

OPMS is changing! (part I)

by Capt. Melita McCully

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As you have probably heard by now, during the last two years the Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) has undergone quite a few changes. These changes were approved by the Army Chief of Staff in September of 1984 and are now being implemented. As a result, the system is now in a transitory and perhaps confusing stage. This article is designed to provide you an update on how OPMS operates today. Take heart; the new system really isn't that confusing.

New terminology

What previously was referred to as a *specialty* is now a *career field*, which may be either a *branch* or a *functional area*. *Specialty skill*

identifiers (SSIs) are now *areas of concentration (AOCs)*, and *additional skill identifiers (ASIs)* are now *skills*.

A *branch* is a grouping of officers in a career field which also comprises an arm or service of the Army. The revised OPMS states that an officer will serve in no more than one branch. Figure 1 shows that the Signal Corps Branch is coded 25; thus, all Signal officers will have a branch code 25 designation.

A *functional area* is a grouping of officers in a career field which does not comprise an arm or service of the Army. Officers in a given functional area possess skills appropriate for that area, skills which usually require significant education, training, and experience. An officer may be

Branches: a grouping of officers by arm or service

11	Infantry	36	Military Intelligence
12	Armor	38	Civil Affairs (RC only)
13	Field Artillery	42	Adjutant General Corps
14	Air Defense Artillery	44	Finance Corps
15	Aviation	74	Chemical Corps
21	Corps of Engineers	91	Ordnance Corps
25	Signal Corps	92	Quartermaster Corps
31	Military Police Corps	95	Transportation Corps

Figure 1.

Functional Areas: a grouping of officers by career field other than arm or service

18	Special Operations	50	Force Development
41	Personnel Management	51	Research and Development
45	Comptroller	52	Nuclear Weapons
46	Public Affairs	53	Systems Automation Officer
47	USMA Permanent Professor	54	Operations, Plans, and Training
48	Foreign Area Officer	97	Procurement
49	Operations Research/ Systems Analysis	99	Combat Development

Figure 2.

assigned no more than one functional area. The functional areas are listed in Figure 2.

Within each branch and functional area there will be *areas of concentration (AOCs)*. An AOC is used to identify a particular subset of skills within each branch and functional area. These subsets are coded by a single letter following the branch or functional area coding. Figure 3 lists the AOCs for Signal Corps and Systems Automation Officer (Functional Area 53).

MILPERCEN is currently preparing to redesignate all officers in accordance with the revised OPMS. This redesignation will be completed in late 1986. For example, as Figure 3 shows, an officer who currently possesses Communications-Electronics Engineering SSI 27A will become a 25D.

Tracking options

The revised OPMS integrates Army assignment requirements with officer professional development. The tracking options necessary to accomplish this are shown in Figure 4. Dual tracking is synonymous with the current dual specialty system. Under the present system, an officer receives an initial specialty (INSPEC) and an additional specialty (ADSPEC) designation. In theory, the officer alternates assignments in his/her INSPEC and ADSPEC. This concept of rotating assignments does not change with dual tracking. Under the new system, a dual-tracked officer will have one branch and one functional area. Examples of possible dual-track designations for a Signal Corps officer are 25/41 (Signal Corps/Personnel Management) and 25/53 (Signal Corps/Systems Automation Officer). The April 1986 update to *DA PAM 600-3* contains additional information on branches, functional areas, and dual tracking.

Since the Army needs some officers to spend their entire career in only one branch or functional area, the new OPMS will also allow some officers to single track. Officers who single track will serve repeated assignments in their career field. *DA PAM 600-3* further outlines the criteria for single tracking in the Signal Corps (Chapter 25) and in each of the functional areas. Officers should consider tentative career

Areas of Concentration for Signal Corps Branch

- 25 - Signal Corps (SC 25, 27, 72)
- 25A - Signal, General (new)
- 25B - Communications-Electronics Automation (25B)
- 25C - Communications-Electronics Operations (25A)
- 25D - Communications-Electronics Engineering (27A)
- 25E - Information Systems & Networking (27B)
- 25F - Communications-Electronics Materiel Integration (72A)

Figure 3a.

Areas of Concentration for Systems Automation Officer Functional Area

- 53 - Systems Automation Officer
- 53A - Software Engineering (53A)
- 53B - Hardware Engineering (53B)
- 53C - Automation Management (new)

Figure 3b.

