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**OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT -
CHANGING THE PARADIGMS**

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The Army is not meeting its promotion obligations in the field grade ranks, and is not in compliance with the provisions of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980 (DOPMA) and the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. Specifically, the Army lags behind the Navy, Air Force, and DOPMA in percentages of officers selected for field grade promotion and on pin on points. Additionally, the Army is failing to achieve minimum promotion floors for joint service officers to the rank of colonel. Although the current downsizing of the Army is a partial contributor to this situation, the problems existed before the downsizing started. Current Army personnel and selection board practices and projected solutions to the field grade and joint officer promotion problems are incremental, and they will not solve these problems in the long term. The personnel management tools are available to correct the promotion problems, but this can only occur if the Army changes its paradigms on officer promotion, retention and assignments. This study proposes long term solutions utilizing additional personnel management tools and changes in the Army's personnel management and promotion paradigms. The purpose of the proposed changes are for the Army to achieve conformity with existing laws, and to maintain an officer corps that is trained and ready for land warfare into the 21st Century.

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OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT - CHANGING THE PARADIGMS

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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INTRODUCTION

For all practical purposes, the Army is being cut in half. From a force that approached one million in 1990, it will decline to a force of 525,000 or less by 1995. Although this reduction is a great source of stress for the force, it also presents a unique opportunity for the Army. At no other time in recent history has the Army been afforded a better opportunity to change its approach to officer personnel management. The turmoil of mandated reductions serves as a window of opportunity for the Army to change some paradigms, and to use more effectively available personnel management tools to build a healthier and more vigorous officer corps for the 21st Century.

There are two major problem areas for the Army officer corps as it is currently managed. The first of these is the inequities in field grade promotions in the Army compared to its sister services and the provisions of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. The second major problem area is the Army's inability to comply with the joint officer promotion requirements of the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Both major problems can be corrected to develop an officer corps that not only complies with the provisions of existing laws but also provides for the Army's basic needs for war fighters and a professional staff corps. New approaches and new paradigms, however, are the only real choices for long term solutions. Current Army personnel management practices are incremental, and they do not serve the officer corps or the Army well in the long term.

NARROWING THE FOCUS

The Officer Personnel Management System is a complex system of policies and programs. The basic document which articulates the Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) philosophy and execution is Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3. It is not within the purview of this paper to rewrite DA Pam 600-3. As written, the document requires little alteration to make the changes necessary to solve the field grade promotion problem and fix the joint officer promotion problem. It is also not the purpose of this paper to examine in detail the automated data systems and models which currently support OPMS. Again, there is very little wrong with these systems and models as they currently exist. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the execution of officer personnel policies currently in force in the Army. It is the policies, written or practiced, which dictate how the personnel systems are used by the Army to meet its objectives. It is necessary to alter these policies and practices to fix current and future shortcomings in officer personnel management.

OFFICER PROMOTIONS-IS THERE A PROBLEM?

Generally, the Army promotes officers at slower and lower rates than the Navy and the Air force. The Marine Corps, which is the smallest service, promotes officers at rates comparable to the Army. Not surprisingly, the Marine Corps shares with the Army the promotion flow and paradigm problems.¹ (Since the Marine Corps has the same problem as the Army, it is deleted from further consideration or analysis.) The Navy and the Air Force officer

corps' are roughly equal in size to that of the Army; yet, they achieve higher selection rates for promotion. They also promote officers to the field grade ranks earlier than the Army. (See Chart 2 below.)

All services have Congressionally mandated caps on the number of officers they may have on active duty at a given time. Additionally, the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980 (DOPMA) specifies how many officers each service may have in each field grade rank at the end of each fiscal year. The field grade ranks are major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel and their Navy equivalents.

DOPMA also specifies preferred promotion opportunity and pin on points for all officer grades as follows:

Chart 1²

Promotion to:	1LT	CPT	MAJ	LTC	COL
Years of Service	1.5-2	3.5-4	10+/-1	16+/-1	22+/-1
Opportunity Minimums	100%	95%	80%	70%	50%

Promotions from second lieutenant through captain do not present the Services with any real challenges because DOPMA does not specify the number of officers permitted in each of these grades. Rather, the law leaves to the Services how many each will have by grade within an allowed combined total for all three grades. The Services can manage this number by varying accessions and retention while taking into account a fairly predictable voluntary attrition rate. The Army generally complies with the

provisions of DOPMA concerning company grade ranks.

