OFFICERS CAREER NOTES

BRANCH CHIEF'S NOTES

I leave the position of Infantry Branch Chief with a solid feeling that in the past 18 months we at Branch have strengthened our relationship with you, the field officers. For the most part, we have reconciled your professional desires with the overriding consideration, the needs of the Army.

I have traveled throughout the world to discuss with you the functions of branch and the processes involved in promotion and selection for military and civil schooling. I am somewhat concerned that the missions and functions of Infantry Branch are misunderstood by many of our 11,500 Infantry officers and would like to clarify some points.

First, of course, Army requirements dictate assignment practices. Infantry Branch only reacts to the priorities stated by DCSOPS and communicated to MILPERCEN by DCSPER. Second and most important, we do not become involved in the promotion board process, and we are not involved in the selection process for CGSC and SSC. In fact, we receive the selection lists the same day your commander gets his. And we do not conduct any "screening" boards.

A major function we do have is to assist you in preparing your records for the various boards. We can help you update your Officer Record Brief (ORB) and your official Performance Fiche (P-fiche), which are the two documents that represent you before any selection board.

Your P-fiche contains your official photograph and copies of your Officer Efficiency Reports (OERs). Close-out OERs that arrive at MILPERCEN after the P-fiche is drawn from the files (45 to 60 days before a board convenes) usually will appear before the board in "hard-paper" copy, and we can help you get an updated record before the board. But you must call your assignment officer and request assistance. We also may call you or your commander to obtain information for the President of the Board, normally only at his request. Information that frequently must be verified includes height, weight, awards, and decorations.

An important change during my tenure here has been the switch of proponency for Infantry personnel force management to the U.S. Army Infantry Center (USAIC). An update on all issues was conducted in June 1982 at the first anniversary of the change in proponency. USAIC is now working on issues pertaining to Infantry Officer Professional Development.

We at Branch will also put together for USAIC the 1983 edition of the Infantry Branch newsletter, which will be available in January 1983. In it, we will spell out our tasks as we see them for 1983, and it will contain dates for selection and promotion boards and a by-name telephone listing of our assignment officers at Branch.

Finally, I sincerely want to express my appreciation for your cooperation and understanding over the past 18 months. We have not always been able to accommodate your personal desires, but where it wasn't possible, at least we were able to tell you why we couldn't do it. We tried to be honest and up-front, and will continue to be. We will tell you exactly what our best professional judgment is and why, because this is the only way to operate a personnel management system.

COL JAMES A. SULLIVAN

CVI CHANGE

A recent change to AR 135-215 will affect many officers on active duty who want to enter the Competitive Voluntary Indefinite Program and compete for career status.

The revision establishes a two-year minimum period of active federal commissioned service for an officer before he is eligible to apply for a voluntary indefinite extension of active duty.

On the surface, this change appears relatively minor, but it does significantly affect officers who are on orders for overseas duty. Since most officers going overseas want to take their dependents, they must either apply for voluntary indefinite status (if they are eligible) or request an extension that is long enough for them to complete a full tour. The same could apply to officers who want special schools such as aviator training. These officers may have to apply for tour extensions to complete the obligation they will incur.

The intent of the change is to allow an officer enough time on active duty to build an in-depth Officer Military Personnel File (OMPF) before a selection board renders a decision that could prevent him from pursuing a career. In effect, the change allows two types of tour extensions. First, the short-term extension remains for those cases requiring from one to 90 days for extreme hardship reasons. Second, a longer extension of 90 days to 36 months can be requested to meet obligations incurred because of training or overseas moves. The formats for the extensions are shown in Figures 2-4 and 2-5, AR 135-215.

Although the change does allow a tour extension in lieu of a voluntary indefinite status, the change was made on the assumption that anyone with more

than two years of active federal commissioned service would apply for CVI. Therefore, Combat Arms Division will not accept a tour extension in lieu of CVI when an officer will have more than two years of service at the time the extension would take effect.

