LEVERAGING COMMAND SERGEANTS MAJOR AND OPERATIONS SERGEANTS MAJOR

Approved for Public Release
Distribution Unlimited

Center for Army Lessons Learned

The Center for Army Lessons Learned leads the Army Lessons Learned Program and delivers timely and relevant information to resolve gaps, enhance readiness, and inform modernization.

CONTACT US

10 Meade Ave.
Bldg 50
Fort Leavenworth
KS 66027

DSN: 552-9533
913-684-9533

DIRECTOR
COL Scott Allen

ANALYSTS/AUTHORS
Michael Robinson

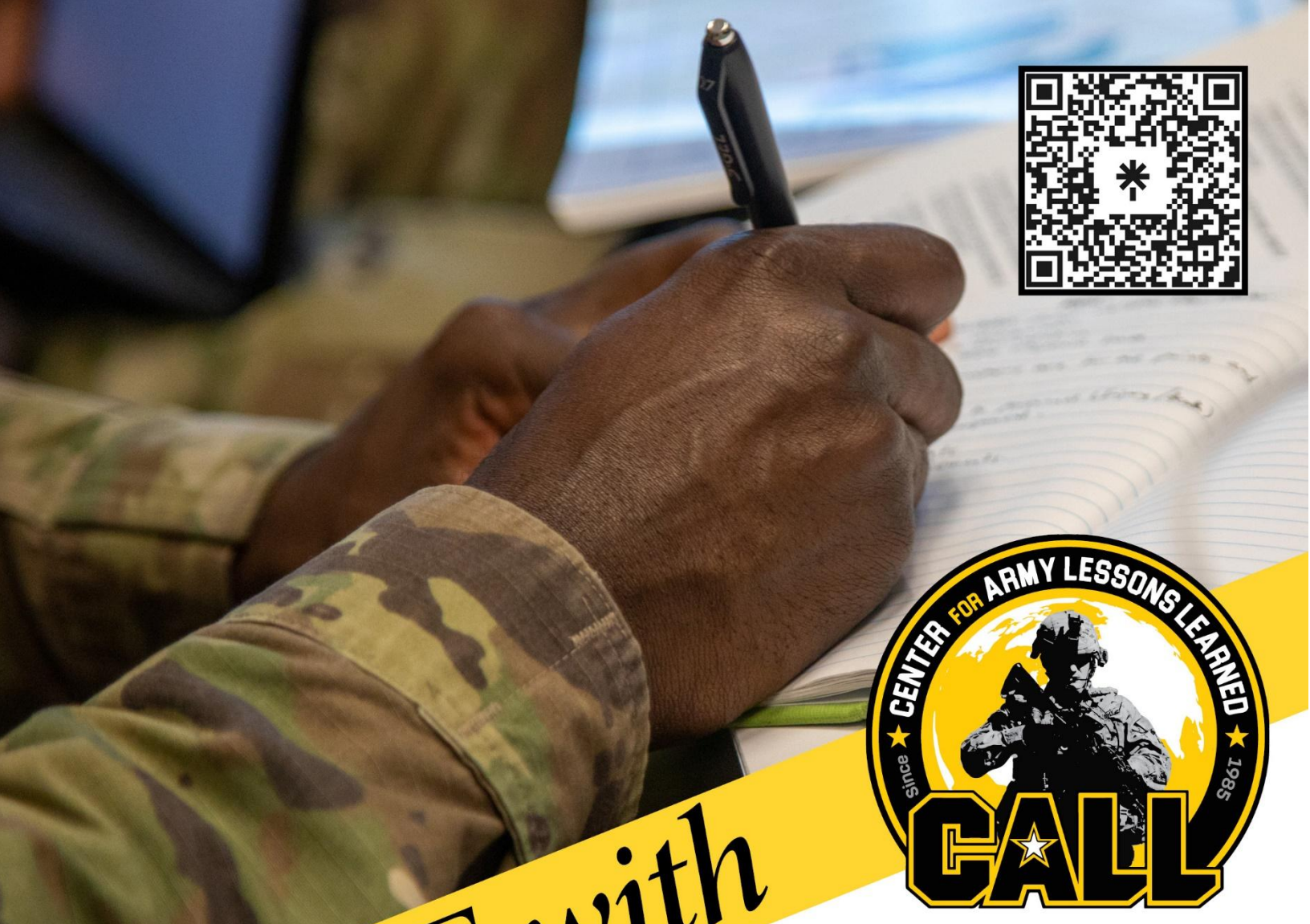
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER
Michael Hagen

EDITOR
Zack Shelby

ILLUSTRATOR
Chris Blake

SECURITY
Sandra Griffin

Disclaimer: This paper was produced with the assistance of GPT-based AI services for research, drafting, and/or editing purposes. While AI was utilized to generate or refine content, all information, interpretations, and conclusions presented herein are the responsibility of the author(s). The content has been reviewed for accuracy, originality, and compliance with ethical standards.



WRITE with CALL

CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED
Since 1985
CALL

Have a game-changing best practice or compelling story? Let CALL lead you to publishing success!

We recognize your insights' immense value and potential impact. CALL offers unmatched resources and expertise to showcase your ideas in respected military journals.

Our team helps you easily shape your narrative and navigate the publishing journey. Don't let your knowledge go unnoticed—become a published author with CALL's support.

ARMY.MIL/CALL | (913) 684-9533/2255

Foreword

For every graduate of the Sergeants Major Course (SMC) and every commander they will serve alongside, this article should be considered a foundational text. It moves beyond theory and offers a clear, actionable framework for building the kind of noncommissioned officer (NCO)–officer relationship that thrives in the chaos of modern battle—two different perspectives that, alone, offers moderate success, but combined as a complete package, allows a good unit to achieve greatness.

The vignettes contained within, particularly "A Tale of Two Defenses," are not mere illustrations; they are a stark warning. The difference between holding the line and breaking is not the quality of the order or the sophistication of the command and control (C2) system. The difference is the combined leadership of the officer and NCO. It is commanders who intentionally create the space for their senior NCOs to contribute and NCOs who have the courage and competence to step into that space.

This work makes a powerful case that we can no longer afford to leave this critical partnership to chance or personality. It must be a deliberate, practiced, and institutionalized behavior. As commandant of the U.S. Army NCO Academy, I charge every senior NCO to read this product, internalize its lessons, and arrive at their next unit prepared to be the proactive, invaluable partner this article describes and your unit demands. Do not wait for permission; integrate immediately and showcase the position of sergeant major as a combat multiplier. Likewise, I urge every commander to recognize the immense combat power resident in their sergeants major. The trust you build with them before the first shot is fired will be your most decisive asset when it matters most.

CSM Tammy M. Everette
Commandant
U.S. Army NCO Academy

Introduction

For new command teams at battalion or brigade levels, executive officers (XOs), S-3 officers, and recent Sergeants Major Course (SMC) graduates, the central challenge of large-scale combat operations (LSCO) is building a cohesive team that can think, plan, and act faster than the enemy. Within that team, the sergeant major (SGM) or command sergeant major (CSM) is the indispensable connective tissue between planning, execution, and training. They refine planning by validating its feasibility and exposing risk. They drive execution through disciplined battlefield circulation and real-time assessment. They ensure training is realistic, standards-based, and aligned with modern warfare demands.