The promotion management problem surfaces in the field grade ranks due to the imposed cap at each of those grades. As stated earlier, the Army is the only major Service not in compliance with DOPMA in this category as the following chart depicts:

Chart 2

<u>PIN ON POINT</u>	<u>DOPMA³</u>	<u>ARMY⁴</u>	<u>NAVY⁵</u>	<u>AIR FORCE⁶</u>
04	10+/-lyrs	11.9yrs	10.0yrs	11.0yrs
05	16+/-lyrs	17.7yrs	15.5yrs	16.0yrs
06	22+/-lyrs	22.9yrs	21.0yrs	21.0yrs
<u>OPPORTUNITY %</u>				
04	80%	71%	80%	85%
05	70%	69%	70%	71%
06	50%	44%	54%	50%

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

As depicted above, Army officers experience lower selection rates to 04 and 06. Army officers also experience longer pin on points to all field grade ranks when compared to the other two major services. There is a promotion problem, and the impact of the Army being out of alignment with the other Services and DOPMA is two fold. There is a significant morale degradation for the Army officer corps when field grade officers serve on joint staffs and attend schools with Navy and Air Force officers who are senior to them yet have less time in service. It is not an uncommon experience now on joint staffs for Army officers to be subordinated to Air Force and Navy officers who have less time in service and experience, but more time in grade. Based upon experience as an assignment officer, this is an issue which frequently arises when attempting to convince an officer to go to a joint duty assignment.

The second consequence of not keeping up with the other two major services in promotion opportunity and pin on points concerns recruiting and retention of officers for the Army. It will be harder for the Army to compete for the best and brightest in a shrinking manpower pool when the Army is saddled with the slowest and lowest promotion rates. Surely the Navy and Air Force will use this information in recruiting efforts.

IT IS NOT JUST TRANSITIONAL

There is an argument that the Army's promotion percentages and pin on point problems are a result of the transition to a smaller force, and therefore not significant. The counter to this argument is that the other services are going through a similar draw down, yet, they are able to maintain a balanced promotion flow. Here lies the heart and soul of the Army's promotion problem. The Army's paradigm on promotion continues to be at philosophical odds with the Air Force, Navy, and DOPMA.

A DIFFERENCE OF PHILOSOPHY

As a matter of philosophy the Navy and the Air Force have traditionally used an "up or out" promotion policy to maintain promotion flow.⁷ Conversely, the Army has resisted this policy as "breaking faith" with its officer corps.⁸ Congress passed the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980 over the objections of the Army which explains the Army's persistence in not complying with the provisions of the law.⁹ Additionally, DOPMA was passed to "... establish common provisions governing career expectations in various grades.", among the services.¹⁰ The

inequities between services which prompted the law still exist. Finally, the ultimate purpose of the law was to provide the services with a system that "...has given the armed forces what they never before had in peacetime- a youthful, vigorous, fully combat ready officer corps."¹¹ It was the penultimate purpose of the law to break the historical paradigm of having aging officer corps' during times of peace who traditionally could not execute the nation's will upon initial transition to war.

Failure to comply with the provisions of the law will result in an older and less vigorous officer corps which is less combat ready. A less combat ready officer corps is obviously not in the best interests of the Army; yet, the Army has not changed its philosophy and paradigm on officer promotions and retention to consistently use the up or out provisions of DOPMA. The Army is trapped in its paradigm. The major reasons the paradigm does not change are because the officer corps is generally uninformed on the provisions of the law, and is mentally conditioned to expect a full career as long as they individually wish to stay on within the mandatory retirement limits.¹²

This expectation is also fully supported by current Army promotion and retention policies. The Army will separate a field grade officer who "...is grossly inefficient, where his [personal] conduct is such that his retention cannot be tolerated...", but officers of marginal performance will not normally be separated.¹³ Additionally, officers who are two times nonselect to major or lieutenant colonel and are within six years of retirement will

normally be selectively continued until they are retirement eligible at the discretion of the Secretary of the Army.¹⁴ Coupled with this current Army paradigm of retention to retirement, there is also great confusion within the officer corps on the recent Selective Early Retirement Boards.

A POINT OF CONFUSION

The Selective Early Retirement Boards (SERB's) which the Army has conducted since 1988 are widely perceived to be an anomaly which are special in nature in order to achieve the necessary reductions in the senior field grade officer corps. In reality, these SERB's are provided for in DOPMA and are the main tool of the up or out provisions of that law. DOPMA provides the services the opportunity to identify up to thirty percent of a year group for early retirement once they have been nonselected for promotion two times. This option applies only to retirement eligible officers, and is intended to be an additional function of a promotion board.¹⁵ It is also intended to be a one time look for this population, and they are not to be considered again for a period of five years.¹⁶

In other words, up to 30% of the lieutenant colonels and colonels who are two times nonselect for promotion can be designated for retirement by a promotion board as part of its normal board deliberations. The thirty percent is a cap which the Services can request to be selectively increased on an annual basis, if needed, to ensure promotion flow. The Services can also go below the cap as necessary to maintain certain skills or year

group sizes based upon the projected needs of the Service. This selection for early retirement is intended to be a normal management tool and not a special, temporary tool for downsizing the Services.

The Army has traditionally not used this provision of the law although it has been in effect since 1980, preferring instead to allow normal attrition through mandatory and voluntary retirement to take its toll on the lieutenant colonel and colonel populations. Unfortunately, normal attrition has not been sufficient of late to deal with the mandated reductions in the officer corps. The Army has been forced to use the SERB since 1988, and it has had an adverse impact on the morale of the officer corps. These boards are collectively viewed as temporary, and the Army leadership has reinforced this view by publicly stating that the SERB's should end by 1995.¹⁷

THE MOST RECENT EVENTS

The most recent lieutenant colonel and colonel SERB's were convened as separate boards. There is a perception issue which arises from the practice of conducting separate board proceedings which will be discussed at a later point. The purpose of the boards was to identify officers for "early" retirement in order to meet downsizing requirements and maintain promotion flow. The term "early" indicates the requirement for officers selected by the board to retire before their normal mandatory retirement dates (MRD) as prescribed by law for their respective grades. As an

example colonels have an MRD of thirty years of commissioned service, and lieutenant colonel's have an MRD at 28 years of service.

