

Redefining the Role Of the Command Sergeant Major In a Tactical Environment



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As change and OPTEMPO have both increased, all the resources available within a warfighting organization need to be examined and redefined to be made more effective than ever before and used to their fullest capacity and potential. Today's Army must realize that we are not utilizing the command sergeant major to his fullest capacity, have failed to give him a specific area of concentration in a tactical environment, and have failed to fully train him for tactical operations.

In units that have undergone reorganization and digitization, there has been a fundamental shift in the duties and responsibilities of the brigade and battalion executive officer (XO) and command sergeant major (CSM). In the past, the XO was responsible for ensuring the staff planning process was synchronized, and that the tactical operations center was postured to support the operation, to generate the requisite combat power needed to enable success, and to supervise all the logistics efforts that supported the unit.

With the digital explosion came an increase in the availability and type of tactical command and control systems, and this change continues to evolve. Because brigades and battalions do not have both a deputy commander and an XO, the XO finds himself not only the staff synchronizer but also the integrator and the director of these systems in order to provide the commander the information he needs before and during tactical operations.

The CSM is another resource the commander can use to help in effectively preparing and executing tactical operations as the logistics enabler. These duties and responsibilities must be defined between the commander and CSM, but in most cases this may be uncharted territory for both.

When a battalion commander assumes command, he will establish his "first" commander/CSM relationship. That relationship must be one that solidifies

unit effectiveness and must be built on frankness, integrity, and absolute trust between both parties. A fair amount of good humor does not hurt either.

One of the first matters that a new commander must establish is the role and duties of the CSM in both the garrison and tactical environment. Too often, the new battalion commander is reluctant to direct these duties or is ignorant of what the duties should encompass, because he may not have a depth of experience in MTOE units or may have served in organizations in which the CSM did not fully participate in all aspects of the unit or contribute to its effectiveness. In some cases, this may have been caused by the CSM's own reluctance to get involved in what he perceives as officer business, or because the battalion commander chose not to define CSM responsibilities in depth. It may also be, in part, due to the commander's past association with a CSM during his formative years as a platoon leader and company commander. Commanders may have viewed the CSM as being in charge of a second chain of command, one in which the CSM had the ability to dominate the time of his NCOs and to hold a position of greater influence than that of commissioned officers. As a result, he may have come to see the CSM as a professional rival.

But, organizational effectiveness of a tactical unit is not about officer business or NCO business, it is about leader business and the ability of the senior officer and NCO of an organization to define roles and solutions that enable winning in combat.

If the duties of the CSM are discussed between the incoming commander and his new CSM, they tend to generally follow these descriptions, found in *AR 611-201*:

- Provide advice and make recommendations to the commander and staff on all matters pertaining to enlisted personnel and their families.

- Accompany the commander on inspections, visits, and at ceremonies.

- Assist in inspections of the command as prescribed by the commander.

- Hold first sergeants or sergeants major call to pass on information and instructions.

- Ensure that newly assigned enlisted personnel are instructed in military courtesy, customs of the service, and command regulations or policies.

- Provide counsel and guidance to NCOs and other enlisted personnel of the command.

- Inspect duties performed by subordinate NCOs.

- Note discrepancies and initiate appropriate corrective instruction.

- Assist in reception of visitors to the command.

- Sit as president of the promotion board for NCOs as authorized by regulation.

- Perform other duties as prescribed by the commander.

All of the above are important duties and worthy of the experience and maturity of the senior ranking NCO of the organization. However, they are too general in scope and do not describe the CSM's tactical requirements. The CSM, because of his experience, training, and authority, is the one NCO who is best equipped to place himself to support the intent of the commander and the organization during combat.

There is, however, little out there in the form of doctrine to help the new commander develop his thinking about what the CSM's duties should be in the tactical environment. Everything said about a CSM in emerging doctrine for the armored and mechanized brigade and battalion task force can be found in two sentences.

"The CSM can also assist the commander by supervising and observing at

a critical site away from the command group.” *FKSM 71-3 (2005) Coordinating Draft*, page 3-10 and *FKSM 71-2 (2005) Coordinating Draft*, page 3-10.

“Orders Group BRAVO (for detailed planning): Orders Group A, S1, S4, ALO, engineer, air defense officer, scout platoon leader, mortar platoon leader, GSR section leader, BMO, CSM, CESO, S3 Air, Chemical Officer, Chief of Reconnaissance (HHC Commander).” *FKSM 71-2 (2005) Coordinating Draft*, page 4-37.

Today’s CSM must be provided a specific job description with clearly definable leader tasks. One of the most important roles that the CSM can fill to support the commander and enable the unit to win in combat is that of the logistics monitor and enabler. If we are to set conditions to enable a command team to be effective, we as an Army must be willing to specify in doctrine what a CSM does and then institutionalize these changes. We must develop a valid, applicable program of instruction in our NCOES, to include the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA) and the Command Sergeants Major Course (CSMC), that trains the most senior NCOs on their newly defined and more focused duties as a logistics enabler. Future CSMs must be developed in both the training base and in unit assignments to fully support the tactical fight.