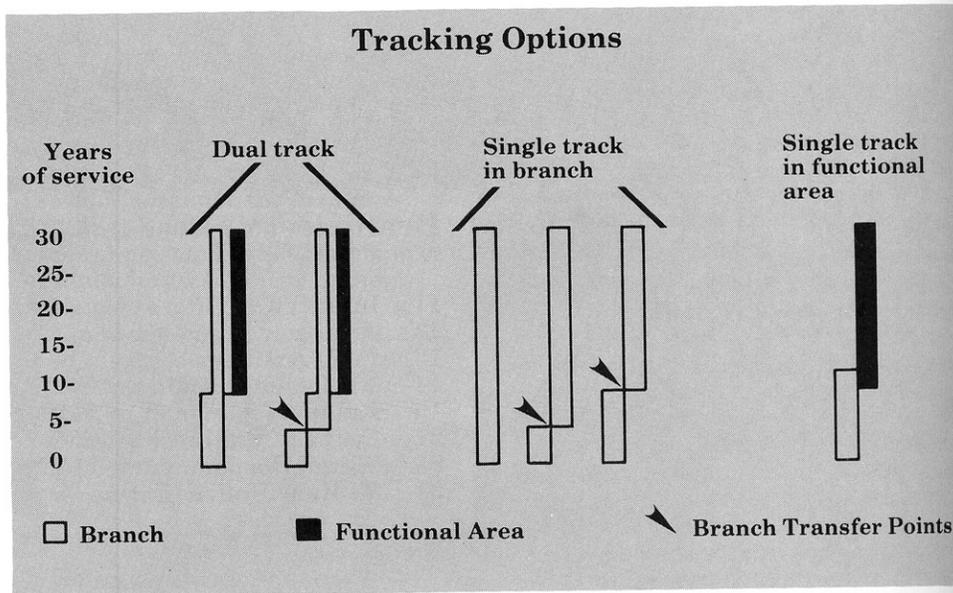


Figure 4.

Immaterial Position Codes

- 01A Branch Immaterial (any officer)
- 02A Combat Arms Immaterial (IN,AR,FA,AD,AV,EN)
- 03A Logistics Immaterial (QM,OD,TC)
- 04A Personnel Immaterial (AG,FA41)

Figure 5.

orientation alternatives during the advanced course and then discuss them with their commander and MILPERCEN career manager. The actual number of officers who will be permitted to single track will vary, based upon Army requirements for each branch and functional area. Signal Corps officers who volunteer and are accepted for single tracking will be designated 25/25, with the appropriate AOCs included.

Redesignation of dual branch/dual functional area officers

Under the revised OPMS, officers who dual track will receive one branch and one functional area designation. There are approximately 360 Signal Corps officers in Year Groups 66 through 78 who presently hold two branch or two functional area designations. For example, a dual branch officer might be designated 25/92, or in other words be affiliated with the Signal Corps Branch and the Quartermaster Branch. A transition board was scheduled to have completed a review of the individual files of these officers by 31 March 1986. Officers in the grade of lieutenant colonel(P) and above and all officers in Year Group 65 and earlier will be automatically "grandfathered" with their present designations unless they wish to redesignate. Other officers may either "grandfather," single track in one of their current branches or functional areas, retain one of their current branches and add a functional area, or retain one of their functional areas and add a branch. The board will recommend an option for each officer based on an overall review of the officer's file and Army requirements. Officers will be notified in May 1986 of the board's recommendation. An officer may accept the board's recommendation or submit a request for another option. In June 1986, MILPERCEN will begin updating the official files of these officers.

Document coding

Four new "immaterial position" codes have been established and will appear on The Army Authorization Document System (TAADS) this summer. TAADS includes TDAs and

MTOEs. These immaterial position codes identify officer positions which can be filled by officers from one of several branches or functional areas. Figure 5 lists the four immaterial position codes. All Signal Corps officers will be eligible for branch immaterial positions coded 01A. Examples of 01A positions include recruiting command assignments and ROTC instructor duty. Signal Corps officers from Functional Area 41 will also be eligible for personnel immaterial positions coded 04A. Examples of 04A positions include Deputy for Personnel and Community Activities (DPCA) and Division G-1.

The Army is in a transitory phase as it moves ahead with implementation of the revised OPMS. Clearly, the new OPMS will enhance the effectiveness and professionalism of the officer corps. All officers should thoroughly review the April 1986 update of DA PAM 600-3, which will be mailed by MILPERCEN to each officer in the summer of 1986. It contains detailed information on the revised OPMS and professional development considerations for each branch and functional area.

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