

# OPMS is changing (part II)

**Although proponents have been afforded increasing leeway in the management of officers, each officer is still the best architect of his or her own career.**

*by Capt. Jill Kirby*

The career patterns and professional development of officers under the new OPMS will remain in many respects similar to those currently in use. The three Signal specialty codes have been combined and redesignated as six areas of concentration (AOC), but each AOC corresponds roughly to one of the specialty skill identifiers (SSIs) currently used. The application of single and dual-tracked career patterns formally recognizes the realities of the current INSPEC/ADSPEC process; while all field grade officers hold two specialties, many are really only qualified in one. One important part of the transition to the new OPMS was the recoding of personnel documents and the resulting increased emphasis on technical training for Signal officers.

As shown in Figure 3a of Part I of this article, the three specialty codes now in use (SC 25, SC 27, and SC 72) have been combined into one career field and designated Signal Branch 25.

Of the six Signal Branch areas of concentration, AOC 25A is unique in that it is used only to identify positions requiring the generic skills of any Signal officer, such as Signal training company commander or aide-de-camp. All Signal officers are eligible to fill AOC 25A positions, but no officers will hold the AOC 25A designation. The remaining areas of concentration are summarized as follows:

**AOC 25B (C-E Automation).** This AOC is very similar to the current SSI 25B. Officers in AOC 25B positions manage specific automated systems or nodes in data communications networks; they also provide detailed technical direction and advice on the installation, operation, and maintenance of teleprocessing systems. Signal officers eligible for AOC 25 must be captains or higher; possess a B.S. degree in engineering, math, physics, or computer science; and have completed the Teleprocessing Operations Officer Course (TOOC) at Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) or have equivalent graduate level education or

experience. Typical duty positions include Teleprocessing operations officer, OIC AUTODIN, or CESO in diversion artillery, DISCOM and CEWI battalions.

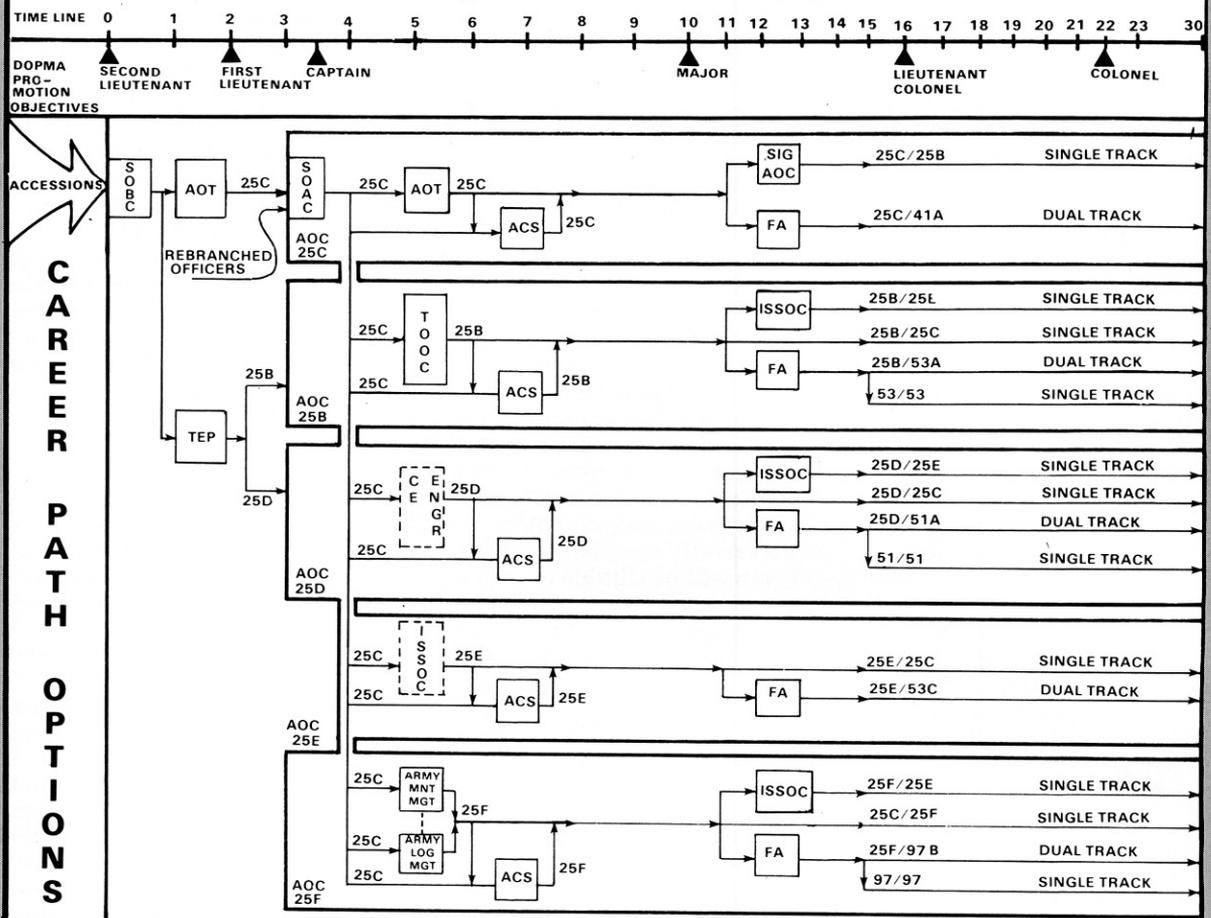
**AOC 25C (C-E Operations).** AOC 25C is what many regard as the "traditional" Signal officer. Officers in C-E Operations command Signal units (except Signal training companies which are coded 25A) and advise commanders and users on the capabilities and limitations of all Signal assets and how best to employ them. All lieutenants are designated 25C, and the majority of Signal officers will hold AOC 25C as one of their two areas of concentration. Typical duty positions include platoon leader; commander of a Signal company, battalion, or brigade; and CESO.