Questions regarding the new regulation or OPMD policy should be addressed to DAPC-OPE-P (AUTOVON 221-0146/0147).

LIEUTENANTS UPDATE

Lieutenants often express concern about what positions they should seek and how they stand compared to their contemporaries.

The most important thing is for Infantry lieutenants to seek positions in which they can have their leadership skills honed and develop their proficiency in the tactical and technical skills associated with the Infantry specialty.

The objectives for all company grade Infantry officers are to get platoon-level experience, to command a company-sized unit for a period of 18 months (plus or minus 6 months), and to complete their officer basic and advanced courses. But there is no established order for achieving these objectives and no standard pattern of assignment that assures success. In fact, Army requirements sometimes prevent an officer from being assigned to a duty position that supports his personal preferences or his professional development needs. Platoon-level experience, for example, may not be available for a lieutenant who is initially assigned to the Training and Doctrine Command, gets a command, and then is not reassigned until after his promotion to captain.

But whatever the duty position, performance is the single most important criterion for advancement. The primary document that various boards and Infantry Branch use to determine overall potential for future service is the OER. It provides an officer's manner of performance, his professional attributes, and his potential as demonstrated by the performance of specific duties for a specific period of time. Although there is a tendency to overemphasize various sections of the OER, the report must be considered in its entirety with no single section outweighing the others.

The Army's assignment philosophy is predicated on the belief that all assignments are important. DA promotion boards are specifically directed to focus on an officer's performance and not to be unduly influenced by the diversity or the level of his assignments. An officer's entire record is used to determine his potential to perform in the next higher grade.

In summary, it is only natural for a lieutenant to be concerned about doing the "correct" job at the "correct" time. In terms of professional development, it is important for the Infantry Lieutenant to lay a strong foundation for future service as an Infantryman by serving in positions at company level. But it is even more important for him to perform all of his duties to the best of his ability. Through his enthusiasm and performance, his rater will best be able to identify his potential for future service and to convey that to promotion boards through his OERs.

USAREC DUTY

After completing the Advanced Course and commanding a company successfully, many captains find their next challenge in an assignment with the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC). You may be one of them, and it will be an opportunity to broaden your experiences and to command again. As the Chief of Staff of the Army has said, "Manning the total force is the major challenge the Army faces today," and the branch-qualified Infantry Captain plays an important role in recruiting and retaining quality soldiers.

There are now 257 Area Commander positions within USAREC, of which 63 are designated Infantry Captain positions. An Area Commander serves for a period of 24 months in this demanding position. He commands a recruiting area staffed by enlisted recruiters and has the overall responsibility for actively leading, counselling, training, and supervising the enlisted recruiters. Additionally, the Area Commander coordinates with and briefs civilian educators and community leaders. He conducts analyses and inspections, and coordinates logistical and administrative support for the recruiting area.

If this sounds like a tough, challenging command, it is. That's why the branch-qualified officer is called on to serve as an Area Commander. Except for his branch qualification, there is not a more important or more challenging job for an Infantry captain.

It appears, however, that many officers in the field think an assignment to USAREC may be detrimental to their career development, but this is not true. The key to success in USAREC, as in any other duty position, is positive leadership, effective time management, enforcement of standards, and thorough job knowledge.

So don't listen to rumors or to someone else's negative opinions concerning an assignment to USAREC. In the final analysis, even though command of a recruiting area is sometimes an exasperating job, the officers who are selected for these positions are highly regarded. As the slogan says, "Be all you can be." Be an area commander.

SPECIAL FORCES

There is always a need for qualified company-grade Infantry officers to serve in Special Forces assignments. These unique and exciting assignments offer physical and mental challenges.

A captain's stabilization will not normally be broken for an assignment to Special Forces; his full tour must be completed before his reassignment will be considered. But a lieutenant who has had an initial assignment in an Infantry unit in CONUS or Korea can apply and may be reassigned after 12 to 18 months on station.

