

FORUM & FEATURES



Visiting MILPERCEN

LIEUTENANT COLONEL DANIEL M. SHAMANSKI

So, sergeant, you want to visit MILPERCEN? Maybe "want to visit" is not the right term — maybe you *need* to visit. If you do, the place to go is Room 212, Hoffman Complex I, the U.S. Army Military Personnel Center, Alexandria, Virginia.

Room 212 is the Enlisted Information and Assistance Office (I&A). It is staffed by three people — a master sergeant is in charge, assisted by a sergeant first class and a receptionist. It's just an ordinary room with a window (overlooking one of the many parking lots), some reading materials, a TV set, and a fish tank. But lots of drama takes place in this room, and not all of it is on the TV set.

"Drama" is sometimes synonymous with "soldier," and soldiers trek to Alexandria by the hundreds with dramatic problems, some of which require pretty dramatic solutions. MILPERCEN operates this office to help those visiting soldiers find some of these solutions. It is the main point of welcome to the Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate and is technically supervised by the Enlisted Personal Actions Division.

Like many soldiers, you may have a fundamental fear of visiting "DA,"

because you think it might lead to an assignment in Timbuktu or to getting some "bad things" into your file. But this is not true. And when your local Military Personnel Office has not been able to help you with a question or a problem, a visit to MILPERCEN can be a good idea. Lots of people do it.

WHY THEY COME

An average of about 120 soldiers a week visit the I&A office with the peak periods being in December and June. They come for all kinds of reasons: Some are just increasingly aware that they need advice on their career progression; others are concerned with such matters as assignment preference, joint domicile, promotion, schooling, permissive attachment, skill qualification testing, and reclassification into another MOS, compassionate deletion/diversion/reassignment, and the many other areas of interest that any army of soldiers might have.

(Over the years, staff sergeants have formed the predominant group represented in the visiting body. Apparent-

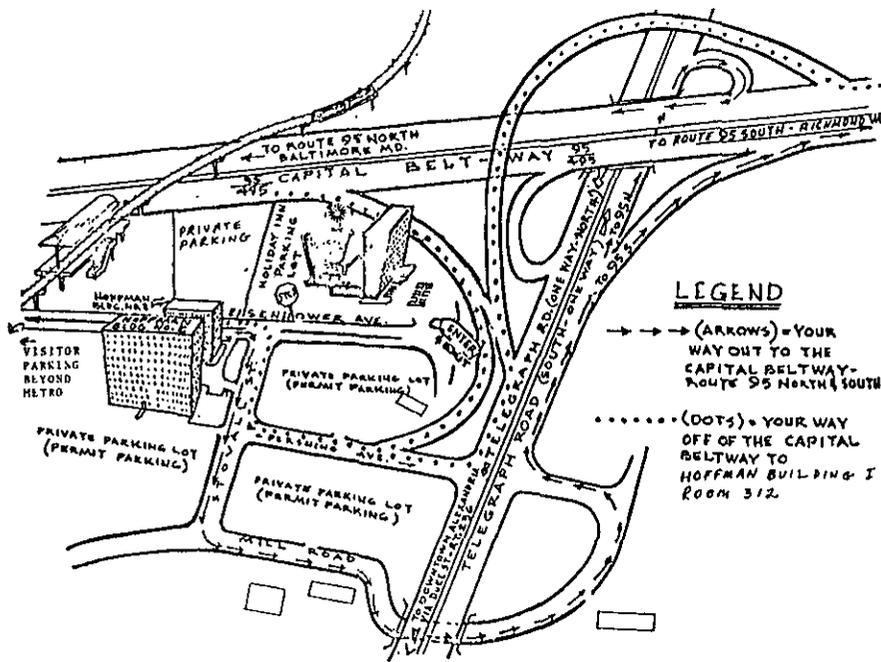
ly, the soldiers in this group have a greater awareness of their career needs and want more advice on career progression. On the lower side of the grade scale, soldiers are more concerned with assignment preference and joint domicile. On the higher end, senior noncommissioned officers visit for a mixture of reasons.)

