



# Personnel Notes

## Officer HRC Update

By Colonel Mike Rossi and Lieutenant Colonel Pete Mueller

“The future ain’t what it used to be.”

—Yogi Berra

We’d be surprised if at least two other contributors to this issue of *Engineer* do not lead off their articles with the same quote by the famous Yankee manager. In the time that passes between submitting this item and its publication, the Army leadership will make several decisions on the structure and mission of our active duty engineer battalions and brigades. These decisions will have a significant effect on the assignment options, command opportunities, and professional development timelines of our Corps. This article presents a snapshot of what we’ve learned from past selection boards, what we know today about professional development in our Corps, and initiatives we anticipate for the future.

### Change, Change, Change

First, we’re now HRC, not PERSCOM. On 2 October 2003, the United States Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM) and United States Army Reserve Personnel Command (ARPERSCOM) were combined to form a single, unified command—the United States Army Human Resources Command. HRC is a result of the Army leadership’s vision to streamline headquarters, create more agile and responsive staffs, reduce layers of review and approval, focus on the mission, and transform the Army. HRC’s activation is the first step in consolidating personnel services throughout the Army.

What does it really mean from a personnel perspective to be an “Army at War – Relevant and Ready”? It means that we are *not* going about “business as usual.” We are not simply thinking outside the box for academic purposes—we’re creating policies and procedures which will ensure that we contribute to increased combat effectiveness and readiness, while enhancing your stability and predictability. It means that our No.1 priority is to support the Global War on Terrorism. We assign officers to meet Army priorities and requirements first, then we balance professional development needs. Deploying units will not deploy at less than full strength. Once deployed, we will not cause unit turbulence. It means that we slate the

best officer to a unit based on experience and skills. Officer preference is important, but it is not the driver.

When we can, we will support the high school senior stabilization program, *Joint Domicile*, and summer moves. It means we will not move you just because you’ve been on station a certain amount of time, and we will increase your opportunity to return to the same location. “Homesteading” is no longer bad—it is okay to stay at a location you enjoy, unless the needs of the Army or your professional needs require a permanent change of station (PCS). It means the personnel system now has a unit focus versus an individual focus. Rather than breadth, we look to develop more depth in an officer. We’re looking to keep experts in their jobs longer.

### Lieutenants

The great news for the Regiment and our future is that our lieutenants are getting the best professional development the Army can offer—operational experience. What’s important for you is to learn as much as you can, do your absolute best, and do not be afraid to fail. Promotion rates to captain are near 99 percent and, once selected, your lieutenant Officer Evaluation Reports (OERs) are masked before future boards. You truly get a fresh start once you make captain.

As with junior captains, all your duties should be performed with the goal in mind of developing the skill sets you need to be a great company commander. These skills include leadership (platoon leader, executive officer), personnel (S1), training and tactics (assistant S3), planning and battle tracking (assistant brigade engineer, brigade engineer, assistant division engineer liaison officer, supply (S4), and maintenance (battalion maintenance officer). The more skills you master in these disciplines, the better commander you’ll make. Even with the home-basing initiative, you can seek professional development jobs with a short-tour assignment or a PCS. Now is the time to jump on professional schools—such as the Airborne, Air Assault, and Ranger Schools and the Mechanized Leader Course.

### Captains

Company command is the *critical node* in your career. A year in command is branch qualification, and boards have shown no prejudice to 1-year commanders on past boards. Command queues are well over 3 years in all, but a very few installations and captains should expect their command tours to be closer to 1 year rather than the traditional 18 months. Our position at the Engineer Branch is that the boards look for two command reports rather than the number of months an officer commanded. As explained above, all lieutenant and captain development leads to it and the level of success you achieve as a commander defines your near-term opportunities—nominative assignments, advanced civil schooling (ACS), and promotion to major. Knowing this, battalion commanders bear tremendous responsibility to cycle junior officers into “tailor-made” developmental jobs; to coach, train, develop, and spot-

light serving company commanders; to advise senior raters as to who are the absolute best of their commanders; and to counsel their commanders about follow-on opportunities to serve the Regiment and the Army.

The jury is out on the Engineer Captain's Career Course (ECCC) and what shape and form it will take. A decision after this writing, but before publication, may render the discussion below obsolete, but here is the current thinking: From the assignment perspective, there are really two options available to the officer corps—a PCS or a temporary change of station (TCS) for non-home-based officers or temporary duty (TDY) and return for home-based officers. The figure on page 50 captures the timelines for the two options. In this case, "CC" is the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command common core curriculum; "BS" is branch-specific courses, which are taught at the U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for engineers; and "CA" is combined arms experience, which is taught at the National Training Center, Joint Readiness Training Center, or Combat Maneuver Training Center.

