

# OFFICERS CAREER NOTES



## COUNSELING PROCESS

The Officer Personnel Management Directorate (OPMD) of the Military Personnel Center (MILPERCEN) has expanded its formal counseling procedures for officers who are not selected for promotion to the ranks of captain through colonel and for warrant officers who are not selected for promotion to CWO 3 and CWO 4.

Either MILPERCEN or unit commanders will counsel non-selected officers on request. MILPERCEN will also prepare, at an officer's request, individual file summaries and interview sheets to be forwarded to his commander for counseling purposes. Counseling will be made available as soon as possible after a promotion list is released.

Infantry officers who want MILPERCEN counseling or who would like for MILPERCEN interview sheets to be provided to their commanders should contact their career managers at Infantry Branch.

Commanders and MILPERCEN career managers have always provided counseling to officers and will continue to do so. These procedures are designed to assist commanders in their counseling role.

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## OFFICER EDUCATION

Each year the Army selects about 750 commissioned and warrant officers to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees at civilian universities as full-time, on-duty students. The Army provides these officers with an educational opportunity and then assigns them to positions that call for that education periodically throughout the rest of their careers.

The Army has two general cate-

gories of full-time, on-duty educational programs — fully funded and partially funded. Under the fully funded program, the Army provides a permanent change of station (PCS) move, full pay and allowances, tuition, and up to \$200 per year toward textbooks and supplies. The partially funded program is similar, but the officer must pay for his or her own tuition (many have used veterans benefits), textbooks, and supplies. Under either program, an officer incurs an active duty service obligation, computed as three days for each day in school, up to a maximum of six years.

In addition, the Army offers a variety of special programs, including the Funded Legal Education Program; fellowships, scholarships and grants, such as White House Fellows; and the Training with Industry program.

Officers who are approved for an associate or baccalaureate degree program must study in a field that is of functional value to the Army. The degree should support the officers' specialties or MOSs. The full-time, on-duty programs require that officers study in a discipline for which the Army has AERB positions in certain specialties. The same requirements apply to off-duty programs in which the Army bears part of the expense through tuition assistance.

The Army does not restrict the field of study for an officer who pursues an advanced degree on his own time and at his own expense. But it is still wise for each officer to study in a field that supports one of his specialties.

Infantry officers who are interested in being assigned as full-time students at civilian universities should read AR 621-1; telephone or write their profes-

sional development officers to determine an appropriate program; photocopy DA Form 1618-R from the back of AR 621-1, fill it out, have it indorsed, and mail it to Commander, MILPERCEN, ATTN: DAPC-OPE-D, 200 Stovall Street, Alexandria, VA 22332.

Professional development sections at MILPERCEN consider officers for civil schooling on the basis of the following general criteria: company grade professional development, such as advanced course and company command completed; availability for PCS; top notch evaluation reports; and academic records that indicate a likelihood of success in undergraduate degree completion or graduate school.

An officer can improve his chances for selection by planning ahead. He should talk to his professional development officer, find out what degrees will support Army requirements, and take the appropriate tests, such as the Graduate Record Examination or the Graduate Management Aptitude Test.

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## UPDATE ORBs

An officer's Officer Record Brief (ORB) is important to his career in several ways. Commanders and supervisors use it to get an impression of his qualifications for a duty position; DA selection boards use it to assess his potential for promotion, schooling, or command; and assignment officers use it as an aid in making assignments and other important professional development decisions.

Over the years, officers have criticized the ORB system because of the difficulty they have encountered in getting changes made. But there is evidence that many officers neglect

updating their ORBs until a problem arises or until it is time for their records to go before a board. Keeping an ORB up to date takes personal involvement and follow-up.

DA sends a copy of an officer's most recent ORB to his local military personnel office (MILPO) three times a year, including an audit copy in his birth month. The officer's signature on the audit ORB attests that the data on it is correct, or that he has indicated any changes that need to be submitted by the MILPO. The other two ORBs, which come at four-month intervals following the audit ORB, should be checked to make sure these changes have been made.

