THE NCO JOURNAL

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LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

The NCOs who help the families of the fallen

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On the Cover

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Michael Mullen, Brig. Gen. Michael Harrison, Navy Rear Adm. James Shannon, and Air Force Col. Manson Morris salute the coffin of a fallen service member July 8, 2009, during a dignified transfer at Dover Air Force Base, Del.

Photo by Benjamin Faske

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THE NCO JOURNAL

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From the CSM

Garrison life and leadership: Are we ready for it?

By Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola
U.S. Army Installation Management Command

The Army has realized huge successes in the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters of operations. We have done this through the selflessness, sacrifice, tenacity and capacity of our uniformed Soldiers, our families and our great civilian workforce. We have welcomed far more Soldiers home this year, with ever-increasing dwell time, than at any other point during the past seven to eight years.

Now these young Soldiers, after having invested themselves in sustained combat operations over the course of one, three, five or even more combat deployments, express disaffection and frustration at the prospect of returning to garrison life. Many contemplate leaving the military rather than face what they perceive to be a less rewarding, exciting and challenging future. The situation is exacerbated by some senior officers and enlisted leaders who profess that we must not "go back to doing business the way we used to."

If you wanted to be a leader in this Army, you said, in effect, you wanted to be responsible for human life. If you thought otherwise, you thought wrong.

So we have two apparently unrelated perspectives expressed by senior and junior Army leaders that actually have everything to do with each other. If we fail to acknowledge the capacity that resides in our deployed formations and the Soldiers within their ranks, we raise questions about the training and development processes that have brought much of the success we have experienced during this period of sustained hostilities. On the other hand, if we fail to adequately articulate the unlimited reward to be gained by investing oneself in the development of our next generation, we fail to manifest in the minds of present and future leadership the true reward of service in our Army.

A great many profound and positive changes have taken place in the Army during the past 10 years. We are a smarter Army. We are a better-equipped Army. We are a far more responsive and agile force. We have quantified and qualified the programs and services necessary to care for ourselves and our families (at home and while deployed). Finally, and most importantly, we have accrued a vast amount of insight and experience in treating and caring for our emotionally and physically wounded and the families of our fallen.

If we have the courage and conviction to separate fact from fiction, I contend we can clearly see that which has served us well in the past, that which we ought to retain, and that which has increased the capacity and resilience of the force (Soldiers, families and civilians) and ought to be embraced now and in the future.

We have in our ranks three generations of Soldiers who have only known this reality: train, deploy, fight, redeploy, reintegrate, rebuild, train, revalidate, deploy, fight, etc. Those three generations have endured considerable stress and hardship, while simultaneously participating in a seemingly unlimited, ongoing national investment in defense and homeland security in the name of fighting terrorism. That investment amounted to more than $1 trillion during the past four years in the Army alone.

Over the same period of time, we have raised three generations of young troopers who have seen the manifestation or enhancement of family support services included in the Army Family Covenant. They've experienced an unprecedented level of local community support as embodied in the Army Community Covenant and seen expansion and enhancement of quality-of-life initiatives, including Survivor Outreach Services, Residential Communities Initiative and the First Sergeants' Barracks Program, to name but a few.

And finally, we have three generations of troopers who have seen the ranks of our civilian and contracted workforce swell in order to disencumber our expeditionary forces of various garrison duties so they could better prepare for and then deploy into our combat theaters.

We as a nation now find ourselves confronted with a national debt in excess of $14 trillion, much of which is attributable to our protracted commitment to the Global War on Terrorism. We cannot continue to do business as usual, literally and figuratively speaking. As the civilian workforce begins to shrink under congressionally mandated spending reductions, we are now in the process of assessing and reintroducing Soldiers into many facets of our garrison operations.

History shows us that after every great conflict in which we committed large portions of our Army, we have ultimately withdrawn back onto our garrisons and allowed the nation to redirect its wealth to other critical programs, or pay back the debt it has accrued as a result of sustained combat. That time on our installations is used to absorb lessons learned from the previous conflict and retrain ourselves for the next time the nation calls. As we have done throughout our history, we once again will do.

Where we had large numbers of Department of the Army and contracted security guards controlling installation access, we

will now see greater numbers of Soldiers once again manning our gates. That this concerns some makes me, for one, scratch my head. We as Soldiers guard and secure ourselves, our installations (at home and abroad), our bases, our outposts, our patrol bases, our forward lines of troops, our flanks, etc. Guarding and securing is not a waste of time; it is a fundamental duty that we as guardians of the republic have done and will continue to do. Seeing Soldiers at our gates ought to remind everyone of our charge as selfless servants who stand at the frontiers.