ACS remains a success story for the Regiment. Roughly 80 percent of our captains seek and receive master's degrees while at the ECCC. In addition, we've had a number of captains pursue another ACS opportunity. This year—

- 20 will go to ACS then teach at the United States Military Academy.
- 13 will go to ACS with utilization in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).
- 5 will go to ACS at Georgetown with utilization on the Joint Staff.
- 1 will go to ACS at Harvard with follow-on to the Army G3.
- 1 is an Olmsted scholar.

No other branch has had as much success this year in the ACS arena.

Once a captain completes company command, he or she can expect reassignment to one of the many jobs that meet other critical Army needs. Those assignments include ACS, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), Active Component-Reserve Component (AC-RC), Project Warrior, small-group instruction, or recruiting company command. In each case, officer preference is considered, but the needs of the Army must be first met.

## Majors

The big news for senior captains and majors is the Army's Universal Military Education Level 4 (MEL4) initiative. Greybeards will remember MEL4 as Command and General Staff College (CGSC). More recently, the Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, experience is known as Command and Staff College (CSC). In the future, it will be known as Intermediate Level Education (ILE). In the past, we selected roughly 50 percent

of a year group (YG) of officers to attend resident CSC; the remaining 50 percent completed the course by correspondence. Starting with YG94 in the fall of FY05, 100 percent of officers will attend some form of resident ILE. For the operations career field—that's engineers—this means a PCS for 10+ months to Fort Leavenworth. The Engineer Branch will schedule majors in one of the first two available classes to their YG. We will only support deferring attendance twice in very rare occasions or, obviously, for stop loss/stop move. If you are YG93 and not selected for resident CSC, you must complete the course by correspondence before your lieutenant colonel board or, as history has shown, you will not be selected for promotion.

The results of the last four lieutenant colonel boards have shown that the key to promotion is performance as a major. Resident or nonresident CSC, the type of branch-qualifying (BQ) majors' job, or company command reports are negligible factors in comparison. BQ positions for majors are shown in Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management*, and are assistant division engineer, battalion- or brigade-level S3/executive officer, regimental engineer (Ranger, cavalry regiments), Special Forces group engineer, Director of Public Works (DPW), or Deputy District Engineer. Once again, performance as a major—shining periodically in your reports, particularly in BQ positions—is the key to making lieutenant colonel.

## Lieutenant Colonels

If you are a lieutenant colonel in today's Army, you are a success! My sense of the boards, regulations, guidance, and selection history is that all are geared toward making you a lieutenant colonel; if you don't make it, both you and the Army are disappointed. But everything after lieutenant colonel is gravy—battalion command, colonel, War College, colonel command, and beyond. The Army knows there are more officers qualified for these selections than there are positions available and makes its best effort to pick the officers to serve at these levels. They are all tremendously tough cuts.

Battalion command remains the most selective gate in our Regiment. Roughly 40 percent of a cohort YG will be selected for lieutenant colonel command. With rare exceptions, all centrally selected (command selection list [CSL]) battalion commanders will attend Senior Service College (SSC)—the War College. Also rare is when a non-CSL battalion commander will be selected for resident SSC. So, if you're not a battalion commander, you should consider the nonresident SSC option, if offered.

Lieutenant colonels serve the Army. We'll always do our best to find the right job for senior officers, to include joint, Department of Defense, or Department of the Army staffs; DPW; training support battalion; and provisional battalion command. We'll spend much time seeking key strategic jobs

7th Year of Service	8th Year of Service	9th Year of Service
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**Option: PCS/TCS/TDY- Retirement**

Company Command	STAFF BQ CPT	PCS	Project Warrior
			Functional Assignment
			AC-RC/ROTC/Recruiting

**Option: Modular/TDY- Retirement (20-22 Weeks)**

Company Command	STAFF BQ CPT	PCS	Project Warrior
			Functional Assignment
			AC-RC/ROTC/Recruiting

DL = distributed learning

**Blended Modular Captain's Career Course**

for our outgoing battalion commanders to capitalize on their experience and professionally develop them for future service.