**AOC 25D (C-E Engineering).** Officers in C-E Engineering plan, direct, and supervise the design, development, testing, and installation of communication and automation equipment. Signal officers eligible for AOC 25D must be captains or higher and possess a B.S. degree in electrical engineering or a related discipline. In the future, these officers must also have completed the C-E Engineering Course at AFIT. Typical duty positions include C-E engineer, and test and evaluation officer.

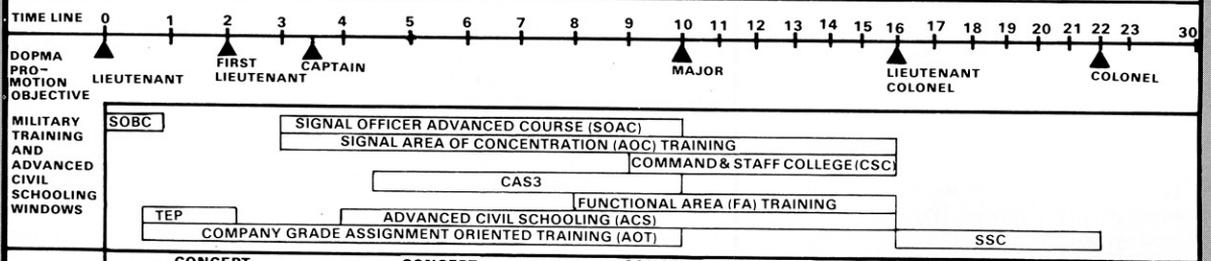
**AOC 25E (Information Systems and Networking).** Officers in AOC 25E are responsible for planning and managing the integration and interconnection of diverse types of automation and communications systems into interoperable information systems. They also must be captains or higher, have three years experience in C-E Operations, and be graduates of the Information Systems Staff Officer Course (ISSOC) at Keesler AFB or have equivalent graduate level education. Positions such as battalion and brigade S-3, ADCEO/ACCEO, and C-E systems engineer will be coded for AOC 25E.

