

## Gunner's Seat

# Talent Management Needs to Be More Than Just Buzzwords

The 2019 Maneuver Warfighter Conference at the Maneuver Center of Excellence accomplished its goal of continuing to message the criticality of preparing our Soldiers and formations for large-scale combat operations. A key component of ensuring that our Soldiers, tank crews/scout squads and platoons maximize their lethality is effective talent management of Soldiers and leaders.

Most critical of all is the staff sergeant. The staff sergeant is most sought-after noncommissioned officer (NCO) rank to fill our critical positions as drill sergeants, recruiters, tank/scout instructors, etc.

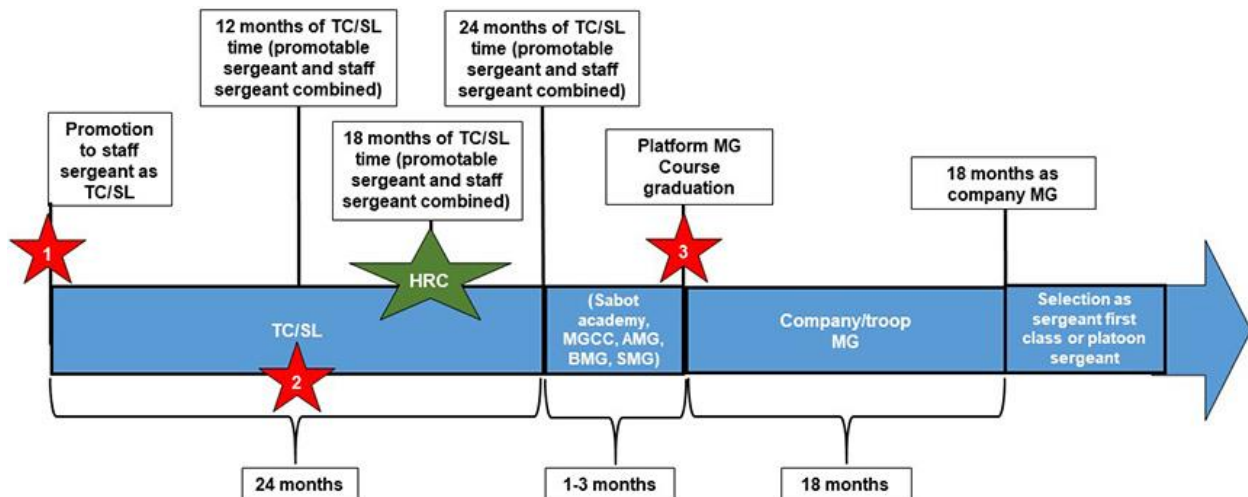
The bottom-line-up-front of the matter is that if units in the operational force are not proactive with a sound talent-management program, Human Resources Command (HRC) will manage their Soldiers for them. The greatest way to manage the critical resource of an experienced NCO is to have a two-way flow of communication between HRC and operational units in the field.

We at the Armor School and branch-proponent office are adjusting some manning policies found in Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 600-25. These are:

- The minimum amount of time a staff sergeant serves in a tank commander (TC) /scout-squad leader (SL) position has been returned to 24 months from the current 18 months.
- Non-promotable sergeants in a staff-sergeant position will no longer have rated time count toward their 24 months of critical leadership time.
- Non-promotable staff sergeants in a sergeant-first-class position will no longer have rated time count toward their 24 months of critical leadership time.

These changes are not designed to stymie the careers of our NCOs but to give them the time to receive the “reps and sets” to become truly proficient in their warfighting skills.

Now that the guidance for assigning NCOs has been adjusted, how can units maximize the amount of time they have in their positions? Figure 1 is an example of how a staff sergeant, once made a TC/SL, can be managed by the unit.