Where we've seen large numbers of civilians — working in our dining facilities and military personnel offices; patrolling the streets of our installations with Department of Defense Police; cutting grass and cleaning the areas where we live, work, and train; processing and training our newest recruits; managing our barracks spaces; operating our ranges and training facilities — we'll see ever-increasing numbers of Soldiers performing those duties. These demands are not new to our Army, and they are not an attempt to deliberately, callously or cold-heartedly place a devoted civilian employee on the unemployment. Instead, they are a fiscal imperative, and something our Army has done repeatedly during the course of its 236-year history.

That we find ourselves confronted with a fundamentally different fiscal reality does not mean we will casually terminate the litany of programs that have sustained our Soldiers and families during this era of persistent conflict. What it does mean is our senior leaders will have to make some tough decisions on what programs and activities need to continue intact, which we can combine with other programs, and which we will scale back or terminate with acceptable risk.

Photo by Bill Murray

Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola, IMCOM command sergeant major, and the Fort Sam Houston Army Support Activity Color Guard await orders during the IMCOM Headquarters uncasing ceremony Oct. 5, 2010, in San Antonio, Texas.

In this new, more garrison-centric reality, we are reviving some important training opportunities that languished during the years of intense deployments. The potential will once again exist for a noncommissioned officer in the generating or deployable force to grab a detail of Soldiers in the wee hours of the morning, move to a range and establish it in preparation for a day of training. This activity is training in its own right, and it satisfies two requirements. First, it reduces cost, and second, it imbues the noncommissioned officer and troopers with the knowledge necessary to establish these training venues in deployed theaters. That we'll once again have noncommissioned officers training individual augmentees or units destined for deployment is not just a product of fiscal limitation, it's what we sergeants do. We train Soldiers, and the only way to get good and remain good at it is to do it, do it right and do it repeatedly.

To those who are either considering or have decided to separate when confronted with extended periods in-garrison, I say if you're determined to depart the Army regardless of my perspective or the collective wisdom of even greater leaders in our military, I thank you for your service, your sacrifice and your selflessness, and wish you well in all your future endeavors. If you're sitting on the proverbial fence as it relates to future service in a fundamentally different operating environment — in-garrison — I say these two things: Nothing worth doing is easy or glamorous; and, from those to whom much is given, much is expected and much is required. You may have seen the relevance, as I did, in all you were engaged in our theaters of operation. You may have been determined to deploy in an effort to care for the men and women under your charge. You may have been committed to the fight for no greater reason than the fact that you gave your word.

Whatever may have added substance or satisfaction to your service to this Army, there is yet tremendous satisfaction to be found in shaping the hearts and minds of our youth — the next generation of young troopers. If you thought it was fulfilling saving and securing the lives and livelihood of an Iraqi or Afghan

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Odierno assumes responsibility as the Army's 38th chief of staff

By Army News Service

Gen. Raymond T. Odierno was sworn in Sept. 7 as the Army's 38th chief of staff during a ceremony on Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va., near the Pentagon.

"I am humbled and honored to serve as the 38th chief of staff of the Army," Odierno told the crowd.

"Over the last 10 years, our Army has proven itself in, arguably, the most difficult environment this nation has ever faced. Our leaders at every level have displayed unparalleled ingenuity, flexibility and adaptability. Our Soldiers have displayed mental and physical toughness and courage under fire.

"They have transformed the Army into the most versatile, agile, rapidly deployable and sustainable strategic land force in the world. I am proud to serve in your ranks, filled by great men and women who willingly serve our country."

Odierno now takes on responsibility for training, equipping, maintaining and sustaining an Army of more than half a million Soldiers.

Odierno graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1976 with a commission in field artillery. During more than 34 years of service, he commanded units at every echelon, from platoon to corps, with duty in Germany, Albania, Kuwait, Iraq and the United States.

Odierno served as commander, Multi-National Force-Iraq from September 2008 to December 2009. He then continued to serve as commander, United States Forces-Iraq, from January 2010 to September 2010.

Most recently, he served as commander of U.S. Joint Forces Command, where he oversaw that organization's role in joint concept development and experimentation, joint capability development, joint training, and force provision and management. U.S. Joint Forces Command was disestablished Aug. 31.

