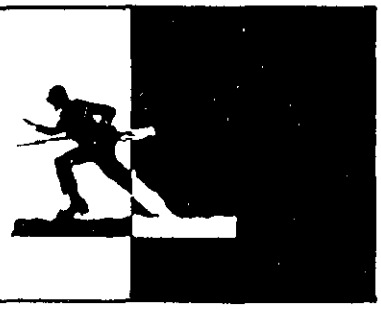
OFFICERS CAREER NOTES



BRANCH CHIEF'S NOTES

After a year as Branch Chief, I would like to offer, before leaving, some of my perceptions concerning the way day-to-day business is conducted at "Mother MILPERCEN" and the attitude that prevails in Infantry Branch.

As most of you know, Infantry Branch is responsible for identifying, selecting, and assigning more than 12,000 officers, second lieutenants through lieutenant colonels, in accordance with Army priorities. Inherent in the assignment process is the assignment officers' responsibility for monitoring the professional growth of each officer and for maintaining the proper balance among requirements, priorities, professional development, and personal preferences. I am truly impressed with the way the assignment officers here have demonstrated that they are equally concerned with both.

Infantry Branch is a busy place. On a typical day 12 assignment officers answer more than 500 phone calls, conduct 15 interviews, put 25 officers on orders, process an additional 100 personnel actions, and respond to 30 pieces of mail. And amid all this, they manage Infantry officers not by grade and specialty but as people and tested professionals (although from the field it may not appear that they do).

To the many installation and divisional AGs, G-1s, and assignment officers at all levels, I also say thanks for your understanding, loyalty, and support. I know that at times it appears that Army priorities are contrary to unit needs and requirements, but I can assure all of you that Infantry Branch exists to serve the Army in the field. It makes every effort to support local commanders: More than 90 percent of all requests from the field are favorably considered.

To Infantry officers throughout the world, I encourage you to keep in touch with Infantry Branch. But please be sensitive to the timeliness of your calls and letters. A large number of calls are made too far in advance for assignment officers to provide a definitive answer, and vague or generalized responses to your requests do not help.

Remember that before assignments can be completed, assignment officers must have a valid requirement. Stateside requirements are not available until five months before the projected reporting date, while overseas requirements are available nine months before. Calls or letters concerning assignments before those availability dates simply cannot be answered.

I leave Infantry Branch, proud of its dedication and commitment to the Infantry. The work of the Branch's professional civilians and officers often goes unnoticed and seldom receives the recognition it deserves.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Infantry is well represented and supported by our MILPERCEN team. There is a "P" in personnel, and the "P" is for people — people *are* important, things are not.

LTC BRYAN A. SUTHERLAND

RA INTEGRATION

Officers who have between two and eight years of active federal commissioned service may apply for integration into the Regular Army. A selection board is held once a year, in the spring, to select qualified officers for integration.

Individual officers who want RA appointments should apply in accordance with AR 601-100. Applications should arrive no later than 31 January each year. Although they are not required, strong recommendations by members of an officer's chain of command improve his chances for selection. Applicants are notified by letter as to the board's results.

ASSIGNMENT PROCESS

One of the questions most frequently asked an assignment officer is just what, specifically, is the classification of a particular assignment. It's easy to understand the confusion over this subject in light of the terms used by assignment officers at Infantry Branch and by personnel managers in the field.

First, there are only four basic classifications of assignment: INSPEC (initial specialty) with troops, INSPEC without troops, ADSPEC (additional specialty) with troops, and ADSPEC without troops.

To define those terms — an officer's INSPEC is his initial specialty, which for Infantry officers is 11. An ADSPEC is his designated additional specialty, normally designated during his eighth year of service.

Thus, it can be said that all his assignments will be either in his INSPEC or his ADSPEC — except, of course, that there are variations that make a specialty designation immaterial to a particular assignment (U.S. Military Academy instructor, Assistant Professor of Military Science, for example). Infantry officers have a large number of these branch immaterial requirements to meet in such commands as USAREC and ROTC.