**Colonels**

As of February 2004, there are 185 active duty colonels on the rolls of the Engineer Regiment, serving our nation in a time of war. This includes the addition of 19 promotable lieutenant colonels announced in December 2003. Considering anticipated retirements through next summer, our rolls could drop below 160. Our colonels are assigned to SSCs and worldwide in 110 authorized engineer colonel and numerous branch-immaterial positions. Authorizations for continental United States (CONUS) DPWs were dramatically cut during the Total Army Analysis 2009 (TAA09) process. In 2003, there were 12 colonels assigned to DPW positions within CONUS. The Personnel Management Authorization Document for 2005 includes only 4 CONUS DPWs. The other 8 DPW positions are being transformed into Department of the Army civilian positions.

In 2003, the Regiment's promotion rate to colonel was lower than the Army average and about 45 percent less than in recent years. Promotions within branches of the Army are tied to both structure and inventory or, more simply, authorized requirements and the health of a YG or population. Reductions in authorizations in combination with a larger-than-average population can translate into a reduced requirement for BS promotions as determined by the Army G1. This can also translate into increased requirements for branches that may experience the opposite trend.

One impact the field may have on this is the timely submission of retirement requests. Late requests could mean that a snapshot before a promotion board could reflect an unusually healthy population, with follow-on consequences for the

Regiment. Army Regulation 600-8-24, *Officer Transfers and Discharges*, dictates that "voluntary retirement requests may be submitted up to 12 months before the requested retirement date and not later than 6 months prior to the projected start date of transition leave."

The impacts of the Army's priorities—fighting the Global War on Terrorism and The Way Ahead Campaign—are also affecting the management and assignment priorities for engineer colonels. The establishment of the USACE Gulf Regional Division and the USACE District in Afghanistan are examples of five new 21Z (combat engineering senior sergeant) Directed military overstrength (DMO) assignments. Along with the rest of the Regiment, in assigning engineer colonels, we must first consider the priority needs of the Army and assign officers based on depth versus breadth of experience. The Army's stabilization plan, along with stop loss/stop move for deploying units, will impact colonels along with the rest of our soldiers. CSL brigade-level commanders could see command deferments based on timing of unit deployments for contingency and combat operations.

**The Glass Ball**

Battalion and brigade commanders are accustomed to juggling numerous "glass balls"—maintenance, training, and personnel come to mind immediately. And while these are all absolutely critical, commanders and units can usually overcome shortcomings and mistakes in these areas. Last quarter is soon forgotten, and you focus on the future. Writing OERs and managing your (and your rater's) Senior Rater Profile are *THE* glass ball. The reason is simple—mistakes last forever! A poorly written report will remain in an officer's file throughout his career and will have an influence on every board. You must get this right. We've provided a primer on writing an effective OER on the Engineer Branch home page. The link is

<<https://www.hrc.army.mil/OPeng/OERinfo.htm>>. There are examples of various comments with the intended board effect, as well as thorough explanations.

The most important take-away from that primer is that although a center-of-mass report is not a discriminator for most boards, not all center-of-mass reports are viewed equally. It is very important that you include the following in each narrative: enumeration, promotion potential, schooling recommendations, and next command/position recommended. A rater or senior rater may elect to leave one or more of these four components out of a narrative, but they should understand that they risk sending an unintended (and not positive) message to a board. Rated officers should watch for these items in their OERs and question their rater/senior rater if they notice an omission during their counseling. The omission may be intentional, and it's certainly within the purview of the rater/senior rater to make this call. Or the rater/senior rater may have unintentionally left these comments out and can add them as a result of this dialogue.

Additionally, senior raters need to amplify their potential box checks by using the narrative to clearly send the appropriate message to selection boards. Board members relate that the first and last lines in the senior rater's comments are the most important factors in their assessment—so spend time on these portions. Some senior raters fill their box and hide potential comments. This is not good (don't make it time-consuming or difficult for the board members). A center-of-mass OER with the right comments about potential and future assignments is more valuable than an above-center-of-mass report that doesn't enumerate performance or contain key bullets about the ability to command or about school selection.

### Communications

Our tool for communicating with you is the Internet and Army Knowledge Online (AKO). If we need to contact you specifically, we'll e-mail you via your AKO account address.

We cannot recommend more highly that you forward your AKO account to your work account address, or that you check your AKO inbox regularly. Often, we'll notify you about assignments, boards, corrections, or questions on your file by e-mail. It begins the discussion between you and your assignment officer.

We update elements of our branch Web page weekly. In it, we provide links to board results, dates for branch visits, hot or late-breaking assignment opportunities, or useful personnel tools for your use. The link is <<https://www.hrc.army.mil/OPeng/enmainpg.htm>>. The homepage also leads you to the Automated Preference System and allows you to see the available assignments for your grade and one grade up, real time (you see them when we see them). Through this system, you can open the dialogue with your assignment officer on your preferred next assignment.

