DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY HUMAN RESOURCES COMMAND
SECRETARIAT FOR DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY SELECTION BOARDS
1600 SPEARHEAD DIVISION AVENUE
FORT KNOX, KY 40122

AHRC-PDV-S 19 February 2011

MEMORANDUM THRU Headquarters, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, Attention: ATTG-P, 3 Fenwick Road, Building 11, Fort Monroe, VA 23651-1049

FOR Commanding General, Maneuver Center of Excellence, Fort Benning, GA 319055

SUBJECT: Career Management Field (CMF) 11/Infantry Review and Analysis

1. Reference memorandum, HQDA, DAPE-MPE-PD, 07 January 2011, subject: Memorandum of Instruction for the FY11 Sergeant First Class (SFC) Promotion Selection Board; memorandum, HQDA, AHRC-PDV-S, 03 February 2011, subject: FY11 Sergeant First Class Promotion Selection Board Standard Operating Procedures; HQDA, Office of the Chief of Infantry, subject: FY11 Sergeant First Class Selection Board Briefing

2. In accordance with the referenced memorandum, the selection board panel reviewing records for CMF 11 submits this Review and Analysis to assist you in executing your duties as proponent for MOS within this CMF.

3. General. In accordance with the references listed above, the CMF 11 proponent package provided by your command, and the experience and knowledge of the board members, we are confident the best qualified Staff Sergeants have been selected for promotion to Sergeant First Class.

4. The Infantry proponent guidance package provided was very helpful and important to the panel. The only piece of information the panel felt was lacking was the importance of the Infantry Mortar Leader's Course to development and progression of the 11C SSGs. The packet complimented the Army guidance and was very useful in assisting the panel with establishing criteria and weight for selecting best qualified Infantry SSGs for promotion to SFC.

5. Board Issues and Observations

a. Photographs.

(1) The absence of photographs was prevalent. Unless accompanied by a compelling letter to the board explaining why a SSG was unable to establish an official photograph in the last five years, the panel considered the lack of a photograph a significant discriminator. The panel's rationale was that the presence of a photograph in

a board file is a requirement and not optional. Additionally, official photographs have a life span of 5 years and readily easy to obtain and post given the digital technology used. Nobody in the Army has an operational tempo that prevents them from maintaining a current photograph given the current technology and generous currency window of 5 years. The panel saw the lack of a photo as an indicator that the SSG was not among the best qualified for promotion. Recommend that the standard be emphatically reiterated. The presence of a photograph is either the standard or it is not the standard. There will certainly be exceptions, but they will be very rare. The field needs to understand this. The panel noted that SSGs from units with the highest OPTEMPO in the Armed Forces all had current and quality photographs.

(2) The quality of a photograph in a file is critically important. The panel members were able to very quickly establish a critical impression of the fitness, discipline, attention to detail, professionalism, military bearing, and general quality of a given SSG by viewing his photograph. A poor photograph was a discriminator. Many SSGs photographs were technically poor due to presence of Infantry cords and discs, improper placement of badges and awards, ill-fitting uniforms, clear appearance of being overweight or close to it (physical fitness and appearance will be discussed further below), etc. A quality photograph is absolutely an individual and chain of command responsibility and reflects directly on the prospective candidate and his chain of command. Recommend that supervisors of SSGs appearing before the board make the time to assist their SSGs with their photographs by inspecting them and accompanying them to the photography studio. It is a supervisor obligation to sit down individually with each SSG and review his photograph on file to ensure it is a quality product and effort and that it complies with the selection board standards. Also recommend units, posts, organizations and individuals pay close attention to the differences between the selection board standard verses the official DA photo standard for photographs. There were several posts and organizations who were potentially improperly advising their SSGs on the standard, for they were uniformly in the wrong standard for their board photographs.

(3) The panel observed several discrepancies in the consistency for standardized photographs. Some posts and organizations produce photographs at an oblique angle, while others produce photographs "head-on". While this anomaly did not affect the individual SSGs file relative to evaluation and voting by the panel, it was noted by the panel as a failure to standardize photographs across the Army. What is the standard? This is an easy fix and should be corrected.

b. Physical fitness and compliance with AR 600-9.

(1) Infantry NCOs must be able to lead by personal physical example. The physical demands on Infantrymen, regardless of the composition of their organizations (vehicular, airborne, etc) are physically tough and demanding and the best qualified

SSGs for promotion to SFC must be able to effectively lead in that environment. The panel paid close attention to physical fitness. The panel viewed favorably SSGs who had a demonstrated trend of achieving 270 or higher on the APFT as meeting the physical requirements of superior leaders. SSGs who demonstrated a fitness trend in the 211 to 269 range were viewed neutrally and potentially not yet ready for service as a SFC depending on the strength of the other crucial elements of their file. SSGs with an APFT trend of 180 to 210 were viewed negatively by the panel and their readiness for promotion was seriously questioned. An APFT failure was a significant discriminator and those SSGs were clearly demonstrating to the board that they are not ready for promotion.

