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Army Reserve Promotion Without Training

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Army Reserve Promotion Without Training

The Army Reserve promotion system is significantly different than the Army Active component promotion system. Soldiers wishing to be promoted to rank of Sergeant in the United States Army Reserve (USAR) are not required to stand before a promotion board, they are not required to attend the Army's Warrior Leaders Course, and they do not have to prove their ability to lead. This I believe is an ethical problem that the Army and the Army Reserve leadership need to look into. We are a nation at war, and we deserve to have the very best leading the very best. We cannot promote Soldiers to sergeant the same way we did during the cold war. We need a new promotion system that works to identify, train and promote the very best.

Promoting Soldiers Without Training

The Army faces an ethical issue with promoting Soldiers to the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) ranks without the training necessary to do be ready for that kind of commitment, and responsibility. We as senior NCOs have the responsibility of ensuring that Soldiers are ready for the responsibility inherent in that position. In particular Soldiers being promoted to the NCO ranks in the Army Reserve are being promoted and leading Soldier into combat with little or no training in leadership. I believe that this is an ethics issue that needs to be addressed, to ensure that our sons and daughters going to war have the very best leader they can have, one that has the training, and motivation necessary to lead them through, and bring them home.

In this time of war preparing Soldiers to lead others into combat is the most important lesson that should be taught. Leadership has been and will always be the premier part of war. We as Soldiers do not want leaders who are in it for the money or prestige; we want leaders that lead

because they have leadership ability. Time in service is another aspect of the promotion system to be looked into.

Time in Service

As a first sergeant of an ammunition company during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) III. I was witness to the promotion system for normal reserve Soldiers, or Troop Program Unit (TPU) Soldiers. TPU Soldiers do not stand before a promotion board as active component Soldiers do, they prepare a promotion packet, which includes, a recommendation from the company commander, NonCommissioned Officer Evaluation Report (NCOERs), copies of awards, height and weight verification and a copy of the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) scorecard. In some cases of the packets I reviewed, I saw several packets of Soldiers who put in a promotion packet that had less than two years time in service. This means that for a typical TPU Soldiers in two years of reserve service they have spend a total of 70 days in uniform. I don't feel that this is enough time in the Army to not only know how to lead, but these Soldiers haven't even learned how to follow yet. Although it is possible for a Soldier to have leadership ability with less time in service, the Army owes it to Soldiers to have the best of the best; therefore more time is needed to evaluate their ability. In most cases I believe that Soldiers wish for promotion in order to receive an increase in pay that goes with the promotion. All Soldiers regardless of component need leaders who can lead. We need a system to certify and promote the best.

Promote the Best

The Army regulation that covers the Army Reserve promotion system is Army Regulation 140-158, it states that with a waiver Soldiers may request promotion by completing Department of the Army (DA) form 3355-1-R (Department of, 1997). The form as well as a promotion packet must be completed and submitted through their immediate commander. The

first line supervisor's only requirement is to counsel the Soldier if they do not feel that they are ready. Simply putting in a promotion packet should not be the only prerequisite for promotion. Soldiers need to have demonstrated the ability to lead, and commanders need to stand fast on that issue. We as senior NCO must advise our commanders on this very important issue. I believe that Soldiers must complete a prerequisite course to help give them the tools necessary to lead our Soldiers into combat. Once as a 1SG, I was told by a senior Department of the Army (DA) civilian, who was evaluating our preparation for deployment, that my company did not have the required number of senior grade Soldiers. I checked my records and found that we were in fact two Soldiers above the required senior positions in the unit. I informed this civilian of this and she informed us that I was short ten Sergeants and two Staff Sergeants. I informed her that Sergeants and Staff Sergeants are not senior positions, and therefore we meet all requirements. In short I was informed that I needed to promote more Soldiers to the NCO ranks. I disputed this as I and the platoon sergeants had not had enough time to evaluate the Soldiers to determine who should become a NCO. Soldiers deploying need to have the very best, a cookie cutter approach to Sergeant is not how we safe guard our Soldiers. Promoting the very best is one of the ways to avoid a hollow Army of the past.

Hollow Army

I believe that we as leaders have a moral responsibility to ensure that Soldiers receive the very best leadership that is available. When the Army got away from the train select promote philosophy, they made a mistake that we need to change. The term hollow Army came from the 1970s when Soldiers didn't have the leadership they needed, therefore the Army became an undisciplined, untrained Army, which had problems with drugs, racism, and ineptness. After the Vietnam War, the United States Army was trying to figure out how to maintain the numbers of

Soldiers necessary to hold off communism but in an all volunteer Army. The Army worked through these trying times into the 1980s and 1990s when the NonCommissioned Officer Education system (NCOES) was first enacted. This allowed for systematic training and education of Soldiers to be leaders. The Army of these times did have an abundance of Soldiers, and more than enough money to ensure that they were retaining and training the best of the best. We cannot allow the Army to fall back into the hollow Army of that era. I feel that promoting Soldiers to Sergeant before they are ready is similar to the mistakes made during that time in our history.

Select Promote Train

The current promotion system in the Army is Select Promote Train. Select Soldiers for promotion, and then promote them, followed by training them. This I believe is a contributing problem to the untrained leaders in the USAR. Due to this Soldiers never have to pass a certification or test to certify that they have the ability to lead. We have training institutions to train Soldiers in leadership, such as the Army's Warrior Leaders Course. This course currently teaches warrior training, and leadership. I believe that it should be leader instead of warrior focused, and should be concerned with teaching leading and mentoring Soldiers. This is the only opportunity the Army has to collectively train its future leaders. I believe that the Army should change the promotion system to Train, Select Promote. Once Soldiers pin on the rank of Sergeant, they are viewed as leaders. Although the best training of leaders comes from actually leading Soldiers, training from the NonCommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) schools is the next best thing. This training is the only formal training that a Soldier will receive in leadership. By first training them prior to promotion they can be given tools necessary to assist them in leading Soldiers. Training them after promotion does not set them or our Soldiers up for

success. Army leaders need to change the promotion system so that Soldiers receive leadership training prior to promotion to sergeant, and leading Soldiers.

Conclusion

Soldiers wishing to be promoted today must have some qualifications to certify that they are ready for the responsibilities and leadership inherent in their role as a NCO. I believe that if we don't have fix the situation, at one point we will soon have senior leaders that grew up in the current promotion system, that don't know how to identify the potential leaders of the future. They have grown up in an Army that promotes Soldiers with two or less years in service and then doesn't train them until they wish to be promoted to the next grade. In my opinion the Army Reserve promotion system of today is an ethical issue that effects the Soldiers that these NCO's lead, they need to be trained, and complete some sort of qualification in order to be the leaders that we need into the future.

References

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