

last week to get on the plane). If you're a short-notice replacement, check with your schools NCO and find out if the individual you replaced has the welcome packet.

The Academics section of the Sergeants Major Academy sends out welcome packets to all MACOMs and other commands with numerous allocations. If you don't receive a packet within a reasonable amount of time after notification of course attendance, then call USASMA at (915) 568-8449 or DSN 978-8449 to request one from Mr. Jesse Arenas. He will either fax or mail a packet to you.

The Army has training material available through correspondence studies that will assist you in preparing to attend BSNCO. Some recommended sub-courses on graphics and overlays are in DA Pam 351-20, the Army Correspondence Course Program Catalog. Those sub-courses are FA8015 (Overlay Techniques), IT0588 (Prepare and Maintain Intelligence Situation Map and Associated Overlays), and SS0529 (Prepare Overlays).

As leaders, we must prepare our NCOs to perform the staff functions when the primary staff member is unavailable due to circumstances of the battlefield. (These positions are traditionally filled by commissioned officers). Under normal full-up staffing, these skills acquired will allow NCOs to improve the capabilities of the staff to perform to the levels required of the future battlefield.

If you prepare yourself ahead of time in the preceding seven requirements, along with the additional information provided in this article, then you, your unit and the United States Armed Forces will benefit. You will be a well-trained and highly-skilled warfighter of the 21st century.

For additional information on the Battle Staff Course, contact the following individuals: SGM Scott, Co C Commander, at DSN 978-9165 (the commercial prefix for all numbers is 915-568-); SGM Caudill, BSC Senior Instructor, at DSN 978-9191; or ISG Cortinas at DSN 978-9116. The fax number is DSN 978-8145.

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Compassion, Yes Training Shortcuts, No

By ISG Kip E. Kowalski

When a unit conducts nuclear, biological and chemical training in full MOPP gear during the summer, it may be uncomfortable. But, unless troops are at risk from hot weather, being uncomfortable isn't a reason to compromise training. Leaders who feel sorry for their troops and allow them to sneak around and remove their masks in training are setting them up for failure. The soldiers are apt to do the same in an actual chemical environment, risking injury or death. Remember, soldiers do in combat what they rehearse in training.

Another instance of troop care is physical training. Not ensuring soldiers get into shape during peacetime means they may not survive in combat—risking not only themselves, but other soldiers as well. Is it more humane to show compassion and allow shortcuts now, or to train them right so they will not die in combat?

As with the sweating NBC soldiers and the weak PT program, NCOs need to approach their careers with the same "get tough" attitude. When a promotion list comes out, it's always the case that many soldiers ask why they weren't selected. What the boards are looking for is outstanding performance in tough leadership positions. With sinking selection rates, boards not only are looking for outstanding NCOs, they are looking at what NCOs were accomplishing when they got the outstanding NCOER. Selection boards relate jobs like platoon sergeant, first sergeant and similar leadership positions as being the tough payoff positions.

NCOs can't sit back. They must aggressively pursue those "hard" leadership positions. Leaders also have an obligation to support worthy NCOs by putting them into those tough payoff jobs. Some NCOs evade these positions due to their lack of previous leadership experience or they are complacent and let someone else do the tough jobs. We all know NCOs who spend many years as instructors or on special duty working outside their MOS, going home every night on time. No mission's too complicated for them—as long as it's under controlled conditions—cool in the summer and warm in the winter. If we let these NCOs linger in the soft jobs, are we looking out for their future?

Soldiers who stay in these positions (and NCOs who let them stay) are being set up for non-selection, even though they know the possibility for promotion is remote. They're the first to ask, "Why wasn't I selected?"

Our responsibility to these NCOs is to show compassion for them and their careers. Place them in a job where professional development is obtainable. Teach them what that job is and encourage them to seek leadership challenges. Many NCOs, apprehensive about taking on these tough positions, perform well after being coerced. They just need to mature into the job. The number of NCOs with repetitive platoon or first sergeant tours who perform well in them, makes it obvious that there are more than enough positions to go around. Some NCOs feel comfortable doing them over and over again, after they've gotten the first successful tour under their belt. Commanders need to encourage their best NCOs to seek these high-risk, high-payoff positions and mentor them to develop them into promotable leaders. Sometimes commanders and leaders are either selfish in using soldiers or don't understand the effects they're having on NCO careers.

Examples include unit orderly room clerks and training NCOs. These positions are an extremely important part of a unit's operation, but can be definite career-blockers. Leaders need to rotate NCOs back to the line platoons. Share the wealth within the unit. Allow more soldiers the opportunity to experience the difficult duties.

Taking care of soldiers means helping NCOs find that tough job to keep them competitive. Keep in mind that units have jobs that are less than career-enhancing. Some times commanders must have a job accomplished, but they need to understand the effect it has on the NCO's career. Don't let NCOs overstay their welcome in these jobs.

Remember, promotion boards advance soldiers based on potential and by virtue of how well they perform in their MOS, not out of it. Selection boards also view overseas assignments favorably. Soldiers who have their fair share of tough overseas duty tend to have better career patterns, varied assignments, more leadership experience and higher selection rates. ■

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