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## STUDY PROJECT

WHAT IS A SERGEANT MAJOR?

BY

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## **USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER**

### **WHAT IS A SERGEANT MAJOR?**

#### **A GROUP STUDY PROJECT**

by

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# ABSTRACT

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The experience of the authors combined with informal discussions with their contemporaries during the last four years is the genesis for this study. They became convinced that sergeants major in general and the program in particular was somewhat a mystery to many senior officers and that parts of the program needed examination. Data was gathered using a literature search and by personal interviews with scores of senior officers and noncommissioned officers. While the total program is determined to be extremely useful in contributing to the overall mission of the Army, there are perceptions in the field in both the officer and noncommissioned officer corps that are detracting from its value. Further, certain policy guidelines, specifically as they relate to the Command Sergeant Major Program, are dysfunctional and need to be changed. The name Command Sergeant Major should be changed to Sergeant Major of the battalion, brigade, etc.; members selected for sergeant major should be able to be assigned laterally into a designated equivalent staff job; those senior NCOs selected for promotion to E9 will be designated Staff Sergeant Major and only eligible for designated staff level jobs requiring their MOS specific technical expertise; increased preparation of CSM and battalion commander designates will assist team building; brigade level sergeants major will be selected on a system wide competitive basis; and the role, duties, and responsibilities of sergeants major at battalion level will be specified to a minimum required standard.

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## PREFACE

This study project was the culmination of a long thought process by the two authors, coalescing into the firm study process under the watchful eye of COL Phil Saulnier. Without the aid of our many contributing classmates who were constantly answering questions or discussing contentious points, we could not have proceeded. Special thanks are due LTC Bert Maggart, CSM Donald Devine, CSM Eddie Velez, SGM Ron LeFlore and SGM Harmon, SFC Cooley and SFC Bussells of the SGM Branch, MILPERCEN, and the many Officers, CSMs and CSM designees we interviewed in the course of this study. Our attempt to spread the word and make the system better would not have been possible without them.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT . . . . .	ii
PREFACE . . . . .	iii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY . . . . .	1
Background . . . . .	1
Command Sergeants Major Program . . . . .	2
Army Regulations and Field Manuals . . . . .	3
II. CSM/SGM SELECTION AND ASSIGNMENT . . . . .	7
The Selection Process . . . . .	7
The Assignment Process . . . . .	9
III. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES . . . . .	12
General Qualifications and Traits . . . . .	12
Specific Duties and Responsibilities . . . . .	14
Administrative Duties . . . . .	14
Discipline . . . . .	15
Appearance . . . . .	16
Drill and Ceremonies . . . . .	16
Morale and Welfare . . . . .	16
Training . . . . .	17
IV. ISSUES . . . . .	19
What Is A CSM . . . . .	20
Integrating The CSM Into The Battalion . . . . .	21
Selection Issues . . . . .	23
Assignment Issues . . . . .	24
Role Of The CSM . . . . .	25
V. RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	27
What's In A Name . . . . .	27
Integration And Team Building . . . . .	27
Selection Of Brigade Level CSM . . . . .	30
Improve Sergeant Major Assignment Flexibility . . . . .	31
Role Of The Battalion CSM . . . . .	33
CSM-1SG Relationships . . . . .	33
Training Subordinates and the EER Form . . . . .	34
Resourcing the Battalion CSM . . . . .	34
Conclusions . . . . .	36
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	38

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

#### BACKGROUND

The title "sergeant major" has been with the military since the Revolutionary War. The duties and instructions for Sergeants Major (SGM) were first spelled out in Baron Von Steuben's so called "Blue Book." The SGM was placed at the head of all NCOs and responsible to closely watch their conduct and behavior. Von Steuben stated that he should be familiar with the management of discipline, be responsible for rosters and details, and attend parades involving the battalion and assist the adjutant.<sup>1</sup>

The rank insignia for senior noncommissioned officers dates back to the War of 1812, and chevrons were formally adopted by the Army in 1821. In July 1821, regulations called for a worsted braid above the elbow for sergeants major and quartermaster sergeants. By 1849, sergeants major were authorized in the Dragoons, Mounted Riflemen, Artillery, Infantry, and Engineers. The number of sergeants increased significantly during the 30 years between 1872 and 1902 and the sergeant rank became known as the backbone of the Army.<sup>2</sup>

The 1913 Regulations for the Army of the United States stated that the regimental sergeant major would be appointed by the regimental commander and the battalion sergeants major would be appointed by the regimental commander after consultation with the battalion commander. These senior NCOs of the regiment and battalion were to be selected from the noncommissioned officers of the regiment most distinguished for their efficiency, gallantry, and soldierly bearing.<sup>3</sup>

After World War I, the Army reduced the number of enlisted/NOO grades from more than 40 different rank titles down to seven pay grades/ranks. War Department General Order No. 36, 19 June 1920, specified which ranks would be transferred to the seven pay grades. For example, regimental sergeants major were converted to enlisted men of the first grade or master sergeant, and squadron/battalion sergeants major became enlisted men of the third grade or staff sergeant. This seven rank/pay grouping from master sergeant to private first class basically remained in effect for 38 years. The 1948 grade and title realignment reserved the name sergeant for the top three grades only. This change would connote a sergeant as a career soldier.

The next grade restructure occurred in 1958 when Congress authorized the E8 and E9 pay grades. These two new super grade NOOs increased the rank structure to nine grades ranging from E1 to E9. The first sergeant major was promoted in April 1959, and displayed a star in the center of a master sergeants chevron.<sup>4</sup>

#### COMMAND SERGEANTS MAJOR PROGRAM

The Command Sergeants Major Program was approved by the Army Chief of Staff in July 1967. The purpose of the program was to improve the effectiveness and prestige of the sergeants major occupying the top enlisted positions from battalion up through major command level. The program established a single common MOS (0025), a distinctive insignia to set them apart from all other sergeants major (a wreath around the star), and a Command Sergeants Major Office to provide career management.