**AOC 25F (C-E Materiel Integration).** Officers in C-E Materiel Integration serve in units or organizations engaged in the supply, maintenance, and life-cycle management of all types of Signal

# Signal Officer Professional Development and Utilization



(NOTE: All area of concentration pairings identified above, e.g., 25F/97B, are only examples and are not exclusive.)



	CONCEPT	CONCEPT	CONCEPT	CONCEPT	CONCEPT
	Begin Branch Development Troop & CE Operations Experience SOBC (100%)	Continue Branch Development Begin Development in 2nd Signal AOC (Most) Company Command (Most) SOAC (100%) CAS3 (100%)	Continue Development in Both Signal AOC (Most) Begin Functional Area Development (Some) Resident CSC (40%) Non-Resident CSC (Remainder)	Continue Development in Both Signal AOC (Most) Continue Development in Functional Area (Some) Battalion Command (Some) SSC (27%) Project Manager (Some)	Continue Utilization in Both Signal AOC (Most) Continue Utilization in Functional Area (Some) Brigade Command (Some) Project Manager (Some)
	<b>LIEUTENANT JOBS</b>	<b>CAPTAIN JOBS</b>	<b>MAJOR JOBS</b>	<b>LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOBS</b>	<b>COLONEL JOBS</b>
	Signal Platoon Leader Signal Detachment Commander Signal Company Operations Officer Signal Company Executive Officer Telephone-Digital Officer Radio Officer Wire Officer Cable Officer	Signal Company Commander Signal Battalion Staff CA/CS/CSS Battalion CEO CE Engineer Officer CE Maintenance Officer Supply Officer Teleprocessing Operations Officer Visual Information Officer Instructor/Combat Developer, Service School Staff ROTC/USMA Staff Reserve Component Duty Recruiting Command Duty	Signal Battalion Operations Officer Assistant Division CE Officer CA/CS/CSS Brigade CEO Signal Brigade Staff Senior CE Engineer Senior CE Logistics Officer Division/Corps Automation Management Officer Visual Information Officer Instructor/Combat Developer, Service School Staff ROTC/USMA Staff Reserve Component Duty Recruiting Command Duty Functional Area Utilization	Signal Battalion Commander Training Battalion Commander Engineer Branch/Division Chief Logistics Branch/Division Chief CORPS/MACOM Staff Army/DOD/Joint Staff Assistant Program Manager Director of Information Management Service School Staff Functional Area Utilization Project Manager	Signal Brigade Commander Training Brigade Commander Corps/MACOM Staff Army/DOD/Joint Staff Program Manager Engineer Staff Director Logistics Staff Director Deputy Chief of Staff for Information Management Service School Staff Functional Area Utilization Project Manager

(NOTE: Females are prohibited from performing the following job due to the combat exclusion policy: CA Battalion CEO.)

Figure 6.

materiel. AOC 25F officers must be captains or higher and graduates of the Army Logistics Management or Army Maintenance Management Course, or have successfully completed graduate level education in logistics or materiel acquisition management. Typical duty positions include Signal battalion S-4 or C-E Materiel Staff officer.

The majority of Signal officers will be single-tracked and normally will qualify in at least two areas of concentration within Signal Branch. Although there is no limit to the number of areas of concentration an officer can qualify in, constraints such as time, money, and training allocations will usually preclude development in more than two. Once trained in a second AOC, officers will alternate assignments between areas of concentration for the rest of their career. Dual-tracked Signal officers will be qualified in both Signal Branch and a functional area. Usually, these officers will be qualified in one Signal AOC and one or more areas of concentration within their chosen functional area. Dual-tracked officers will alternate assignments between Signal Branch and the functional area. Dual-tracked officers can also expect fewer assignments in positions coded O1A (Branch Immaterial) than their single-tracked counterparts.

The career options under Signal Branch can best be visualized using Figure 6. To read the chart, begin in the upper left corner with the arrow labeled "accessions." After being commissioned, all lieutenants will attend the Signal Officer Basic Course (SOBC), and most will also attend an assignment oriented training (AOT) module applicable to their next assignment. After completing this training, the majority are assigned as C-E Operations Officers in AOC 25C positions.

