

Letter to the Editor



As a recipient of two Chief of Signal Plaques, the Silver Order of Mercury, the title of "most published author in the history of the Army Communicator" and a lifelong member of the Signal Regiment, I was very pleased to see Nick Spinelli's paper in the last Army Communicator, titled "Signal Soldiers prepared for certification and licensing opportunities."

I have been advocating this very thing on the pages of Army Communicator, for many years. Unfortunately, my beloved Signal Corps has partially missed the boat when it comes to certification and licensing opportunities for Signal Soldiers. Specifically, the certifications listed in the article, are only in the fields of computers, computer networking, and automation.

Not a single program of instruction, license, or certification listed covers what is now and will be forever the critical backbone of the Signal Corps which is telecommunications by means of radio, television, cable, fiber optic and other systems. This is not to say that such certifications and licensing opportunities in these areas don't exist because they certainly do! They just seem to have been totally ignored in this instance in favor of the automation/computer interests. This is wrong and makes no sense if the Signal Center of Excellence truly plans to support an Army that has an on-the-move mindset. Automation, computers and their networking are very important but are not the only reason the Signal Corps exists.

What Signal leaders must consider along with current effort in computers and automation is to support programs of instruction and opportunities that will lead to certifications in critical areas such as:

- Radio operating procedures*
- Radio system design, and engineering practice*
- Electronic circuits and components*
- Signal processing and emissions*
- Radio installation design*
- Lasers*
- Radio physics and radio wave propagation*
- Electrical power and system principles*
- Practical system and circuit technology*
- Antennas, feed lines, waveguides*
- Fiber optics*

Certification in all of these areas is readily available at very low cost from our own federal government with numerous commercial sources of instruction and training materials. Passing of the certification requirements will result in the widely recognized industry required Federal Communications Commission license or certification broken into the following categories:

- FCC 1st Class Radiotelegraph Operators Certificate*
- FCC 3rd Class Radiotelegraph Operators Certificate*
- Marine Radio Operator License*
- FCC Radar Endorsement*
- FCC 2nd Class Radiotelegraph Operators Certificate*
- General Radiotelephone Operators License*
- GMDSS Radio Maintainer's License*
- Global Maritime Distress and Safety System Operator License*

Having these Federal Government licenses and certificates will obviously add to any Signal Corpsman's body of professional knowledge whether they be officer, warrant officer, or enlisted and should be part of the criteria for promotion and ratings.

Signal Soldiers in radio/electronics career fields need to be treated exactly like those in the automation/computer career field are now being treated (with commercial certifications) according to Mr. Spinelli's article.

The bottom line of this letter to the editor is this, for many years and for many reasons the Signal Corps has avoided recognizing that Signal Soldiers need professional education and proof of technical competency beyond that provided by the Signal School.

It has become very clear particularly with the adoption of commercial equipment to accomplish the Signal mission that education and certification of Signal Soldiers by government and industry agencies outside the army now needs to happen or our personnel will not have creditability in the world of technology OR with our own leadership. This will benefit the army by providing a more creditable signal force to the combat commander and benefit the Signal Soldier by providing widely recognized credentials that will aid career development both in and out of the service.

The Signal Regiment needs to expand the license and certification effort begun in the computer/automation field to include all of telecommunications (via the existing FCC structure) or we will fail to provide the best to our army and to the members of the Regiment. The means to do it are there, the cost is low so let's get moving.

LTC (Ret) David M. Fiedler