In 1968, the E9 (sergeant major) pay grade was split into two ranks—Staff Sergeant Major and Command Sergeant Major. The purpose of the split was to distinguish those who served as unit sergeants major (battalion or higher) from those not serving with soldiers in units authorized a color or standard.<sup>5</sup>



## ARMY REGULATIONS AND FIELD MANUALS

Current Army Regulations, Field Manuals, and Special Texts dealing with the CSM position, utilization, responsibilities, and duties are very general in scope. Extracts from these publications are summarized below:

AR 600-20, Chapter 4 (Army Command Policies and Procedures). The CSM is the senior noncommissioned officer of the command at battalion or higher level. He/she executes policies and standards pertaining to performance, training, appearance, and conduct of enlisted personnel. He/she gives advice and initiates recommendations to the commander and staff in matters pertaining to enlisted personnel. The CSM administers the Noncommissioned Officer Development Program (NODP) which operates through the NCO support channel.

The NCO support channel was formalized and became directive in nature in 1977. This channel of communication was designed to supplement the chain of command and used primarily to accomplish routine, but important tasks and responsibilities. These include: NODP, maintaining NCO standards and job performance, training EM in MOS and basic skills, wearing of the uniform, appearance, military courtesy, supervision of unit policies and operations, care of soldiers and their families, care of arms and equipment of EM, and area maintenance. The final sentence states that each commander should require his NOOs to perform these duties.

AR 611-201 (Enlisted Career Management Fields and Military Occupational Specialties) outlines standards for E9 (CSM/SGM) grade authorizations. CSM are authorized in headquarters from Army down to battalion. Staff sergeant majors are authorized in the general and special staff sections from Army down to group/regiment/division artillery; as chief instructors and supervisors, as MAAG unit SGMs (if strength is 125 or more military personnel); on technical or tactical boards; as chief installers; in technical intelligence of

maintenance assistance and instruction teams (MAIT); and as staff action NCOs in positions requiring technical expertise at the sub-MACOM or higher headquarters.

AR 614-200 (Selection of Enlisted Soldiers for Training and Advancement). Chapter 5, Section II is titled the Selection, Assignment, and Utilization of Command Sergeants Major. The establishment of a CSM position is appropriate only if: 1) "the incumbent is to be the principle enlisted assistant to the commander in an organization with an enlisted troop strength equal to a battalion or higher", 2) "commanded by a lieutenant colonel (05) or above." "The TDA equivalent of a battalion is an organization commanded by an 05 or higher and the commander has authority over 300 or more enlisted soldiers." "Enlisted soldiers under the commander's authority will include those authorized by TDA and MTOE of subordinate units in the official chain of command and assigned students, transients, trainees, and patients."<sup>6</sup> Additional sub-paragraphs include the selection process, assignment and utilization, and tour length.

FM 22-600-20 (The Noncommissioned Officers' Guide). Chapter 3 describes the relationship between the NCO support channel and the chain of command. "The NCO support channel begins with the CSM and ends with the squad/section chief and or team leader."<sup>7</sup> This channel is used to advise the commander on individual soldier proficiency and training needed to insure readiness and is used for passing information, issuing orders, and getting routine but important jobs done. The FM also states that a battalion commander normally will consult with his CSM before putting orders into the chain of command but is careful to say that the CSM is not in the chain of command.

FM 101-5 (Staff Organization and Operations). This manual states that the CSM is a member of the commander's personal staff and the senior NCO of the command. The commander has the mission to define the responsibilities and authority of his CSM to his subordinate commanders and staff. It goes on to

list five (5) CSM responsibilities which include: advising and initiating recommendations concerning enlisted personnel; executing performance, training, conduct, and appearance standards/policies established by the commander; maintaining communication with subordinate NCOs and EM through NCO support channel; provide counsel and guidance to NCOs and EM; and performing other duties prescribed by the commander.

RB 22-600-20 (The Duties, Responsibilities, and Authority of NCOs). This reference text is used at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy. Chapter four discusses the specified, implied, and directed duties of officers and NCOs. A key point is that directed and implied duties increase as position in the unit increases.

The references listed in this chapter do not specifically outline the duties and responsibilities of the command sergeant major; therefore, there is sufficient latitude for the commander to use his CSM and NCO support channel as he sees fit to supplement the normal or official chain of command. If the commander desires to use his CSM as a key staff member, then chapter two, AR 600-20 can apply. It states that a commander does subdivide his responsibility and authority to subordinate commanders and staff members. The commander must define the CSM's duties and responsibilities to his staff and subordinate commanders and officers.

## CHAPTER I

### ENDNOTES

1. Fredrick W. Von Steuben, Regulations for the Orders and Discipline of the Troops of the United States. p. 144.
2. William K. Emerson, LTC, Chevrons. p. 102.
3. Regulations for the Army of the United States 1913. p. 61.
4. Emerson, p. 197.
5. Ibid.
6. US Department of the Army, Army Regulation 614-200.
7. US Department of the Army, Field Manual 22-600-20, p. 17.

## CHAPTER II

### CSM/SGM SELECTION AND ASSIGNMENT

Selection and assignment of command sergeants major (CSM) and sergeants major (SGM) would appear to be a simple, straightforward process and in many ways it is just that. AR 614-200, Chapter 5 deals specifically with the selection and assignment of CSM/SGM. This regulation as well as guidance from the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel and the Sergeant Major of the Army form the guiding framework for the Sergeant Majors Branch, Military Personnel Center. It is the Sergeant Majors Branch that administers the approximate 4,400 authorized CSM/SGM on active duty. We will look first at how the senior enlisted ranks are selected.

#### THE SELECTION PROCESS

CSM/SGM are selected by one board that meets, normally on an annual basis, at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. This board also has the charter to select serving CSM/SGM for retention beyond 30 years and to review records for elimination under the Qualitative Management Program.

Before progressing, an important note about the board must be made. The board's official title is "DA Selection/Promotion Board". The subtlety here is that eligible E8s are promoted to E9 SGM and promoted/selected to E9 CSM. This distinction is key to understanding the CSM/SGM system.

