



December 2014

**Conscience of the Command
Inspector General
Newsletter 15-01
December 2014**



Ohio National Guard

Volume 15-01

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*The Sign of a Good Organization
By COL Timothy Whalen*

As an active duty officer I am intrigued with how National Guard units manage to consistently maintain high levels of readiness and are able to adapt to the ever changing local, national and international missions. Most impressive is the synchronization of full time Soldiers/Airmen (FTNGD) and those in a Traditional/M-Day status. As I visit units I am reminded of an expression of a former commander of mine... 'The sign of a good organization is that when the leadership is absent the unit continues to function at a high level.' Although this sounds somewhat cliché, it is worth reading into a bit.

Of course, not every Soldier can claim they are a member of a unit like this. However, whether you think you are or not consider the following as you strive to get better every day.

Attitude of leaders....For a majority of a calendar month units primarily rely on Battalion AO's and Company Readiness NCO's to keep units ready and able to respond at a moment's notice. However, the Command Team, usually M-Day, are no

less in charge and responsible for these organizations. The strength of this concept lies in the attitudes of those involved. Successful units constantly communicate, understand and execute a Commander's intent flawlessly. When leaders and managers are synchronized, mission orders are clear, and subordinates are informed then success is all but guaranteed.

Embrace Change...Although disruptive at times, I believe our formations ultimately benefit from changes in leadership. Our line of work, active, reserve or guard grows accustomed to new leaders every few years, some more often than others. Instead of frowning on change, Soldiers should embrace change and the opportunity for a fresh set of eyes on some of the same problems. New leaders bring new energy and all but eliminate the excuse of doing things because "that is the way we have always done things." Again, first-rate organizations, regardless of the change of leadership, keep humming and do not miss a beat.

Systems/processes...The continuity within all organizations should be the tested and validated systems and processes in place that ensure mission success despite the turbulence with leaders. That new set of eyes will review these systems and make necessary tweaks to ensure future success. However, these are the foundation of continued mission accomplishment at the unit level.

As we navigate through numerous significant leader changes in our ranks I implore you to draw from the positives of this

"When Called, We Respond with Ready Units to Execute Federal, State, and Community Missions."

unique aspect of our profession and not the negative undertones.

Suspension of Favorable Personnel Actions (Flags)

By MAJ Jon Stewart

Flagging actions occur every day in the Ohio Army National Guard, yet many times commands at all levels struggle with the ability to impose and/or remove Flags in a timely manner while also accurately tracking their status. For the Army National Guard, the key regulations that detail flagging action requirements are AR 600-8-2 (Suspension of Personnel Actions (Flag)), 23 October 2012, and NGB Supplement 1 to AR 600-8-2 (Suspension of Personnel Actions (Flag)), 9 December 2013.

A commander can impose a Flag for a myriad of different reasons, and each reason should be treated and flagged separately. NGB Supp 1 to AR 600-8-2, Table 4-2, provides all possible Flag reason codes for the ARNG, while Table 4-1 specifies actions to initiate a Flag, these are essential tools for commanders. The flagging authority must initiate a Flag on a DA Form 268 (Report to Suspend Favorable Actions (Flag)), October 2012, for each individual reason and, according to NGB Supp 1 to AR 600-8-2, para 4-4.c., must occur "within three working days after a Soldier's status changes from favorable to unfavorable." If a Soldier is an APFT failure, enrolled in the ABCP, and has failed to produce a Family Care Plan then three Flags should be imposed, one for each occurrence. Commanders DO NOT have a choice as to impose the Flag or not, it is a requirement.

Next, commanders must properly store both active and closed Flags. Although the Personnel Actions Tracker (PAT) is a tool used to process the DA Form 268 this does not meet the regulatory requirement to store the documents. NGB

Supp 1 to AR 600-8-2, para 4-4.k. requires commanders to maintain a copy of the DA 268, including supporting documentation, at the unit or Battalion S1. Commands must maintain these files for a minimum of one year IAW AR 25-400-2 (Army Records Information Management System (ARIMS)), 2 October 2007.

In addition to imposing the Flag, a commander must also counsel the affected Soldier. NGB Supp 1 to AR 600-8-2, para 4-4.g. specifies that the person conducting the counseling can be the "flagging authority, unit commander, or designee." Essentially, the Company Commander (or other flagging authority) can delegate this task to ensure the flagged Soldier receives the required counseling. Para 4-4.g further specifies that the counseling "should take place before the conclusion of the first period of training or other duty following the date the Flag was initiated."

