

Preparing Our Sustainment Noncommissioned Officers

To be ready for greater responsibilities, noncommissioned officers must be exposed to the many facets of global sustainment.

■ By Command Sgt. Maj. James K. Sims

One of my goals as I visit sustainment organizations throughout the Army is to impart my vision for how we should be preparing our noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to be sergeants major and command sergeants major (CSMs) in the sustainment community.

Battalion and brigade CSM positions are now open to NCOs from all of the sustainment career fields. This inclusion is absolutely necessary because we cannot afford to limit the pool of candidates to specific career fields. What we need to do now is ensure senior NCOs are thoroughly prepared for the responsibility of being CSMs.

Army sustainment is the provision of logistics, personnel services, and health service support necessary to maintain operations until successful mission completion. Knowing that definition serves Soldiers well on promotion boards, but that alone will not develop NCOs into multifunctional leaders with a broad enough knowledge base to effectively lead an organization tasked with such a wide range of missions.

Time and again, our senior NCOs have been placed into positions of responsibility for which they were not specifically prepared. They have had to rely on critical thinking, past experiences, and problem-solving skills to meet those demands.

Although this speaks volumes about the character of those NCOs, we as a community owe them more. We have an institutional obligation to equip our senior NCOs with the tools required to be effective leaders and to prepare

them for unfamiliar situations.

To fulfill that obligation, we need to expose sergeants first class and senior staff sergeants serving in sergeant first class positions to these areas:

- Logistics estimates.
- Global Combat Support System—Army assistance.
- Property accountability.
- Maintenance operations supervision.
- Finance and banking operations.
- Operational contract support.
- Human resources and financial management.
- Reception, staging, onward movement, and integration.
- Postal operations.
- Theater-level personnel accountability.
- Casualty reporting.
- Materiel management.
- The role of the Army field support battalion.
- Supply chain management.

This is not to say that every NCO should, or even could, learn how to do the jobs of each and every one of their peers. Simply stated, the task at hand is to ensure that NCOs are fully exposed to the global picture of sustainment.

Fortunately, we do not need to reinvent the wheel. All we need to do is figure out the best way to put the wheels that we already have onto the truck and show our NCOs how to drive it. The institutional knowledge and training materials required already exist, and we need only to change our mindset about how and when we expose our NCOs to these concepts.

In coordination with the Training

and Doctrine Command and the Combined Arms Support Command, I have met with the regimental command sergeants major from Fort Lee, Virginia, and Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and have asked them to develop courses of action to accomplish this monumental task. Success can be achieved only through teamwork and a combined effort from every part of the sustainment community.

The professional development of an individual Soldier at any level is about far more than simply developing that one Soldier. Developing greater individual capability and increasing the baseline knowledge of global sustainment among NCOs builds our credibility as leaders.

Everything we do as NCOs must support the priorities of our commanders and the Army and enable mission readiness. Realizing this vision will better prepare the senior NCOs of today and tomorrow to lead sustainment formations into the future and maintain the readiness required to accomplish any mission.

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