelons of command, but seems to be considerably less effective at major command levels (see para 3g).

(5) The normal requisitioning process differs little from the nomination method discussed in para 3f(3) above, and does not provide the best qualified individual.

g. The Command Sergeant Major Gap

(1) As a general rule, Command Sergeants Major of Corps and Divisions are better qualified for their jobs than those assigned to the higher commands. The lower level SGMs have more current short tour experience, get better CERs, and indicate a greater desire to serve with troops.

(2) There are several reasons for this difference:

(a) Incumbents are younger and more aggressive.

(b) They possess combat arms MOS.

(c) They are usually selected by the commanders.

(3) It is logical to assume that many of the outstanding Corps and Division Sergeants Major would perform equally well at the higher echelons of command, but very few have the opportunity to serve at those levels. The most obvious reason for this barrier between the command levels is that the Tables of Distribution of most major commands list the command Sergeant Major position as an Administrative Specialist. As a consequence, the positions are filled with administrative types rather than with combat arms Sergeants Major who have proven their worth at the lower echelons.

(4) Commanders can place combat arms SGMs in the major command slots, if they choose. In recent weeks there have been two requests for such action. This indicates that Command interest will breach the barrier between the higher levels of command. Commanders, not staff officers, should select command SGMs.

h. Utilization of Major Command SGMs

(1) The second part of this problem concerns the effectiveness of the major command SGMs. There are strong indications that, in many commands, the SGM functions principally as a chief clerk, rather than as a key staff member and chief enlisted advisor to the commander. As a consequence, the SGM becomes a mere "figurehead", having little contact with the EM of the command, other than those assigned to the command headquarters.

(2) There are several possible reasons for poor utilization of command SGMs.

(a) Since the majority of the major command SGMs are Administrative Specialists, their commanders may not consider them qualified to delve into operations, training, supply and maintenance matters throughout the command.

(b) The poor quality of some of the command SGMs, manifested by homesteading, little current oversea experience, lack of motivation and dedication, and poor leadership, renders them ineffective as chief enlisted advisors to their commanders.

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

(c) Failure to give responsibility to Command Sergeants Major.

(d) No apparent emphasis by DA on the utilization of Command SGMs. There are only meager guidelines on the duties and responsibilities of Sergeants Major published by DA (AR 600-20).

i. Sergeants Major MOS

(1) As stated earlier, there are 78 MOS in which an NCO can become a Sergeant Major. Below division level, this is completely proper, since the SGM must be a specialist in the operations of the particular command to which he is assigned.

(2) At the higher levels of command (division and above) the need for specialization is supplanted by the requirement for broad general knowledge in the many facets of the command's mission. At this level, it appears practicable and feasible to reduce drastically the number of SGM MOS.

j. Proficiency Measurement

(1) At DA level, the primary method of determining the proficiency of SGMs is examination of the CER. In the case of major command SGMs, there is little to be determined from the report insofar as what duties were performed. A review of the most recent CERs of the SGMs of 37 major commands indicates that only 10 were rated or indorsed by the commander, the remainder were completed by aides and SGS personnel. This supports the remark that command SGMs function principally in an administrative capacity.

(2) The recent requirement for raters and indorsers to make a written statement of the NCO's duties and his manner of performance of such duties may assist in identifying the better SGMs, but too few CERs have been received to make a judgment.

(3) A need exists for the commander to assign duties of increasing responsibility (other than administrative) to his SGM, and rate him on his discharge of these responsibilities, showing strengths and weaknesses. This will require an improved efficiency report form, and command emphasis on the use of SGMs. The former should be accomplished by the new CER. The latter may require action by DA. Such action should include a requirement that the CERs of command SGMs be indorsed by the commander.

4. CONCLUSIONS.

- a. Sergeants Major assigned to the major commands of the Army are not the finest SGMs.
- b. Existing selection methods and records maintained at DA are insufficient to identify the best SGMs in the Army.
- c. Sergeants Major at Corps and Division level are better qualified than their major command counterparts.
- d. At Division and higher level there is no need for a proliferation of SGM MOS.
- e. An urgent requirement exists to identify, select, and assign the finest SGMs in the Army to its top-level commands, and to revitalize the position of command Sergeant Major of the 24 major commands.

5. PROPOSED SOLUTION:

a. Establishment of a Command Sergeants Major (CSM) Program, which would create a small corps of selected Sergeants Major for assignment to the major commands of the Army. Screening, selection, assignment, and career management of CSMs would be controlled by DA in a manner similar to General Officers. A proposed concept of the CSM Program is attached as Tab A.

b. Salient points of the attached concept are:

(1) Establishment of a screening/selection board at DA, similar to the normal Colonel's promotion board. To augment the inadequate records now maintained in EPD, special efficiency reports, and items from the individuals' field 201 files, such as award citations and letters of commendation, would be collected from the field for use in the selection process.

(2) Select 150 - 200 SGMs, the exact number to be determined by further study, from the announced zone(s) for entry into the CSM Program under a single MOS.

(3) Establish a CSM Control Section consisting of 1 officer, 1 senior NCO, and 1 typist, to make assignments, manage careers, and maintain records on the CSMs. The three personnel required would be in addition to the present Assignment Division authorization, since the minor decrease in SECB workload caused by the establishment of the CSM Program would not create surplus personnel.

(4) Phase CSMs into the major commands of the Army -- filling the top 49 commands first, and placing the remainder in CSM training positions, where they will be prepared for the top-level jobs.

(5) Replenish losses through periodic selection boards.

6. RECOMMENDATION. That the concept for the proposed Command Sergeants Major Program be approved for coordination with major commanders.

7. If the above recommendation is approved, EPD-OPO will incorporate commanders' comments into the proposal and present a final concept for approval and implementation. Upon approval of the final concept, EPD-OPO will take the following actions:

- a. Announce the program Army-wide.
- b. Publish guidelines on the use of Command Sergeants Major.
- c. Establish a working group from within OPO to develop the details of the program and monitor its progress.
- d. Collect data from field 201 files, SECB records, and other sources from which valid selections can be made.
- e. Establish a CSM Section under Assignment Division, EPD, OPO.
- f. Request TAGO to convene a selection board.

1 Incl
Proposed Concept

J. A. LECLAIR, JR
Colonel, USA
Chief, Senior Enlisted Control Branch