However, a persistent gap exists in many formations. Too many units fail to fully use their senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) in staff processes, operational design, and decision making. This gap reduces shared understanding across the formation, limits a commander's ability to synchronize combat power at decisive points, and sidelines a critical source of battlefield experience and tactical grounding.

This article provides a framework for new command teams, recent SMC graduates, and the institutional Army to re-examine this dynamic. It argues that fully integrating senior NCOs into planning, operations, and training management—not as advisors on the periphery, but as essential partners in the commander's decision cycle—is a prerequisite for success.

To bridge the gap between theory and practice, this article provides two key tools. Appendix A offers vignettes illustrating formations that effectively integrate their senior NCOs and, just as importantly, those that do not. Appendix B provides a self-assessment tool, allowing commanders and their staffs to candidly evaluate how well their own processes leverage the experience of their senior NCO.

The Army's doctrine, history, and contemporary combat experience all reinforce a single truth: when senior NCOs contribute early and consistently, staffs think more clearly, plans become more executable, and units fight with greater tempo and discipline. Their unique perspective grounded in realism, sustainment awareness, and the human dimension of war is not a "nice to have"; it directly strengthens the commander's ability to understand, visualize, describe, direct, lead, and assess operations.

Planning Integration

Senior NCOs enhance planning by grounding concepts in tactical reality. They identify friction early, refine assumptions, and ensure the staff considers sustainment, readiness, and Soldier load throughout the planning process. The SGM's perspective can ensure battalion plans are executable at the company and platoon levels. Their experience helps the staff avoid overly technical or idealized solutions that collapse under battlefield conditions. When senior NCOs participate in mission analysis, course of action (COA) development, and war gaming, they help the staff anticipate how Soldiers will execute tasks under stress, fatigue, and uncertainty.

"…NCOs must be included in mission analysis and COA development—not just execution."[1]

Commanders benefit when senior NCOs contribute directly to the commander's visualization. They can highlight risk, identify opportunities, and ensure the plan accounts for the physical and cognitive demands placed on Soldiers. Their input strengthens the commander's ability to describe the operation clearly and direct the staff effectively. Senior NCOs can help translate the commander's intent into practical tasks that subordinate units can execute. The planning process becomes stronger when senior NCOs and officers collaborate as a unified team. Officers bring conceptual design, doctrinal structure, and analytical tools. Senior NCOs bring experience, realism, and an understanding of how units actually fight. In practice, "the CSM must review all plans and schedules prior to publication by the S-3. Because he is very knowledgeable of all the battalion's commitments, he can identify conflicting schedules and can provide comments concerning guidance from higher headquarters; often from a perspective unlike either the battalion S-3 or XO."[2]

Together, they can produce conceptually sound and tactically executable plans. This officer–NCO collaboration strengthens the plan by balancing doctrinal soundness with tactical feasibility. As one observer at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) noted, "The Ops (operations) SGM is the synchronization anchor—he sees the seams before they split."[3] Senior NCOs, SGMs, and CSMs provide tactical insight and continuity that strengthen the military decision-making process (MDMP).

The Officer–NCO Partnership in Staff Operations

Senior NCO integration is a doctrinal requirement and a combat multiplier, not an optional enhancement. The partnership between officers and senior NCOs strengthens planning, improves staff cohesion, and accelerates decision making. This section outlines how the partnership functions in practice and why it matters for LSCO.

The officer–NCO partnership is the engine that drives effective planning and execution in LSCO. Officers provide conceptual design and doctrinal structure, while senior NCOs ensure feasibility, realism, and the Soldier perspective as mission executors. This collaboration strengthens mission command by grounding staff concepts in tactical reality. As one senior NCO noted, "Mission command without trust is just delegation. SGMs don't need permission—they need purpose."[4] When officers and senior NCOs build a shared mental model early, they accelerate decision making and reduce friction across the staff.

"The XO manages the staff. The Ops SGM manages the fight."[5]

---

[1] Center for Army Lessons Learned. MDMP Newsletter 95-12. 1997.
[2] *The Officer/NCO Relationship: Words of Wisdom and Tips for Success from Senior Officers and NCOs*. September 1997 (2016 reprint with minor changes). Page 13.
[3] CSMs Bill Gallant, Mike Hall, and Robert Peña. *Backbone of the Plan: Integrating NCOs into the Plan and Across WfF to Survive LSCO*. The Crucible – The JRTC Experience Podcast. 106 Season 03 Episode 11. 2025.
[4] Pires, Brazilian SGM Antonio V. M. *Senior NCO Integration in Staff Processes*. 2025.
[5] Center for Army Lessons Learned. *Transforming the Tactical Staff for the 21st Century*. No. 04-01. Special Study. March 2004. Available only to authorized users with a valid common access card (CAC).

Senior NCOs shape staff culture by reinforcing standards, maintaining discipline, and ensuring the staff focuses on what matters most. "The SGM's perspective ensures that plans are executable at the company and platoon levels."[6] Their influence is operational, not ceremonial, and their presence in working groups and planning teams creates a climate where the commander expects and values their candid feedback. The Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) captured this dynamic clearly: "Presence doesn't equal relevance. NCOs must earn their seat at the table—and speak with authority."[7] The partnership becomes even more powerful when the CSM and SGM synchronize their efforts.

This partnership becomes decisive in LSCO, where uncertainty, tempo, and friction demand rapid adaptation. Officers rely on senior NCOs to validate timelines and identify risks before they become failures. Senior NCOs rely on officers to provide clear intent, doctrinal structure, and the authority to act. When both groups operate as a unified team, they create a faster and more adaptive staff. Their collaboration ensures commander's intent survives contact with the staff and execution remains disciplined and synchronized.

Officers and senior NCOs share responsibility for developing, refining, and executing plans. Senior NCOs help the staff understand how tasks translate into actions on the ground. They identify friction points, anticipate sustainment challenges, and ensure the plan accounts for Soldier load, fatigue, and readiness. Their input helps the staff avoid unrealistic timelines, overextended formations, and assumptions that collapse under battlefield pressure.

What Doctrine Says

Despite decades of battlefield evidence, doctrine offers little guidance on how to integrate CSMs and SGMs into staff processes. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces,* mentions CSMs' roles in advising the commander but does not articulate their staff function.[8] Similarly, although Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Developing Leaders* and Training Circular (TC) 7-22.7, *The NCO Guide*, describe CSMs' responsibilities, they remain focused on mentorship and policy, not operational planning.[9] This doctrinal void leaves their integration up to the commander's personality and preference.