**Figure 1. Staff-sergeant talent-management model. Regarding talent-management Milestone 1: Immediately submit key and developmental (KD) stabilization to HRC (24 months to meet KD requirements) and prepare NCO for attendance at ALC, focusing on Career Management Field (CMF) 19 tasks. In Milestone 2, the unit identifies the NCO as a potential MG once KD time is complete; identify Soldier at about 14 months; contact HRC with**

timeline to attend sabot academy, MG common core (MGCC), Abrams MG (AMG), Bradley MG (BMG) or Stryker MG (SMG). At Milestone 3, the MG branch chief automatically submits MG graduation rosters to HRC for stabilization (18 months). At HRC’s Milestone 3, HRC’s Armor Branch begins identifying NCOs for broadening assignments. (Note: The unit MG candidate is the same NCO that HRC/Army looks at for other assignments – for example, drill sergeant / recruiter, etc.) Key in this process is early communication between HRC and the unit’s command sergeant major.

Figure 1 shows how a unit can stabilize a staff sergeant once assigned to TC/SL position; identify the NCO for training as a master gunner (MG) at the 18-month mark; and send the Soldier to the MG course upon completion of his/her 24 months. Once the NCO completes the MG course, he/she is stabilized for 18 months so the unit benefits from the skills the NCO has gained as TC/SL and as an MG. The Soldier then may be selected as a sergeant first class and assigned as a platoon sergeant once he/she has completed professional military education (PME) and is promoted.

The preceding scenario is based on leveraging the stabilization options available from HRC, which are shown in Table 1.

<b>Active Component enlisted-crew stabilization (Assignment, Eligibility and Availability (AEA) F):</b> -Stabilization starting seven months prior to combat training center for specific crew military-occupation specialties (MOSs)/positions	
<b>Special-category stabilization (AEA G):</b>	
-First sergeants	24 months
-Master gunners (additional skill identifiers J3/A8/K8/R8/A7)	18 months (new – auto stability)
-(New) Critical enlisted aviation skills/positions*	24 months
-(New) Ranger (Career Management Field (CMF) 11/13/14/19)	12 months after graduation
-Other HRC-approved extensions	Various
<b>Stop Move and combat deployments:</b> -Deployment to imminent danger/hostile-fire areas: stabilization starts 180 days prior to latest-arrival-date	
<b>Key and developmental (KD) stabilization:</b> -(New) Stabilize NCOs in CMFs 11, 13, 19 (sergeants through master sergeants) and MOS 12B (staff sergeants through master sergeants) for minimal time required to meet career-model requirements in accordance with DA PAM 600-25	
<b>Deletion/deferment:</b> -Request related to Soldiers already on AI	

**Table 1. Stability/predictability tools available. Note: HRC puts Soldiers on assignment instructions (AI) six to nine months from report. Refer to the consolidated Active Component enlisted-stabilization procedures in Military Personal Message 18-359, “Stabilization options for commanders to preserve readiness,” <https://www.hrc.army.mil/content/Enlisted%20Procedures%20and%20Soldier%20Actions%20Branch>.**

As I travel to units across the force, there is a lack of understanding of these options at the platoon, company and battalion level. It is not that the NCOs are bad leaders, but it is a topic not covered in any PME course. We are messaging these options to the students who attend Armor Advanced Leader’s Course (ALC) and the Maneuver Senior Leader’s Course, and to the future commanders at the Maneuver Pre-Command Course.

However, education is only part of the solution, as it must be predicated on open communication between units in the field and branch managers at HRC to make it work. It is the “reps and sets” that build proficiency; proficiency builds lethal units; lethal units are units that are filled with pride; and **PRIDE IS CONTAGIOUS!**

**CSM KEVIN J. MUHLENBECK**  
Command Sergeant Major  
U.S. Army Armor School

## Acronym Quick-Scan

**AEA** – assignment, eligibility and availability  
**AI** – assignment instructions  
**ALC** – Advanced Leader’s Course  
**AMG** – Abrams master gunner  
**BMG** – Bradley master gunner  
**CMF** – career-management field  
**DA PAM** – Department of the Army pamphlet  
**HRC** – Human Resources Command  
**KD** – key and developmental  
**MG** – master gunner  
**MGCC** – master gunner common core  
**MOS** – military-occupation specialty  
**NCO** – noncommissioned officer  
**PME** – professional military education  
**SL** – scout-squad leader  
**SMG** – Stryker master gunner  
**TC** – tank commander