(2) The panel was alarmed at the amount of SSGs who are overweight, have a pattern of struggling with AR 600-9 compliance, and who appear overweight. If the leaders are not meeting the standard, their Soldiers are probably not meeting the standard. This is a disappointing indictment on the Army's commitment to readiness and the overall fitness of the force. Several files had height and weight data that fluctuated two to four inches and 10 to 30 pounds across two or more rating periods. Units and leaders must record their NCOs data accurately and be held accountable. In most cases (and not surprisingly), SSGs who struggled with or were not in compliance with AR 600-9 also had weak APFT trends. Failure to meet weight standards in accordance with AR 600-9 was a clear indicator to the panel that those SSGs were not ready for promotion to SFC. SSGs that appeared overweight and had of pattern of flirting with being overweight were questionable in their potential for promotion.

(3) The lack of a numerical APFT score entered in part IVc of the NCOER gave the panel the perception that the SSG had a low APFT score. Additionally, a trend across several NCOERs of no numerical scores entered created the perception that the SSG was a mediocre physical performer and leader. A SSG whose APFT scores wildly fluctuated 20 to 40 points depending on where he was assigned also created a negative impression on the panel.

(4) Although currently authorized, the entry of no APFT score for the rating period due to combat conditions or deployment is not helpful. Because this practice is authorized, the panel did not hold it against the SSG. However, in most cases where there was no APFT score entered due to deployment, the SSG in question had a demonstrated pattern of weak APFT scores in his NCOERs left and right of the deployed evaluation. The panel also noted that SSGs assigned to organizations with the highest OPTEMPO in the Armed Forces all had current APFT scores.

(5) Some NCOERs contained a failing APFT score but still had the SUCCESS block checked. The standard should be that failing the APFT or not meeting standards in accordance with AR 600-9 should warrant the NEEDS IMPROVEMENT block checked.

Unit leaders should not attempt to camouflage or mitigate the failure of their SSG to meet the standard.

(6) In addition to a numerical APFT score, comments about effectively leading in strenuous combat conditions (altitude, heat, cold, number of patrols in full kit, etc) along with unit APFT average and percentage or numbers of Soldiers under the SSGs leadership who achieved 270 or higher were very helpful and reflected positively on the file.

(7) Some APFT and height/weight entries appeared questionable because the numbers appeared altered after the fact. This is made possible because the entries for APFT pass/fail, height, weight and yes/no must be physically entered by the unit and leave room for temptation and corruption. This could be fixed by adding drop-down menus to block IVc for pass/fail/yes/no, and height/weight.

(8) Recommend heavy emphasis on physical fitness and compliance with AR 600-9 weight standards. Physical fitness is directly tied to readiness and survivability on the battlefield and demands appropriate attention. Units must develop a culture of fitness and leaders must be held accountable for their programs and the accurate records of their Soldiers.

c. Duty position and assignment history.

(1) The panel saw the position of squad leader or its equivalent (team leader in LRS or Pathfinder for example) in an operational unit as the most important position in an Infantry SSGs file. 24 months or more squad leader time within the last four or five years was viewed very favorably by the panel. SSGs with 12 months or less squad leader time in an operational unit were viewed as not yet ready for promotion to SFC.

(2) Diverse experience in addition to squad leader time is critical and SSGs who served in other positions in addition to squad leader such as drill sergeant, MiTT, WTU, recruiting and instructor were viewed by the panel as having the most desirable assignment background.

(3) Diverse experience with various types of Infantry formations was viewed very favorably by the panel.

(4) More than two years or evaluations reflecting non-key SSG duty positions such as training room NCO or assistant operations NCO was viewed negatively by the panel.

(5) Files with multiple evaluations reflecting duty outside expected 11B desired positions such as protocol or supply were viewed negatively by the panel.

(6) Recommend that Infantry SSGs seek as much operational squad leader time as possible with the target being 24 months or greater squad leader time. The caveat is that although lots of operational time is good, additional duty as mentioned in (2) above is better because it develops the well-rounded NCOs we need at the senior level. Supervisors should assist council and mentor their SSGs in achieving this assignment pattern. Additionally, Infantry SSGs who consistently serve outside the 11B assignment pattern should be reclassified to a different CMF. This is something Infantry Branch should monitor and act on when identified.

d. Performance.