The board is entrusted to promote, select, and retain the number of CSM/SGM necessary for the next fiscal year based on known and anticipated vacancies. For promotion to E9 the board can select from all eligible E8s. For selection to CSM, the board must consider all eligible E8s as well as

serving E9s and promotable E8s. For example, it is possible for an E8 to be selected for the CSM program and upon appointment immediately become an E9 CSM. The same is true for the E8 already selected but not yet promoted to E9. For the serving SGM, his rank does not change while he makes a lateral move into the CSM program. Because the intent is to select the best qualified senior NCOs for CSM, the board must first select CSM, then promote soldiers to E9. While this process appears complicated, it does provide for selection of the best qualified soldiers as well as rapid advancement for the outstanding young senior NCOs. For example, of the 317 CSM selected by the FY85 board, one third were E8s. This large number of "early" selections is a double edged sword that will be discussed later.

Though a distinction between the selection to CSM (MOS 00Z) and promotion to E9 (MOS designator retained) has been made, there is more to that story. The selection to CSM is actually selection to the Command Sergeants Major Program. All eligible senior NCOs are required to formally accept or decline consideration for the program. Declination for consideration, according to a recent change to AR 614-200, is valid for only that board and is not final. Acceptance is final in that a selected CSM may only voluntarily decline entry for extreme hardship or compassionate reasons. In other words, selection means a CSM will serve anywhere and anytime in CSM designated positions until retirement. The designated positions for CSM as well as the positions for SGMs are contained in AR 611-201. At last count, there were 1,396 authorized CSM and 2,962 SGM positions. The number will vary greatly, particularly for SGM positions, as system requirements change.

One last note about selection to CSM. Until 1980, CSM were selected from serving SGM and eligible promotable E8s only. As indicated above, all eligible E8s, E8s (P), and E9s are considered. A discussion of why this change was made will follow in Chapter IV.

According to AR 614-200, all personnel either E9 or those selected for promotion to E9 will be managed by the CSM/SGM Office, EPMD, MILPERCEN. This hardworking group of eight NCO personnel managers led by a SGM, manage the assignment of over 4,300 CSM/SGM. Using AR 611-201 as a guide, the Sergeant Majors Branch fills quotas worldwide to TOE and TDA organizations, on short notice and sometimes under intense pressure. How they accomplish this task is worth examining.

### THE ASSIGNMENT PROCESS

Table 1-2 of AR 611-201 specifies the standard of grade authorization for principle NCO and enlisted staff positions. The table essentially provides a CSM for battalion and higher headquarters, and SGM in various joint, general, and staff jobs. The actual number and location of jobs is contained in the PERSACS authorization document.

When a soldier is promoted to SGM E9, he/she retains his original MOS. For example, a 19Z E8 becomes a 19Z E9 SGM. It is considered by the SGM Branch that these individuals are technical experts in the MOS and assigned accordingly. There is no particular hierarchial job structure but previous experience is, of course, considered. A SGM can be assigned to any of his MOS authorized positions worldwide. It is possible to assign a SGM to positions in other MOS's but is normally only done in an overage/shortage situation or when it is in the best interests of the government.

The assignment of CSM is more complex, regulated, and not without its headaches. The overriding consideration, in a philosophical sense, is that "a CSM is a CSM is a CSM". All CSM, upon appointment, receive the MOS 00Z. This switch removes the previous MOS technical orientation and makes them generalists. Thus CSM are eligible for assignment anywhere, anytime, to any type

unit. There are additional regulating requirements concerning CSM assignment. For example, a CSM must only be assigned to a CSM billet and he cannot be assigned surplus. This requirement creates problems to be examined later. In addition, the following policies are applied to general CSM assignment:

- o MOS background qualified, if possible, particularly first assignment.
- o Turn around time for overseas assignment based on background (from 3 to 5 years).
- o Minimum of 90 days notification for involuntary assignment.
- o OCONUS CSM stabilized for tour length.
- o CONUS based CSM stabilized for 30 months after initial assignment to position—minimum 12 month stabilization after local upward move.
- o Not normally involuntarily assigned overseas with more than 26 years service.
- o Normally no CONUS to CONUS moves for serving CSM.
- o Underlap, if necessary, in CONUS.

The above regulatory/policy guidelines are applied to three basic types of CSM requirements: battalion, 06/07 commander positions, and nominative (08 and higher) positions.

The battalion position is obviously the most numerous and frequently managed position. SGM Branch uses a combination of CSM designees and serving CSM both in CONUS and transients to fill the position. As mentioned, a CSM's first battalion will, if possible, be in his previous MOS background. Because of the number of available battalions, overseas requirements, and tour length requirements, most CSM (about 80%) can expect repetitive battalion level assignments.



The 06/07 position, normally a brigade or equivalent level, usually is filled locally with SGM Branch sending the battalion a new CSM, by a returning overseas CSM (rare case) and occasionally by a CONUS to CONUS move to provide upward mobility. These positions account for less than 20% of the SGM positions, are not universally competitive, usually are not filled by SGM branch, and are a prerequisite for selection to a nominative assignment.

The nominative (08 and higher) positions are managed by exception. These CSM serve at the pleasure of the commander and have no turn around time or stabilization. They are only reassigned when selected for another nominative position, when either the CSM or commander requests it, upon DEROS from overseas positions, or upon retirement.

There are prerequisites for nominative assignments:

- o Serving or having served in 06 or higher position.
- o Have recommendation of current commander.
- o Record (EER) shows potential.
- o CONUS based CSM must be able to complete overseas tour before Mandatory Release Date (MRD).
- o In CONUS must be able to complete two year tour before MRD.

It is during the nominative process that a CSM's record as a CSM is examined in greatest detail. Those who are selected then are truly the cream of the crop.

The preceding view of the selection and assignment side of the CSM/SGM business was, by necessity, dry and factual. A key to the success of the program is the personal touch apparent both from Sergeant Majors Branch, MILPERCEN to the soldier and the communication from the soldier to Sergeant Majors Branch.

## CHAPTER III

### DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAITS

Since the sergeant major E9 position was established by the Army, his duties and responsibilities can generally be divided into a number of functional areas. For the purposes of this study, the roles, duties and functions of the battalion CSM will be emphasized. Many of the articles written about the command sergeants major support that his traditional areas of interest or responsibility are: administration, discipline, appearance, drill and ceremonies, training, morale and welfare and area maintenance.