The Officer Engineer Branch exists to serve you, the Regiment, and the Army. Essayons.

*Colonel Rossi has been the Engineer Officer Branch Chief, HRC, since June 2002. His assignments include company commander, battalion executive officer, and G3 Training in the 101st Airborne Division; commander, 65th Engineer Battalion, 25th Infantry Division (Light); and Deputy District Engineer-Military for the Sacramento District, USACE. He holds master's degrees from MIT and the National War College and is a professional engineer in the Commonwealth of Virginia.*

*Lieutenant Colonel Mueller has been the Engineer Colonels Assignment Officer, HRC, since July 2003. Assignments include company commander, 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized); assistant division engineer and battalion executive officer, 101st Airborne Division; Congressional Fellow; and commander of the Charleston District, USACE. He holds a master's from MIT and is a professional engineer in the Commonwealth of Virginia.*

## Army Values

*"We are, have been, and will remain a values-based institution. Our values will not change, and they are nonnegotiable. Our Soldiers are warriors of character. They exemplify these values every day and are the epitome of our American spirit. They are the heart of the Army."*

*—General Peter J. Schoomaker, Army Chief of Staff, arrival message July 2003*

**Loyalty** - Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other soldiers.

**Duty** - Fulfill your obligations.

**Respect** - Treat people as they should be treated.

**Selfless Service** - Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and your subordinates before your own.

**Honor** - Live up to all the Army values.

**Integrity** - Do what's right, legally and morally.

**Personal Courage** - Face fear, danger, or adversity.



# Personnel Notes

## Enlisted HRC Update

By Lieutenant Colonel Margaret W. Burcham

**T**his past October, PERSCOM became the Human Resources Command (HRC), and the Enlisted Engineer Branch turned over a few personnel as well. The assignment managers are here to serve you. So if you have questions, please contact them through our Web site at <https://www.hrc.army.mil>.

### MOS Changes

In August 2003, the Deputy Chief of Staff, Army G1, approved the deletion of military occupational specialty (MOS) 21F, crane operator. All duties currently performed by MOS 21F personnel will be incorporated into MOS 21J, general construction equipment operator. This change will take effect in fiscal year (FY) 2006.

### Promotions

The conditional promotion—that is, a 1-year period to pin on the next rank without meeting Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) requirements—is suspended until further notice. Soldiers may now pin on rank as soon as they have orders, following success at the promotion board and adequate promotion points, regardless of their completing the applicable NCOES. However, sergeants must complete the Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC), staff sergeants must complete the Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course (BNCOC), and sergeants first class must complete the Advanced Noncommissioned Officers Course (ANCOC) before they will be considered for promotion to the next higher rank. The calendar year (CY) 2004 Master Sergeant Promotion Board convened from 3 - 27 February 2004. The next board, FY05 Master Sergeant Promotion Board, will convene from 5 - 29 October 2004.

### Army Knowledge Online

We at HRC are making greater and greater use of Army Knowledge Online (AKO). It is especially important that your AKO account be forwarded to your work account if you have one or that you have access to AKO and check your account from time to time. For soldiers who are deployed, it is our

primary means of contact. We will notify you of assignments or provide options when we can. Soldiers should also use the Army Satisfaction Key (ASK), found on the HRC Web site to update assignment preferences. We use these preferences in making many decisions regarding a soldier's next assignment. A great new tool for NCOs on AKO is access to their Enlisted Record Brief (ERB) via our Web site. In March 2004, AKO will be used as a medium for four new personnel initiatives:

- E-mail notification of assignment, deletion, or deferment actions, which will eventually replace HRC-GRAMS (formerly PERSGRAMS).
- E-mail reminders to update assignment preferences and contact information in ASK within 3 months of permanent change of station (PCS) and again 18 months before the date eligible for return from overseas (DEROS) for soldiers outside the continental United States (OCONUS) or after 2 years time on station (TOS) for soldiers in the continental United States (CONUS).
- E-mail acknowledgements when volunteer or assignment preference information is updated in ASK.
- Ability to view Personnel Key Information through ASK. This includes spouse information, MOS, NCOES history, Enlisted Force Management Plan (EFMP) status, assignment location and report date, and pending training course information.

### Retention

Many new bonuses are in effect now, especially for those currently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, as well as those volunteering to remain in, or reenlist for, Korea. Learn more about these from your unit retention NCO.

