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Armor Promotion Review — Overview of the SGM/CSM Selection Board

The Armor Force is well on the way to becoming the Armor Force of Force XXI. The full potential of the Armor Force lies not in the futuristic vehicles or doctrinal manuals, but in the hearts and minds of our quality Armor leaders. This article is designed to highlight the need to actively mentor our quality NCO corps to help maintain, retrain, and promote our best and brightest. Armor NCOs must be prepared for the future challenge by understanding the strenuous competition which will ensue for future promotion boards.

The recently released Sergeant Major/Command Sergeant Major Promotion Board provides a profile of the future Armor NCO. The selection board convened on 17 September, and recessed on 4 October 1996. It considered first sergeants and master sergeants with a date of rank 30 September 1993 or earlier in the primary zone, and 1 October 1993 through 30 September 1994 for the secondary zone. The chart below identifies the time in service, time in grade, and educational level that characterized the Armor selectees and compares them with Army averages.

NOTE: Armor had the second highest selection rate in combat arms and was 13th out of 30 CMFs in selection rate. Additionally, there were no dual selections to SGM then CSM, although nine previously selected SGMs were nominated for CSM. The overall Armor selection rate was in-line with the Army Average: 12.3%.

The line between those selected and those not selected was very thin. Solid performance in the tough jobs remained the key to success for promotion in CMF 19. As the quality of the CMF continues to increase, the promotion boards must be even more conscious of the whole man when selecting between highly qualified NCOs. One such indicator of quality which becomes a factor "when all else is equal" is education. No soldier in CMF 19 owed his selection to education alone, and as stated, performance in the tough jobs is the key to success. However, the soldiers who performed the tough jobs, and still found time to attend college courses, displayed the initiative which separated them from the pack. The competition for SGM/CSM is tough, and with all else being equal,

civilian education becomes an important discriminator.

The importance of civilian education, and its indication of a soldier's initiative, is apparent in the CSM selectees. The board chose nine CSMs from among the 138 MSGs in the zone for promotion and the large number of previously selected SGMs. The quality cut-line for this large pool of eligibles was obviously high, and the difference between the selectees and non-selectees was minute. The education level of the nine selectees was: five with a baccalaureate degree, three with 3 years of college, and one with 2 years of college. Education was just one of the discriminators; with performance remaining the primary discriminator, it is evident that education could play a major role on future promotion boards.

Performance in a wide variety of assignments was another major indication of success to promotion panel members. Years ago, an assistant commandant in the Armor School used the phrase, "Blossom where you are planted" when mentoring his personnel. You must maintain a high performance level wherever you are assigned, but you must also ensure that you are planted in a variety of the tough jobs that Armor has to offer. The boards looked not only at performance in branch-qualifying positions, such as tank commander, platoon sergeant, and first sergeant, but also at performance

	Selectee	% Select	Avg TIS	Avg TIG	Education
Armor (PZ)	13	27.7%	19.8	3.0	13.9
Armor (SZ)	4	4.4%	19.4	2.3	13.5
Army Average	427	12.3%	20.6	3.6	14.1

Continued on Page 53

DRIVER'S SEAT (Continued from Page 5)

in a variety of assignments, including drill sergeant, recruiter, and AC/RC advisor. Leaders must counsel their soldiers on the importance of assignment variety and avoiding patterns, such as back-to-back TDA assignments. If you are nearing completion of a TDA assignment, contact your assignment manager and ensure that your follow-on assignment is back to a TOE war-fighting unit. Armor NCOs must be proactive partners in the assignment process.

Fitness remains a key indicator of ability to perform in stressful situations. The promotion board looked critically at such items as a soldier who meets height/weight standards and scores well on PT tests at home station, but suddenly gains weight and shows a significant drop in PT score when attending NCOES courses. The Armor Branch is doing well in this category, but we must continue to focus on maintaining standards at home station.

While official photographs were not generally a problem in Armor, there appears to be some apathy in updating photographs. Soldiers who send their records before a promotion board with a black and white, or outdated photograph are sending a negative signal to

board members. Old photographs place questions in the mind of board members when reviewing the soldier's records like: What, if anything, is the soldier hiding? Does he really measure up?

The soldier's official military personnel folder (OMPF) is another area which needs emphasis. The board noted a number of promotion packets with orders for awards which were not noted on the soldier's DA Form 2-1. Failure to update civilian education information is another area which needs more focus. Errors on the OMPF cause the board member to be on alert when evaluating a soldier records.

The area that we are all continually reminded of is the importance of the NCOER, particularly the raters and senior raters comments. Raters are not helping the NCO by using subjective and "fluffy" comments which are not substantiated by factual information. Solid performance over the long run, not occasional instances of excellence, bring the solid NCOs to the top. Senior raters must focus on potential, not on past performance. Those raters who focus on performance, and never mention future assignment potential or schooling, lose their vote on the future of Ar-

mor and may even cost a deserving soldier a promotion. Superior ratings coupled with comments like, "In time will make a good sergeant major" are confusing and may be indicative of poor counseling during the rating period. Senior raters must be forthright and specific regarding the potential of the rated NCOs. Your comments are helping to choose the future leaders of the Armor Force.

The Armor Force has quality, technically competent NCOs who are able to meet the challenges of the future. We, as leaders, must ensure that our soldiers are afforded every opportunity to become the best-trained and utilized force possible. We must ensure that we mentor our quality NCOs, with primary focus on the importance of performance in a variety of tough assignments, but never neglect those areas that could be used as a discriminator later in a soldier's career. It is obvious that the competition for promotion will continue to be tough. In keeping with the whole-soldier concept, a soldier's willingness to sacrifice, pay attention to detail, and to enhance his horizons will be a clear indicator of the type NCOs we want to lead the Armor Force into the 21st Century.