Odierno assumed responsibility for the Army from Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, who after serving five months as the Army's chief of staff, will move on to assume new duties as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff after the Sept. 30 retirement of Adm. Mike Mullen.

While Dempsey's tenure as the chief of staff was short, he said he's proud to have served.

"My brief tenure as CSA has produced a lifetime of memories," Dempsey said. "I now have a vocabulary of abstract words brought to life. Courage, determination and commitment brought to life wherever you find Soldiers and their families."

"You are the best our country has to offer," Odierno said, referring to the Soldiers.

"You are courageous, confident, competent and compassionate," he said. "I look forward to seeing you as I visit your camps, posts, stations and operating bases. Thank you for your steadfast dedication and loyal service to our nation."

Photo by Army News Service

Secretary of the Army John McHugh administers the oath to Gen. Raymond T. Odierno during a change of responsibility ceremony at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va., as Odierno's wife, Linda, looks on Sept. 7. Upon completion of the oath, Odierno became the Army's 38th chief of staff.

Army DFACs swap in 'greener' menus

By Brittany Carlson
U.S. Army IMCOM

Over the past year, items have been disappearing from the 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Dining Facility at U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart, Germany.

French fries, sodas and hamburgers have been silently replaced by baked potato wedges, flavored water, chicken and fish. These subtle changes are part of U.S. Army Europe's "Fueling the Team" program.

"The program is designed to create a 'greener' menu to help with Soldiers' overall health," said Staff Sgt. Derek Maak, assistant manager at the DFAC. "We are serving more fresh products and cutting out the products that are high in sugar and grease."

USAREUR dining facilities began officially implementing the program in May as part of the Soldier Fueling Initiative, an Army program that establishes healthy eating standards for Soldiers.

Both the 1st Battalion DFAC and Black Stallion Inn Dining Facility on Patch Barracks are now labeling foods using the "Go for Green" nutritional education program that began in U.S. Army dining facilities stateside earlier this year.

"Go for Green" placards in front of each dish tell Soldiers how the food will affect their performance. "Green" foods should be eaten frequently, are high in protein and low in fat, and enhance performance. "Amber" foods can be eaten occasionally, and "red" foods are those that should be eaten rarely as they have higher amounts of fat and calories that hinder performance.

In addition to using the color code, the DFAC has stopped deep-frying and is replacing several "red" foods with healthier alternatives, such as swapping in frozen yogurt for ice cream.

"We've pushed it in subtly," Maak said. "We implemented a 10-day menu with mostly yellow and green [items] and fish three or four times a week."

Maak said the DFAC completes the fitness puzzle for service members, giving them fuel that complements their workout routines instead of negating them.

Photo by Brittany Carlson

Sgt. Gabriel Warwick, of 554th Military Police Company, chops vegetables for the cold sandwich bar Aug. 11 at the 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Dining Facility on Panzer Kaserne, Germany.

"I've seen Soldiers work out constantly, and they're physically fit. But they don't understand what it does to them when they eat nine or 10 eggs in the morning," he said. "If we offer them a healthy alternative, at least we're doing our job to try and help them out."

The quest for providing Soldiers with better nutrition and education began in February, when USAREUR's commander, Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling, then the deputy commanding general for Initial Military Training at the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, began the Soldier Fueling Initiative to help newly enlisted Soldiers form healthier eating habits.

The initiative was implemented at 12 TRADOC installations, whose dining facilities eliminated sodas, deep-fried items and sweets altogether. The changes were based on a 28-day menu created by the Joint Culinary Center of Excellence at Fort Lee, Va.

Once Soldiers leave IMT, they can make their own meal choices using the "Go for Green" color coding system with an array of healthier options available at dining facilities like those in USAG Stuttgart.

Maak said it might be the Soldiers' choice what they eat, but it is vital that NCOs set the right example.

"It is important that we, as NCOs, lead from the front by eating properly and portraying a healthier way of life," Maak said. "Nutrition is 100 percent the most important part of physical fitness. No matter how much you work out, if you are eating unhealthily, then you are killing yourself from the inside."

WOUNDED WARRIOR CARE:

Army develops new orthopedic device

By Steven Galvan
Institute of Surgical Research

A new energy-storing orthopedic device, along with an extensive rehabilitation program, is allowing wounded warriors who previously had difficulties walking or standing due to lower leg injuries to run again.

