

DRIVER'S SEAT

Selecting the Best — CY 98 MSG Board Review and Analysis

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While the selection list is not yet published, the CMF 19 panel has finished its review and analysis of the CY 98 Master Sergeants Board selection list. No details of the number selected can be released, nor of the specific criteria used to select the best of the fully qualified candidates. Having recently sat on a centralized board, and having studied all three CY 98 selection board reviews, I will highlight some common trends as I summarize the review and analysis.

Primary Zone Selections

All selectees are certified as excellent platoon sergeants through multiple assignments and NCOERs. They have served successfully for at least 12-18 months as platoon sergeants; in most cases they have served much longer. An encouraging number of the selectees are or were serving as acting first sergeants in line units. *The best qualified are successful master gunners who have excelled as TOE armor and cavalry platoon sergeants and who have also succeeded in at least one staff (E8 or E9 authorization) or special assignment (E6, E7, or E8 authorization).* The only TDA PSG positions that were granted TOE equivalency were those PSGs in 1/16 Cavalry, Fort Knox.

Analysis also showed that many NCOs have repetitive special or staff assignments without leadership certification as sergeant first class PSGs. These NCOs are less competitive with their peers, and this includes some master gunners who have not served as PSGs. NCOs assigned to unauthorized non-troop leading positions (i.e., billeting manager and BDE financial advisor) are also not competitive.

Almost every SFC selected for promotion had more civilian education than a high school diploma/GED. Whether or not a degree was earned was less important than the fact that these NCOs were following DA guidance to develop themselves and to serve as good examples for

their soldiers. All selectees were AN-COC graduates. NCOES honors helped the board identify the best. Master gunner course graduates were very competitive. Battle Staff NCO Course graduates were competitive, provided they had served at least one tour as a battle staff NCO. Those graduates who had never served as battle staff NCOs were treated as ticket-punchers.

The selectees were all physically fit, many recognized on their NCOERs for APFT scores above 250. A gratifying number were scored on the extended APFT scale. Quantified bullets highlighting significant small-unit APFT score improvement due to an NCO's leadership were also viewed favorably. Inconsistent height, over several rating periods, especially when coupled with weight increase, hurt the NCO and the credibility of the rater.

NCOs selected as NCO or Drill Sergeant of the Quarter or Year, or who were members of the Audie Murphy or Sergeant Morales Clubs were competitive.

Secondary Zone

Yes, there was a secondary zone selection list! Their performance and potential are as highly rated as the primary zone selectees. Many are/were serving as acting first sergeants. These NCOs have fought hard to lead soldiers; if selected for special assignment, they did very well and returned to platoon sergeant duty as soon as possible. They had some college credit hours and all the military education as the primary zone selectees. They possessed outstanding APFT fitness.

Competition Criteria

Looking over three sets of reviews and analysis, the following areas had the most importance in competition for promotion:

- Successful TOE assignments as PSG or ISG

- Outstanding performance in special and staff assignments, as long as they do not prevent leadership certification
- Outstanding NCOERs: identified as "the best" by different raters and senior raters, through clear, concise, quantified comments. Also, senior raters clearly identify potential for immediate promotion and increased responsibilities in leadership positions.
- Outstanding NCOERs: potential for immediate promotion and increased responsibilities in leadership positions
- Exceeding standards and earning honors in NCOES courses
- Master Gunner Course
- Battle Staff NCO Course
- NCO or DS of the Year/SGT Morales/Audie Murphy Club membership
- College credit (tankers/scouts don't need the PhD, but they must develop themselves)
- Physical fitness and deployability (good health, bearing, and attitude)

The most important document in a soldier's OMPF is the NCOER. The DA Form 2-1 is also important: especially the assignment, school, and award information. DA photos are important. If the last few NCOERs reflect a weight gain of ten pounds or more, a photo after the weight gain will be very useful.

There are more fully qualified sergeants than there are positions at MSG/ISG. Some fully qualified NCOs could not be selected for promotion. There are many competing demands for CMF 19 soldiers outside the branch: Drill Sergeant, EO Advisor, IG, Recruiting, AC/RC, and ROTC positions will be filled. NCOs who do well at these jobs and who gain leadership certification will stay competitive. The Armor Force is healthy, for assignment policies, when combined with concerned unit leadership and the desire of our best NCOs to lead, are ensuring that our sergeants first class have the opportunity to succeed.

"SERGEANT, TAKE THE LEAD"