Before elaborating on some of the specific tasks by functional area, it is important to first review some of the general qualifications and traits expected from the key personnel occupying the top enlisted positions within the various echelons of command. The CSM is expected to:

- o Be the symbol of leadership and set the example in all areas (conduct, appearance, discipline, professionalism, dependability, and integrity).
- o Reflect the image of the NCO Corps.
- o Demand high standards for himself and fellow NCOs.
- o Be above reproach in moral principles and personal conduct.
- o Avoid personal or professional conflicts of interest.
- o Present frank and honest views/opinions when giving advice or making recommendations.
- o Be forceful, firm, and impartial when dealing with subordinates.

- o Demonstrate tact and diplomacy as required (especially when dealing with higher headquarters, allies, and members of the civilian community).
- o Demonstrate absolute loyalty to his commander and remain worthy of the commander's complete trust, faith and confidence.
- o Never infringe upon the commander's prerogatives but be prepared to actively support, supervise, and/or interpret the commander's policies or decisions.
- o Assist his commander in the accomplishment of the unit mission.
- o Be a confidant' and friend to the commander.

The CSM is expected to be the principal advisor to the commander on all matters pertaining to and dealing with the enlisted members of the unit and their families. He can be used solely as an advisor, or as a personal staff member or a combination of the two. These general duties and responsibilities pertain to all levels of command. All CSM should provide the commander with an additional channel of communication down, up, and laterally; he must know how to use the NCO support channel and avoid conflicts or competition between it and the formal chain of command. Acting as a sounding board for ideas, policies and procedures, the CSM serves as the enlisted representative in the command group or headquarters. By maintaining frequent contact with his subordinates and participating in all phases of unit activity, the CSM can monitor the pulse of the command. In addition to advising the commander and staff and making recommendations on matters pertaining to the maintenance and efficiency of discipline, training, esprit, troop welfare and morale of the command, the CSM should be assisting the commander with his command responsibilities. Occasionally he may be called upon to perform those additional duties prescribed by the commander. The key factor is that the commander is obliged to inform the staff, subordinate commanders and other officers on how

he sees the role of his CSM. Since the CSM job involves many personal relationships, his effectiveness and success will be dependent upon how well he can function within the officer and NCO chains, both internal and external to his organization.

#### SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Listed below are some of the functional area specific duties and responsibilities assigned to command sergeants major at the battalion level. The following were extracted from the studies/papers and letters listed in the bibliography and the personal experiences of the authors.

##### Administrative Duties

- o Establish First Sergeant Calls for the purpose of discussing all matters of interest to the command.
- o Exercise and use the NCO support channel.
- o Monitor the unit sponsorship program and assist with the reception and integration of replacements.
- o Perform individual counseling. He should counsel all senior NCOs concerning unsatisfactory job performance, those non-selected for promotion to E7 and above, and those placed into the Qualitative Management Program (QMP).
- o Assist with the selection of NCOs for advanced schooling, special training, courses/programs, and NCO of the month.
- o Assist with the selection of enlisted personnel for soldier of the month and military schooling.
- o Serve as president or member of senior NCO councils or boards—promotion, reenlistment, etc.
- o Should be a member of the unit award board/panel.

- o Insure that all EERs are completed, reviewed, and processed in a timely fashion.
- o Assist the commander directly to insure the unit maintains a positive and effective reenlistment and competency enhancement program.
- o Keep himself informed by participating in command and staff, training, and other meetings that impact upon the command.
- o Working with the S-1, recommend the assignment and transfer of all NCOs in the command.
- o Monitor the number of personnel living on and off post and their martial status.
- o Keep the next higher command informed using the NCO support channel.

#### Discipline

- o Remain alert to detect deterioration of discipline and standards of conduct.
- o Insure that breaches of discipline are quickly and judiciously corrected.
- o Coordinate regularly with the unit legal clerk and make recommendations to the commander on non-judicial punishment and administrative action involving NCOs.
- o Monitor the unit military justice program and make recommendations to the commander as required.
- o Monitor the effective and constructive utilization of battalion extra duty personnel.

### Appearance

- o Focus particular attention to the dress, appearance, military bearing, and deportment of all soldiers.
- o Make on the spot corrections as required.
- o Ensure that all enlisted personnel attain and maintain high standards of dress in garrison and are in proper field attire when conducting training or visiting the training area.
- o Ensure that all enlisted personnel are in the proper uniform at all times.

### Drill And Ceremonies

- o Advise the commander on matters pertaining to military ceremonies. Should be the subject matter expert for drill and ceremonies to include color guards and funeral details.
- o Participate in ceremonies as required.
- o Participate in social functions involving posting of unit and national colors.

### Morale And Welfare

- o Remain abreast of the health, welfare, and morale of soldiers and their families.
- o Strive to improve troop living conditions to include bachelor enlisted quarters.
- o Make frequent visits to morale and recreational facilities such as dining facilities, recreation services facilities, and clubs.
- o Should organize social functions for NCOs and their families in order to foster unit morale, teamwork, and a sense of belonging.
- o Should be a member of the unit awards board/panel.

## Training

- o Administer the NCO Development Program (NODDP).
- o Be primary trainer for the first sergeants and operations NCO at battalion level.
- o Supervise training of all NCOs.
- o Counsel noncommissioned officers (E6 and above) on career development/progression.
- o Must be qualified to evaluate the effectiveness of unit operations and training activities.
- o May be responsible for the individual training of soldiers (SQT, CTT, and Soldier Manual Tasks).
- o If properly resourced, can be used to observe field training and tactical operations and make recommendations to the commander.
- o Should be conversant in all phases of tactical operations from squad to battalion level.
- o Assist the commander with the implementation of the Army Physical Fitness and Weight Control Programs.
- o In a tactical/combat environment the CSM can be responsible for:
  - oo Assisting the headquarters commandant with command post displacement, camouflage, light discipline, security, traffic control, and reconnaissance of new locations.
  - oo Assisting the S-1 in strength accountability and reporting.
  - oo Assisting the support platoon leader and first sergeants with resupply of critical items namely, Class III and Class V.

The CSM must fully understand the relationship between training and maintenance. He must stress the importance of a positive and continuous maintenance program on the accomplishment of the unit mission.

In truth, the normal functions, duties and responsibilities assigned to the CSM by regulation, field manuals, or tradition become secondary to the main activities or priorities established by the commander. The CSM must take an active and positive role in supporting the commander's policies and programs. For example: if the commander's priorities are training and maintaining, then the CSM is obliged to give them equal emphasis and avoid at all costs scheduling activities that may conflict with the commander's priorities.



