



Speech File Service



Prepared by the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, DA

Remarks by
General Carl E. Vuono
Chief of Staff, USA
at the
USA Sergeants Major Academy Dedication Ceremony
12 November 1987

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Thank you Sergeant Major Bevins.

I am honored and pleased to be here with you to help dedicate this splendid facility.

Before I begin, I want to recognize some very important people in the audience who made this building possible. If we put up a sign in front of this building saying who deserves the credit, at the top of the list would be the names of some distinguished sergeants major sitting in front of me. Some of them have been sergeant major of the Army, some of them have been command sergeant major of this academy, and two of them have held both positions. That sign should also include the names of all the top NCOs in this room, active and reserve components, and retired as well. You are the ones who have built this building by building what it stands for — the U.S. Army non-commissioned officer corps.

Today is your day — a historic day for the Sergeants' Major Academy, for the non-commissioned officer corps, and for the Army. This spacious, permanent building symbolizes our commitment to the Army's non-commissioned officer education system — the system that supports our professional NCO corps.

In the past fifteen years, the Army has built some notable successes. Given the mission of creating a volunteer Army, we have not only filled the ranks, but we have filled them with the highest quality men and women in our history. Faced with the challenge of a growing threat and rapidly developing technology, we have conceived and published the Army's dynamic airland battle doctrine. Our training, at the individual, team and unit level, is the best ever. We are proceeding with the most extensive peacetime modernization in our history. And we have great leaders at every level.

Today's Army has great momentum, but the success that most pleases me is the building and strengthening of the Army NCO corps.

Students of history can trace the growing and evolving role of the American non-commissioned officer. For example, in the American Revolution, our Army employed the linear tactics of the European armies of that time. Sergeants performed the essential job of "file-closer." They kept the long lines steady and enforced fire discipline in combat.

By the time of the war with Mexico, the formation had thinned, and units wheeled and rallied on the colors carried in front. At the same time, the job of carrying the colors was transferred from an officer to the color sergeant, who with his guard of corporals, was at the focus of attention. As time passed, inventions such as the rifled musket and the machine gun led to progressively more dispersed tactical formations. That trend continues today, and at each step, we find NCOs assuming more and more independent

responsibility. The constant in our Army's history has been the indispensable role of skilled, courageous sergeants, both in battlefield victory and in peacetime preparedness.

Our past also includes the memory of the early Seventies, when the NCO corps, like the rest of the Army, was hard-pressed to retain its pride and its purpose. At that time, despite ever-present resource constraints, the Army made an investment in its future. We went back to basics to establish standards for NCO professionalism, and we rebuilt the NCO education system.

Schooling for sergeants is not new. In the nineteenth century the Army had technical schools for field artillery sergeants, medical specialists and signaleers, to name a few. The seventh Army NCO Academy in Germany traces its origins to a school opened by the Second Constabulary Brigade in Munich in 1949.

The difference in the Seventies was this: for the first time in our history, we began to put in place a progressive and sequential NCO education system. It wasn't easy. Money and personnel spaces were tight, as they always are, but we stuck with the plan. The purpose of that system was to build NCO trust and confidence through schooling — schooling to raise tactical and technical competence and firmly embed the essential values of integrity and professionalism throughout the corps.

Today, halfway from that past in the early Seventies to the future of the year 2000, the investment is paying off. Army sergeants are assuming responsibility, setting the example, and enforcing standards. Many efforts have contributed to this success, and certainly the sergeants major here today deserve much of the credit. It has taken time to put all the pieces of the education system in place, but we have the career courses of PLDC, BNCOC, ANCOC and the sergeants' major course. We also have functional courses, like the first sergeants' courses here and in Munich, and the operations and intelligence course along with the personnel and logistics course soon to begin here at Ft. Bliss.

Building the NCO corps, like building the Army, is a job that is never finished. Today, Army readiness is high, and we have superb NCO leadership. To continue the success story, we must maintain that current momentum and shape the successful Army of the future. Recognizing the essential contribution of NCO schooling to the future of our Army, we shall never take the fatal shortcut and cut back on these courses. Besides coming here today to dedicate this building, I wanted to make you that promise.

This fine facility will be the home of the capstone of the NCO education system. Just as sergeants major set the example of NCO tactical and technical competence, caring and leadership, the Sergeants Major Academy is the model for U.S. Army NCO courses

worldwide. Here you set the standard. The Academy is an essential piece in the progressive pattern of education and experience that produces our finest NCO leaders. Here's what that pattern does for the developing sergeant and for the Army.

First and foremost, NCO schooling must develop tactical and technical competence. As individuals, sergeants must be totally skilled. Our Army cannot function for a minute without the expertise of its sergeants of every grade and specialty. Tactical and technical expertise is more than knowing how to do the job. It is the basis for respect and authority. It save lives on the battlefield. It is a source of pride, trust and confidence. If we are competent — we will be confident.

