

COMMANDER'S HATCH

A Progress Report on OPMS XXI

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OPMS XXI implementation is moving along as planned. Just this past May, the Chief of Staff of the Army agreed to a recommendation from the OPMS XXI implementation team to move from Phase I to Phase II. This progression to Phase II translates into success in setting the conditions for OPMS XXI and movement forward toward sustaining the effort. I want to explain how this movement looks from my seat and give you insight into some things you need to understand as we move forward.

Phase I included three key elements – officer corps education, recoding of officer authorizations, and revision of DA Pam 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management*.

The OPMS XXI implementation team has traveled around the world to educate all officers. If you have not received information on OPMS XXI, it is out there. The DCSPER web page at <http://www.army.mil/opms/> contains significant information and briefings about OPMS XXI. The Fort Knox home page at <http://147.238.100.101/center> can also provide significant information about how changes to OPMS XXI will affect us. Chain teaching kits were sent to all brigade and regimental commanders. There is also the “Blue Book” on OPMS XXI, called *The Officers Guide to OPMS XXI*, which was sent to all officers. Hopefully, this article will add to what you have already heard.

DA Pam 600-3 is a crucial part of your education and addresses professional development and career management. It is the road map for implementation of OPMS XXI. This document includes critical information that details promotion boards, the career field designation process, and counseling. It is an individual career guide. To ensure that we have serviced the target in re-writing DA Pam 600-3, it has been staffed with numerous Armor officers, and I think we’ve hit the mark.

A significant improvement in DA Pam 600-3 is that it contains a section on character and values expected of officers. The

values section includes the Seven Army Values: **Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless-service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal courage**. Most of you have seen this as the acronym LDRSHIP, remembered as LEADERSHIP. An overview of the Armor chapter includes a review of officers’ careers by grade, education, assignment and self-development, and branch qualification. It also details joint duty and its value, while the professional development guidance adds truth and reality to branch qualification.

Branch qualification is the key for promotion and continuation for officers at all levels. Being branch-qualified means you are professionally developed in your current grade, and you have demonstrated success in leading soldiers at that grade. For lieutenants, this requires 12 months as a TO&E platoon leader. Captains are considered branch-qualified with at least 12 months as a company-level commander. Branch qualification for majors includes at least 12 months as a battalion/squadron S3 or XO, or brigade/regimental S3 or XO. The OPMS XXI goal is that a major’s branch qualification time is 24 months. We are close to achieving this goal. For lieutenant colonel and colonel, branch qualification is successful completion of command. This chapter also includes additional information on command, joint assignments, and functional area assignments. Currently, DA Pam 600-3 is undergoing review by the Army MACOMs and Army senior leaders. As soon as it is released, it will be

published on the Internet. Get a copy and read it; this is your guide for your future.

What follows is a brief rundown of the professional development goals for each rank. As a new lieutenant, we want you to develop the requisite basic Armor branch skills, knowledge, and attributes necessary to be a successful company grade officer. As a captain, your goal should be to develop proficiency as a combat commander and staff officer. Entering the field grade ranks, a major’s main goal should be to develop the war-fighting skills, technical proficiency, and staff competency in preparation for battalion command. Lieutenant colonels should be able to demonstrate excellence in tactical skills, technical proficiency, and the ability to lead, train, motivate and care for soldiers in both battalion level command and staff environments. Sustainment of warfighting, training and staff skills, along with utilization of leader, managerial, and executive talents, are goals that a colonel should be looking toward. These are all in DA Pam 600-3 and focus on the branch qualifying jobs mentioned in Table 1.

We are still working with the OPMS XXI team to iron out the recoding of Armor positions. The goal of this process was to properly code each position by branch as to the type of officer it required, whether that be an Armor officer or a Functional Area Officer. Our job is to ensure that Armor has the right number of authorizations in all ranks to maintain a healthy branch. If we have too many or

RANK	EDUCATION	BRANCH QUAL. ASSIGNMENT
LT	OBC	Platoon Leader
CPT	OAC/CAS3	Company/Troop Command
MAJ	CGSC	Bn/Sqdn S3/XO Bde/Regt S3/XO
LTC	PCC/SSC	LTC level command
COL	SSC	COL level command

TABLE 1

too few officers at a given rank, we produce either an overabundance of officers, where too few get promoted, or a shortage of officers, where everyone gets promoted. Neither of these two situations results in a healthy branch.