## CHAPTER IV

### ISSUES

Now that we have taken a factual look at the history, selection and assignment process and roles, duties and responsibilities of CSM/SGM, it is time to venture into the subjective waters of system weaknesses. In each phase of the research effort, from literature review to interviews with CSMs and battalion commanders, strong opinions, both pro and con, were derived or expressed about various aspects of the current system. For example, one former battalion commander said, "My CSM was absolutely outstanding—I couldn't have survived without him." Another had a different perspective—"I had two CSMs. The second was weaker than the first. Neither helped me or the battalion. I don't like the program." Divergence of opinion about CSM/SGM was equally noticeable when talking to our senior NCOs. One serving CSM said, "After selection to CSM it all becomes political—whether you get a good battalion or selected for brigade or division CSM depends on who you know." Another said "We've lost sight of what the CSM is supposed to do." Still another said, "The system has some small glitches, but all in all appears to be working."

Struck by the divergent opinions encountered and applying liberal doses of personal experience, we have attempted to identify the significant issues applicable to the CSM/SGM system. In Chapter V some proposals can be found addressing these issues. It should be noted that a study of this nature tends to produce more weakness than strength issues and no attempt has been made to balance the ledger. We used the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" and, in

this case, "don't address it" approach to both the issue identification and solution phases of this study.

#### WHAT IS A CSM

What is/is not a CSM/SGM or, perhaps more importantly, what is the PERCEPTION of what is/is not a CSM/SGM? This first issue is significant and prevalent throughout the system and perhaps the most difficult to grapple with. Differences in preception were apparent at all levels in the officer and noncommissioned officer corps from Major General through Sergeants First Class.

The official definition of a CSM/SGM from Sergeant Majors Branch, MILPERCEN, and one that guides assignment policy is as follows:

- o A command sergeant major is a generalist. A leader of men who can be assigned to any type unit, anyplace, anytime.
- o A staff sergeant major is a senior technical expert in his MOS and should be assigned only to those jobs requiring that expertise.

The perception is that the CSM is the cream of the E9 grade and the SGM is a staff NCO that has not yet made it. While there is little support for the generalist/technical expert breakout as above, the selection process and realities of life in the field support this perception. It appears that the current system creates a large number of "second class" senior NCOs who ostensibly are technical experts but in the eyes of many cannot make the grade. In our view, a fix is needed to more closely align the reality and perceptions of the CSM/SGM's.

Let's look directly at the CSM. It seems abundantly clear from the discussion in the previous chapter on duties and responsibilities that room exists for a wide disparity in definition of what is a CSM. For example, many commanders give their CSM missions forgetting that in spite of the "Command"

in the title, they do not actually command anyone and to do so would be dysfunctional. While it is not our contention that all CSM should or need to be the same, it does seem that some basic standard needs to be established at each level. It is clear that what a CSM is at the battalion level differs from that of a brigade level CSM and so on up the chain. Something needs to be done to clear these muddled waters. Perhaps different job descriptions and a name change is in order.

#### INTEGRATING THE CSM INTO THE BATTALION

One of the significant issues common to both officer and enlisted interviewees concerns integration of the CSM into the organization, particularly at the battalion level. It is recognized that often the battalion commander joins the organization with an already established CSM. To cover both contingencies, we will use the term "team building" to describe the integration process.

There are a significant number of variables that can effect team building. In some cases, the variables are facts of life that probably cannot and should not be changed. Other variables require system changes, as explained later, to assist the team building process.

A key factor in CSM integration is whether the incoming CSM is serving in his initial assignment following appointment. In this situation, he may or may not by policy have an MOS background in the battalion's specialty, is probably joining a battalion commander with some established ideas on the role of the CSM, and the new CSM probably has no firm concept of his own charter. Contrast the above situation with the second term battalion CSM, now with ideas from his own experience, possibly returning to CONUS from a European battalion. The pressures on team building are different but no less significant. Another contrast to make is the battalion commander joining an already

established CSM in his first or subsequent assignment. Again, team building can be adversely affected by the dynamics of the two key players and the concepts they bring with them.

Another influential variable affecting team building is the personal experience brought to the battalion, and subsequently higher levels of command, by both the CSM and commander. On the one hand, the CSM has probably spent the vast majority of his average 22 years service at the battalion level. During this time he has had the opportunity to observe and hopefully learn from a variety of CSM role models, thus developing a perspective of his role. Conversely, his battalion commander, during his 18 years of service, has spent less than half that time in a battalion and only at the field grade level as operations or executive officer did he probably develop a clear concept of the CSM role. Thus the commander brings a certain bias to the team building environment based on limited experience and infrequent contact with the senior NCO of his battalion. It was surprising to the authors how varied was the bias and how negative in many cases. The bias is attributable, in large measure, to the experience factor mentioned above and unfamiliarity of the officer corps with the CSM program.

Another variable that affected team building was preparation for the job, other than personal experience. Investigation of the program of instruction at the Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas indicated that while the curriculum was wide ranging and rigorous, no attempt was made to prepare a CSM designee for his next assignment. For the incoming battalion commanders there is a brief attempt, during the Pre-Command Course instruction at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to expose them to some serving CSMs. However, the concepts will change from speaker to speaker, and while the attempt is worthwhile, each class receives a different perspective. One can see that the lack of a

standard view for the commander and no official view for the CSM does not provide the firm foundation for team building necessary, particularly at the battalion level.

### SELECTION ISSUES

One of the major issues in the CSM/SGM puzzle is the role of the selection board. As explained in an earlier chapter, the board promotes to E9, selects to the CSM program, eliminates under the qualitative management program, and selects CSM/SGM for retention past 30 years. Though there is admittedly no empirical support data, it appears that the sheer numbers involved and complexity of the system make the board's work extremely difficult.

Contributing directly to the board's problems are poorly written Enlisted Evaluation Reports (EER). While this area is outside the scope of this study, it is an area of great concern. Of the many records screened, only about 50% met minimum standards of accuracy and clarity. The last time an NCO's EER is used in a system-wide competitive basis is by the E9 board. While we will recommend a change to this, it remains critical for commanders at all levels and CSM at the battalion level to become more involved with the enlisted efficiency reporting system.