Training in school is just one part of developing professional expertise. To be fully competent, every NCO must stay informed on the latest issues and constantly seek self-improvement in professional and personal education. The Army's professional NCOs take advantage of experience in units to learn beyond what the manuals teach and in turn to teach the soldiers they lead.

The most important part of tactical and technical competence is knowing our doctrine, how we plan to fight. The NCO's role in carrying out his responsibilities is to translate doctrine into tactics, techniques and procedures. It's integrating different weapon systems, arms and services to generate combat power.

Modern warfare will put the burden of decision lower in the ranks than it has ever been before. Squads and crews will be on a dispersed, decentralized battlefield. In the changing circumstances of battle, the young leader must be able to act on his own initiative to carry out the commander's intent. And it doesn't matter if we are talking about a tank or howitzer crew, or an ambulance, or a maintenance contact team. Soldiers need leaders who know how to fight and how to make the right decisions.

The way we build that competence and trust, the way we learn about translating doctrine into battle field actions, is training. You've heard me say it before: training is the Army's number one priority.

Training success starts with knowing our doctrine so you know what we are trying to do. Also, NCOs must learn through schooling and experience how to plan training. That means knowing how to identify the tasks that a unit should train. It means knowing how to bring together the resources needed to conduct training. It means knowing the standards and being able to assess training performance. It means knowing how to get the biggest payoff from the newer facilities and devices available for training, such as combat training centers and electronic simulations.

NCOs and officers are partners in training. Together they plan, conduct and assess training. The NCO has particular responsibilities at the squad and crew level, where individual skills come together in teams and small unit actions. Furthermore, NCOs and officers are partners in setting and enforcing standards, both in training and on the battlefield. We learn these training tools in our schools and hone them in our units.

The challenge of modernization is significant to the NCO corps. But our Army will never stop modernizing. That means more than just equipment. It also means changing doctrine, organizations and training. Schools help the modernization process by teaching NCO leaders how to fight and maintain new equipment and how the modernization process works. Informed NCOs can make change smoother for soldiers, for units, and for the Army.

Finally, schooling prepares NCOs for assuming increased leadership responsibilities. As I said before, tactical and technical competence is the starting point for leadership. Education and experience should also put in place the following parts of the leadership knowledge base.

First, a leader must be a teacher and a coach to his troops. Every leader in the Army is also an instructor. As NCOs move up the ladder of rank and responsibility, they must be role models for the sergeants who follow them. Leader development takes place throughout the Total Army. Sharing knowledge and experience is the greatest legacy you can leave to subordinates.

Second, a leader must be able to listen to subordinates. People want to know that the leader is willing to listen. Leaders also learn by listening. You must listen to them if you are to know their needs, their perception, and their competence.

Third, a leader must care for his soldiers and their families. The most important factor in caring is commitment. Caring is not a "nice-to-have" item that fits if there is enough time at the end of the day. Caring is at the heart of everything a leader does for his subordinates.

Caring for families is more than programs from Washington. It is a climate of concern in the unit that welcomes the new soldier and his family and watches out for them as long as they are assigned. I am dedicated to continue the great momentum we have in our family programs — it improves readiness.

A caring leader respects the dignity of his soldiers, because he knows that pride and initiative are essential to battlefield success. Respect for the individual is at the foundation of our Army, just as it is at the foundation of our nation.

Caring doesn't mean coddling. In fact, the most important form of caring is preparing soldiers to fight and win on the battlefield. That requires tough, demanding training. To succeed, soldiers need the right skills, the right equipment, and the right leaders.

Caring is setting the example. That's the role of Army leaders and particularly of sergeants major. We set the example by competence, knowing our business by knowing and enforcing standards. We set the example by having a spirit that says we can do what we're asked. We set the example by our personal integrity, making our word our bond.

Non-commissioned officers are the standard bearers of our Army. In our earliest history, the units flags they carried provided guidance and inspiration in the midst of battle. Today, competent and courageous sergeants sustain the standards for warfighting excellence throughout the Army.

This afternoon, we dedicate this academic building of the Sergeants Major Academy. I believe we should also dedicate our NCO education system to the American soldiers of the future, because they need and deserve no less than the finest NCO corps in the world.

MONTHLY UPDATE

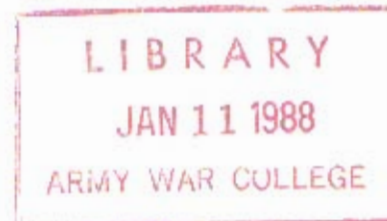
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A BULLETIN OF THE OFFICE, CHIEF OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY, WASHINGTON, DC 20310-1510