The most recent colonels SERB identified 189 colonels from an eligible population of 919 for early retirement.¹⁸ This is a selection rate of a little less than 26% which will later be shown to be too low a number to meet the Army's needs. Significantly, there is a morale problem associated with this board which could be avoided. It is appalling that these officers were all notified of their selection for early retirement in mid-January 1993, and they must leave the service by 1 July 1993. The adverse psychological impact of this and similar boards is even greater as the officer corps in general learns that those selected are given only five months to completely change their lives. The Army can and must do better in this regard.

Added to an already bad situation, the real issue is that not enough officers were selected for early retirement. The recent colonel SERB damaged morale, yet it did not fix the promotion flow or selection percentages problems within that rank. It merely delayed the inevitable.

THE INEVITABLE

As stated previously, there is a cap on the number of officers in each field grade rank. By selecting only 189 colonel's for early retirement, the remainder of the spaces needed to promote the 600+ officers still waiting for promotion on the two currently standing colonel promotion lists must be achieved by mandatory retirements

and voluntary retirements by colonels not selected by the SERB. A recent phenomena which has completely surprised the modelers who project all these numbers has been the significant drop off in voluntary retirements.¹⁹ Discussions with officers reveal that there is an apparent psychological phenomena that is taking effect within the officer corps that if one is not selected by the SERB, the Army must want them to stay. A struggling economy in the civilian sector has also played an obvious part in the reluctance of officers to retire any earlier than mandated.

The bottom line is that although the SERB was conducted, not enough officers are going to leave voluntarily or involuntarily to sustain, much less improve, promotion flow to full colonel. Slowed or stagnated promotion flow to colonel has a ripple effect on promotions to lieutenant colonel and major as each must wait for a vacancy to exist in the next higher grade before promotions can take place. The promotion flow problem also has an effect on the percentage of officers who can be selected for promotion by future boards as the Army balances the force within the prescribed caps by grade. If fewer officers are leaving the next higher grade through promotion or separation, then it makes sense that fewer will be selected for promotion to that grade. Alternatively, if the numbers to be selected are not reduced, then promotions slow even further as more officers wait for a vacancy to exist.

ON THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA

The Army is now faced with the dilemma of accepting even slower promotion rates, or taking further non-routine and non-

traditional steps to fix the problem. One distinct option is to continue to consider officers multiple times for selective early retirement. In the words of one colonel, this process makes him feel like he is on a six month contract that may or may not be renewed at any given time with little or no warning. From personal observation, morale is not good among officers in this category. Morale is also not particularly high among the majors in the Army who have been selectively continued to retirement at the discretion of the Secretary, but who do not yet have eighteen years of service. They are the population who would be considered for involuntary separation if it is determined that a reduction in force (RIF) board must be conducted to break the promotion deadlock to major.²⁰

ONLY SHORT TERM FIXES

Separately convened Selective Early Retirement and Reduction in Force boards are short term fixes for what has really been a long term problem in the Army. Promotions in the field grade ranks have been slow compared to the Air Force and Navy since the Vietnam war ended. DOPMA was enacted into law thirteen years ago to specifically correct the problem of promotion inequity between the Services for the long term.²¹ Only by addressing the promotion problem in the long term and embracing long term solutions can the Army hope to achieve success in this arena.

THE LONG TERM SOLUTIONS

The first step in solving the long term promotion problem is to take a long term view of the problem. The SERB must become an

integral part of the promotion system as provided for in DOPMA. The boards that consider officers for promotion to colonel and brigadier general are in the best position to determine fairly and objectively which officers in a year group should be selected to retire early. There would be a greater perception of fairness than currently exists if the same board determined both retirements and promotions. Current Army practice of separate boards considering officers multiple times for early retirement is not perceived as being fair by those considered. After the first board, officers are no longer being compared to only their peer group as other year groups enter the window for consideration. Officers have a general idea where they stand in their peer group based upon selections over the years for promotion and schooling, but they have no idea how their file competes against other year groups. The increased anxiety caused by this unknown is generally expressed in terms of fairness, or lack thereof.

Promotion boards for colonel and brigadier general can identify up to thirty percent of the considered population for early retirement. Based upon unusual circumstances like oversized year groups and/or directed draw downs, the Services may request permission to exceed the thirty percent cap. The thirty percent figure, therefore, is flexible and the size of the year group balanced against Army needs for promotion flow should determine the exact number above or below the thirty percent to be retired. By changing the paradigm to make early retirement a routine and consistent function of the promotion boards based upon the needs of

the Service, there would not be as much a stigma attached to this selection for retirement. This needs to become part of the Army's personnel management philosophy for the long term, and it should be clearly articulated to the officer corps. It should be viewed as an officer's duty to retire once a promotion board identifies the officer as performing below the average of the peer group. This concept is not new in the Army's paradigm.