The FY85 board results showed that approximately one third of the CSM appointees came from eligible E8s. One of the driving forces behind the shift away from progression from SGM to CSM in 1980 was economic. For example, an E8 is selected to E9 SGM. When his number comes up he is promoted to E9 and transferred to a job requiring his MOS. Let us suppose he then gets selected by the next years E9 board for CSM. When a position becomes available, he is appointed and moves again. To reduce the number of moves, more E8s are selected which results in fewer moves. While there is a requirement to provide rapid upward mobility for truly outstanding E8s, this number should be

restricted. Further, other ways to solve the moving problem would be more appropriate.

Brigade and higher CSM are not selected or slated by Sergeants Major Branch. As discussed earlier, local selection normally provides brigade level CSM while the nominative process is used for higher level jobs. The nominative process is working and appears to get the job done. The local selection option for brigade level is full of inequities and is the breeding ground for charges of cronyism. There is a need for system wide competitive selection of serving battalion level CSM for brigade or equivalent assignment. This addition would provide continued upward mobility and continued emphasis on team building.

#### ASSIGNMENT ISSUES

In general terms the current system does an adequate job of providing qualified CSM/SGM for the myriad requirements world-wide. There are, however, some policies/issues that appear counter productive.

At the battalion level it should be mandatory for a CSM to be technically qualified in the primary MOS of that battalion. This is particularly true for combat and combat support battalions, but has applicability across the board. The issuance of a 00Z MOS would be more appropriate at a brigade level and higher.

The fact that a CSM cannot be assigned excess and must be assigned to a CSM slot creates significant problems for MILPERCEN assignment personnel as well as creating problems for the battalion. This requirement contributes to instability and makes advanced planning extremely difficult. It would appear that a more flexible policy could easily be devised, particularly as it relates to serving CSM.

The CSM is by definition the cream of the NCO Corps, yet the current assignment policies have the effect of forcing our best to retire before their time. For example: current policy requires that 80% of serving CSM have repetitive assignments at the battalion level (the other 20% serve at brigade level and higher). It is clear that repetitive assignments of this nature eventually creates undue stress on the individual and his family and with no alternative leads to retirement. It is acknowledged that the severity of the aforementioned problem varies from person to person and type of assignment to type of assignment.

Another facet of the assignment dilemma is that a brigade or higher level CSM must, in his follow-on assignment, move to a higher position, take another at the same level, go back to battalion, or retire. The numbers would suggest that most do not move up. Very few historically move to another job at the same level as do few return to a battalion. Many choose to retire. The reasons behind this choice are many and varied. It appears that professional development, expanded horizons and expectations, and prestige all enter into the CSM's decision. The fact is that the Army loses a significant number of its best NCOs at the height of their contributory capability because of assignment policies that could be made more flexible.

#### ROLE OF THE CSM

As was explained in Chapter III, the role of the CSM has evolved into a variety of functions, duties, and responsibilities dependent upon, in most cases, the personalities of the two main members of the organization's leadership team. While current literature contains guides for use and role playing by the CSM, these guides are stated in the broadest terms to allow for the commander's wishes. It is clear that in the minds of many commanders and CSM, as stated earlier, neither the commander nor the CSM at first understand what

a CSM is or can be well enough to team build effectively. Therefore, much valuable time is lost in the developmental stages which detracts from the overall success of the organization. If both the commander and CSM knew at the outset the parameters of the CSM's functions, as a minimum starting point, team building would be greatly enhanced.

Another role issue is the considerable difference in functions of a CSM at the battalion level than at the higher levels. It is necessary for this distinction to be enunciated so that relationships in the NCO support chain can be more fully understood. Simply put, the battalion level CSM deals with soldiers while the senior level CSM deals with other CSMs and senior NCOs. The perspective, one can see, is considerably different. A prime example of the CSM function at battalion level is, as the senior NCO, he is the senior trainer. He should have overall responsibility for individual training in the battalion. This function dictates that his MOS background be aligned with the bulk of the battalion. At the brigade and higher level, he no longer has this function and reverts predominately to an advisor/administrator role.

A very significant role issue, and one that neither current literature nor our interviewees could illuminate is the CSM's role in combat. As described already, there is no shortage of "dos and don'ts" for a garrison environment; however, little is said about the combat environment. For example: what does the CSM do during an ARTEP at Hofenfels or maneuver at the National Training Center? His function must be addressed and, as with the garrison role, agreed to and RESOURCED. Further, the combat role should not necessarily be only an extension of the garrison function. Without a well defined role in combat, the CSM cannot reach his enormous potential.

In the above compilation of issues, we have sought to highlight some weaknesses in current policy and thought in the CSM/SGM system. In the following chapter recommended changes will be offered.



## CHAPTER V

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### WHAT'S IN A NAME

As discussed throughout the study, the Sergeant Major Program is chock full of perceptions, guidelines, "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts" but these are somewhat vague. One thing that is clear though, is that CSMs are different and they do different things at the various levels of the Army. Since we will recommend standardizing to a degree the performance objectives of CSM, we should make the sergeants major name match the job. For example:

- o Staff Sergeant Major for designated staff jobs.
- o Sergeant Major of the Battalion (or equivalent) or Battalion Sergeant Major.
- o Sergeant Major of the Brigade (same comments as above).
- o Sergeant Major of the Division (etc.).
- o Sergeant Major of the Corps, TRADOC, or FORSCOM, etc.
- o Sergeant Major of the Army, which, of course, we already have.

The above would more clearly align the title to the roles, duties, and responsibilities we ascribe to sergeants major at all levels, recognize the differences in levels, and clear up some perception problems as to the meaning of the "Command" in command sergeant major.

#### INTEGRATION AND TEAM BUILDING

In order to correct and expedite the integration of the CSM at battalion level, the Army should take steps to: 1) improve the officer education programs

in the school house, 2) capitalize on the experience and exposure gained while serving in battalion level assignments, 3) avoid stereotyping the CSM role, and 4) initiate a pre-command course, incorporating in the POI a minimum essential list of CSM duties and responsibilities. The adoption of these recommendations will help "clear the air" of bias and misconceptions concerning the role of the battalion CSM and expedite the team building process.