### Assignments

As you read about force stabilization below, you will see that overall the pace of PCSs will be slowing down. We will tend to leave soldiers where they are unless there is a compelling need to move them, such as for promotion, DEROS, schooling, or to fill a higher-priority position. We will attempt to increase the *depth* of a soldier's knowledge and experience and be less concerned with increasing the *breadth* of that soldier's experience.

One assignment problem we are dealing with is that of back-to-back assignments, meaning an assignment to a deploying unit or to an unaccompanied tour within 1 year of that same kind of assignment. While we try to avoid this situation whenever possible, with the current pace of deployments and the fact that the majority of the Engineer Regiment has been deployed, it is not possible for us to completely avoid back-to-back assignments. Many of you have experienced this. Of course, we will work with soldiers who volunteer for these assignments.

Stop loss/stop move is in effect for units that are currently deployed as well as for those moving into Operation Iraqi Freedom Phase II and Operation Enduring Freedom Phase IV. This measure will remain in effect for those units until 90 days following their redeployment. If you are serving in a table of distribution and allowances (TDA) assignment or otherwise have not deployed, you should expect to be assigned to a deploying unit on your next assignment. We will attempt to assign redeployed soldiers to the TDA assignments to get recent combat experience into the training and recruiting base. Exceptions to this include the following:

- Soldiers currently programmed to end their 3-year recruiting tours this year have now been extended to a fourth year.
- Soldiers scheduled to complete their 2-year drill sergeant duties between 1 May 2004 and 30 April 2005 have been extended to a third year.

This is a temporary measure to ensure that we have adequate fill in those critical positions during this period of stop loss/stop move.

Several new Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs) will be standing up over the next year, to include SBCT3, 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division; SBCT4, 2d Light Cavalry Regiment (formerly 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment); and SBCT5, 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division. Due to the extensive equipment fielding and training time required, soldiers assigned to these units must remain in place throughout a significant stabilization period of several years. Therefore, soldiers currently assigned to those units who do not have enough time remaining on their enlistment must either extend to meet applicable dates or will be reassigned to other units. Soldiers with questions regarding assignments to SBCTs should contact their assignment manager.

### Force Stabilization

The Army has some great initiatives to increase unit readiness and to make it easier to have greater predictability in the lives of soldiers and their families. Force stabilization is a system designed to decrease personnel turbulence for units and set conditions for increased unit readiness, combat effectiveness, and cohesion.

#### Why Force Stabilization?

This initiative will—

- Increase overall Army readiness.
- Slow down the force (fewer PCS moves).
- Cause homesteading to become a *good* thing!
- Increase unit cohesion.
- Stabilize families and provide more predictability to soldiers.

### How Does Unit-Focused Stability Work?

Beginning in October 2004, brigade combat teams will be set on 36-month life cycles, which will—

- Align the soldier's tour with the unit's operational cycle (36 months).
- Minimize soldier moves/losses for deployed units.
- Provide cohesion for all levels of soldiers and leaders.

There are three phases in the life cycle:

- **Reset** (30 - 90 days). This is the time following a major deployment and 90 days stabilization when soldiers who have reached their estimated time of separation (ETS) or are retiring will depart the unit, some will PCS to other assignments due to promotion or for professional development, and others will join the unit to replace the departed.
- **Training** (6 months). During this period, the unit will be at 100 percent strength and will train with set crews to perform its wartime mission. Training will be individual through collective and will wrap up with a certification exercise.
- **Ready** (25 - 29 months). Throughout this phase, the unit is available for employment.

One new initiative intends to place first-term enlistees, as well as newly commissioned lieutenants, at their first duty station for a total of about 7 years. During that time, the soldier may leave the base for deployments with their unit or TDY for schooling, but will then return to their initial posting. Families will remain at the initial post throughout the 7-year period, giving them continuity in their community and a sense of stability.

To learn more about force stabilization, visit the G1 Task Force Stabilization (TFS) Web site at <https://www.stabilization.army.mil>.

*Lieutenant Colonel Burcham is chief of the Enlisted Engineer Branch at the Human Resources Command.*

## Moving?



Did your unit move recently, or is your *Engineer Bulletin* addressed incorrectly? To correct your mailing address, send us the following information:

Old Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

New Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: [pbid@wood.army.mil](mailto:pbid@wood.army.mil)

Telephone: (573) 563-4104, DSN 676-4104

Address: U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center, ATTN: ATZT-DT-DS-B (Engineer), 320 MANSCEM Loop, Suite 210, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri 65473-8929