(1) The panel sought consistent patterns and trends of excellence in performance and senior rater endorsement for promotion and service as a platoon sergeant when selecting the best qualified SSGs for promotion. The quality of bullet comments by raters and senior raters in relation to blocks checked will be discussed below.

(2) SSGs who had excellent performance in one position and then performed in an average manner in a different position obviously did not fare as well as those who consistently performed well in any given assignment. Similarly, SSGs who demonstrated a marked difference in performance while deployed (whether better or worse) compared to home station performance did not display the level of consistency the panel wanted to see in the best qualified for promotion.

(3) Recommend SSGs understand that all jobs are important – that they cannot be great at one thing and average at another and expect to be competitive for promotion. Nor can a SSG be an average performer at home station and "rise to the occasion" when deployed (the converse is true as well – a SSG cannot be a stellar performer at home station and then turn in an average performance while deployed). The panel pays attention to consistent performance trends when deciding who is best qualified for promotion to SFC.

e. Quality of the duty position in the NCOER.

(1) The panel relied heavily on duty descriptions on NCOERs. A well-written duty description that contains scope of responsibility and authority along with the accurate number of Soldiers, vehicles and equipment for which the SSG is responsible is crucial.

(2) Several duty descriptions contained the assigned strength of the SSGs squad in the duty description rather than the TO&E/authorized strength. This was confusing to the panel. Is the SSG really a team leader being labeled as a squad leader, or does he just have an under-strength squad?

(3) Duty positions should also not be inflated. A common example of this was an NCOER that listed the SSG as a "platoon sergeant" but further analysis of the file by the panel revealed that he was actually a squad leader with the additional duty of serving as a company headquarters platoon sergeant (which is not an actual TO&E position). It would better serve the SSG to accurately list his duty title as squad leader on the front side of the NCOER and then enter his additional duty of headquarters platoon sergeant on the back side in part IV b or f (Competence or Responsibility and Accountability). Another common example of inflation was an NCOER that listed the duty position as squad leader but the duty description and supporting data made it clear the SSG was actually an operations NCO or training room NCO. Inflated duty descriptions and titles did not help make a SSGs file look stronger; they had the opposite effect.

(4) Recommend individuals and their supervisors ensure they have an accurate duty title and description that is not inflated and reflects the SSGs scope of responsibility and authority along with the accurate number of Soldiers, vehicles and equipment for which the SSG is responsible. Also, it may be helpful in the future for the Army, by CMF, to establish standardized duty descriptions for all authorized NCO positions. This should at least be done at the unit level.

f. The Values portion on the front side of the NCOER (part IVa) was important. One or more NO blocks checked sent a clear message to the panel that the SSG was not suitable for promotion to SFC – especially if the evaluation was as a SSG. Raters must ensure that bullet comments explain the NO block. Additionally, a NO in Values usually affects some aspect of the evaluated areas on the back side of the NCOER in parts IVb-f, so the lack of a "Needs Improvement" block checked on the back side in relation to the NO in Values on the front was confusing to the panel and presented what amounted to an incomplete NCOER.

g. Rater and senior rater evaluations on the NCOER.

(1) Raters and senior raters must be sure to avoid duplicate comments on subsequent evaluations, for it reduces the quality of the report for the SSG and gives the perception that the chain of command is inattentive or worse. In several cases, rater and senior rater comments were identical on two reports but the block checks were different. This made it more difficult to ascertain what the chain of command was trying to say about the potential and performance of their SSG to the board.

(2) Rater and senior rater bullet comments in Parts IVb-f and V of the NCOER are very important components of the evaluation for the board. It is imperative that leaders take the time to paint an appropriate word picture for the panel when describing and supporting excellence or the need for improvement. The bullets need to support the block check.

(3) The panel needs complete honesty from the senior rater in part V. Most reports viewed were good and helpful, but several reports sent confusing messages when the senior rater (SR) checked the "AMONG THE BEST" block in part Va along with the "1" blocks for successful performance and superior potential in parts V c and d, but the first bullet contained in part Ve was "promote with peers." This confusion was only compounded when the positions recommended in part Vb did not match the bullet comments or box checks.

(4) The panel relied heavily on recommended positions by the SR in part Vb. SSGs that were consistently not recommended for platoon sergeant positions by their senior raters were not viewed as ready for promotion to SFC.