Sometime between the third and sixth years of service, all Signal officers will return to the Signal Center for the Signal Officer Advanced Course (SOAC). After completing SOAC (and usually an AOT module as well), some captains will continue development in AOC 25C, and some will begin development in another Signal area of concentration. As you can see in Figure 6, officers who continue development in AOC 25C progress along the timeline to the right. Officers who continue development in another Signal area of concentration track down the page to the second area of concentration. The five

blocked-in areas illustrate the career path opportunities within each AOC. Although the decision points and career branchings are shown at specific locations against the timeline, these events are flexible and represent only guidelines for individual career planning. The opportunities for Advanced Civil Schooling and Training With Industry, although shown at the sixth year of service, are available as early as the second or as late as the fifteenth year.

Officers who are rebranched into the Signal Corps from one of the combat arms branches will normally attend SOAC and an AOT module prior to their first assignment in Signal Branch. After completion of this initial training, rebranched officers will be assigned to a position in AOC 25C. Once an assignment in AOC 25C is successfully completed, rebranched officers will be eligible to earn a second Signal AOC.

The career pattern for field grade officers remains much as it is now. By the fifteenth year of service, all single-tracked officers will have a second Signal AOC, and officers who are dual-tracked will continue or begin development in a functional area. Figure 6 shows examples of pairings between areas of concentration and/or functional areas; however, all combinations are possible. The preferred functional area pairings for Signal officers shown in Figure 7 are intended only as guidelines and are not exclusive.

The middle segment of the chart in Figure 6 shows the exact windows for attendance at training or education in support of the new OPMS. At the discretion of their commander, officers can attend company grade assignment oriented training anytime during their company grade years, in either a TDY enroute or TDY and return status. Officers are eligible for AOC training from senior lieutenant until they are promoted to lieutenant colonel. The bottom segment of the chart gives the concept for officer utilization and some representative jobs for each rank. This list is not exhaustive.

As part of the new OPMS, each proponent was required to submit the minimum requirements for branch qualification. The Signal Corps' requirements for branch qualification are divided between general criteria which apply to all officers and separate criteria for each AOC. All lieutenants are required to complete

SOBC and gain experience with troops and in C-E Operations. All captains must complete SOAC and have assignments both with troops and in Signal jobs. In addition, the following criteria have been established for each AOC:

- 25A: - Not applicable
- 25B: - Successful completion of one of the following:
  - TOOC
  - Master's degree in computer science or a related field
  - Successful utilization in a C-E automation assignment
- 25C: - Command of a company-sized unit
- 25D: - B.S. degree in electrical engineering or a related discipline  
(NOTE: In the future, officers in AOC 25D will be graduates of the C-E Engineering Course or have a master's degree in electrical engineering)
  - Successful utilization in a C-E Engineering assignment
- 25E: - Eighteen months additional experience in another Signal AOC
  - Successful completion of one of the following:
    - Information Systems Staff Officer Course
    - Master's degree in telecommunications or information systems management
  - Successful utilization in an assignment in Information Systems Networking
- 25F: - Successful completion of one of the following:
  - Army Logistics Management Course
  - Army Maintenance Management Course
  - Master's degree in materiel acquisition or logistics management
  - Successful utilization in an assignment in C-E Materiel Integration

All officers are strongly encouraged to seek command. The majority of command positions exist within AOC 25C and AOC 25A. Since AOC 25A positions are open to all Signal officers and the majority of all Signal officers will hold AOC 25C, company command opportunity will be available for most officers.

An integral step in the transition to the new OPMS was the recoding of personnel authorization documents. Every TOE and TDA in the Army has been completely scrubbed and recoded by a central board at DA,

MILPERCEN in accordance with the revised officer classification system. The recoding yielded a complete and coherent picture of the Army's requirements, and will result in a better match between officer skills and position requirements. The recoding of commissioned officer positions in typical battalion and brigade headquarters is illustrated at Figure 8. Note the insertion of technical skills into battalion and brigade staffs as indicated by the number of 25B, 25E, and 25F positions. This represents a decision made by the Signal Corps' senior leadership to insert more technical skills into the field, and to support the fielding, employment, and sustainment of increasingly sophisticated automation and communications systems.