Finally, the appropriate level of command must review active Flag cases on a regular basis. AR 600-8-2, para 1-9, specifies that "unit level commanders will review and validate Flag reports monthly" while "BN level commanders will review all Flags over six months old monthly." There are multiple methods to completing this review, but the trend in OHARNG units is that this review is not occurring at the company or battalion levels.

Are all Soldiers flagged that required a Flag? Have all Flags been removed in a timely manner? Do your Soldiers know why they are flagged and the requirements for removing the Flag? These are just a sampling of questions to consider as leaders review their unit flagging actions next month. Flags are an administrative tool, not to be used for punishment or restriction. As an administrative tool, commanders need to know and understand the requirements for initiating, removing, and tracking active Flags. Is your unit in compliance?

"...it is as hard to do your duty when men are sneering at you as when they are shooting at you".

- Woodrow Wilson

Addressing the EPS Board

By MSG Bryan McKinley

AAR comments from the FY2014 EPS boards revealed that few Soldiers addressed issues in their board files to the president of the board. Only Soldiers being considered may address the board, and only via a letter to the President of the Board, submitted with the EPS packet.

Soldiers being considered by promotion boards are authorized to address the President of the Board IAW AR 600-8-19 (Enlisted Promotions and Reductions) RAR 27 December 2011, paragraph 7-32. Good examples of issues to address are missing NCOERS or gaps in the rating history; missing awards; any item that the Soldier believes would lead the board to rate them in a negative manner.

AR 600-8-19 forbids some items from being provided to the board. These items are: correspondence to the board by anyone other than the Soldier being considered; correspondence that criticizes or reflects on the character, conduct, or motives of any Soldier; incomplete appeals of items such as a NCOER, AER, courts-martial, Article 15, or comparable criminal conviction; incomplete copies of NCOER or AERs. The board will only see fully completed documents processed through official channels.

Per AR 600-8-19, the board will not acknowledge correspondence; the correspondence will not be a basis for reconsideration and will not be included in the Soldiers permanent record. A Soldier cannot claim that the lack of receipt by the President of the Board is grounds to appear before a Standby Advisory Board (STAB).

In addition, Tab E (Soldiers' Responsibility) to Appendix 6 (NCO PROMOTIONS (EPS_SGT-SGM)) to Annex C (Position Management) to OHARNG Personnel Readiness Campaign Plan (PRCP) TY15 speaks to this topic as well. The PRCP states "Soldiers considered may write to the president of the promotion board to provide information, calling attention to any matter concerning themselves that they feel is important to their consideration."

The Soldier should not take this means of redress lightly; remember the audience being addressed (senior non-commissioned officers and Sergeants Major). The letter should address critical, not trivial errors. Prepare the letter IAW AR 25-50 and get to the point.

"Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence."

- Vince Lombardi

Self-Structured Development

By SFC Craig McGue

The 2015 Enlisted Promotion System (EPS) season is upon us. Do you fully understand the Structured Self Development (SSD) requirements and how they will affect your promotion eligibility? Do you know the SSD changes between 2014 EPS and 2015 EPS? Below you will find important information on SSD and changes to this year's eligibility for enlisted promotions.

In order to meet Army Directive 2013-15 (Noncommissioned Officer Promotions), we must synchronous relationship between the NCO Education System (NCOES) and promotions that are deliberate, continuous, sequential and progressive to produce competent and committed leaders in the Ohio Army National Guard. Milper Message Number 13-275 Established SSD courses and modified the formal NCOES training path.

Per AR 350-1, Army Training and Leader Development, 19 August 2014, the intent of SSD is to bridge the operational and institutional domains and set conditions for continuous growth. SSD is centrally managed specified content that a Soldier must complete within specified career points as a prerequisite for NCOES courses. ALARACT 126/2014, Transition of Advanced Leader Course Common Core (ALC CC) to SSD Level 2 explains how SSD 2 replaces Advance Leaders Course Common Core (ALC CC). SSD is linked to EPS eligibility as follows:

- E4-E5: Eligible Soldiers will be considered for promotion but not selected for promotion until SSD-1 is complete.
- E5-E6: Eligible Soldiers will be considered for promotion but not selected for promotion until SSD-2 is complete.
- E6-E7: SSD-3 must be complete prior to the promotion board being held in order to be considered or selected to E7.
- E7-E8: SSD-4 must be complete prior to the promotion board being held in order to be considered or selected to E8.

In closing, individual Soldiers execute SSD at their own pace but under the supervision of their first line leader. Completing the required level of SSD is the first step; Soldiers must then ensure a copy of the completion certificate is placed in iPERMS. A minimum of annually, review your records to ensure all completion certificates are loaded. Do not wait until after the promotion board to find out that you do not meet SSD requirements for promotion, it is your career.

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

- Mark Twain