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## **Web-based program speeds up SGT and SSG promotions**

WASHINGTON, D.C - The Army recently announced the first dramatic change to the enlisted promotions system for active duty Soldiers since the Vietnam era. The Army sees this web-based program, titled the "Soldier Self-Service DA Form 3355", as a bridge to DIMHRS (Defense Integrated Military Human Resource System), and a way to empower Soldiers to directly impact on the management of their careers. "Trust and verify are key components of the system" said Sergeant Major Tom Gills, Chief of Enlisted Promotions at Human Resources Command. "This new program has numerous advantages over the current system, and the majority of those benefits stem from three key features," he added.

"First, this system eliminates the need for Soldiers to accumulate 20 or more points before adding them to their file," Gills said. The Army uses an 800 point system that allows Soldiers to distinguish themselves from their peers by accumulating points among performance categories such as physical fitness, weapons firing, civilian education, military education, and awards.

"Under the current system, Soldiers must accumulate 20 points in one or more areas before they can add them to their files. With this new program, as soon as Soldiers earn points, they can add them to their file, making them immediately more competitive with their peers," Gills said.

The accumulation rule, a personnel workload management-based requirement for more than 34 years, has long irritated Soldiers and their families. This long-needed improvement translates into faster promotions.

The second key improvement is also related to speed. Currently, when Soldiers update their files with new points, or are newly recommended for promotion, they must wait until the first day of the second month before those points become effective in the system, approximately two months. With the self-service application, Soldiers recommended for promotion or those adding points will have those points in the system the first day of the following month, provided they add them in by the eighth day of the month.

“We have to take a snapshot of the current points across the Army, while allowing time to forecast accurately how many Soldiers we need in a given MOS. According to the experts who developed the program, the eighth is that pivotal day,” Gills said.

Finally, because of the self-input capability provided to Soldiers for some of their administrative points, recomputation evaluations conducted across the Army at Human Resource Offices every month will immediately become a thing of the past. This time-consuming requirement for Soldiers and managers across the Army is burdensome. With the elimination of Personnel Service Battalions across the Army in support of transformation, this workload reduction will be a welcome relief.

“This is just one more example of how the Army is transforming into a more agile force, and improving processes using existing technology,” Gills said.

While the Army continues to drive hard towards the DIMHRS solution, this program provides some of the DIMHRS-type improvements now, and will help Soldiers by ensuring their records are accurate when we do make the DIMHRS transition in October 2008.

Concerns about the new self-service system have been brought up, and largely relate to Soldiers putting in false data. “That concern is valid to a point, but appears somewhat overstated,” Gills said.

A few Soldiers have, for the past 20 years, tested the system. Some will likely try to go around this new system. The numbers are small. This is the trust and verify part of the system. We trust our Soldiers. They live by the Warrior Ethos. We trust them with expensive equipment. We trust them with enormous responsibilities. We trust them with the lives of their fellow Soldiers. Certainly, we can trust them with keeping accurate records.

“We actually have a fairly robust verification process built into the system,” Gills said. “When a Commander recommends a Soldier for promotion, he is doing so based on the chain of command’s recommendation as well as his own observation of the Soldier’s character and performance over time. A Command Sergeant Major and panel of senior NCO’s then certify that Soldier in a formal board process. Once those two actions have occurred, the Human Resources specialist adds the points into the system and the Soldier is at that point allowed to add points to roughly half of the measured areas of performance.”

Items such as certificates of achievement, certificates of military education, completion of a college course (after certification by the education center or S1/MPD for that university enrollment) are examples of point areas a Soldier may modify. Higher awards (AAM and above), APFT and weapons qualification are examples of areas that will remain the responsibility of the unit for input onto the Soldier’s record. The system will automatically tally all points.

Additionally, each month the Commander will receive a report that shows all promotable Soldiers within the unit, their previous month points total compared to their current points and the amount of points added, if any. First Sergeants know their Soldiers, and unusual or suspicious activity will be readily apparent. All Soldiers must electronically sign a statement that attests to the validity of the points they have added. Those who do attempt to cheat will have to face their leadership, administrative and other actions as appropriate.

Finally, Human Resources Command will randomly audit a percentage of promotable Soldiers across the force. Human Resources Specialists will review reports monthly indicating those selected for audit, and those Soldiers will be required to produce all supporting documentation.

“As I travelled the Army testing the system and talking to Soldiers, there were typically one or two dissenters in each audience who were concerned about cheating. I reminded them that we have an opportunity to do something really good for Soldiers and their families. Do we want to focus on the opportunity or the small percentage that might want to test the system by cheating? I believe we need to move forward and recognize the Soldiers who perform their duty selflessly and with integrity each day,” said Gills. “We have the greatest Army in the history of the world, buttressed by an ethically sound, values-based NCO Corps. When we move to DIMHRS, our Soldiers will be ready for it, and their records will more accurately reflect their performance as a result of this effort.”

Soldiers in the grade of Specialist and Sergeant may access this application at the Human Resources Command Enlisted Promotions Web Site: <https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/active/select/promo.htm> . Non-promotable Specialists and Sergeants may access the program for viewing and update, but will not be able to affect point changes to the Army data base until they have

been recommended by their Commander and have appeared before a promotion board. Promotable Specialists and Sergeants may access and update their file beginning 11 October, which will affect points beginning 1 December.