The Army currently applies this up or out philosophy in the company grade officer and enlisted ranks, and it is not viewed as breaking faith or being disloyal to those soldiers. Rather, it is viewed collectively as a healthy way to ensure quality in the ranks and promotion opportunity for the force. The same philosophy for the same ends should be applied to the field grade ranks.

The impact of being selected for early retirement could be significantly lessened by making this selection a routine rather than a "special" occurrence. By routinely programming vacancies over the long term, officers will only need to be considered once, rather than multiple times for early retirement. This selection process would have a less adverse impact on morale than current SERB's because by making it a matter of routine, the Army could program for the notification of officers up to 18 months in advance of their new mandatory retirement dates. This earlier notification permits more time for an orderly transition to civilian life for officers who have served their country honorably and well. They deserve this consideration, and it should frankly make everyone involved with this process feel better about it.

Best of all, the Army can meet or exceed DOPMA promotion opportunity percentages and promotion pin on points for both lieutenant colonels and colonels by creating vacancies each year. The current system of "wait and see" how many choose to retire before their mandatory retirement date does not work. Although there is an attempt to project this number, it is at best an educated guess. Promotion flow then hinges on how accurate the guess was. Only by routinely creating vacancies in an even handed manner can a predictable promotion flow be obtained and sustained. In such an environment, voluntary retirements would enhance rather than dictate promotion flow.

FIXING THE "MAJOR" PROBLEM

Improved promotion flow to lieutenant colonel and colonel through a routine up or out process will still not totally solve the problem of promotion to major. The current and projected promotion situation is particularly abysmal for those waiting to make major. Pin on points to that grade are projected to go beyond twelve years, and may even go beyond thirteen years.²² The DOPMA goal for the pin on point to this rank is ten years plus or minus one year. This slower promotion rate to major is clearly not within the stated intent of the law, and it will continue to have significant adverse impact on the Army's ability to retain its best captains on active duty. Recent personal observations in the field Army has verified a flight of talent from the captain ranks to the civilian sector. In candid discussions, the most frequently stated reason for resignation has been the slowness of promotions and

career progression. This departure of talent lowers the quality and readiness of the force, both now and in the future.

To meet the DOPMA goal of 70% of eligible majors selected for lieutenant colonel, the Army is left with the remaining thirty percent of the population waiting to retire at twenty years of service. Based on observations, the majors in this group are generally not very productive within the Army. The Army considers these officers for promotion to lieutenant colonel too late in their careers which is both the cause and the solution to this problem.

An officer is considered for promotion to lieutenant colonel at his sixteenth year of service. An officer who is nonselect for promotion is considered again in his seventeenth year of service with the results being released at about the seventeen and one half year point. The dilemma arises at this point with the two time nonselect officer because he or she is close to eighteen years of service which is by law the "magic point" for retention to retirement.²³ As a matter of practice, but not formal policy, the Army elects to "selectively continue" these officers on active duty to retirement at twenty years of service.²⁴ Only those identified to show cause for retention are separated without benefit of retirement.

At any given time there are nonselected majors in four different year groups (those between the sixteenth and nineteenth years of service) on the Army rolls. This population increases when selection rates to lieutenant colonel prevail that are below the

seventy percent specified in DOPMA. As a rough estimate based on an average year group size of 2000 with an average nonselection rate of 35% (due course selection to lieutenant colonel has averaged 65%), there are 2800 (2000 X .35 X 4) majors waiting to retire which means there are 2800 captains the Army cannot promote to major. The results are lower selection rates to major, longer pin on points for those who are selected, and retention problems. Although improved promotion flow to lieutenant colonel and colonel will ease the log jam to a degree, there is still this large block of officers blocking increased promotion flow to major.

ANOTHER SHORT TERM FIX

The Army has recently received permission to retire officers at the fifteenth year mark as an interim measure for the drawdown. The Army's request for this tool was based on the need to break the log jam. How the Defense Department will allow the Army to use this tool, or how the Army wants to use this tool is still undecided. The central issue is will this new tool be voluntary or mandatory? If voluntary, it likely that it will not generate the numbers needed to break the promotion log jam. More likely, it will be used to soften the blow of a RIF for majors which is the only short term tool available to the Army to attempt to fix the problem.

Just as the Army needs a long term fix for the colonel problem, so too does it need a long term fix for the major problem. More likely the Army will compound its problem the first year a RIF occurs unless another change in the paradigm is made. There is a

very real need for quality selection in the selective continuation policy. The Secretary of the Army is not obligated to extend all nonselected officers to retirement which is the current paradigm. Only those officers who hold critical skills and those who continue to demonstrate good duty performance should be selected for continuation. Those officer's whose duty performance is clearly marginal should be separated with commensurate separation pay as provided in law. A quality cut for selective continuation is philosophically at odds with the Army's paradigm, but it remains the only option available in order to achieve a long term solution to break the log jam to major. It would perhaps be easier to make this part of the Army's paradigm if officers were considered, nonselected and separated earlier in their careers thereby giving them a chance to enter the civilian sector at a younger and more marketable age.