Step one calls for the education of officers early in their careers on the CSM Program and regulations governing such areas as: the enlisted aspects of command; the selection, assignment, and utilization of the CSM; and the relationship between the chain of command and the NCO support channel. This step could be accomplished very easily in the school house.

Second, incumbent battalion commanders must take the time to formally educate their subordinates on the duties, functions, and responsibilities of the CSM. This could be a topic for discussion at an Officer Professional Development class. The company grade officers should be encouraged to seek the CSM's advice and counsel and all junior officers should look at him as their battalion CSM. Commanders must insure that the XO and S-3 work in close coordination and cooperation with the CSM and pay particular attention to his duties and responsibilities as outlined by the commander, to his methods, and his accomplishments. Since the commander has the mission to train the XO and S-3 for a future O5 command assignment, the effective use of the CSM should be one of his teaching points. A logical starting point may be the job description block on the CSM's EER.

Third, commanders must avoid getting locked in on the traditional duties and responsibilities assigned to the CSM. The Army is experiencing many changes in organization/structure, equipment and weapons modernization, manning, doctrine, training and service support. Changes in how we fight and do business will have a concomitant effect on the roles and functions of the

officer and NCO leadership. The CSM is the most experienced enlisted member of the battalion and to limit his duties and responsibilities to routine matters associated with garrison operations does not take full advantage of his background, experience, rank, or position. The commander must be prepared to accomplish a variety of missions. By maximizing his NCO talents and the NCO support channel he can move out on a broader front toward mission accomplishment.

Fourth, the Army should develop a pre-command course for newly selected CSM. This course could be patterned after the battalion and brigade pre-command course. Incorporated into the course program of instruction should be an approved job description that would list the minimum essential duties required of every battalion level CSM. The list could be limited to those duties and responsibilities specified in the current regulation and field manuals, e.g., maintaining communication through the NCO support channel, administering the NCO Development Program, advising and making recommendations to the commander on enlisted matters, providing counsel and guidance to enlisted members, training enlisted members in MOS and basic skills, appearance, military courtesy, drill and ceremonies, and caring for soldiers and their families. Note: These duties and responsibilities will differ from those CSM billets above the battalion level. The minimum essential list mentioned above could help alleviate the misconceptions, expedite the team building process, and serve as a starting point upon which to develop a more unit specific and comprehensive list of mutually agreed upon duties and responsibilities for the CSM in both a garrison and field environment.

Last, the Army needs to improve and expedite the commander/CSM team building process. The team building process operates on the concept of knowing the other team members duties and responsibilities. Thus the requirement for

a basic job description for the CSM that both the commander and CSM are cognizant of, subscribe to, and can use as a starting point. This basic concept breaks down at the battalion commander/CSM level. There are a number of reasons for this breakdown and some of the causative factors have been mentioned above. The length of time the newly selected battalion commander has been away from troops can also contribute to the team building dilemma. The same holds true for the newly selected CSM. The general misunderstanding in the field about the CSM's duties in a garrison environment and the total lack of knowledge about his role in a tactical or combat environment impedes the team building concept. It becomes abundantly clear that to facilitate the team building process, there is an urgent need for education at all levels. The more young officers learn about the CSM and his duties and responsibilities at an early stage of their professional development, and the more the NCO learns of the CSM position, the less time will be wasted during the critical stage of team building. Only through a rigorous education program can we gain the knowledge necessary to make the most of the CSM position.

#### SELECTION OF BRIGADE LEVEL CSM

As was discussed earlier in the study, selection for brigade or equivalent level is normally accomplished at the local level with MILPERCEN backfilling the created battalion vacancy. This, as mentioned in chapter four, creates several anomalies: a battalion CSM at a large post (Fort Hood) has a better chance to be selected than his counterpart in a smaller locale (Fort Irwin, where there are battalions but no brigades); selection at the larger installation can depend on who you know and lead to politics and cronyism; at the small post the battalion CSM has no chance at all; and the best qualified CSM are not necessarily selected, because the selection is not competitive system wide.

To solve the above it is recommended that brigade and equivalent level CSM be selected by competition using the selection board process.

It could work this way. Eligible CSM, say those with 18 months or more battalion level time, would be considered by a selection board. The board would select the number of brigade level CSM needed in the next fiscal year plus an appropriate number of alternates. Further, the board would place all selectees on an order of merit list (OML). The OML would be used for assignment purposes. For example: CSM Smith is #4 and in Europe and CSM Jones is #5 and at Fort Hood. In this case CSM Smith can be assigned against a vacancy in Europe and CSM Jones against one at Fort Hood in spite of the fact that #1, #2 and #3 have not yet been put in slots. This system would allow local utilization when possible and reduce turbulence.

If adopted, this proposal would allow the best to be selected, put the EER back in the process, and reduce the potential for cronyism.

#### IMPROVE SERGEANT MAJOR ASSIGNMENT FLEXIBILITY

Two major factors impact on this recommendation. The first is the regulatory requirement that all members of the CSM program be continuously assigned to CSM required positions. The second factor is that the selection procedure ensures that the best senior noncommissioned officers are selected to the CSM program. This means in numerical terms that of the approximately 4,400 E9 authorized positions, the best can only be assigned to the 1,346 authorized CSM positions and the other 2,600 plus positions are filled by the rest of the E9s at every level of assignment. It further means that the CSM is faced with tough, repetitive battalion level assignments (something officers are not asked to do because 1) it restricts the number given the opportunity and 2) battalion level assignments tend to be demanding, stressful environments), a

one in five chance to move up to a brigade level assignment, or the opportunity to retire. A similar dilemma faces the brigade and division or higher level CSM who are likely, for a variety of reasons, to select retirement if faced with returning to a battalion level assignment. As one serving upper level CSM put it, "As a senior NCO progresses through the system his goals, objectives, and perspectives change and he gets older. It is very hard for a former division CSM to approach a battalion job with the same enthusiasm as the newly appointed one." Other parts of the equation are the intangibles of prestige of the job and, of course, dates of rank. As stated in chapter four, the bottom line is that we are forcing our best out too soon.

