

our own M67 recoilless rifle. The technology exists for making a 25-pound rifle out of titanium, for improving the breech-locking mechanisms, and for lightening the monopod and other components. With the commitment of funds for research and development, state-of-the-art ammunition to fill the three desired capabilities is within easy reach. That ammunition would be substantively better than any that is avail-

able through any foreign market. This solution, in the broad sense, is infinitely more affordable than any of the high-technology solutions that have been offered.

The Army must take a critical look at how we fight the middle ground. We must return to a fighting philosophy that a medium antiarmor weapon must be simple, durable, and inexpensive; must be crew-served; and must have an

abundant supply of ammunition in order to kill armor with exceptional marksmen shooting exceptionally accurate fires.

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Officer Evaluation

How Well Does the System Work?

CAPTAIN THOMAS M. JORDAN

General John A. Wickham, when he was Chief of Staff of the Army, said, "Our effectiveness depends on continuing to improve the professional competence, imagination, and integrity of Army leaders from the most senior to the most junior."

To help promote that improvement, the Army uses the Officer Evaluation System as its primary tool for identifying the officers who are best qualified for advancement and assignment to positions of increased responsibility. But does this system actually work? And does it contribute to the improvement of professional competence within the officer corps? The results of a recent survey I conducted indicate that the system may be out of kilter.

I administered my survey over a period of time to company grade officers with approximately four years of commissioned service who were attending Infantry Officers Advanced Course classes at the Infantry School. Each of these officers was asked to complete the survey on the basis of his last job assignment before coming to the course, and 108 responded.

Admittedly, this is a limited study

with data from a small group; nevertheless, the results may be an indication of a more general problem with the system.

One rather sobering result from the data was an apparent lack of communication between the rated officer and his raters. DA Pamphlet 623-105 clearly states that the officer evaluation support form (DA Form 67-8-1) "should be first used during the rating period as a work sheet to discuss the rated officer's duty description and major performance objectives." Despite this guidance, 37 percent of the officers in the survey said they had not agreed with their raters in advance on what their performance objectives would be. Fifty-nine percent of them said they had not even discussed their performance objectives with their *senior* raters.

Equally disturbing is the fact that 40 percent of the officers said they were unaware of the standards of performance and the expectations of their raters, and 68 percent said they did not discuss standards or expectations with their senior raters.

Fifty-four percent of the officers

indicated they had received performance counseling from their raters throughout the rating period, but only 27 percent indicated that their senior raters had provided any performance counseling during the rating period.

Seventy-two percent said they discussed their performance with their raters at the end of the rating period, while 28 percent said they did not. Only 49 percent said they discussed their performance with their senior raters at the end.

Sixty-two percent said they did not believe the efficiency report would affect their future performance while 38 percent felt their performance would improve as a result of the report.

All of these responses indicate that, in the eyes of these officers at least, the officer evaluation system is not working very well.

One of the problems seems to be the way the support form is being neglected. According to DA Pamphlet 623-105, this form is designed to "increase planning and relate performance to mission through joint understanding between the rater and rated officer and [to] encourage performance

counseling [through] continuous communication." But it is clear that among this particular group of officers, this interaction seldom occurred.

What this means is that these officers, when assigned to new positions, in many cases, received little guidance on what was expected of them or what their jobs consisted of in the eyes of their raters or senior raters. Neither did many raters and rated officers develop similar ideas in advance about what constituted good or bad performance.

Feedback is another problem. The current officer evaluation system encourages both raters and senior raters to provide this feedback to their subordinates. Yet 46 percent of the officers in this survey said they did not receive any such feedback from their raters, and an alarming 73 percent said they did not receive any from their senior raters.

A positive aspect is that 72 percent of the officers said their raters did discuss their performance with them at the *end* of the rating period. In view of the earlier lack of agreement on performance objectives, however, and the absence of clearly communicated performance standards, this eventual discussion may have been more of a report card than a fair appraisal. For the 28 percent who did not discuss their performance ratings with their supervisors at all, this was clearly the case.

A major concern is that most of the officers did not believe the rating would improve their future performance or

otherwise affect it. This indicates that little communication and coaching took place. It also indicates that the OER was essentially a report card and that it was not used within the intended structure to promote the development of the individual officer.

Thus, it seems that many of these officers were not really participants in the evaluation system. Some seem to have weaved their way through the system and received a report card on their mission accomplishment at the last stop. They may have realized then what had been expected of them all along and what their raters and senior raters considered good and bad performance.

Still others seem to have gone through the entire process only to receive a report card based on arbitrary standards that were never communicated to them, not even at the end. The system certainly was short-circuited in these cases, and the victim was the subordinate.

Preparing performance appraisals is not an easy task or a popular one. Many officers are uncomfortable making such judgments and even more uncomfortable communicating those judgments to their subordinates. Another problem is that some supervisors tend to assume their subordinates know what they are supposed to do and are surprised when they do not.

Although more extensive research would have to be conducted to confirm that there is a problem, certain recommendations can be made from this survey.

First, since a senior rater has a tremendous effect on an officer's career, an effort must be made either to see that senior raters fulfill their monitoring role or to eliminate their input entirely. Further study would be necessary to confirm one option or the other, but it appears that some senior raters do little except pass judgment, and one can only imagine the performance criteria they use.

Second, more stringent measures need to be applied to see that the support form is used the way the regulation prescribes, perhaps in the form of suspenses.

In addition, the system must ensure that officers who become raters understand their duties and obligations to their subordinates. Every officer should therefore be required to attend instruction on the purpose and methodology of the officer evaluation system. Then each officer should be required to demonstrate that he can follow the correct procedure.

Hopefully, additional training and closer monitoring will help alleviate these problems, and the system can be made to work the way it was designed to work.

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World War II History

German Military Studies

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Mao Tse-Tung wisely noted that "We should carefully study the lessons which were learned in past wars at the

cost of blood and which have been bequeathed to us. . . ."

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