Senior NCOs also strengthen the commander's decision cycle. Officers provide doctrinal structure, while senior NCOs ensure plans remain feasible under combat conditions. Codifying this partnership in FM 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*, 16 May 2022, and FM 5-0, *Planning and Orders Production*, 4 November 2024, and reinforcing it through professional military education (PME) scenarios that place senior NCOs in lead roles institutionalizes their contributions. They help the commander visualize the fight by providing grounded assessments of unit readiness, terrain impacts, and likely enemy reactions. Their experience enables them to identify risk early and propose practical mitigation measures. When

---

[6] Insights from the Fight. *Episode 1: Effectively Leveraging NCOs in Staff Processes.* Podcast audio. October 2025. https://www.dvidshub.net/audio/87848/insights-fight-podcast-episode-1-effectively-leveraging-ncos-staff-processes.
[7] Center for Army Lessons Learned. No. 21-09. *Leadership Guide to Externally Evaluated Full Scale Exercises*. 2021.
[8] ADP 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*. 31 July 2019.
[9] FM 6-22, *Developing Leaders*. 1 November 2022; TC 7-22.7, *The Noncommissioned Officer Guide*. 19 August 2025.

senior NCOs participate in war gaming, they help the staff anticipate how Soldiers will execute tasks under stress and uncertainty.

This shared approach improves tempo. The staff moves faster when officers and senior NCOs collaborate from the start rather than working in parallel or sequential lanes. The partnership creates a shared mental model that accelerates planning and execution. "Senior NCOs must be present at the start of planning—not post-COA selection. Their absence during mission analysis is a missed opportunity."[10] Embedding this principle across the force ensures planning processes remain doctrinally sound and tactically executable.

CSM-Ops SGM Synergy: The Inside-Outside Game

> "The Ops SGM sees the seams before they split. The CSM walks the seam line."[11]

The effectiveness of a battalion or brigade hinges on the strength and relationships of the command team and staff. No relationship is more decisive than the partnership between the CSM and Ops SGM. The CSM operates "outside" the command post (CP), and the Ops SGM operates "inside," but their efforts are inseparable. Together, they form the senior NCO engine that drives execution.

The CSM's outside focus is aggressive and unrelenting. They move across the battlefield to enforce discipline, assess morale and readiness, identify friction before it becomes failure, and deliver direct, unfiltered feedback to the commander and CP. Through battlefield circulation, the CSM validates unit posture, confirms whether subordinate formations truly understand the commander's intent, and ensures units uphold standards under pressure.

Inside the CP, the Ops SGM is the commander's integrator. They control the staff's rhythm, enforce disciplined processes, and maintain operational tempo. The Ops SGM ensures running estimates stay current, synchronizes warfighting functions, and forces the staff to anticipate rather than react. They also identify friction early and drive adjustments to timelines, resources, and priorities to keep the unit ahead of the fight.

Together, the CSM and Ops SGM create a unified senior NCO effort that sharpens the commander's ability to direct, assess, and adapt operations. Their combined actions form a continuous, high fidelity feedback loop that accelerates decision making and preserves tempo.

This synergy becomes decisive in the fight. High-tempo operations demand rapid assessment, disciplined execution, and constant adaptation. The CSM and Ops SGM enable the commander to maintain tempo by providing accurate and timely assessments of the fight, ensuring the unit stays ahead of the enemy rather than reacting to it.

Sustainment

Sustainment determines tempo, endurance, and operational reach. Sustainment is not support; it is survival. Ops SGMs influence logistics package (LOGPAC) timing, route selection, and

---

[10] Beavers, Jr., SGM Bradley J. *NCO Relevance: Beyond Just Your Presence*. NCO Journal. April 2025. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/nco-journal/images/2025/April/Relevance/Sharing-Understanding-UA.pdf.

[11] CSMs Bill Gallant, Mike Hall, and Robert Peña. The Crucible – The JRTC Experience Podcast. 106 Season 03 Episode 11. 2025.

recovery posture, while CSMs validate terrain and survivability of casualty collection points. Their combined oversight ensures operational endurance and responsiveness.

Sustainment operations are often where friction accumulates the fastest. Senior NCOs ensure the staff considers sustainment throughout planning and execution. They identify gaps in resupply, maintenance, and casualty evacuation (CASEVAC). CSMs and SGMs who understand the tactical implications of logistics can prevent delays, shortfalls, and misalignment. CTC trends have highlighted that units with proactive senior NCO involvement in sustainment planning experienced fewer class IX disruptions and more effective CASEVAC coordination.[12] They help the staff develop realistic timelines, prioritize resources, and coordinate with sustainment units. Their input strengthens the staff's ability to maintain tempo and support the commander's intent.

During operations, senior NCOs monitor sustainment statuses and provide timely updates to the staff. They identify emerging challenges and help the staff adjust priorities. Their assessments help the commander understand the unit's endurance and ability to continue the fight.

Sustainment becomes decisive in LSCO. High-tempo operations require constant resupply, maintenance, and casualty care. Senior NCOs help the staff anticipate and mitigate sustainment challenges, ensuring the unit maintains operational reach and endurance.

Experienced leaders warned in *The Crucible – The JRTC Experience Podcast*, "An inaccurate logistics status (LOGSTAT) can commit the division," underscoring the strategic implications of tactical sustainment.[13] Similarly, leaders on that podcast said planning without sustainment is just hope.[14] Also, officer–NCO collaboration in sustainment bridges the gap between staff planning and tactical execution, ensuring endurance and responsiveness in LSCO.

Training Alignment

Training prepares units for LSCO demands. Senior NCOs play a central role in training management, certification, and readiness. They ensure training is realistic, disciplined, and aligned with the commander's intent. Their experience helps the staff design training that prepares Soldiers for the physical and cognitive demands of combat.

> We need to train for the fight we'll get, not the one we want, CSMs/SGMs know the difference.[15]

The Ops SGM leads training management at the staff level. They help the staff develop training plans, teach and reinforce the eight-step training model, coordinate resources, and synchronize events. Their input ensures training is feasible, realistic, and aligned with operational requirements. The Ops SGM helps the staff identify training gaps, prioritize tasks, and maintain momentum throughout the training cycle. They ensure the unit captures the lessons learned from each training event and uses that information to inform planning future events. Senior NCOs

[12] Center for Army Lessons Learned. *CTC Trends.* National Training Center Trends and Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs), 1st and 2nd Quarters, Fiscal Year (FY) 98. No 98-14. July 1998.
CSMs Bill Gallant, Mike Hall, and Robert Peña. The Crucible – The JRTC Experience Podcast. 106 Season 03 Episode 11. 2025.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

strengthen training by enforcing standards and discipline. They ensure training events replicate battlefield conditions and prepare Soldiers for the stress and uncertainty of combat.

Their presence during training helps the staff identify friction, adjust scenarios, and improve realism. Training alignment becomes critical when units prepare for LSCO. Senior NCOs help the staff design training that develops the skills, discipline, and endurance required for high-tempo operations. Their input ensures training prepares Soldiers for the demands of modern warfare.

Mentorship

Mentorship strengthens the unit's culture, discipline, and readiness. Senior NCOs play a central role in leader development, coaching, and professional growth. They help officers understand the human dimension of war and develop the skills required to lead Soldiers in combat. Ops SGMs coach junior officers on doctrinal application, terrain analysis, and synchronization.