EARLIER IS BETTER

With a streamlined and properly managed promotion flow to all field grade ranks, the Army could, like the Navy and the Air Force, consider officers earlier in their careers for promotion to those ranks. It is to the Army's benefit to adopt and adhere to the same provisions of DOPMA as the other two major services. The single greatest benefit would be an opportunity to better care for those nonselected for promotion. Simply put, it is easier to transition to a second career at an earlier rather than a later age. The earlier the Army notifies an officer of the need to leave the service, the better the officer's chances to make a successful

transition to the civilian job market. As evidenced by the Navy, it is possible to consider officers for due course promotion to lieutenant colonel at thirteen years of service with a subsequent second nonselection and notification at fourteen years of service.

An additional advantage to earlier consideration for promotion to lieutenant colonel is that it eliminates the dilemma of seventeen years is close enough to eighteen years which is close enough to twenty years for retirement. For some reason the Army is fixed on a psychological break point at the fifteen year mark. Perhaps the logic goes fifteen is three quarters of twenty and therefore "close" to retirement. Whatever, the logic is flawed. Fourteen years is below the threshold and marks a point where there appears not to be a psychological barrier to releasing officers. The Army releases captains who are two time nonselects to major at the twelve and a half year mark with no apparent institutional or collective guilt. It is a short step to do the same with two time nonselect majors at the fourteen year mark.

A final, and perhaps the greatest single advantage for considering officers for promotion to lieutenant colonel at the thirteen or fourteen year mark would be the ability of those officers to command battalions earlier. Earlier battalion command would be a major step forward for the Army to fix its joint officer promotion numbers problem.

RECAPITULATION

To summarize the field grade promotion problem and some possible solutions before proceeding on to other officer personnel

management issues, the following points are made:

1. The Army does not meet DOPMA standards for promotion opportunity and timing in the field grade ranks.
2. The Army lags behind the Air Force and the Navy on almost all promotion measures.
3. The only long term solution is to change the Army's current paradigm by creating vacancies on a routine basis.
4. The best means to create vacancies at the lieutenant colonel and colonel grades is through the routine application of the up or out provisions of DOPMA.
5. The best means to create vacancies at the rank of major is to consider officers for lieutenant colonel two to three years earlier, and selectively continue only those the Army truly needs.

ANOTHER TOOL THAT WOULD HELP

A constant barrier to officers electing to voluntarily leave or retire from the service is not knowing where they stand in relation to their peer group. The only way available to them to determine that their standing is below average is when they are notified that they have not been selected for promotion, schooling, or command. Two years experience as an assignment officer at PERSCOM clearly showed that the vast majority of officers nonselected by whatever board considered them, were completely shocked by the outcome. Collectively, the Army has no tool to keep officers informed of their standing as their career progresses. It is not possible to keep officers informed because the Army has developed a fetish against the use of Order of Merit Lists (OML).

Creating, maintaining, or using OML's by assignment branches or agencies within PERSCOM is proscribed by standing written orders. The only exceptions to the above rule are the command and war college lists which are presented to the assignment branches in OML format for the purposes of slating and/or activation. These OML are used internal to PERSCOM, and an officer who divulges the contents of these lists is subject to disciplinary action.

The genesis of this fetish came from the Reduction in Force Boards (RIF) that followed the Vietnam War. In that era, assignment branches created and maintained an OML on all their officers. It was the branches and not formal boards who identified officers for release for the first series of postwar RIF. At the time, this practice was widely and loudly viewed in the Army as unfair, and the Army went to central selection boards for subsequent RIF. The branch OML was outlawed, and the end result is that now nobody knows where they stand among their peers until a board tells them. Even then, the board may not tell them much.

Each promotion board is required to create an OML for the entire population it considers.²⁵ The cut line is then drawn through this OML based upon the number of officers the board is permitted to select for promotion. This OML is subsequently given to Promotions Branch in PERSCOM. Promotions Branch takes the OML and arrays the officers above the cut line (i.e., those selected for promotion), to achieve the individual promotion sequence numbers for those selected. Officers selected for "due course" promotion with their year group will receive a sequence number that

is the same in relationship to their remaining peers also selected as that which they had when they came on active duty. As an example, Officer X is an Academy graduate. He graduated in an even numbered year, so his position on the Army Promotion List (APL) upon entry onto active duty is behind ROTC graduates of that year who came on active duty immediately upon graduation. Officer X's sequence number is further adjusted within his Academy class based upon his academic class standing at graduation. A review of this Army Regulation shows it to be archaic at best. In essence, how Officer X did as a cadet in summer camp, or on a math test as a teenager, or what year he graduated determines his promotion sequence in his peer group for his entire career as long as he is selected for promotion with his peer group. The only movement within the peer group for Officer X is achieved when officers above Officer X on the APL are nonselect for promotion or are selected for early promotion. This sequencing is done in accordance with Army Regulation 624-100, Promotions of Officers on Active Duty, and the selection board OML for due course selected officers is not a factor in computing promotion sequence numbers.²⁶ The duty performance differential between officers in a peer group which a board uses to determine selection for promotion and the generation of the board OML is not taken into account for promotion sequence. Based upon the current system, it is possible for Officer X to be listed as Number 1 on the promotion board OML and still receive a promotion sequence number hundreds of places lower on the list. The result is Officer X waits additional months to be promoted instead

of being promoted first on the list. His duty performance which earned him a place at the top of the board OML does not translate into earlier promotion as long as he is selected for promotion with his peer group.