(5) The heavily inflated "Hail Mary" NCOER was not helpful, and there were quite a few. As stated previously, the panel is looking for a consistent manner of performance and potential. Plenty of files denoted average to successful performance and the last "board report" contained all excellence box checks, and maximum box checks and comments from the SR. These inflated reports had to be viewed with a critical eye because they simply did not match the established pattern of performance and potential the panel saw with all the reports before. These types of evaluations did not have the intended effect of influencing the panel and could not be taken seriously in several cases.

(6) Recommend that chains of command avoid duplicate comments on evaluations over multiple rating periods, that bullet comments support excellence and the need for improvement, that senior raters pay close attention to the message they are trying to send to the board in part V, and that all evaluations be an absolutely honest assessment. Do not inflate evaluations. The reviewer also has a responsibility to check evaluations for discrepancies and "level the bubbles" with raters and senior raters.

h. The NCOER should provide a holistic view of a given NCOs performance and potential during a rating period. As such the panel saw a need to change the policy/regulation/standard/guidance to ensure that NCOERs contain comments on NCOES performance. Some files had missing or no DA1059s. Exceptional or marginal and failing performance in NCOES during a given rating period should be mentioned as bullet comments in part IV b through f. Evaluations should also include mention of significant awards and induction into the Sergeant Audy Murphy Club and the Sergeant Morales Club.

i. The Enlisted Record Brief (ERB). Most ERBs had inaccurate duty positions and number of months in that position. Panel members had to rely on NCOERS to establish what positions a given SSG held, when, and for how long. A number of ERBs contained inaccurate or incomplete data on schools and civilian education. Finally, documentation of awards and badges must match what is contained in the ERB.

Although this is clearly an individual responsibility, the leadership in any given unit or organization has supervisory responsibility and obligation to review the ERB with NCOs at all levels to ensure their information is current and accurate.

j. NCOES and Civilian Education.

(1) The panel paid close attention to all DA1059s related to NCOES. They carried as much weight as an NCOER. SSGs that exceeded course standards were viewed very favorably by the panel, while those who failed or received marginal ratings were viewed negatively by the panel and were clearly not demonstrating their potential for promotion and success at the next level.

(2) Civilian education matters and the presence of college credit in a SSGs file is an indicator to the panel of maturity, discipline, depth, and self-improvement. SSGs that possessed 15 or more hours of college credit were viewed very favorably by the panel.

(3) Recommend that the field understand that NCOES reports are an integral part of developing a holistic picture of a given SSGs performance and potential, and the presence of 15 or more hours of civilian education enhances a file.

k. The Expert Infantry Badge and Military Proficiency Schools.

(1) The EIB is important to an Infantryman and to an Infantry panel. It has been very difficult for units to schedule the EIB over the past several years given the very tough OPTEMPO. Therefore, the lack of earning the EIB was not considered a discriminator but its presence in a given SSGs file did significantly enhance the quality of that file.

(2) SSGs who have successfully completed RANGER School were viewed very favorably by the panel, and the presence of the RANGER tab significantly enhanced the quality of their file.

(3) Expert schools such as Battle Staff and Master Gunner also enhanced a given SSGs file.

(4) Recommend SSGs seek the opportunity to earn their EIB and the RANGER Tab in addition to completing the Battle Staff and Master Gunner courses. Unit leaders across the Infantry need to make the time for conducting the EIB. Unit leaders must encourage and support their SSGs to this end.

l. UCMJ and other derogatory data.

(1) Any UCMJ action or General Officer Letters of Reprimand (GOMOR) in a SSGs file that he received as a SSG were a significant discriminator and demonstrated to the panel that the SSG was not among the best qualified for promotion to SFC.

(2) The panel viewed derogatory data in a SSGs file – no matter how old – that was related to drugs, DUI, sexual assault, and domestic violence as extremely discriminatory and evidence that the SSG was not among the best qualified for promotion.

m. Lack of combat deployment. The panel saw a few SSGs who had never deployed in support of combat operations. Although the Army guidance to the board reference lack of combat deployments is clear, the panel was dismayed that there are Infantry SSGs who have never deployed for combat although the Army has been at war since 2001. This is not fair to other NCOs who have conducted multiple deployments, is not properly developing Infantry SSGs who do not deploy, sends the absolutely wrong message to Infantry Soldiers under the leadership of these SSGs, and is something that must be tracked and rectified by Infantry Branch

6. The SSGs selected by this panel represent the very best and best qualified SSGs in the Infantry. Those selected are a very impressive group and are clear evidence that the Infantry is healthy, experienced, and capable for any challenge. It was a very tough cut but we are confident that this cohort of NCOs is exceptional and will have a direct positive impact on the quality of the Infantry and the Army.

HENRY A. ARNOLD, III
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Panel Chief