The CSM leads mentorship across the formation. CSMs mentor platoon sergeants and first sergeants (1SGs) on leadership, discipline, and tactical execution. Mentorship is not a rank—it is a rhythm. Consistency must be reinforced and embedded in everyday practices. They also coach officers, develop junior NCOs, and reinforce the commander's expectations. Their presence during training, planning, and execution helps leaders understand how to apply doctrine, maintain discipline, and build cohesive teams.

Senior NCOs mentor officers by providing grounded assessments of leadership, readiness, and unit culture. They help officers understand how decisions affect Soldiers and how to lead effectively under stress. Their mentorship strengthens the officer–NCO partnership and improves the unit's ability to fight and win.

Mentorship becomes decisive in LSCO. Leaders must make rapid decisions under stress, maintain discipline, and inspire Soldiers to fight. Senior NCOs help develop leaders who can meet these demands. Their mentorship strengthens the unit's ability to maintain cohesion, discipline, and readiness throughout the fight.

Institutional Advocacy

The Army's ability to fight and win in LSCO depends on more than individual Soldier proficiency and unit readiness. It requires an institutional commitment to developing senior NCOs who can think, plan, and operate at the speed of war. Senior NCO integration into planning, operations, and training must become a consistent expectation across the force—not a personality-driven practice or a function of local culture.

The Army provides the framework for commanders to shape this environment. When they deliberately include senior NCOs in planning and decision making, they create a culture where shared understanding and disciplined initiative thrive. Senior NCOs respond by taking ownership of staff processes, strengthening training management, and reinforcing standards across the formation.

PME and the operational force must reinforce this partnership. Courses for senior NCOs and officers should emphasize shared planning, staff integration, and operational design. Both cohorts must learn how to collaborate effectively, understand each other's roles, and leverage each other's strengths. PME should inform officers how to use senior NCOs as partners in

planning and execution, and it should teach senior NCOs how to contribute meaningfully to operational design, war gaming, and assessment.

The solution is not just doctrinal; it requires a cultural shift driven by institutional advocacy. The Army must focus on "shaping an NCO's career through mission command."[16] CALL reports from as far back as the late 1990s have highlighted that staffs consistently overlook the value of the Ops SGM in synchronizing operations. The Army must also update doctrine, training products, and leader development models to reflect the realities of LSCO. Senior NCOs must understand operational art, mission command, and staff processes at a deeper level. Officers must understand how senior NCOs strengthen planning, execution, and training. This shared understanding creates cohesive teams that can outthink, outpace, and outfight the enemy.

Institutional advocacy ensures the Army develops leaders who can operate in complex, high-tempo environments. Senior NCOs must champion this effort by mentoring junior leaders, shaping unit culture, and reinforcing the importance of shared planning and disciplined execution. Their leadership strengthens the Army's ability to fight and win.

Conclusion

The Army fights and wins through cohesive teams built on trust, shared understanding, and disciplined initiative. The officer–NCO partnership is the bedrock of these teams, not as a courtesy, but as a nonnegotiable combat requirement. The complexity and tempo of LSCO demand the constant adaptation and realistic foresight that a fully integrated senior NCO provides.

For the new battalion or brigade commander, XO, and S-3 officer, the charge is clear: intentionally create the space in your planning cycles and decision-making processes for your senior NCO to contribute early and consistently. For the recent SMC graduate, the responsibility is equally clear: step proactively into that space and apply your experience to anticipate friction, develop realistic plans, and maintain tempo throughout the fight.

However, leaving this critical partnership to chance and personality is a risk the institutional Army can no longer afford. The Army must formally codify this integration within its PME. Courses for senior NCOs and officers must emphasize shared planning and staff integration, teaching both cohorts how to collaborate effectively. Therefore, the path forward is a concrete, institutional investment. Either the Sergeants Major Academy and the Command and General Staff College must collaborate to create a shared, integrated curriculum, or the Transformation and Training Command (T2COM) must formalize the creation of a dedicated staff operations SGM course. Formalizing this training is an investment in combat power, readiness, and U.S. Soldiers.

[16] Adams, Retired CSM Richard B. *Shaping an NCO's Career through Mission Command*. Army University Press. NCO Journal. 15 March 2024. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2024/March/Shaping-an-NCOs-Career-Through-Mission-Command/.

Bibliography

Abate, COL Claude W., and LTC (P) Warren P. Giddings. *What is a Sergeant Major?*. U.S. Army War College (USAWC) paper. 1985. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA158563.pdf.

Adams, Retired CSM Richard B. *Shaping an NCO's Career through Mission Command*. Army University Press. NCO Journal. 15 March 2024. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2024/March/Shaping-an-NCOs-Career-Through-Mission-Command/.

Bass, SFC Tramaine. *The Operations Sergeant Major*. NCO Journal, 5 March 2021. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2021/March/The-Operations-Sergeant-Major/.

Battle Command Training Center. *Battle Staff Guide*. Fort Leavenworth, KS. BCTC. 2010.

Beavers, Jr., SGM Bradley J. *NCO Relevance: Beyond Just Your Presence*. NCO Journal. April 2025. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2025/NCO-Relevance/.

Benge, SGM Tyler. *Meet the Staff: The Operations Sergeant Major*. The Field Grade Leader. 7 April 2021. https://fieldgradeleader.themilitaryleader.com/meet-the-staff-the-operations-sergeant-major/.

Center for Army Lessons Learned. *Crosswalk Guide for LSCO Task Alignment*. No. 21-12. Fort Leavenworth, KS. U.S. Army. 2023. https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/2023/01/31/02cd6c77/21-12.pdf.

———. Insights from the Fight. Episode 1. *Effectively Leveraging NCOs in Staff Processes*. Podcast audio. October 2025. https://www.dvidshub.net/audio/87848/insights-fight-podcast-episode-1-effectively-leveraging-ncos-staff-processes.

———. *JRTC Leaders Training Program Observations*. CALL Newsletter 01-04. Fort Leavenworth, KS. February 2001.

———. *CTC Trends*. JRTC Trends and TTP, 2nd and 3rd Quarters, FY 03. No 03-09. October 2003.

———. No. 21-09. *Leadership Guide to Externally Evaluated Full Scale Exercises*. February 2021.

———. *Military Decision-making Process Update*. CALL Newsletter 95-12. Fort Leavenworth, KS. May 1997.

———. *Noncommissioned Officer Lessons Learned*. CALL Newsletter 89-03. Fort Leavenworth, KS. October 1989.

———. *Noncommissioned Officers: Cornerstone to Winning in the Contemporary Operational Environment*. CALL Newsletter 03-08. Fort Leavenworth, KS. March 2003.

———. *Sustainment in Large Scale Combat Operations*. CALL Publication 22-03(657). Fort Leavenworth, KS. 2022.

———. *Tactical Operations Center (TOC)*. CALL Newsletter 95-07. Fort Leavenworth, KS. May 1995.

———. *Transforming the Tactical Staff for the 21st Century*. No. 04-01. Special Study. March 2004. Available only to authorized users with a valid common access card (CAC).

