

Ethics Thought Paper

**“Selection of Professional Develop Noncommissioned Officers at
The United States Army Human Resource Command”**

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The United States Army Human Resource Command's (HRC) replacement selection process, for Professional Development Noncommissioned Officer's (PDNCO), unintentionally creates an ethical dilemma. The dilemma is present on a monthly basis in the overall organization of HRC and is only present within each Branch periodically depending upon the rotation months of the currently assigned Soldiers. This dilemma can be eliminated if the process was conducted in the same manner as the selection of Soldiers for Equal Opportunity Advisor positions.

If you have not yet figured out why an ethical dilemma is present within the branches, before I reveal it, I am going to give you a better understanding and deeper insight into the branch organizational make up and then the functions of a PDNCO. I will use the Ordnance Branch, which was my former duty assignment, as an example. The branch was comprised of the Career Management Fields (CMF) of 35, 55 and 63. There were a total of 28 personnel who worked in the Ordnance Branch. The enlisted military breakdown consisted of a branch SGM which was a 42A position, 2 MSGs, one for CMF 63, one for CMF 55 (excluding a 55D), 5 SFCs, 3 for CMF 63 and 2 for CMF 35 (one 27 series and one 35 series), for a total of 8 NCOs.

Many of you refer to the military member of your respective branches as your Assignment Managers but their correct title, as mentioned earlier in the opening sentence, is PDNCO. Your assignment managers are the civilians that work in conjunction with the military member. The PDNCO has a myriad of functions but the one that is most crucial is the assignment of Soldiers. Soldier assignments are the most crucial because they involve not only the Soldier but their family members as well. We were responsible for the professional development of the Soldiers (primarily focusing on NCOs) that belonged to our respective Military Occupational Specialties (MOS), via permanent change of station (PCS) into and out of

various installations and special jobs such as, Drill Sergeant and Recruiter positions, to name a few. As Assignment Managers or PDNCOs, we initiated and finalized the process that orders or directs a Soldier to move from one duty location to another. The Soldier must pick up their life, relocate and establish their lives in whichever state or country we happen to assign them. Some duties and locations are desirable, some, not so desirable. Additionally, we must select Soldiers for career enhancing positions such as Drill Sergeant, Recruiter, Equal Opportunity Advisor, Instructor, Active Component/Reserve Component, Observer Controller, Inspector General, and ROTC. We must choose the next most eligible and most qualified Soldier to move and assume these special assignments in accordance with the established regulations and procedures. Obviously, this is done to ensure that each Soldier selected receives fair, unbiased, and equal consideration for desirable and undesirable assignments and to ensure that all qualified Soldiers have the greatest opportunity for professional development and promotion advancement. Additionally, we determined if a Soldier was allowed to be released to or assigned to Special Operation units or change to other military occupational specialties. We were also the main player in determining if Soldiers were allowed to retire normally or in lieu of PCS and if a Soldier should be deleted off of an assignment as well. As you can see, the PDNCO has a very powerful position and plays a crucial role in Soldier's personal and professional lives and needless to say those two aspects, which deal with families and careers, are undeniably the most important things in most Soldiers and perhaps most ordinary people's lives.

Soldiers of all ranks constantly and frequently communicate with their PDNCOs on both personal and professional issues. The communication transpires over a period of time because the tour of duty for a PDNCO is 36 months, with an option to extend for an additional year. At times there have been Soldiers that, for whatever reason or circumstances, felt that they were not

receiving fair and unbiased considerations for normal assignments and special assignments.

There have been situations where Soldiers alluded to or directly declared that because of the race of the PDNCO they did not receive certain assignments. For a more tangible example, shortly after I assumed my position as the Senior PDNCO, a senior noncommissioned officer, that I did not know, expressed to me over the phone, totally out of the blue, that it was about time we got a “brother” up there because my predecessor was full of shit when it came to issuing out assignments. There are other situations of this nature that have occurred and I can attest that this was the predominant perception of a large number of Soldiers. Since its inception, within HRC, there are instances, even up to this very day, where there has only been one particular race and gender to serve as PDNCOs in various branches, MOSs or CMFs. Although I know of several Branches, MOSs, and CMFs that fall into this category I will not specify them. As multiculturally diverse as the United States Army is it is difficult to imagine that fair representation of the Soldiers that hold these positions cannot be achieved. Now, this is not to declare that the Soldiers that hold these jobs are not deserving of them or capable of performing them. Nor does this mean that the incumbent intentionally selected their replacement solely because of race. What it does create however, is a negative perception to the Soldiers that communicate with these PDNCOs for many years. Regardless, if the PDNCO performs their duties militarily and professionally at all times a certain perception will still exist and I am confident, that in this day and age, we all know that perception IS reality.

The ethical dilemma is created when the tour of duty is over for the current PDNCO and he or she must choose the Soldier that will replace them. There are other parties involved in the selection process but the PDNCO is the key element and controller within that process. The PDNCO selects, creates and submits packets on three qualified and reassignment eligible

Soldiers that he or she feels should replace them. He or she submits to and expresses to his or her Team Lead (which can be a Civilian GS-9 or a MSG) which of the three they feel would be the best. The packets are then sent through the different approval levels which are the Branch SGM, Branch Chief, Division SGM, Division Chief, Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate (EPMD) SGM and then on to the Commander of EPMD (Brigadier General). If the PDNCO submits three packets and each candidate is a black female, then regardless of which of the three is selected, a black female will be the new PDNCO. More often than not, there are no questions or concerns raised by anyone (at least not openly) as to why the PDNCO submitted only black female candidates. There were issues raised that dealt with the qualifications or professional credentials of the candidate but never with the ethnicity.

There is a very simple process which can be initiated that will eliminate the ethical dilemma that is created each time a PDNCO selects their replacement. The process should be conducted similar to the selection process of Equal Opportunity Advisors. The Adjutant General Branch (AG), of HRC, directs the particular branch to provide qualified candidates and they stipulate the demographical requirement. If they ask for a caucasian male, then the branches must submit to them qualified caucasian males only. The Branches should rotate the demographics of the Soldiers that perform PDNCO duties. In doing so, it will eliminate or at least minimize the negative perception of the Soldiers that they serve. The Soldiers will then come to realize and understand that the assignments and special duties that they are selected for by one PDNCO are the same that they will receive from another PDNCO. Having been a former Team Lead and PDNCO, I thoroughly and completely understand that, Department of the Army assignments, are given based on reasons such as qualifications, authorizations, compassionates, clearances, stabilizations, exceptional family members, married army couples program, timing,

priorities, erroneous data, and fence releases to name only a few of many, many more, but the thousands of Soldiers, young and old, Privates to Master Sergeants, do not understand.