Although at first glance the new OPMS seems unfamiliar and complicated, it is really very similar to the current one. The new areas of concentration correspond to the old specialty skill identifiers, and the traditional career paths still exist: company command, assignments in a mixture of TOE and TDA units, and field grade command. The new OPMS has strengthened career tracks for the technical fields by more accurate identification of requirements, offering more realistic career opportunities, and requiring each officer to gain experience in AOC 25C (C-E Operations) before moving into a more technical area of concentration. This in turn will support the requirements of the Army as it modernizes to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by sophisticated electronics and automation. Although proponents have been afforded increasing leeway in the life cycle management of their career fields, each officer is still the best architect of his or her own career. All officers need to know and understand the revised OPMS to ensure the best possible professional development of both themselves and their subordinates. More information on the new OPMS can be found in *AR 611-101 (Commissioned Officers Classification System)*, *DA PAM 600-3 (Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Utilization)*, and *The Commander's Call*, Sept.-Oct. 84.

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## Preferred Functional Area Pairings

25A:	Not applicable
25B:	FA 49, 51, 53, 99
25C:	FA 41, 50, 54, 99
25D:	FA 49, 51
25E:	FA 49, 51, 53, 54
25F:	FA 51, 53, 97

Figure 7.

## SIGNAL BATTALION

Position	Grade	AOC	Area of Assignment
Battalion Commander	05	25C	Command Section
Asst. Div. C-E Officer	04	25E	Command Section
Executive Officer	04	25C	Command Section
S-2/3	04	25E	Command Section
Maint. Officer	03	25F	Command Section
S-1	03	25C	Command Section
S-4	03	25F	Command Section
C-E Systems Control Off.	03	25B	Op. and Intel. Sec.
Asst. C-E Sys. Con. Off.	02	25C	Op. and Intel. Sec.
Radio Officer	03	25B	Div. C-E Off. Sec.
Telepro. Op. Staff Off.	03	25B	Div. C-E Off. Sec.
Tel. and TT. Officer	02	25C	Div. C-E Off. Sec.
Company Commander	03	25C	Company HQ
Platoon Leader	02	25C	Platoon HQ

## SIGNAL BRIGADE

Position	Grade	AOC	Area of Assignment
Commander	07	00B00	Command Section
Deputy Commander	06	25C	Command Section
S-3	05	25E	Command Section
S-4	05	25F	Command Section
Aide-de-camp	02	25A	Command Section
A-V Officer	03	25A	A-V Section
A-V Opns. Officer	02	25A	A-V Section
Asst. Corps C-E Officer	06	25E	Corps C-E Section
Operations/Plans Officer	05	25C	Corps C-E Section
C-E Staff Officer	04	25C	Corps C-E Section
Elec. Maint. Staff Off.	04	25F	Corps C-E Section
Radio Freq. Officer	04	25C	Corps C-E Section
Telecom. Dgntl. Staff Off.	04	25B	Corps C-E Section
Telecom. Center Off.	03	25B	Corps C-E Section
Radio Officer	03	25C	Corps C-E Section
C-E Materiel Mgt. Off.	04	25F	Logistics Division
Sys. Engr. Officer	04	25E	Engineering Branch
Traffic Engineer Officer	04	25E	Engineering Branch
Telecom. Center Officer	03	25B	Engineering Branch
C-E Engineer	03	25D	Engineering Branch
Tel. Dgntl. Comm. Officer	03	25B	Engineering Branch
Traffic Engr. Officer	03	25E	Engineering Branch
Operations Staff Officer	04	25E	Systems Control Br.
Network Officer	04	25E	Systems Control Br.
Asst. Network Officer	03	25E	Systems Control Br.
Radio Relay Officer	03	25C	Systems Control Br.
Tel. Dgntl. Comm. Officer	03	25B	Systems Control Br.
Plans Officer	04	25C	Plans/Intel. Branch
Asst. Plans Officer	03	25B	Plans/Intel. Branch

Figure 8.