———. Combat Training Center Directorate. *CTC Trends 97-06: JRTC 4QFY96-1QFY97*. Fort Leavenworth, KS. February 1997.

———. *CTC Trends: NTC 98-14 1Q-2Q FY98*. Fort Leavenworth, KS. July 1998.

———. *NTC Trends Analysis*. National Training Center Trends Analysis. 4th Quarter FY 94 to 2nd Quarter FY 96. No. 97-03. January 1997.

———. *NTC Trends Compendium*. Fort Leavenworth, KS.

CSMs Burrow, Charles, and Roderick Marshal. *The Command Sergeant's Major Role in Fires and Maneuver*. NCO Journal. 2019.

CSMs Bill Gallant, Mike Hall, and Robert Peña. *Backbone of the Plan: Integrating NCOs into the Plan & Across WfF to Survive LSCO.* The Crucible – The JRTC Experience. Video. 2025.

CSMs Hall, Mike, and Robert Peña. *The Backbone of the Battlefield: CSMs in Large-Scale Combat*. The Crucible – The JRTC Experience. Video. 2025. https://youtu.be/4IrXrtcszV0.

Dubik, James M., and David M. Hodne. *The Battalion Commander and Command Sergeant Major: The Most Important Senior Leaders in the Army*. *ARMY*. February 2013.

Elder, Daniel K. *The History of the Sergeant Major*. Fort Bliss, TX. U.S. Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer. 2 January 1998. https://ncohistory.com/history-of-the-sergeant-major/.

Gardner, LTC Bernard A., MAJ Aleong, Andre C., and CSM William H. Black. *At the Point of Friction: The Role of the Modern Command Sergeants Major in Today's Army*. Military Review. November–December 2023. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/November-December-2023/At-the-Point-of-Friction/.

Guerrero, Retired CSM Mario F. *Understanding Adaptive Leadership*. NCO Journal. 31 March 2025. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2025/March/Understanding-Adaptive-Leadership/.

Heifetz, Ronald, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky. *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. Boston: Harvard Business Press. 2009.

Holland, T. J. *Location of the Command Sergeant Major*. NCO Journal. 1 December 2017. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2017/December/Location-of-CSM/.

Horval, SGM Sean M. *Attitude Reflects Leadership: The Role of Emotional Intelligence*. NCO Journal. 2021. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2021/February/Attitude-Reflects-Leadership/.

———. *Purpose, Direction, and Motivation*. NCO Journal. 23 November 2020. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2020/August/Purpose-Direction-and-Motivation/.

Information Management Support Center. *The Officer/NCO Relationship: Words of Wisdom and Tips for Success from Senior Officers and NCOs*. The Pentagon. September 1997.

Lopez, SGM Bill. *The Bottom Line: NCO Peacetime Role Preserves Combat Readiness*. NCO Journal. 7 May 2021. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2021/May/The-Bottom-Line/.

National Training Center. *CSM/SGM Crosswalk*. Fort Irwin, CA. Operations Group. 2019.

National Training Center Operations Group. The Company Leader. *The Non-Commissioned Officer Task Crosswalk Guide*. 17 February 2020. https://companyleader.themilitaryleader.com/2020/02/17/the-non-commissioned-officer-task-crosswalk-guide/.

Nelson, SGM Robert A., and Retired CSM Gabriel Arnold. *How to conduct a Dysfunctional Meeting for Dummies*. NCO Journal. 2022. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2022/October/How-to-Conduct-a-Dysfunctional-Meeting-for-Dummies/.

Pires, Brazilian SGM Antonio V. M. *Bridging the Gap Between Doctrine Theory and Practice*. NCO Journal. 18 April 2025. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2025/April/Bridging-the-Gap-Between-Doctrine-Theory-and-Practice/.

———. *Senior NCO Integration in Staff Processes*. 2025.

Sartain, CSM Neil H. "Future Army Challenges and NCO Development." *NCO Journal*. March 2025. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2025/March/Future-Army-Challenges-and-NCO-Development/.

Thomas, Retired SGM Cody J. *The Mountain Doesn't Care*. NCO Journal. 17 March 2025. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/nco-journal/images/2025/March/Mountain/Mountain-Doesnt-Care-UA.pdf.

Training and Doctrine (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World*. 31 October 2014.

U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. *Battalion Staff Research at Brigade and Lower*. ARI Report 1730. Fort Leavenworth, KS: ARI. 1998.

U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy. *Battle Staff NCO Review – NCO Tactical Command Post SOP, Battalion/Brigade Command Post Operations*. Fort Bliss, TX: USASMA. 2004.

Army Publishing Directorate

Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations*. 21 March 2025.

ADP 3-37, *Protection*. 10 January 2024.

ADP 3-90, *Offense and Defense*. 31 July 2019.

ADP 4-0, *Sustainment*. 31 July 2019.

ADP 5-0, *The Operations Process*. 31 July 2019.

ADP 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*. 31 July 2019.

ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*. 31 July 2019.

ADP 7-0, *Training*. 29 April 2024.

Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 6-0.5, *Command Post Organization and Operations*. 1 March 2017.

ATP 6-22.1, *Providing Feedback: Counseling–Coaching–Mentoring*. 13 February 2024.

Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 600-25, *U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide*. 11 September 2023.

Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*. 21 March 2025.

FM 3-90, *Tactics*. 1 May 2023.

FM 4-0, *Sustainment Operations*. 14 August 2024.

FM 5-0, *Planning and Orders Production*. 4 November 2024.

FM 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*. 16 May 2022.

FM 6-22, *Developing Leaders*. 1 November 2022.

FM 7-0, *Training*. 14 June 2021.

Training Circular (TC) 6-0.2, *Training the Command and Control Warfighting Function for Battalions and Brigades*. 30 July 2025.

TC 7-21.13, *The Soldier's Guide*. 17 September 2025.

TC 7-22.7, *The Noncommissioned Officer Guide*. 19 August 2025.

Appendix A

This appendix provides four tactical vignettes designed for use in noncommissioned officer (NCO) and officer professional development. Each scenario presents a realistic, high-pressure situation where the actions—or inactions—of a command sergeant major (CSM) or operations sergeant major (SGM) have a direct and decisive impact on operational outcomes. Leaders can use these vignettes as a basis for staff exercises (STAFFEXs), tactical decision exercises (TDEs), or guided discussions to help leaders think critically about their roles in planning, execution, and sustainment during large-scale combat operations (LSCO). Use these to move beyond doctrinal theory and generate practical, "what would you do" conversations that build judgment and decision-making skills.

Vignette 1: The War Game Reality Check (Military Decision-Making Process–Course of Action Analysis)

Situation

A brigade staff is conducting a war game for a deliberate attack against a prepared enemy defense. The S-3 officer and his planners have developed a sound course of action (COA) that involves rapid, deep penetration by an armored battalion task force, followed by an infantry battalion to clear the remaining objectives. The fire support officer (FSO) has synchronized a massive suppression of enemy air defense and fire plan. The mood in the command post (CP) is optimistic; the staff's running estimates show the armored task force achieving its objectives well within the commander's desired timeline. The executive officer (XO), acting as the war-game facilitator, turns to the sustainment cell and asks for its input on the turn.