To alleviate the above, the following proposal is made: Change the assignment policy to permit lateral assignments of CSM to staff positions. To ensure that appropriate relative merit be accorded to the staff job, certain prerequisites would be applied. For example, a division G3 SGM slot would require a former battalion CSM. It is obvious that this job designation would not work for all staff positions, particularly in the technical MOS, but would be applicable to a large number of selected staff SGM slots.

There are several points to be made about the execution of the above policy. Former unit CSM, laterally assigned, would remain eligible for selection to brigade level CSM positions (see recommendations for selection of brigade level CSM). The laterally transferred CSM retains his status as a member of the CSM program and is eligible for assignment to those positions.

In addition to the flexibility gained, the Army also experiences increased utilization of a large number of CSM's expertise and experience who otherwise would have retired. Ultimately a significant number of key staff positions will be filled by the best of our senior NCOs.

## ROLE OF THE BATTALION CSM

### CSM—1SG Relationships

An anomaly exists in what we have historically required the CSM to accomplish with reference to his relationship with and training of unit first sergeants. By virtue of his rank, position, and relationships with the commander and unit first sergeants, the battalion CSM is a very powerful and influential team member. The commander decides how much latitude the CSM enjoys in assisting him with mission accomplishment. As the head of the NCO support channel, the CSM deals directly with the unit first sergeants and impacts upon the entire enlisted chain of command.

The CSM works and deals with the unit first sergeants almost as much as the unit commander. Tradition places the responsibility for training the first sergeant in the hands of the CSM. However, the current system specifically excludes the CSM from both the formal and informal rating chains. Some battalion commanders have opted to circumvent or modify this unusual relationship by: 1) allowing the CSM to provide input into the commander's portion of the first sergeants' EER, 2) allowing the CSM to review and make recommendations to the commander's endorsement, and 3) in some cases, allowing the CSM to draft or write the commander's portion. Since the CSM is in the second best position to evaluate, on an almost daily basis, the performance of the first sergeants, consideration should be given to modifying the current EER form by adding an intermediate rater block. The ultimate decision to use this block should rest with the battalion commander and be based upon how he plans to use his CSM. A similar option could be afforded the company commander by allowing the first sergeant to intermediate rate the platoon sergeants. If we expect the CSM to accept responsibility for training the first sergeants, we should give him some tangible measure of authority to accomplish this mission.

Note: This intermediate rater option only applies at the battalion level because of the CSM's daily contact with unit first sergeants and direct training responsibility.

#### Training Subordinates and The EER Form

Another fix needed in the EER form deals with the training of subordinates. In accordance with AR 600-20, all noncommissioned officers have a training responsibility. For example, the CSM must carry out training policies and standards of performance, the first sergeants principle duty is individual training of soldiers, and every NCO has the mission to train soldiers in their individual and MOS related skills. With all these training missions assigned to NCOs, why then is the training of subordinates missing from the EER form? Sub block 8 of Part IIIA lists "develop subordinates". We recommend that Part IIIA (Professional Competence) include a subevaluation block entitled "Training Subordinates". The current Individual Training Evaluation Program (ITEP) results could be used as tools to measure the training of enlisted personnel. Unit commanders are directed to consider test results (SQT and CIT) in preparing EERs or making recommendations for promotion and schooling of first and second line supervisors. The same methodology and soldier test results could be used as a measurement of the first sergeants' ability to train his soldiers. If training is our primary mission during peacetime, we need to make the training of subordinates a significant component of the NCO evaluation system. Making it a substantive and visible part of the EER form could be a means to this end.

#### Resourcing the Battalion CSM

Resourcing the battalion CSM is tied directly to his duties and responsibilities in the garrison, field, and combat environments. We have indicated in previous chapters that the CSM's garrison role revolves around a myriad of



functional areas internal and external to the battalion. The interactive nature of his duties clearly supports the need for mobility if he is to accomplish the missions assigned by the commander.

In the field training environment, the requirement for transportation is absolutely critical if he is to accomplish his training, troubleshooting, and advisory missions. His visibility during field training exercises, away from the battalion commander, has both a positive effect on soldiers, and provides the commander with another set of eyes to observe and/or evaluate the required training objectives and standards.

Heretofore, the combat missions of the CSM have not been defined. It is our view that the role should be twofold. His primary function, which closely parallels those of the unit first sergeants, locates him in the combat trains where he can monitor, influence, and/or expedite the battalion logistical systems. With adequate transportation, he would be able to move to the field trains and brigade rear area or as far forward as necessary to influence resupply, recovery, or evacuation. His secondary function could be to assume responsibility for the headquarters commandant functions; focusing his attention on the displacement, set up, organization, and security of the battalion tactical operations center (TOC).

To accomplish these many and varied missions for the commander, it is clear the the CSM must have, as a minimum, a wheeled vehicle, driver, and radio with a secure net capability. If the CSM is to function effectively as an enlisted extension of the commander, he must be visible and maintain contact with soldiers during all phases of unit activity in garrison, during training, and in tactical environments.

## Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to inform the Army community of the duties and responsibilities of the battalion command sergeant major and explain why his role and utilization have been so misunderstood and controversial since the rank was created 17 years ago.

We saw that the rank of sergeant major is not new to the United States Army. This noncommissioned officer has traditionally and historically been placed in a key role in troop units. We have seen that the sergeant major is the logical extension of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps, who are the executors of policy and the backbone of the Army. It is in this context that the role of the battalion level sergeant major can best be described. His priorities, both in peace and war, and in garrison and in the field, must mirror those of the commander. The battalion sergeant major has certain functional duties and responsibilities that he can be expected to perform as well as accomplishing those tasks directed by the commander. Those duties and responsibilities combined with his experience and expertise are what the sergeant major brings to the battalion commander as they build the battalion leadership team.

As discussed in the study, there are significant misunderstandings, misperceptions, and misgivings in both the officer and noncommissioned officer corps about the overall sergeant major program. It is hoped that the information provided about the program and the recommended changes to the program will serve to make both corps more comfortable. It is recognized that in some cases the changes are significant and would require a phased introduction. It is also understood that some modifications in the interest of practicality would be necessary. The bottom line is that the changes, however adjusted, are needed to improve the program.

In summary, the sergeants major of our Army are a necessary vital cog in an organization whose most important commodity is people. Lets make sure that they and the system can reach the enormous potential promised by the cream of our enlisted soldiers.

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