The main focus of our recoding effort is to meet the Army's warfighting requirements. In coordination with the OPMS team, we came up with some very specific rules to determine the recoding of Armor positions. Unless a position fell under a specific rule, the recommendation was to code it combat arms branch immaterial. Obvious positions, such as commander of the Operations Group and senior live fire trainer at the NTC, will be coded Armor. Colonel-level directors here at Fort Knox will also stay coded Armor, along with a few critical joint positions and some chief of staff positions in our heavy divisions. We are still working with the OPMS team to determine other positions that require the unique talents of our Armor officers and that will also produce the natural progression for qualified Armor officers to get promoted.

Phase II consists of initiating the career field designation process and beginning promotion boards.

The realignment of career fields and the way we professionally develop our officers is moving toward a requirements-based management system. This means that we have finally figured out our officers must be developed the way we train. Instead of bouncing officers between operational assignments and functional area assignments, we have begun a program to organize officers who are specialized in what they do. We are focused on having different fields of officers that fill specific requirements needed throughout the Army.

Career field designation has a huge impact on Armor officers. Sixty-six percent of Armor officers will remain in the Operations career field. Basically, that means you will remain an Armor officer and have Armor-related assignments. The other 34 percent will be designated into the other three career fields — Operational Support, Institutional Support, and Information Operations. Only those that

select, desire to, and are qualified will go to another career field.

Career field designation will affect all officers. Beginning with YG89, six months prior to consideration by the majors promotion board, you must submit a Field Preference Statement. This will only be seen by the Designation Board and is not routed through the chain of command. The actual designation board occurs after selection for major. Year Group 89 officers must have their preferences in by 1 May 1999, with the designation board meeting 1-11 June 1999. Officers already in the grade of major or above will also go before the designation board in accordance with Table 2 below. Year Groups 80 and 86 must submit preferences by 1 February 1999 with the Designation Board meeting 16 March through 2 April 1999. Details of the way preferences will be entered are still being worked out. You will probably receive a notice in the mail with a userid and a password allowing you to log onto the Internet at a designated site and enter your career field preferences. The results will be given to the Career Field Designation Board for use. The year groups that will be designated in 2000 include 81, 87 and 90. The point is — career field designation is here now and affecting Armor officers. Make sure that you take the time and decide into which career field you would like to be designated, and submit your preferences on time.

Rater and senior rater portions of the new OER will influence Designation Boards in selecting officers for both branch specific and functional area assignments. Raters and senior raters must counsel their officers about the career field in which the rated officer would like to be designated. Whether you are a rated officer, rater, or a senior rater, your preferences will play a big part in the Designation Board process. The four things the board will look at are Officer Preference Statements, rater/senior rater recommendations on the OER, education and abilities, and the needs of the Army. Therefore, raters and senior raters make sure you talk to your officers about what they want to do while they are in the Army. Also make your educated recommendation on their OER. This affects not only

the officer, but also the Army. You owe it to both.

Promotion boards will undergo a change also. Officers will compete for promotion to requirements in their designated career fields and only against officers from the same career fields. This prevents any single career field from having an advantage in promotion rates, and precludes officers in the other career fields from having a reduced chance of promotion. The promotion system will still remain a fair and impartial system, promoting the most qualified officers in their respective career fields. It will not favor one field over another. So the choice is yours. Select the career field that most suits what you want to do in the Army. The intent has been to make it fair to everyone in every career field.

We do have some concerns. Right now, we feel Armor branch has an insufficient amount of officers to meet combat arms, combat arms-immateral requirements, and have sufficient officers available to meet Armor-specific requirements. We also do not know the breakdown of combat arms and combat arms-immateral positions that Armor will have to fill. These positions are normally found in joint, DA staff, USMA staff, AC/RC and CTC assignments. Filling these positions is a higher priority than filling our divisions. Therefore, with the number of officers that we are currently programmed to have in the future, the higher priority units will be filled to their authorized level while our divisional units will not. We are working to ensure that we have an adequate number of officers to fill our required positions. These are issues that I am currently working on as the Chief of Armor.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this transition period. We are headed in the right direction. We feel we have the right information out there in DA Pam 600-3, the right positions for our Armor officers at all levels to remain competitive for promotion, and that the right officers will be designated to the appropriate career fields to maintain the warfighting requirement. Forge the Thunderbolt!

CFD Board Schedule by Year Group

Year	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
CFD	*	99	00	01	01	02	02	99	00	01	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08

*Year group 79 and earlier will be redesignated based on individual preference and ability...not by a board.

TABLE 2