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# Regimental Command Sergeant Major

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## *Command Sergeant Major Charles R. Kirkland*



### **The Changing Landscape of Sergeant Major Management: The Leader Development Gap and a Proposed Fix**

Another year has arrived, and we are leaning forward to ensure that we are prepared and ready to support the mission of the Army with the most professional and capable military police force possible. We are very proud of your efforts and accomplishments throughout the past year, and we are extremely excited about the future. Our leaders, Soldiers, family members, and civilians across the Regiment continue to amaze us every day; and we are committed to ensuring that you are equipped, trained, and professionally developed in a manner that leads to mission success. In this issue, I want to highlight an emerging change in our Army and explain how it impacts our Regiment. By the time this issue is published, the Army will have gone through its first iteration of command selection and slating of our fiscal year 2012 battalion and brigade command sergeants major position requirements. Let's take a look.



With the command slating of our battalion and brigade command sergeants major and implementation of tier level assignments, the landscape has changed. As with all change, the associated uncertainty tends to conjure negativity. Those of us who grew up under the old sergeant major management practices have a tendency to be skeptical because, after all, the old system worked for us—right? Well, change is not always bad; inside this emerging initiative, there is good. We must embrace the fact that the initiative is moving forward; and we must educate ourselves, our leaders, and our subordinates.

First, let's explore the basics of the recent changes. Under the new policy, battalion and brigade command sergeants major are selected by category (operations, strategic support, recruiting and training, and installation) to fill projected vacancies on an annual basis. This change was implemented to provide opportunities for all sergeants major and command sergeants major, regardless of military occupational specialty (MOS) or organization—especially those within life cycle organizations who would not otherwise have a chance to break the cycle and advance. This new process levels the playing field and gives everyone an opportunity to influence their future by allowing them to compete by category, by position, or not at all. It also provides the opportunity to compete for branch-immaterial positions that, in the past, were routinely reserved for certain MOSs. For example, following the implementation of command slating, the number of battalion command sergeant major opportunities available within Career Management Field (CMF) 31 (all MOSs) increased from 28 to 55; and the number of brigade command sergeant major opportunities increased from 12 to 51. Our branch elected to keep the MOSs "pure," hard-coding our 31B, D, and E positions accordingly; therefore, the notable increases are in branch-immaterial positions that provide opportunities in other areas of the Army or in areas that are geographically appealing to our families. Branches will have an annual opportunity to adjust the coding of positions; but since command slating will not be in full operation until 2012, significant changes are not expected until it is feasible to conduct a true analysis.

The significant challenge created by this new process is the need for command sergeants major to move back to sergeant major positions within our branch. The new dynamic for the management of this population drives the need for direct branch input to support "tier level" positioning.

Figure 1, page 4, illustrates potential advancement through this process, from graduation from the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA) through nominative-level command sergeant major. Sergeants major and command sergeants major may choose to move in and out of command sergeant major positions—or compete to remain in them. In our particular CMF, command sergeants major may serve in battalion to nominative command sergeant major positions in the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (USACIDC) (commonly referred to as "CID") or U.S. Army Corrections Command (ACC), or as the Regimental command sergeant major here at the U.S. Army Military Police School. Those who choose to remain in sergeant major tracks have the opportunity to advance from Tier 1, entry level sergeant major positions to our only nominative-level sergeant major position at the Office of the Provost Marshal General (OPMG). The bottom line is that, regardless of the track chosen, opportunities are available for the "best qualified," as selected by the board.

