

# When new NCOs report, are you... Feeding them to the Wolves?

By 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Robert L. Phifer

Sgt. Doe recently arrived at Fort Bragg. He has been in the Army for three years and has attended jump school, although he has never been on jump status. In his previous assignment in Germany, he completed PLDC and correspondence courses. Now he's at the division replacement detachment, thinking about what lies ahead. A couple of blocks away, his new unit has been notified of his pending arrival.

A popular expression in Doe's battalion is, "The train is moving faster than ever, and it doesn't look like it's going to slow down." Doe faces a hectic pace when he reports. A better expression might be that the unit will be "feeding him to the wolves."

When he does report in, he's briefed, then it's out of the airplane and into the foxhole. He's constantly being corrected because he doesn't know unit SOPs and standards. At the initial manifest, most of his team's equipment is not properly rigged for an airborne operation. In the motor pool, no parts are on order for his Humvee because he didn't know the ordering procedures. In the field, it's discovered that he's never led a team tactical movement and his team is lost for several hours.

Unfortunately, many new leaders don't grasp their jobs until they repeat mistakes several times. They sometimes fall prey to stress and react negatively to otherwise simple tasks.

Such a scenario could have – and probably has – taken place on many Army posts. Every unit has some requirements or ways of doing things that must be passed on to new leaders.

Certain integration mechanisms should have been put into action when Sgt. Doe was still at the replacement detachment. FM 22-100, Military Leadership, calls this "Developmental Leadership Assessment;" FM 25-101, Battle Focused Training, calls it "Leader Development;" and the 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment calls it the Unit Leader Development Program (ULDP). With the idea of putting needed information into the system, this article is designed to share with fellow NCOs our method of ULDP.

Why have ULDP? There are several reasons. According to



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*When your new sergeant arrives, will he or she be left holding the bags? Or will he or she be welcomed into the unit and given a full orientation as to his or her duties? One way to ensure success is through the Unit Leader Development Program.*

FM 25-101, one reason is to develop junior leaders. Another is that such a program feeds the hunger of motivated leaders who lack experience when they arrive at new units. Equally important is that units need continuity when leaders rotate. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan lists leader development as one of the six Army imperatives.

What are the objectives of ULDP? FM 100-5, Operations, states that we need competent and confident leaders. Operational effectiveness is enhanced by development of the nine leadership competencies. Assessment and positive feedback are important to this process because they also help NCOs recognize their strengths and weaknesses. An overly simplified model of this process can be described as involving assessment, feedback, training, reinforcement, education, experience and selection for advancement.

A dynamic leader development system includes three equally important pillars: institutional training, self-development and operational assignments.

Unit leader development also involves three phases:

reception and integration, basic skills development and advanced development and sustainment. This means that the program is a process that spans a Soldier's entire tour of duty with a unit. It also means that NCOs in the unit share responsibilities to make ULDP effective; NCO Professional Development (NCOPD) is an excellent starting point for this process.

Now, let's take Doe through our process of receiving new leaders.

Before he even arrives, his records are reviewed by the battalion commander and CSM. They determine where he should be placed, considering factors such as a need for staff time or troop time. After an interview at battalion level, he is told of his assignment.

The CSM then issues a formal ULDP packet; it includes a schedule of required assessments and goals. Key staff NCOs brief the new sergeant on their responsibilities and how they work with the chain of command. The CSM gives a class on the profession of arms and then gives Doe a written history of the unit, traditions of the regiment and a copy of the battalion Mission Essential Task List (METL). Doe is then introduced to his first sergeant.

Its top's responsibility to monitor the results of Doe's assessments – such as skills, knowledge and attitudes for Doe's skill level – and to send reports to the CSM. The first sergeant explains the importance of these assessments in a positive way. He also gives Doe a calendar with assessment milestones. He further explains that assessments will focus on the nine leadership competencies: communication, supervision, teaching and counseling, soldier-team development, technical and tactical proficiency, decision making, planning, use of available systems and professional ethics. Before leaving this meeting, Doe fills out a leader development counseling form and receives a copy of the company METL and NCOPD.

During the reception and integration phase, Doe concentrates on those tasks which the command has determined are



Photo by Dave Crozier

***Before your new sergeant arrives, his or her records should be reviewed to ensure they are placed in the unit position appropriate for their skill and experience as a leader.***

important. Examples of areas which units might stress include fitness, MOS tasks, common tasks, NCOERs, writing awards, etc.

At the platoon level, Doe receives a copy of the platoon's collective tasks, the squad's collective tasks and the supporting Soldier/leader individual tasks. During this 30-day phase, he also receives an initial NCOER counseling.

At the end of this phase, Doe is counseled. His performance is reviewed and an action plan for improvement is developed.

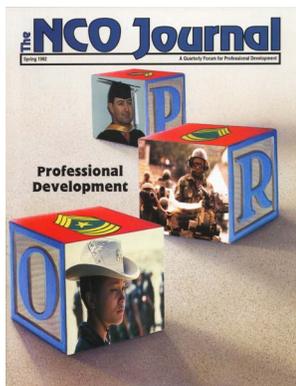
Now Doe enters the basic skills development phase, using his action plan to bring him in line with standards. If warranted, he is placed on the order of merit list for the Basic Skills Education Program. During this phase, he's assessed on METL proficiency, collective tasks, Soldier/leader individual tasks, weapons qualification, soldier-team development and his ability to teach preliminary marksmanship. This phase typically lasts about 60 days, but Doe remains in this phase until all standards are achieved. A follow-on counseling is provided and Doe is

ready for his next phase.

The advanced development and sustainment phase helps Doe maintain and improve proficiency in those tasks he can do or master. He's then assigned additional duties, such as key control NCO, equal opportunity NCO and safety NCO. He attends developmental and technical courses. He receives assistance with preparing a self-development program, based on the skills he needs or wishes to develop. This phase includes correspondence courses and professional reading. It will continue for the duration of Doe's tour with the unit.

Doe has now been fully integrated into the unit. He has been challenged and has proven his skill and will.

The ULDP — actively supporting the three pillars of leader development — will result in a competent and confident leader who knows his job and who seeks a higher level of excellence throughout his time in the Army.



*This article is reprinted in its entirety to show that unit-level sponsorship is important and hasn't changed much in 12 years. At the time of this printing, Phifer was the first sergeant of Co. D, 1/325th AIR, Fort Bragg, N.C. This article originally appeared in the Spring 1992 issue. For more information on the Army sponsorship program refer to AR 600-8-8.*