Our emerging doctrinal publications for brigade and task force do state “*the CSM can also assist the commander by supervising and observing at a critical site away from the command group.*” This forces us to answer two questions: What are the critical sites and leader tasks the senior NCO of the brigade and battalion needs to be able to inspect and supervise?

Critical Sites

Most would generally agree that some of the more critical sites on the battlefield where the CSM can provide support to the unit and influence the action are as follows:

- Company/team assembly areas (AA)
- Task force support areas (TFSA)
- Battalion aid stations (BAS)
- Ambulance exchange points (AXP)
- Logistics release points (LRP)
- Defensive battle positions (BP)

Leader Tasks

If a CSM is to be effective at those critical sites, then he must be proficient, not just familiar, at influencing and supervising operations and activities that take place there. As stated in doctrine, “*Leader ... tasks must be identified at the appropriate level to support the accomplishment of the unit mission essential tasks*” (*FM 25-101*, p. 2-9). The essential tasks that a CSM must be proficient in are:

- Pre-combat inspections
- Assembly area activities
- Maintenance and recovery operations
- Medical treatment and casualty evacuation
 - Leading a logistical release point meeting
 - Sending and receiving administrative and logistical reports
 - Individual, crew, team, and squad fighting position construction
 - Mobility and counter-mobility operations
 - Advising the commander on the health, welfare, and morale of soldiers
 - Battlefield restoration
 - Risk management
 - Reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) activities
 - Advising the orders group on combat service support, concept, planning, and execution
 - Actions involving civilians on the battlefield
 - Attending and providing recommendations at orders group planning sessions, orders briefs, and rehearsals.

Likewise, the battalion commander must understand the capabilities of the CSM. As a team, they must train to the strengths this division of labor brings. They must also require subordinate officers and NCOs to train the leader tasks associated with effective operations at these critical sites. This concept must be expanded to a complete training objective (task, condition, and standard) with a training information outline and evaluation guide. In addition, these leader tasks must be compiled into an expandable leader book that serves as a quick reference for the CSM. The Army’s training base should

also make available “re-writable” compact discs (CD-RW) to enable units that are continuing to evolve the ability to make modifications. This evolution is a process that results from the developmental nature that exists in units today and the necessary updating of tactical standing operating procedures (TAC-SOP) that follows the format in common use today. These standardized training and evaluation outlines provide the medium for constructing objective feedback for both the brigade and task force CSM to evaluate the status of training, strengths and weaknesses, and the information required to support the unit’s Noncommissioned Officer Development Program (NCO DP). By regulation (*AR 350-17*, para 5c.), NCO DP is conducted at the battalion, separate company, or equivalent level. This regulation would require modification with the development of CSM leader tasks.

Acknowledging this role of the unit CSM would be a fundamental change in doctrine, techniques, and the procedures that must be embraced across the Army. This includes the unit commander, who must understand the CSM’s leader responsibilities and use the CSM as the logistics monitor at critical sites. The commander must also internalize that the CSM is not his competitor or less of a professional than he requires subordinate officers to be. He must understand and require that the NCOs in his organization are responsible for building, sustaining, and regenerating combat power. The CSM, as the commander’s designated representative, must work in conjunction with the task force executive officer, S1, S4, and the forward support company commander to ensure the organization accomplishes the critical tasks.

The role and performance of the CSM at the National Training Center (NTC) is of much less importance and concern than that of his commander counterpart. Every team leader (07) is a former battalion commander. With the exception of the Operations Group CSM, there is no one who has ever been a battalion CSM filling the team sergeant major (40) position. How can someone who has never performed the task coach, teach, or mentor someone who is performing the task? We must begin the process of placing experienced CSMs as observer controllers at the NTC.

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This is easily accomplished with existing CSMs who go to the NTC for periodic rotations. They operate with an existing team sergeant major or independently after completing the Observer Controller (OC) Academy. This is accomplished in conjunction with their unit's Leader Training Program (LTP). Everyone benefits from this initiative and the cost is minimal.

The Army has the ability to begin to better set up CSMs for success by immediately restructuring the CSM Course from one to two weeks and training the leader tasks discussed here. They should provide an exportable leader teaching program for major commands (MACOM) and begin the close examination of the program of instruction at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) has the unique ability to incorporate the training observations from the NTC, the course developers at the USASMA, and service school doctrinal writers. We have the ability to utilize the NTC OC Academy and the FORSCOM LTP to place trained, experienced coaches, teachers, and mentors in the world's best training environment.

We are in a period of great changes in the Army. These changes cannot be limited to equipment and information technology. They must include changes

in the Army's most important resource — soldiers — and specifically the CSM. These changes, in consonance with the Army's process of rebuilding itself, will better leverage the abilities of unit CSMs and more effectively enable units to train, deploy, stabilize a situation, enforce peace, or win in decisive combat.

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