

NCO RANKS

COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR AND SERGEANT MAJOR

The Command Sergeant Major is the senior NCO of the command at battalion or higher levels. The CSM carries out policies and standards on performance, training, appearance and conduct of enlisted personnel. The CSM gives advice and initiates recommendations to the commander and staff in matters pertaining to enlisted personnel. A unit, installation, or higher headquarters CSM directs the activities of that NCO support channel. The support channel functions orally through the CSMs or first sergeant's call and normally does not involve written instruction. The CSM administers the unit Noncommissioned Officer Development Program (NCODP), normally through written directives and the NCO support channel. As the senior NCO of the command, the CSM is the training professional within the unit, overseeing and driving the entire training program. The CSM assists the commander in determining leader tasks and training for NCOs.

The CSM and commander jointly coordinate and develop the unit's Mission Essential Task List (METL) and individual training tasks to create a team approach to battle-focused training. The CSM and NCO leaders then select the specific individual tasks, which support each collective task to be trained during this same period. CSMs use command information channels to inform, express concerns on enlisted issues and build esprit. They also represent the commander at military and civilian functions to maintain good community relations.

Colors and Color Guards

Flags are almost as old as civilization itself. Imperial Egypt and the armies of Babylon and Assyria followed the colors of their kings. Ancient texts mention banners and standards. The flag that identified nations usually were based on the personal or family heraldry of the reigning monarch. As autocracies faded or disappeared, dynastic colors were no longer suitable and national flags came into being. These national flags such as the Union Jack of Great Britain, the Tricolor of France and the Stars and Stripes are relatively new to history. When the struggle for independence united the colonies, there grew a desire for a single flag to represent the new Nation. The first flag borne by our Army representing the 13 colonies was the grand union flag. It was raised over the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on 2 January 1776. The Stars and Stripes as we now know it was born on 14 June 1777. The flags carried by Color-bearing units are called the national and organizational colors. The Colors may be carried in any formation in which two or more company honor guards or representative elements of a command participate. The Command Sergeant Major is responsible for the safeguarding, care and display of the organizational color. He is also responsible for the selection, training and performance of the Color bearers and Color guards. The honorary position for the CSM is two steps to the rear and centered on the Color guard. Because of the importance and visibility of the task, it is an honor to be a member of the Color guard. The detail may consist of three to eight soldiers, usually NCOs. The senior (Color) sergeant carries the National Color and commands the Color guard unless a person is designated as the Color sergeant. The Color sergeant gives the necessary commands for the movements and for rendering honors. The most important aspect of the selection, training and performance of the Color guard is the training. Training requires precision in drills, manual of arms, customs and courtesies and wear and appearance of uniforms and insignia. A well trained color guard at the front of unit's formation signifies a sense of teamwork, confidence, pride, alertness, attention to detail, Esprit de corps and discipline. The Color Guard detail should perform its functions as much as possible in accordance with ARs 600-25, 670-1 and 840-10 and FM 22-5.

FIRST SERGEANT AND MASTER SERGEANT

The First Sergeant is the senior NCO in companies, batteries and troops. The position of first sergeant is similar to that of the CSM in importance, responsibility and prestige. As far back as the Revolutionary War period, first sergeants have enforced discipline, fostered loyalty and commitment in their soldiers, maintained duty rosters and made morning reports to their company commanders. Since today's first sergeants maintain daily contact with and are responsible for training and ensuring the health and welfare of all of the unit's soldiers and families, this position requires extraordinary leadership and professional competence.

First sergeants hold formations, instruct platoon sergeants and assist the commander in daily unit operations. Though first sergeants supervise routine administrative duties, their principle duty is training soldiers. The CSM, first sergeant and other key NCOs, must understand the organization's collective mission essential tasks during METL-based training. Through NCO development programs, performance counseling and other guidance, first sergeants are the Army's most important mentors in developing subordinate NCOs.

The Master Sergeant serves as the principle NCO in staff elements at battalion or higher levels. Although not charged with the enormous leadership responsibilities of the first sergeant, the master sergeant dispatches leadership and executes other duties with the same professionalism as the first sergeant.

PLATOON SERGEANT AND SERGEANT FIRST CLASS

While "Platoon Sergeant" is a duty position, not a rank, the platoon sergeant is the primary assistant and advisor to the platoon leader, with the responsibility of training and caring for soldiers. The platoon sergeant helps the commander to train the platoon leader and in that regard has an enormous effect on how that young officer perceives NCOs for the rest of his career. The platoon sergeant takes charge of the platoon in the absence of the platoon leader. As the lowest level senior NCO involved in the company METL, platoon sergeants teach collective and individual tasks to soldiers in their squads, crews or equivalent small units.

The Sergeant First Class (SFC), may serve in a position subordinate to the platoon sergeant or may serve as the NCO in charge (NCOIC) of the section with all the attendant responsibilities and duties of the platoon sergeant. A platoon sergeant or sergeant first class generally has extensive military experience and can make accurate decisions in the best interest of the mission and the soldier.

Utilizing tough, realistic and intellectually and physically challenging performance-oriented training to excite and motivate soldiers, the platoon sergeant ensures Army standards are met and maintained. Additionally, the platoon sergeant must conduct cross training to promote critical wartime skills within the unit, evaluate the effectiveness of the platoon and provide training feedback to the commander and first sergeant during After-Action Reviews (AAR) on all unit collective training.

SQUAD, SECTION AND TEAM LEADERS

Staff Sergeants, Sergeants and Corporals are normally squad, section and team leaders and are a critical link in the NCO channel. These NCOs live and work with their soldiers every day and are responsible for their health, welfare and safety. These squad, section and team leaders ensure that their soldiers meet standards in personal appearance and teach them to maintain and account for their individual and unit equipment and property. The NCO enforces standards and develops and trains soldiers daily in MOS skills and unit missions.

"NCOs should make it a point to drop by the barracks on and off duty to visit soldiers and check on their welfare."
SMA Jack L. Tilley

The NCO teaches individual and collective training, develops unit cohesion, fosters the values of loyalty and commitment and builds spirit and confidence. The NCO evaluates performance oriented training and through coaching and counseling grooms young soldiers for future positions of increased responsibility. Squad, section and team leaders teach everything from the making of sound and timely decisions to physical training to ethics and values. You, corporals and sergeants, are the basic trainer of today's soldiers.

YOU ARE A NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

You as an NCO have a tough, demanding, but very rewarding job. The soldiers you lead are the heart of the Army. You lead soldiers at the action level where the important day-to-day fundamental work of the Army is mission oriented. Because you live and work directly with and among soldiers, you have the best opportunity to know them as they really are. You are the first to identify and teach soldiers how to best use their strengths and help them detect and overcome their shortcomings. You are in the best position to secure the trust and confidence of soldiers by leading by example. You have the advantage of a deeper understanding of soldier behavior because you were promoted directly from the ranks that you now lead

and serve. Your soldiers will challenge you each and every day and you will be rewarded by the respect they hold for your ability as a leader. You will be successful as they follow your leadership in the difficult business of getting ready to fight and win our Nation's wars.