An officer may also be assigned a

job in a third specialty because he has better qualifications for a mission-essential duty than anyone else available. As a rule, however, assignment officers try to limit those instances, keeping assignments within an officer's designated specialties as much as possible.

Most infantry officers want to serve with soldiers in Infantry units all the time and, while there are some who do not, most aspire to battalion command and its subsequent challenges. Because of this, many officers view any assignment away from troops as detrimental to their career progression, but as something they must do as part of "paying their dues." The facts are that repetitive assignments to Infantry units are the exception rather than the rule.

In this regard, it is important to understand the assignment officer's role in the system. First of all, he meets Army requirements, as established in MTOEs and TDAs; he does not create them. Secondly, he fills requirements that are established in the priority designated on the DA Master Priority List and other appropriate documents that he receives in the form of valid requisitions against the Officer Distribution Plan (ODP). The ODP is established independently of assignment officers, and it allocates resources against requirements. As a result, there is likely to be a shortage of captains or majors in the units at a particular installation, according to the MTOE. Many officers, knowing of this shortage, call to request assignment to one of those units. But if the assignment officer has no valid requirement to fill, he can't make that assignment.

One of the unpleasant facts we have to deal with is that Infantry officers in the rank of major have little more than a 20 percent chance of serving at battalion or brigade level. There are 190 such positions and more than 2,100 Infantry majors. For captains, there are 2,500 positions coded as 11 (many without troops) and nearly 4,500 officers to be assigned.

This means that most Infantry officers won't be battalion S-3s or XOs, or brigade staff officers either. And Infantry Branch has little control over who gets to fill those positions, because assignment officers, in the vast majority of cases, make assignments to installations or major commands, not to pinpoint assignments below that level. Their strategy is to send officers in either their INSPEC or ADSPEC to those installations where there are troop units and to leave it to the commanders and the chains of command to determine what job they get.

As can be plainly seen from the numbers shown above, most Infantry officers will spend a great deal of time away from troops, with half or more of their assignments in their ADSPECs. The Army is structured in such a way that most company grade assignments are INSPEC jobs, while most field grade assignments are ADSPEC.

Another serious point of confusion is the term "nominative assignment." In the past that term has been used almost synonymously with duties in the Recruiting Command, ROTC, and the Reserve Components. In an eagerness to get back to troops, many have tried to equate service school instructor duty, joint service assignments, or similar assignments with these "three Rs" and have protested when told they were going to one of those assignments.

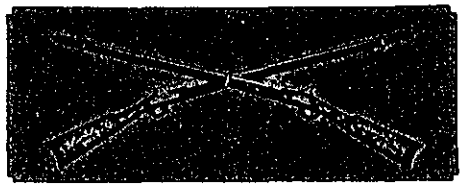
But it is time to clear up this misconception. Nominative assignments are those to which an officer must be nominated because the gaining command can refuse to accept him. Some assignments to USAREC are nominative; many are not. Many, but not all, ROTC assignments require nominations. So do some DA staff jobs and some at DA field operating agencies, NATO, SHAPE, and similar headquarters. The point is that nominative assignments are found everywhere, at all levels of responsibility, at all grades. We try not to assign anyone to repetitive nominative tours, but may have to.

But success does not lie in the job description. The way to success is — as each officer has heard many times — in the way he performs each job.

DEPENDENT PROGRAM

The Exceptional (Gifted/Talented) Program is designed to function in much the same way as the Handicapped Dependent Program. A service member may request that the Army be aware of and consider any special talent one of his dependent children may have.

The service member must include an appropriate evaluation from school or other authorities to support his request. Among acceptable documents are achievement test scores, intelligence test results, creativity tests, nominations or recommendations of teachers or schools, and documentation from experts in a given field (art, music, drama, sports).

The governing regulation is AR 614-203, and requests should be submitted to Department of the Army, USA MILPERCEN, ATTN: DAPC-OPE-P, 200 Stovall Street, Alexandria, VA 22332.

Processing time is about three days.