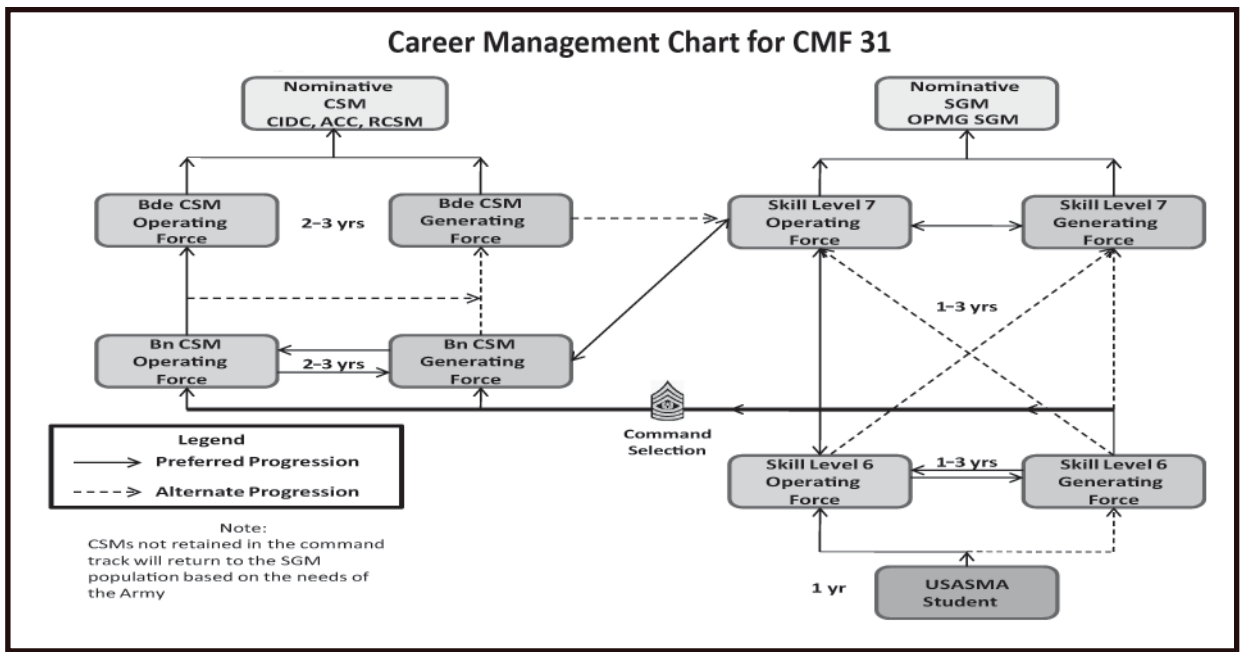


Figure 1

Tier level assignments are designed to foster the professional development of sergeants major by assigning recent USASMA graduates to entry level positions and advancing more seasoned and experienced sergeants major into positions at higher echelons of the Army. For command sergeants major, Tier 1 represents the battalion level, Tier 2 the brigade level, and Tier 3 the nominative level.

Figure 2 illustrates the tiered progression of command sergeants major and sergeants major, using the 31D MOS as an example. It is important to note that Skill Levels 6, 7, and 8 have been added and that battalion and brigade command sergeants major retain their MOSs and skill levels in conjunction with their respective tier levels; they no longer convert to 00Z—which, under this program, is exclusive to nominative-level command sergeants major. In this example, the command operations sergeant major is a 31D70. If he previously held the position of battalion command sergeant major, he would also hold the additional skill identifier of 8A. And if he previously served as a group command sergeant major, he would hold the additional skill identifier of 8B. From the perspective of a proponent looking at the health of the CMF, we are addressing the gap that is created by our sergeants major who elect not to compete for command sergeant major positions or revert back to sergeants major following a command sergeant major assignment.

For the most part, this process mirrors the successful process of officer command selections and slating. And in an effort to reduce redundancy, our centralized promotion boards are now using the same system used by officer selection boards. However, direct branch input is an important aspect of the officer management practice that we have failed to adopt for use under our new system of assigning sergeants major based on tier levels. It is through the logical assignment to key developmental positions that officers become prepared for service at the highest levels of our branch and our Army, and military police officers are involved in these assignment decisions through the rank of colonel. However, the