An officer who wants to volunteer

TELEPHONE DIRECTORY
INFANTRY BRANCH — COMBAT ARMS DIVISION

DESK	OFFICER	AUTOVON		COMMERCIAL
Branch Chief	LTC John F. Connolly	221-0207/7823	(202)	325-0207/7823
LTC Assignments, SC 11	MAJ Don Madison	221-0209/0317		325-0209/0317
LTC Other, ROTC	LTC Lynn Hunt	221-7823/0209		325-7823/0209
LTC SC 54	LTC Garrett Cowsert	221-0317/0207		325-0317/0207
MAJ Assignments, SC 11	MAJ Dave Crittenden	221-7823/0318		325-7823/0318
MAJ Other	MAJ Russ Thompson	221-0318/7823		325-0318/7823
MAJ/CPT SC 54	MAJ Jim Gibson	221-0317/0318		325-0317/0318
CPT SC 11/Advanced Course	MAJ Terry Young	221-0208/0209		325-0208/0209
CPT CONUS/Nominative	CPT Steve Smith	221-0207/0317		325-0207/0317
CPT Overseas/OAC	CPT John Kidder	221-0207/0208		325-0207/0208
LT SC 11	CPT Ron Thompson	221-0207/0208		325-0207/0208
LT Accessions	Mrs. Elaine Martin	221-0208/0209		325-0208/0209
Infantry Branch Representative (Fort Benning, Georgia)	CPT Mick Bednarek	835-3611/4381		545-3611/4381

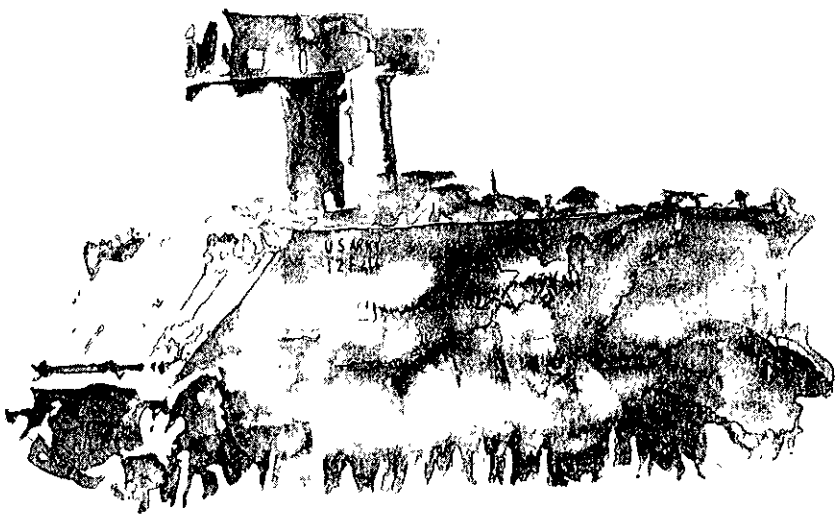
for Special Forces training and assignment should submit a DA Form 4187 with substantiating documentation to show that the requirements outlined in AR 614-162 can be met

SCREENING BOARDS ELIMINATED

Earlier this year, the Army eliminated screening boards for the promotion of officers to Chief Warrant Officers 3 and 4, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, and Colonel, and for the selection of officers to attend senior service colleges. The only screening board that will continue to be held is the board for selection to attend the Command and Staff College, because of the large number of officers this board considers.

For promotions and senior service colleges, a single board will select officers from in the zone, above the zone, and below the zone of consideration.

The screening concept was introduced some years ago as a means of reducing to a manageable number the large number of officers under consideration. But two factors led to the elimination of the boards: First, the officer population is much smaller now and can be managed by one board. Second, there has been a change in the policy of giving officers repeated chances for promotion to field grades from below the zone Majors now have only one opportunity for selection from below the zone, colonels have two opportunities.

The elimination of screening boards should also improve the credibility of the boards, since one board now sees all the records and makes all the selections.

The change will cause some minor adjustments in this year's board schedule, but it will not affect the zones of consideration.