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Training has warrants developing staff officer skills

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Training and education options for warrant officers are looking more like those for officers as Army transformation calls for warrants to take on more of the responsibilities of officers, according to those involved with a review of warrant education courses.

At one time, most soldiers graduating from Warrant Officer Candidate School were aviators, but now most are in technical military occupational specialties because Army transformation created more slots for their expertise at the levels of division and brigade combat team.

A complete redesign of the curriculums at Warrant Officer Candidate School, Staff Course and Senior Staff Course, which has been in the works, is getting a new push from the Army chief of staff, whose top priorities include the enhancement of leader development.

The final pilot phase of an overhaul of the Staff Course curriculum was set to begin Nov. 26 and will fully incorporate the new curriculum, said Col. Mark Jones, commandant of the Warrant Officer Career Center at Fort Rucker, Ala.

The new approach for the Staff Course emphasizes quick-decision exercises, with a focus on understanding the critical elements of the contemporary operational environment, the management of knowledge and projects, and the development of staff officer skills.

The Senior Staff Course will likely be completely revised in about a year, Jones said, noting that the common theme in those courses will be overarching concepts, such as how the Army runs and where warrants fit into that organization.

Jones is the proponent of a recommendation to lengthen the four-week staff course and nine-day senior staff courses to more closely mirror the deeper months-long training officers get at Intermediate Level Education and War College courses.

The goal is to give warrant officers in advanced education the broader base of knowledge that officers receive at those schools.

However, that initiative may not be accepted because it could potentially take more time away from soldiers already burdened with multiple deployments.

"I'm going to recommend it," Jones said, suggesting that warrant officer education "has been somewhat forgotten about."

"Do I think it's going to be approved? No. Do I think it needs to be longer? Yes," he said.

Lengthening the courses would not necessarily mean putting bodies into the classroom. Much of it could be done using Web-based products, a practice increasingly used by the expeditionary Army.

Another leap in training for warrants is a proposed pilot program in which a handful of warrant officers would in coming months attend ILE at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., a course for midcareer officers.

"We're looking at the feasibility of sending a small number of warrant officers as a pilot to ILE this summer," said Col. Bruce Reider, director of the Center for Army Leadership.

That will likely happen, he said, but the prerequisites and types of warrants who should go have not been determined.

TIME FOR COLLEGE

Warrants are not required to have college degrees but most do, and they know it gives them an edge. A new proposal would help them get their degree.

"I knew that to be competitive and get to CW5 I would need a bachelor's degree, but the Army didn't give me the time to do it," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Charles Wigglesworth, deputy commandant of the Warrant Officer Career Center. He "got all the way to CW4 with an associate's degree. I had to do it all on my own," he recalled.

That would change under a recommendation that would give warrants the same time and resources officers and noncommissioned officers get when working toward a civilian degree or moving forward in their professional military education, Jones said.

As with initiatives being offered to NCOs and officers, warrants will be given more opportunities to work in joint, international, intergovernmental and multinational positions.

"Years ago, the courses that we now have were not in existence," said Jones. "I'm very happy that the Army has taken a vested interest in warrant officer education. If we're going to throw them out in these odd places of the world to do their business I want them to have an understanding of how things work."

(Courtesy WO Net)

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