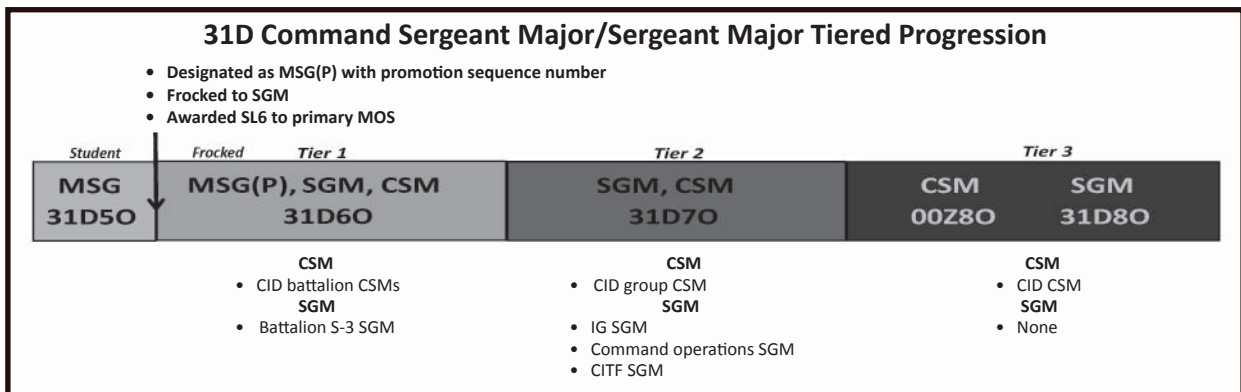


Figure 2

enlisted population is managed from within the CMF only through the rank of master sergeant. When a master sergeant becomes promotable, the sergeants major branch takes over the decision making. This creates a developmental gap that does not exist with the officer population (see Figure 3). If we are to prepare our most senior enlisted Soldiers for service at the highest levels, we cannot continue to simply assign “the next available” to a vacant position. Rather, direct branch involvement in the assignments process is imperative. The personal attention of a senior leader within the specific career field is required to manage this valuable, highly skilled population. We are currently developing recommendations for courses of action to support changes in the policy and ensure that our systems and professional development tracks are logical and that they produce the best-qualified senior enlisted leaders possible.

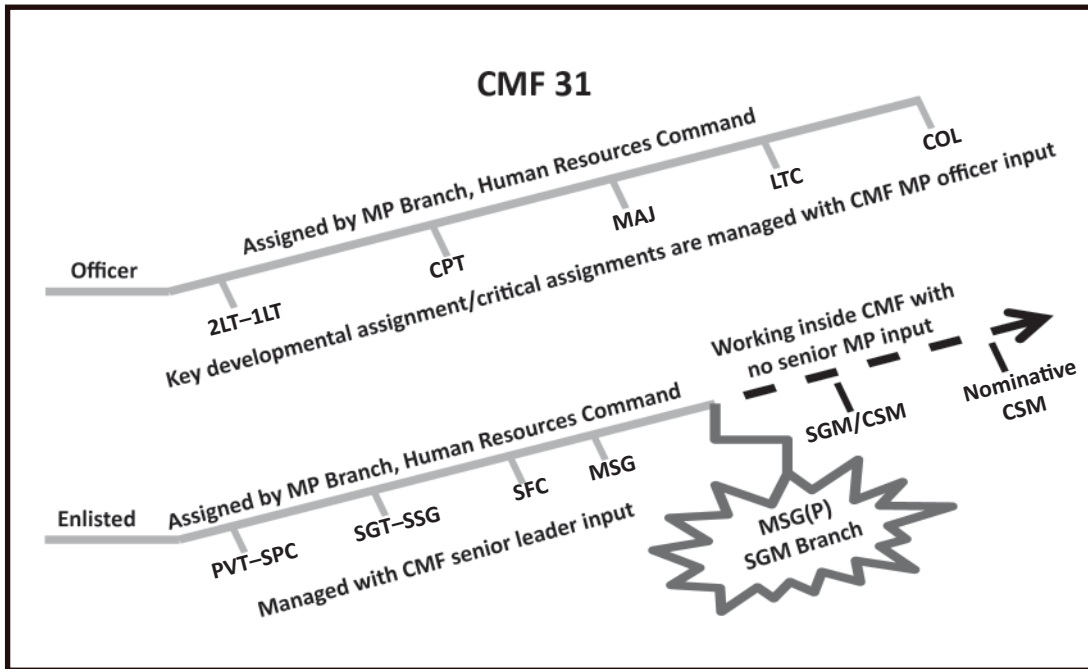


Figure 3

I encourage all Soldiers and leaders to embrace the changes in our promotion systems and to educate themselves about those changes. We just need to help the Army fine-tune the process so that our most senior enlisted Soldiers receive career-developing assignments and rewarding positions.

As always, I ask that you keep our Soldiers who are currently deployed—and the strong family members who keep the home front secure in their absence—in your thoughts and prayers. After all, it is the Soldier representing our Regiment and taking care of our Nation’s business at the “tip of the spear” who is truly important. Thank you for all you do for our Regiment and our Army.

**“Of the Troops and For the Troops”**

**“NCOs Lead the Way”**