ADVANTAGES OF AN OML

The Army should use the OML to establish promotion sequence numbers. Recent history shows that it takes on average one and a half years or more to exhaust a field grade promotion list. By using the OML to determine promotion sequence, a due course selected officer who is high on the OML based on his duty performance could be promoted up to a year and a half earlier for what is, in effect, an accelerated promotion. He would get promoted up to one and a half years faster than some of his peers, and his seniority within that group would go up.

An additional benefit of using the OML for promotion sequence is that it will tell an officer exactly where he stands in his peer group based upon an assessment of his duty performance by the board. By knowing his current relative standing within the peer group based upon his promotion sequence number as generated by the OML, an officer can make an informed judgement on his chances for promotion to the next higher grade. For example, an officer at the bottom of a promotion list derived from the board OML would know that, barring any significant improvements in his performance file, he is at risk for further promotion based upon the progressively lower selection rates at higher grades. The officer could either attempt to improve his performance file before the next board, or

make an informed decision to voluntarily leave the Army before being nonselected for promotion. As long as there are no significant monetary advantages to being nonselected for promotion and retention, it is human nature to prefer to quit rather than being fired or let go.

The Army would also be well served to use an OML created by an impartial centrally appointed selection board for assignment purposes. With the knowledge of where its officers stand in their peer group, assignment branches could do a much better job of assigning officers to the right jobs at the right times. The branches could also counsel officers more effectively and objectively on their career options and potential for further service. Of current significant import, the Army could fix its joint officer assignment procedures which would ensure that the Army consistently meets its joint officer promotion obligations under the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. The Army does not have a problem with the majors assigned to joint duty making the promotion requirements under Goldwater-Nichols.

WHY AREN'T MAJORS A PROBLEM?

The problem of majors on joint duty being selected at a rate equal to the Service average has not surfaced, nor is it likely to surface. Unlike battalion command and its relationship to selection to colonel, there is no magic formula for promotion to lieutenant colonel other than a file that is better than 65% of one's peer group. The Army does fairly well assigning majors to joint duty because the staff college list is the management tool of choice.

About half of a year group is selected for resident staff college attendance, and joint duty assignments for majors as a matter of practice are exclusively reserved for resident staff college graduates. Selection for staff college attendance identifies an officer as being in the top half of his year group; therefore, those selected are also a safe bet for selection to lieutenant colonel. The staff college lists serves as an informal OML tool for assignment branches even though it does not specify individual standing in the group. Without a similar OML for lieutenant colonels, the Army has done poorly in meeting its joint promotion numbers.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE JOINT PROMOTION NUMBERS

The most recent Colonel's list was returned to the Army by OJCS in the fall of 1992 ostensibly because the Army failed to meet its joint officer promotion numbers. What that means is the Army did not select for promotion sufficient numbers of lieutenant colonels serving on the OJCS staff and those who have served or are serving in joint billets at a rate equal to those serving on the Army staff and in the Army at large. Although not specified in the Goldwater-Nichols Act as a formal requirement, the equal selection rate is a goal the Act encourages to ensure quality officers serve in joint staff positions.²¹ It is a requirement for DOD to report to Congress on an annual basis its progress in this area which demonstrates continued Congressional interest in the quality of officers on joint duty. The specific purpose for stating this goal of equal selection rates for promotion in the Act was to counter

the widely held perception that service on a joint staff will not be career enhancing and may actually be career limiting.²⁸

Specifically, the table below enumerates the results of the last colonels board:²⁹

Table 3

	CONSIDERED	SELECTED	PERCENTAGE	DELTA
TOTAL ARMY	964	428	44	0
ARMY STAFF	75	30	40	NA
OJCS STAFF	12	3	25	2
OTHER JOINT STAFFS	63	9	14	19
JSO'S	71	15	21	16

The Delta number is the additional number that needed to be selected in each category to meet or exceed the Army selection average. Stated simply, the overall selection rate to full colonel for Army officers serving in past or present joint billets, or who have been previously designated as holders of the Joint Staff Officers Specialty (JSO's) was 18%. The total Army selection rate was 44%. The lower selection rates for promotion of joint duty officers is one of at least two major indicators that perhaps the wrong officers are being selected to serve on joint staffs.

