

**THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER EVALUATION
REPORTING SYSTEM**

by

SGM STEVEN SLEE

CWO KENNETH HODGE

L10

ETHICS THOUGHT PAPER L564

16 NOVEMBER 2005

The Army should change the emphasis placed on the noncommissioned officer evaluation reporting system or adjust the procedures used in implementing the system.

All noncommissioned officers of the United States Army have their performance and potential documented by using the Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Reporting System (NCOERS). Through the issuance of Army regulations, the Secretary of the Army contends that the system strengthens the noncommissioned officer corps and ensures selection of the best-qualified noncommissioned officers. The regulation states that the NCOERS also contributes to the Army wide professional and performance development of the noncommissioned officer.

This evaluation system, the way it has evolved today, does little to establish an equitable record of one's true abilities and potential. Because of the emphasis placed on the evaluation by a centralized body or selection board, NCOs feel forced to forfeit their Army values and become cornered in an ethical dilemma.

The first flaw that has come from the reporting system is the way seniors view the report and the emphasis it carries during promotion selection boards. The Army regulation governing the NCOERS states, "A single report should not, by itself, determine an NCO's career." The intent implied is clear but a review of nearly any promotion boards after action report will show that the evaluation is the document that will make or break your career. Also prevalent is the scrutiny the board puts on the administrative correctness of the report. Members are more likely to assess a soldier based on a report's "administrative correctness", rather than quantifiable content. The thoughts and actions of the promotion boards show an extremely high degree of emphasis placed on evaluation reports. This results in favor going to the soldier with the best report writer rather than the best soldier.

Another falsity that exists in the NCOERS is the notion that this reporting system advances the army values and develops an NCO in his responsibilities. Raters and senior raters know the importance placed on an NCOs evaluation report and sometimes stray from proper procedures thinking they are doing “the right thing” for the Soldier. The following situations are widespread and occur regularly. First situation; A leader lacking superior writing abilities may fear hurting a Soldier with an average or poorly written report. This leads to the rated Soldier writing his own report. Another situation that is happening all too often is leaders choosing to withhold a true appraisal, knowing a mere suggestion that a Soldier needs to improve at something may stifle the Soldier’s career. Who among us could not stand to improve at something? Why must we be afraid to state this on an evaluation?

The way in which we have come to view evaluation reports today demands immediate perfection from the rated NCO. This sets a poor example and leaves no room for developing an NCO. This also does nothing in advancing the Army’s values. Nor does it provide any professional development to those NCOs who are failing to write reports on the Soldiers they supervise.

The last area of concern regarding the NCOERS is the course or theme of our training when we are teaching others to do an evaluation report. Training is a good thing, and sorely needed, but improperly focused. The emphasis placed on evaluations cause us to embellish the rated Soldier. Because of this, we train NCOs to write evaluations geared toward getting a Soldier promoted, rather than presenting an accurate assessment of that Soldier. Our attempt to make the report “perfect” is wrong. The practice of NCOs writing their own report is wrong.

We should train our leaders the basics. We need to toss out the “how to” books that provide us with the glamorous bullets. We should teach leaders to recognize and write real quantifiable bullets with substance pertaining to the rated Soldier.

The way we view a soldier’s evaluation report today is contrary to the Army’s intent and imposes an ethical dilemma. The emphasis placed on the evaluation report has forced leaders to sacrifice personal courage and duty in an attempt to fulfill what they see as loyalty to the Soldier. Every time a Soldier writes his own report, or feels compelled to write his report, he sacrifices integrity. The Army needs to study this subject and steer the NCOERS back to a forum for Soldier development.