So come on up.

But, first, how do you get here? (Asking and answering this question is not intended to insult your intelligence — thousands of visitors have told us that one of the most trying parts of their trip was to get to the right room in the right building.)

First, the Hoffman complex is off Interstate 95, Exit 2N (Telegraph Road North). Hoffman I and II sometimes cause confusion. Each houses a separate entity, but for purposes of this discussion, Hoffman I is for enlisted soldiers, Hoffman II for officers. (Hoffman I has affixed to it on the outside left wall a sign designating the "United Virginia Bank," a co-located commercial enterprise.)

As you approach the final leg of your journey to MILPERCEN, you may find it beneficial to use the map shown here for reference and to call



202/325-7791 (0700-1700 weekdays) for specific directions. After duty hours, a tape recording will guide you to the Hoffman complex. If, upon arrival, you have a bona fide emergency, you can call the MILPERCEN Staff Duty Officer at 202/325-8851 for help.

If you arrive early or care to stay over, just across the street from the Hoffman complex is a Holiday Inn. Tour bus services are also available.

A visitors parking area is on the east side of Building I under the Metro overpass. You should park in one of the red-lined, numbered spaces and sign your parking space number in with the guard in the lobby.

Once you're in the building, just follow the signs to Room 212, the "room with the red rug." At the receptionist's desk, you will be briefed (again) on parking procedures, just to be sure your car isn't towed away into the heart of Alexandria.

If your wife and children have accompanied you on the trip, they will find Room 212 a friendly place to wait for you. There is the TV set (and the fish tank), and there are also games for children and some reading materials. A cafeteria is available on the ground floor.

Once you've checked in with the

receptionist, you'll be asked to fill out an information sheet explaining the purpose of your visit. Then a call will be placed to your career management division, and someone will be sent to meet you — most likely your Professional Development NCO. After all, he has been hand-picked for the job because of his extensive field experience and his familiarity with Army procedures. If you're affiliated with a regimental unit, the Regimental Adjutants are co-located in the I&A office and can be called upon to help you. In either case, interview rooms are available in which you can be assured of privacy.

After you've talked with your interviewer, you may find that your problem has been solved. We can't say we work miracles, but in trying to help you we do explore every angle within our governing directives. If you're not satisfied with these efforts, you can ask to see the person next in authority, and in most cases you will be able to do so.

Later, you will be given a questionnaire to fill out. It is optional, but if you want to complete it, the questionnaire gives us a way of evaluating the service you have received and of making our operation more efficient. The questionnaire will *not* become a part

of your CMIF (Career Management Information File), so you can feel free to tell us frankly what you liked or didn't like about the service.

We are not here to give you a bureaucratic run-around; we realize, in fact, that an informed Army is a more effective Army. We fully understand that you are not a personnel administrator, just a soldier trying to get a problem solved and do his job.

Your responsibility in this cooperative venture is to bring with you any documentation you may need to substantiate the reason for your visit. These documents might be court orders, affidavits by third parties, birth certificates (authenticated), and any number of other papers. The better you have prepared your case, the easier it will be for us to help you.

A point worth mentioning here is the distinction between your CMIF and your "official" records. The records that determine promotion and centralized school selection are maintained at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. It is those records that you must keep up to date, and placing documentation in your CMIF at MILPERCEN will not do that. You get documents into your official file when your MILPO forwards them on a transmittal letter to Fort Harrison.

Remember, your commander, first sergeant, command sergeant major, and local MILPO are the quickest and least expensive ways to deal with any problems you may have. If these don't work, you can call the I&A office and someone will give you the name and number of someone to assist you. Then if that doesn't work, by all means, visit your Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate — starting with Room 212.

Our soldiers *are* the Army!



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