The second indicator concerns where officers go for their next assignment following joint duty as the chart below depicts:³⁰

Table 4

<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	ARMY	NAVY	USAF	MARINES
COMMAND	1	111	93	54
SERVICE HQ	16	84	32	158
OTHER JOINT	73	83	145	41
OTHER STAFF	196	30	247	88

The essence of the above chart is that Army officers competitive for command do not generally serve on joint staffs immediately

prior to command, unlike the other Services. The second significant implication is, again unlike other Services, Army officers from joint staffs are not subsequently sent to the DA Staff. Quality officers with the knowledge of how to work with joint staffs would be major assets on that staff as it finds itself increasingly and inextricably involved in the joint staff process. This is particularly true in the areas of budget and service needs articulations which now go through OJCS to OSD and Congress.

HOW WE GOT THERE-THE PARADIGM OF PROMOTION

The first and most significant reason the Army does not assign the right quality officers to serve on joint staffs is a function of timing in relationship to achieving the goals of promotion to lieutenant colonel, command of a battalion, and war college attendance. As discussed in detail below, there is, under the Army's current practices, no time for an officer to achieve the above goals and serve on the joint staff for two to three years. Another factor is that selection to colonel is reserved almost exclusively for former battalion commanders. It is not in the Army's paradigm to promote staff officers to colonel except for a very small number of specialists each year.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Assuming due course selections, officers normally are selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel in their seventeenth year of service. Usually they are selected to command during their nineteenth and twentieth years of service. Following successful

command, they attend a war college in their twenty-first or twenty-second years of service. Of note, if an officer is not selected for war college attendance during the first consideration and the records suggests likely selection on the next board, assignment branches are compelled not to assign the officer to a joint duty position because joint duty entails a three year lock in by law.³¹ Compounding this phenomena is the fact that due course officers are considered for promotion to colonel at the end of the twenty-first year of service. At time of consideration for colonel, most are in a war college, waiting to attend a war college, or off to a "higher priority assignment".

HIGHER PRIORITY ASSIGNMENTS

The former battalion commander (FBC) population is a highly sought after commodity in the Army. Each year assignment branches receive numerous FBC requirements. By specifically requesting an FBC, the field ensures that they get quality lieutenant colonel's for their projected vacancies. Specifically requesting FBC's is also heavily used by the DA Staff for the same purpose. The result each year is the number of requirements for FBC's exceeds the number of available FBC's. Since other FBC's are attending war college at this critical juncture and the remainder are in Army specified FBC higher priority assignments, there are very few if any of this group available for the joint staffs. Subsequently, the Army fails to meet its joint duty floors when selecting officers to promote to colonel.

A SHORT TERM SOLUTION

To preclude another failure in meeting its joint numbers this year, the Army has decided to delay the colonel's board until after the war college population reports to joint duty assignments. Additionally, the cohort year group in the primary zone for full colonel will go to joint billets at a greater than normal rate to ensure that the joint duty officer selection floors are met. Delaying the board and maximizing joint duty assignments are good quick fixes to a long term problem, but they would have to become permanent policies to become a long term fix. The price of these fixes will be fewer war college graduates available for other assignments. An obvious bill payer will be the DA Staff.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

The joint duty officer selection floor problem is much bigger than it appears on the surface. The Army's full time joint staff requirement is 1411 lieutenant colonels according to the "Revised FY 1992 Joint Duty Assignment List". For the Army to achieve the DOPMA promotion opportunity of 50% selection to full colonel, at least half of these 1411 officers must be selected for promotion. To add to the problem, there are not enough former battalion commanders available in the Army to routinely fill at least half of the joint billets to ensure that half the joint population is selected for promotion. The available group of FBC's is further reduced by selection for brigade command and the needs of the DA staff for FBC's to serve as division chiefs, executive officers, and in other critical positions.

There is an additional fact which adversely impacts on the Army's ability to achieve its joint duty officer promotion floors to colonel. Increasing the number of FBC's assigned to joint duty as mentioned above as a quick fix will rapidly cease to be a viable solution in the short or long term. Joint staff requirements for the Army are not declining at a rate commensurate with the decline in the number of battalions in the Army which produce the FBC population. Joint staff requirements are also not declining at a rate commensurate with the Services' officer reductions which exacerbates the joint officer promotion floor problem for all. Joint staff requirements have decreased by one hundred total positions for a reduction of less than one percent while the Services have reduced their officer corps by roughly twenty-five percent.³²

THE LONG TERM FIX

There are several options available to fix the joint assignment and subsequent promotion problem for the lieutenant colonel population. The most obvious and least likely solution is to change the Army philosophy on the importance of battalion command as it relates to selection for promotion to colonel. The most recent Colonel's promotion board had to select non-FBC's with joint tour credit in order to make the joint promotion floors. (There were not enough FBC's with joint duty credit in the population to meet the promotion floors.) This was the board's only option to achieve the joint promotion floor numbers, and the board refused to select the non-FBC's even when forced by OJCS to

reconvene the board to readdress the joint numbers issue. The board would not break the Army's current paradigm, and the board results were not changed. In reality, the board refused to accept the tenets of the OPMS.

Under the philosophy of the OPMS concept, officers would go either into the command track or into their functional area at the rank of senior captain or major. It was to be possible for an officer to achieve flag rank through either track. The former Chief of Staff of the Army, General Vouno, told the Precommand Course at Fort Leavenworth in June 1990 that it was his goal to "really make OPMS work" and have officers make general who had never commanded battalions or brigades, and were not in small, highly specialized fields. The recent Colonel's board clearly demonstrated that this concept has not, and probably never will, be part of the Army's promotion paradigm.