SGM/CSM's Action

The CSM, who has been quietly observing the war game and cross-referencing the COA sketch with his own notes, interjects. He does not challenge the maneuver plan directly. Instead, he asks a series of pointed questions directed at the brigade support battalion (BSB) commander and support operations (SPO) officer:

"The plan has Task Force (TF) Rock reaching Objective Lions, 40 kilometers deep, in 6 hours. That's a fast pace. My question is about the casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) plan for that lead element. The brigade medical officer's (MEDO's) overlay shows the ambulance exchange point (AXP) staying at the line of departure until the infantry battalion moves. If TF Rock's lead troop hits a smart minefield and takes 30 percent casualties, which is a realistic planning factor for a breach—how do we get those critically wounded Soldiers from the point of injury back to role 2 care? The dust-off window will be contested, and our ground ambulances will be 40 kilometers behind the fight. Have we war-gamed the 'D' in DOWS (Died of Wounds)?"

Impact and Lessons

The CSM's questions immediately shift the focus of the war game from a successful maneuver to a potential logistic catastrophe. This forces the staff members to confront the human dimension of their plan. The XO pauses the war game and the staff spends the next 30 minutes developing a trigger for jumping the AXP forward, pre-positioning a maintenance recovery team with the lead element, and adjusting the tempo of the advance to allow sustainment to keep pace. The final plan is less audacious on paper, but it is infinitely more realistic and survivable.

Leverage Point: The CSM's role in the military decision-making process (MDMP) is not to design the maneuver plan, but to be its most rigorous critic. By leveraging their experience to focus on the human dimension and sustainment realities, CSMs ground the staff's conceptual plan in tactical truth, preventing catastrophic failure during execution. They are the voice that asks not, "Can we do this?" but "Can we *sustain* this?"

Vignette 2: Walking the Seam Line (Execution–Offensive Breach)

Situation

A battalion is amid a combined arms breach. The support by fire (SBF) is effective, but the engineers are struggling to reduce the complex obstacle under heavy indirect fire. The enemy has the assault force, Bravo Company, pinned down just short of the breach lane and is taking casualties. The Bravo Company commander is focusing on the immediate fight, trying to direct his platoons and coordinate with the engineers. The battalion commander and S-3 officer are in the tactical command post (TAC), trying to manage the overall battle. The XO is running the main CP. The system is overloaded.

SGM/CSM's Action

The battalion CSM is not in the TAC or the main CP; his place is at the "point of friction." He has positioned himself at the combat trains command post (CTCP) where he can monitor the command and administration/logistics (A/L) networks (nets). He hears the Bravo Company first sergeant's (1SG's) increasingly desperate calls for more smoke and CASEVAC support for three urgent casualties. Cross-referencing the SBF plan, the CSM realizes the shifting smoke will mask the SBF position.

He gets on the command net: *"Panther 6, this is Panther 7. Bravo is taking casualties and is black on smoke. Its 1SG is requesting immediate CASEVAC. Also, smoke will mask SBF-1 in the next five minutes. We are about to lose suppression on the far side of the breach. Recommend we commit the reserve now to pass through Bravo or they will be decisively engaged."*

Impact and Lessons

The CSM's concise, ground-truth report cuts through the fog of war. It provides the commander with a real-time, unfiltered assessment he cannot get from a map. The commander immediately directs the reserve company to move, tasks the FSO to shift fires, and pushes the battalion surgeon to the CTCP to manage the mass casualty situation. The CSM's presence and assessment prevented the breach from failing and prevented Bravo Company's destruction. This is the embodiment of the phrase, "The Ops SGM sees the seams before they split. The CSM walks the seam line."

Leverage Point: CSMs' primary role in execution is to be the commander's senior sensor and problem solver. By positioning themselves at a critical sustainment and command and control (C2) node, they can synthesize information from multiple channels, anticipate friction, and provide the commander with the timely, accurate assessments needed to make critical decisions and maintain operational tempo.

Vignette 3: Enforcing the Process (Defense - Command Post Operations)

Situation

A brigade is in a defensive posture, anticipating an enemy attack within the next 12–24 hours. The brigade main CP is a hive of activity. The division just sent a series of intelligence reports

detailing a shift in the enemy's likely avenue of approach to the S-2 shop. The junior NCO at the intelligence desk logs the report and hands it to his officer, who is busy updating a different product. The battle captain sees the report, but a current logistics issue demands their attention. The reports exists in the CP, but nobody is processing or disseminating the information. A critical seam is developing.

SGM/CSM's Action

The operations SGM is monitoring the CP floor, her primary responsibility. She is not looking at the main map; she is observing the *process*. She sees the new intelligence report sitting on the desk and notices that nobody has updated the main enemy situational template (SITEMP) overlay. She sees the battle captain focused on a logistics status (LOGSTAT) report that is three hours old.

She does not yell. She walks over to the battle captain and asks quietly, *"Have you seen this intelligence summary? How does it affect our current defensive plan? Have you war-gamed this new avenue of approach? Have you alerted the 2nd Battalion that their western flank may now be the main effort?"* She then moves to the S-2 NCO and says, *"This SITEMP is stale. Your job is to ensure every chart in this command post (CP) reflects the most current intelligence. Get it updated, then take the new overlay to every staff section and brief them personally. I want confirmation from all of them within 30 minutes."*

Impact and Lessons

The Ops SGM's intervention forces the staff members to adhere to their own processes. They immediately integrate the new intelligence, adjust the plan, and issue a fragmentary order (FRAGORD) to the affected battalion. The Ops SGM did not provide the intelligence, and she did not make the command decision. She made the *system work*. She enforced the "process muscle memory" that the staff is supposed to have.

Leverage Point: Ops SGMs are the master of the staff process and guardian of the unit's operational rhythm. Their role is to enforce the standards of information management and synchronization within the CP. They ensure the right information gets to the right person at the right time, enabling staffs to think and commanders to decide. They are the ones who ensure the "engine room" of the headquarters runs at peak efficiency.

Beyond the Icons: The Human Element of Command in Large-Scale Combat

The modern battlefield is a paradox. It is a domain of unprecedented technological clarity, where commanders can see friendly and enemy icons move across a digital map with perfect fidelity. Yet, this clarity can be dangerously seductive. In the crucible of LSCO, where the friction of war is intense and the enemy is adaptive, victory will not be found in simply managing icons on a screen. It will be found through leadership, trust, and the leveraging of a command team's most powerful and experienced asset—its senior NCOs.

CSM and Ops SGM roles have evolved far beyond their traditional duties. They are not merely advisors or administrators; they are operational leaders who provide the critical human element that will help turn a technically sound plan into a victorious reality. The following story of two battalions, given the same mission but led by vastly different command teams, illustrates this truth with brutal clarity.