But an officer does not have to wait until he receives an ORB to make corrections; changes can be made through MILPOs any time during the year. (DA Pamphlet 600-8, Procedure 5-1, contains all the information he needs. Copies should be available in unit personnel administration centers (PACs) or MILPOs.)

Some officers are under the impression that their assignment officers are the only ones who can get changes made on their ORBs. This is a myth that needs to be dispelled. Some of the items on the ORB can be updated only by DA, others only through SIDPERS transactions.

If an item needs to be updated by DA, an officer should have his local MILPO send a letter to the appropriate agency as shown in the pamphlet, making sure he has provided MILPO with enough information to validate the requested change. This is better than sending the request for change directly to DA, because if there is a change in procedure, the MILPO is more likely to know about it and can help get the problem corrected.

Although each item on the ORB is important, the items that are most often found to be inaccurate by selection boards are height and weight data, military and civilian education levels, and assignment history.

Height and weight must be entered accurately, with height in inches and weight in pounds. There is a big dif-

ference, for example, between 63 inches in height and 6 feet 3 inches, which is sometimes entered the same way — 63. If an officer's photograph makes him appear overweight but his ORB says that he is not, the board will ask for verification of height and weight from his commander.

Data on military education level (MEL) for schooling at command and staff college (MEL 4) and senior service college (MEL 1) level is entered at DA. So is civilian education for master's and doctor's level schooling. All other school data is entered in the field. Officers who complete non-resident programs for MEL 1 and MEL 4 schools must forward appropriate documents through their MILPOs to DA for update. Appropriate degrees and transcripts must also be forwarded to DA before an officer can be credited with completing graduate work.

Another problem is that assignment history is not entered accurately; sometimes organization and duty titles are so abbreviated that they are not clear. Organization titles can be no longer than 19 characters with four additional characters available for unit number, while duty titles can be no longer than 24 characters. But the problem is that often an officer does not even use all of these spaces, and this often results in indecipherable abbreviations. If abbreviations are necessary, they should comply with AR 310-50.

Above all, each officer must get involved in keeping his own ORB up to date. If a change is not made on the first try, he should follow it up and resubmit it, getting his commander involved if he has to. If he is getting close to a selection board and has not succeeded in getting changes made that he considers important, he should write to his assignment officer or call, if time is short.

The assignment officer will change the items that are DA changeable, and he will post the ORB that goes before the selection board with the handwritten changes the officer has requested. At the same time, though, these changes should be submitted

through the MILPO once more.

An officer who follows these guidelines and the advice in the pamphlet should be more successful in keeping his ORB current.

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## **ORSA GRADUATE PROGRAM**

The Florida Institute of Technology (FIT), in conjunction with the U.S. Army Logistics Management Center (ALMC) at Fort Lee, Virginia, has recently initiated a Master of Science Degree program in Operations Research at ALMC.

Officers who want to pursue this degree must first complete the 12-week Operations Research Systems Analysis Military Applications Course I (ORSA MAC I) at ALMC, for which they receive six graduate quarter hours with FIT. Then they complete the remaining 42 credits over the course of one year for a total time of 15 months at Fort Lee.

FIT has a resident ORSA director for the program and carefully screens and selects instructors who are both academically and professionally qualified in operations research. Classes are scheduled during the day or evening with the ALMC library and computer facility available to students.

The degree program is a cooperative program that requires student officers to pay tuition costs, but VA Educational Benefits can be used to pay these costs.

For information on the program, anyone who is interested should write or call the following: Mr. William Creed, Resident Director, ALMC, FIT Office, Fort Lee, VA 23801; AUTOVON 687-2722 or Mr. Jose Antunes, ORSA Committee, ALMC, ATTN: DRXMC-LS-S, Fort Lee, VA 23801; AUTOVON 687-2386.

Interested officers who have degrees in science, engineering, or mathematics are encouraged to discuss the program with their respective professional branches at MILPERCEN.