It does not appear to be in the Army's interest to create a corps of general officers who have not commanded since they were captains. The basic mission of a nation's army is to fight and win its ground wars. Also, this nation's Army will never fight alone, and it won't fight at all if it does not have a fully functioning and professional corps of staff officers who can make quality tools available for modern war. Colonels and not generals are responsible in the Army and in joint organizations for running staffs on a day to day basis.

There is a need in the Army for colonels who are professional staff officers who may not have commanded battalions. In order to

promote these officers in light of the Army's current promotion paradigm, it would be necessary to stop dogmatically selecting and promoting officers to colonel because they have commanded battalions. Not all officers selected for command do well in command, but the Army paradigm is it is better to select a mediocre commander for colonel than an outstanding staff officer. This paradigm makes even less sense when the difference between selection and nonselection for command is often only one center of mass OER received as a major in a battalion executive officer or operations officer billet. In reality, there are staff officers whose overall performance files are clearly better than those of some battalion commanders who consistently received center of mass command reports. The Army would be better served to promote outstanding, experienced staff officers to colonel in order to run the staffs rather than promoting mediocre battalion commanders to run staffs in their stead.

A second option to fix the long term joint numbers problem for selection to colonel is to select officers at an earlier point in their careers for promotion to lieutenant colonel and battalion command. Earlier selection would permit more time at that grade to command successfully, attend the war college and serve on a joint staff. As noted earlier, this option could be executed at the fourteen year mark and would help the overall promotion flow. Officers would command battalions at an earlier age which is an added benefit considering the physical and mental stresses of battalion command; particularly in combat. Selection to lieutenant

colonel at fourteen years would be a large step forward for the Army to take to fix both major problems: promotion stagnation and joint officer selection numbers.

The final option is to assign officers to joint duty while they are still majors and well before battalion command selection. It is possible based upon a review of the overall file and particularly the OER's from troop duty as a captain and major to reliably assess an officer's potential for battalion command selection. Based on that prediction, an officer who has excellent command potential could be earmarked and slated for joint duty. There is a tendency not to do this in the Army's current assignment process which goes back to the taboo regarding OML's and the collective resistance to tell officers exactly where they stand in relationship to their peer group.

MORE REASONS FOR AN OML

To track an officer into a functional area vice the command and joint staff track is possible as early as the seven to ten year range after most officers have completed company command. Although some assignment branches review command reports and strongly suggest to their officers which way to track, this is done on an informal rather than formal basis. This decision process to track officers needs to become a formal requirement throughout all the assignment branches. Starting at eight years of service and based on OML's created by centrally appointed boards which convene biannually, assignment branches could notify their officers of their standing within their peer group. There would be no need to

openly publish the OML, and officers need only know which quarter of their year group they are in. Assignment branches could assign officers to joint duty with greater assurance of ultimate success in meeting joint promotion number requirements.

This OML creation and maintenance process requires a few additional boards each year when a year group is not being considered for promotion or schooling. The pay off is that it would provide assignment branches with a valid and consistent tool to use to put the right officers on the right career track. It would also permit officers to make informed career decisions to include the decision to resign or retire. The advantages far outweigh the few extra boards required.

RECAPITULATION

It is possible for the Army to get back on track and meet its joint promotion selection floors. To achieve success the Army should make adjustments to its current promotion and assignment paradigms as detailed below:

1. Barring significant reductions in joint staff requirements, the Army cannot fix its joint numbers for colonel without promoting outstanding staff officers who have not commanded. There are not enough FBC's available to fill the joint requirements.
2. The Army can fix its overall joint numbers by identifying and assigning officers in the top half of their peer group to joint assignments as majors. Those in this group not selected for battalion command become the pool of the "outstanding staff officers" and should be assigned accordingly.

3. The Army needs to establish a formal Order of Merit List which is updated every two years for use by assignment branches to track and assign officers. The goal of the assignment branches would be to develop outstanding staff officers and commanders. An Order of Merit List would also permit officers to make informed career decisions.

IN SUMMARY

The Army can choose to do nothing about promotion stagnation and its failure to achieve the joint officer selection floors. Eventually, Congress and JCS will call the Army to task on both issues should it not solve the problems. It is possible for the Army to fix these problems. The problem of joint officer selection floors to colonel will continue to deteriorate in spite of the Army's future best efforts if joint requirements are not reduced to conform to lower officer end strengths. It will need the best efforts of JCS and DOD to accomplish this feat since staffs are the very last to impose reductions on themselves. The intervention of Congress may be necessary to solve this problem.

It is totally within the Army's ability to fix permanently its internal promotion problems with tools currently available, but it will require a change in paradigms. It will also require improved management tools such as the OML, a better informed officer corps, and a corporate willingness to stay the course by routinely using the up or out tools provided by DOPMA. The long term benefits of a younger, more vigorous field grade officer corps which is trained and ready to fight the Nation's wars is well worth the price.

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