Vignette 4: A Tale of Two Defenses

The FRAGORD was remarkably simple and identical for two battalions holding the line: defend in place. The 1-88th and the 3-52nd Infantry Battalions occupied similar terrain and faced the same threat—a well-equipped enemy mechanized force known for its speed and aggression. The order was simple, but how each command team prepared for the fight tells a tale of two different outcomes.

The Smart Way: A Team-Based Defense

LTC Arkwright of the 1-88th read the order and immediately called for his command sergeant major, CSM Valerius, and his operations sergeant major, SGM Kael. Before the formal planning process began, the three met in Arkwright's cramped command vehicle.

"No PowerPoints yet," Arkwright started. "Just give me the ground truth. What are you both seeing and thinking?"

CSM Valerius, who spent the last 48 hours walking the line, spoke first. "Sir, the Soldiers are tired. They'll dig, but morale is shaky. They need to understand *why* this piece of dirt matters. Also, Charlie Company's sector is all rock; the obstacle plan the engineers briefed is a fantasy. We'll be lucky to get a strand of wire in."

SGM Kael, who was studying the enemy's patterns, pointed to a thin, dry riverbed on the map—a feature the staff's software flagged as impassable. "This wadi is the weak point," he said flatly. "The satellite imagery is old. My gut says a T-72 can get through there, and it leads straight to Alpha Company's flank. We're blind on that side."

Armed with this human intelligence, Arkwright led the formal planning. When the young S-3 proposed the defense, Kael was there to refine it, suggesting a shift in antitank assets to cover the wadi. Valerius spoke up and got the obstacle belt moved to a more realistic location. The final plan was not just technically sound; it was practical and grounded in reality.

During the preparation, Arkwright did not stay in the CP. He gave his sergeants major his intent and let them work. CSM Valerius moved from foxhole to foxhole, explaining the "why" to squad leaders and ensuring fields of fire were properly interlocking. SGM Kael spent his time with the company 1SGs and the medics, bypassing the official supply chain to make sure they reinforced the locations of casualty collection points and that they had the right equipment.

When the attack came, it was fast and violent. A squadron of enemy tanks exploited the wadi, just as Kael predicted. But instead of finding an open flank, they ran straight into a wall of Javelin and tube launched, optically tracked wire guided (TOW) missile fire. During the peak of the main attack, Arkwright's radio crackled. It was his CSM.

"Sir, this is Valerius. They're hammering our line, but it's holding. They hit Charlie's 2nd Platoon leader, but the platoon sergeant has control of the situation. We are winning this fight, but we need to shift our mortar fire 200 meters west."

Because Valerius was at the point of friction providing a calm, accurate assessment, and Kael ensured the logistics were in place, Arkwright was free to command. He was not glued to a screen, desperately trying to make sense of icons. He was able to direct his reserves and counterattack, confident his NCOs owned the close fight. The 1-88th held the line.

The Wrong Way: A Process-Based Defense

Down the road, LTC Sterling of the 3-52nd also received the order. A firm believer in process, he immediately kicked off the formal MDMP with his entire staff. His CSM, CSM Rourke, and his Ops SGM, SGM Gallo, stood in the back of the CP, observers rather than participants.

The S-3 presented a beautiful, color-coded plan generated by the C2 system. It was textbook perfect. CSM Rourke tried to interject. “Sir, that obstacle plan for Charlie Company… the ground is solid rock. My guys can’t dig in there.”

“We’re sticking to the analysis, sergeant major,” Sterling said, his eyes fixed on the screen. “Trust the process.” SGM Gallo, seeing the same dangerous wadi on the map, said nothing. He learned weeks ago they saw his practical experience as an unwelcomed disruption to a clean, digital plan.

LTC Sterling remained in the CP—a place he called “the cockpit.” To him, battle was a matter of managing icons on a screen. He tasked CSM Rourke with getting a 100-percent accountability report on sensitive items—a job for a supply clerk. He sent SGM Gallo to inventory the engineer assets. He wasted the immense tactical experience of his two most senior NCOs on administrative errands.

CSM Rourke returned from his task and tried again. “Sir, the Soldiers have no confidence in their positions. They feel exposed.”

“Noted,” LTC Sterling replied, moving a friendly icon on his map. “Tell them to meet the timeline. The plan is sound.”

When the attack came, the enemy did not follow the plan on Sterling’s screen. They bypassed the ineffective obstacles and poured a column of armor through the wadi, collapsing Alpha Company’s flank in minutes. LTC Sterling’s screen lit up with red icons.

“Alpha 6, what’s your status?!” he yelled into his headset, with the panic in his voice of a man who just had his certainty shattered. The reply was a burst of static.

He looked around the CP for an experienced NCO to give him a clear picture, but they were gone. CSM Rourke was pinned down with a handful of survivors, trying to mount a desperate defense. SGM Gallo was at the supply depot, his tactical mind wasted on counting rolls of concertina wire.

LTC Sterling had a perfect, high-definition view of his battalion’s destruction and no real understanding of why it was happening. He followed the process perfectly, right into disaster. The 3-52nd broke.

Anatomy of Success and Failure

The story of the 1-88th and the 3-52nd is a lesson in the difference between managing a process and leading a team. LTC Sterling failed because he trusted his screens more than his people. LTC Arkwright succeeded because he built a command team that leveraged the unique strengths of his senior NCOs, transforming their experience into a decisive combat advantage.

Commander’s Choice: Trust vs. Process. The fundamental difference was leadership philosophy. LTC Arkwright chose to lead people; LTC Sterling chose to manage icons. LTC Arkwright understood the MDMP is a tool, not a substitute for human judgment. By seeking his

NCOs' input *before* the formal process began, he grounded his staff's planning in reality. He empowered his subordinates with his intent and trusted them to execute, creating a resilient and adaptive organization. LTC Sterling, by contrast, saw his NCOs' experience as an inconvenient variable in a clean process. He marginalized them, squandered their talent, and in doing so, created a brittle organization that shattered at the first touch of real combat.

CSM's Role: Walking the Line

CSM Valerius demonstrated the modern CSM's primary function in LSCO—to be the commander's senior sensor and problem solver. He did this by—

1. **Providing Ground Truth:** He gave the commander an unvarnished assessment of morale and the tactical reality of the terrain, which directly shaped a more feasible plan.
2. **Extending Command Influence:** He moved among the Soldiers, reinforcing the commander's intent and ensuring they met the standards. He did not just inspect; he explained the "why," building the confidence and cohesion of the force.
3. **Being at the Point of Friction:** During the fight, he provided a calm and accurate assessment that allowed his commander to make a critical decision. He was not a spectator in the tactical operations center (TOC); he was a participant in the fight.

Ops SGM's Role: Driving the Engine Room

SGM Kael demonstrated the critical, often misunderstood, role of the Ops SGM. He is the master mechanic of the staff and the commander's chief tactical analyst. He did this by—

1. **Challenging Assumptions:** His "gut feeling" about the wadi, born from years of experience, was a piece of human intelligence no algorithm could provide. He had the courage to challenge the digital analysis, preventing a catastrophic failure.
2. **Driving the MDMP:** He was an active participant in the planning process, helping refine the S-3's plan to ensure it was synchronized and executable. He is the NCO who ensures the staff's processes produce a quality product.
3. **Overseeing Execution:** He ensured the "beans and bullets" were in place, managing the details of sustainment and casualty support so the CSM could focus on the forward fight, and the commander could focus on command.

Conclusion: Forging the Human Weapon System

In the end, technology is only a tool. A map, whether paper or digital, is not the terrain. The most sophisticated C2 system is useless without the human judgment to interpret its data and the leadership to act on it.

The commander, CSM, and Ops SGM form a special collaborative system that is more powerful than any technology. The commander provides the vision and intent. The CSM provides the ground truth and extends that intent to the Soldiers. The Ops SGM ensures the staff's processes can turn that intent into a synchronized, sustainable plan. To sideline any member of this team is to fight with one hand tied behind your back.

The lesson for every leader is clear. Trust people, empower NCOs, and lead Soldiers, not just icons. In the brutal reality of the next fight, that will be the difference between holding the line and breaking.

Appendix B

This appendix contains a confidential self-assessment tool[17] for battalion and brigade commanders. Its purpose is to provide a framework for leaders to reflect on how effectively they are integrating their command sergeants major (CSMs) and operations (Ops) sergeants major (SGMs) into the unit's planning, training, and execution cycles. The questions come from the best practices and doctrinal principles covered in this article. This tool is not a scorecard, but a catalyst for professional dialogue. Honest self-assessment can help commanders identify potential gaps and opportunities, strengthen their command team dynamic, and ultimately build a more cohesive, agile, and lethal organization.

The Command Team Effectiveness Assessment Tool

Purpose: This instrument is a confidential self-assessment tool for battalion commanders to reflect on how effectively they are integrating their CSMs and Ops SGMs into their unit's operational cycle. Honest answers provide insight into potential gaps and opportunities to strengthen the command team dynamic.

Instructions: For each statement, rate yourself on the following scale. Be objective and base your answers on recent actions and established routines, not on future intentions.

- **1 = Never**
- **2 = Rarely**
- **3 = Sometimes**
- **4 = Often**
- **5 = Always**

Section 1: Planning and Preparation

Question ID	Statement	Rating (1-5)
P1	I include my CSM and Ops SGM in my initial guidance sessions *before* the formal military decision-making process (MDMP) begins.	
P2	During MDMP, I explicitly solicit my CSM's assessment of the plan's impact on Soldier load, morale, and sustainability.	
P3	I specifically ask my Ops SGM to "red team" our courses of action, looking for enemy avenues of approach or logistic weak points the staff may have missed.	
P4	My CSM and Ops SGM feel empowered to speak up and challenge assumptions during planning, even if it contradicts the staff's initial analysis.	
P5	I use my CSM and Ops SGM to conduct a "reality check" on the final plan, walking the ground (physically or virtually) to ensure what looks effective on a map is feasible for a Soldier.	

[17] Developed by Michael Robinson and Ron Pruyt. Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL).

P6	Before publishing an operation order (OPORD), I have my CSM and Ops SGM review the concept of the operation to ensure it is clear, concise, and executable at the lowest level.	
P7	My Ops SGM is a key player in managing the battalion's operational calendar and long-range training plan, ensuring it is synchronized and deconflicted.	
Section 1 Total		/35

Section 2: Training

Question ID	Statement	Rating (1-5)
T1	My CSM takes the lead in designing and executing the battalion's noncommissioned officer (NCO) development program, and I provide the top-down support and resources to make it effective.	
T2	My Ops SGM is actively involved in mentoring staff NCOs and company first sergeants (1SGs) in the art and science of operations and training management.	
T3	I leverage their combined experience to add realism and friction to training exercises (e.g., unexpected casualties, logistic failures, or opposing force [OPFOR] surprises).	
T4	In after action reviews (AARs), I ensure the CSM and Ops SGM have a prominent role, providing candid feedback on Soldier/leader performance and plan effectiveness.	
T5	I task my CSM with ensuring fundamental Soldier skills (e.g., marksmanship and first aid) are up to standard before moving to collective training.	
Section 2 Total		/25

Section 3: Execution

Question ID	Statement	Rating (1-5)
E1	I give my CSM and Ops SGM clear roles and responsibilities during operations, rather than having them simply shadow me.	
E2	I dispatch my CSM to the point of friction to provide me with an unvarnished, "ground truth" assessment that I trust as much as a report from a company commander.	

E3	My Ops SGM has a defined role within the CP (e.g., managing the deep fight or planning future operations) that leverages their experience beyond simply monitoring radios.	
E4	I rely on my CSM to monitor the "human element" during execution—assessing fatigue, morale, and leadership effectiveness in real time.	
E5	When the plan changes, I communicate my updated intent to my CSM and Ops SGM first, trusting them to help disseminate it through the NCO support channel.	
Section 3 Total		/25

Section 4: Command Climate and Relationship

Question ID	Statement	Rating (1-5)
C1	We have a scheduled, recurring command team synchronization that is informal and allows candid discussion on any topic.	
C2	I have created an environment where my CSM and Ops SGM can, and do, privately disagree with me without fear of reprisal.	
C3	I publicly support my CSM's and Ops SGM's decisions to the staff and company command teams, reinforcing their authority and role.	
C4	I use my senior NCOs as mentors for my junior officers and company command teams, actively pairing them up for professional development.	
Section 4 Total		/20

Scoring and Interpretation

Add the scores from all four sections. The maximum score is 105.

- **90–105: Highly Effective Command Team.** Your relationship is built on mutual trust and respect. You instinctively leverage the full spectrum of your senior NCOs' experience. Your battalion is likely characterized by a high degree of empowerment, shared understanding, and operational agility. **Action:** Continue to refine your system and use your team to mentor the next generation of leaders.
- **70–89: Generally Effective, with Room for Improvement.** You have a functional and positive relationship, but you may not be maximizing your CSM and Ops SGM's potential. You might be underutilizing one more than the other or primarily engaging them during execution rather than early in planning. **Action:** Review your lowest-scoring section. Identify two or three specific questions (e.g., P1, E2) and make a conscious effort to change your behavior. Schedule a candid conversation with your team about how you can better integrate them.

- **Below 70: Significant Gaps in Utilization.** Your command team is likely not operating as a cohesive unit. You may be viewing your CSM and Ops SGM in traditional, limited roles (e.g., "beans and bullets," discipline only) or keeping them outside your decision-making cycle. This likely creates a lack of shared understanding and limits your battalion's effectiveness. **Action:** A command team reset is necessary. Start with an open conversation about roles, responsibilities, and expectations (yours and theirs). Use this assessment tool as a guide for that discussion. Focus first on building relationships and trust (section 4), as this is the foundation for everything else.

CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED
10 Meade Avenue, Building 50
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1350

U.S. ARMY COMBINED ARMS COMMAND

COMBINED ARMS COMMAND - TRAINING

NO. 26-1127
April 2026

Approved for Public Release
Distribution Unlimited