The Intrepid Dynamic Exoskeletal Orthosis, or IDEO, was designed by prosthetist Ryan Blanck at the Center for the Intrepid at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. It is a custom-fit device made from carbon and fiberglass that supports the foot and ankle, and resembles an amputee's running prosthetic.

The ability to run can be the difference between a wounded warrior being allowed to stay on active duty and to return to his or her unit or receiving a medical discharge.

In Iraq in 2009, Staff Sgt. Philip Davis with the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, found himself in that situation after a mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicle rolled over, wedging his left leg under his seat.

"It pulverized it," Davis said. "I was given two options — to amputate or to have the foot and ankle fused."

Davis chose to have his ankle fused, even after his doctor told him that he would never be able to run, jump or play in any high-energy sporting activities.

"I told him that the surgery would give him very little flexibility and mobility and that he was probably looking at a medical discharge or that, if he stayed in the Army, he would have to look at another job other than being a combat engineer," said Lt. Col. Joseph Hsu, an orthopedic surgeon at the Army's Institute of Surgical Research.

After the surgery, Davis began a rehabilitation program. However, Johnny Owens, a physical therapist at the Center for the Intrepid, said some warriors can rehab for months, even years, and may never regain full function or capabilities.

This lack of progress can be so discouraging that some warriors have requested an amputation.

A late amputation is not as simple as a warrior saying "amputate." It is a lengthy process that involves extensive counseling, but it can be an option for some wounded warriors.

Photo by Steven Galvan

A member of the "Chosen" Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, is able to jump again after being told that his lower leg would be amputated. The Soldier is in physical therapy at the Center for the Intrepid at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, using the Intrepid Dynamic Exoskeletal Orthosis, and preparing to deploy with his unit.

"That was not an option for me," Davis said. "I wanted to run again when I began rehab. I pushed myself. I was determined to stay in the Army as a combat engineer and join my unit."

After a few months of rehab, Davis was able to walk, with a severe limp, but he couldn't run or jump.

"Then I was told about the IDEO. After being fitted with it and shown how to properly use it, I felt the difference almost instantly," Davis said.

The IDEO is made using a mold from the warrior's leg. The three-piece device fits in shoes and boots. The top piece, shaped like the top portion of a prosthetic leg, is placed just below the knee. Both pieces are held together by a carbon-fiber dynamic-response strut system.

"The way it works is very much like a runner's prosthetic," Blanck said. "As the warrior steps on it and moves forward, the energy of the foot piece is transferred to the back of the foot piece with a spring motion."

Sixteen months after his injury, Davis was able to return to his unit as a combat engineer — ready to deploy.

"I'm able to move like I did before the injury," he said. "I can run, jump and play my favorite sport — softball. But most of all, I kept my job as a combat engineer."

Since its inception, the IDEO has been fitted on 143 wounded warriors.

"After a couple of years of using one, I had a Soldier who didn't need it anymore," Owens said. "The IDEO helped him regain full use of his leg and no longer requires it."

Though Davis is still using the IDEO, he is amazed at what he can do with it.

"I was playing outfield during a softball game. When a ball was hit in my direction, I was able to take off and chase it down," he said. "I didn't realize what I had done until after I caught the ball."

The IDEO is working for Davis and many other wounded warriors who want to be physically active, redeploy with their units or just lead a normal life.

Panetta: Any retirement changes will not affect current Soldiers

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Svc.

Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jacob N. Bailey, Defense Department

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta responds to a question from a member of the military press Aug. 19 in his office at the Pentagon.

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said Aug. 19 that if the military retirement system changes, it will not affect current service members.

"I will not break faith," the secretary said during a roundtable meeting with military media representatives in the Pentagon.

Panetta's predecessor, Robert M. Gates, asked the Defense Business Board to look at the military retirement system and make recommendations. However, Panetta said he is familiar with the outlines of the proposal.

"People who have come into the service, who have put their lives on the line, who have been deployed to the war zones, who fought for this country, who have been promised certain benefits for that — I'm not going to break faith with what's been promised to them," Panetta said.

People in the service today will come under the current retirement system, which gives retirees 50 percent of their base pay after 20 years of service.

"Does that stop you from making changes?" Panetta asked. "No, because obviously you can 'grandfather' people in terms of their benefits and then look at what changes you want to put in place for people who become members of the all-volunteer force in the future."

One aspect of the retirement debate is fairness, the secretary said. Most service members do not spend 20 years in the military and therefore do not get any retirement benefits when they leave the service.

"They are not vested in any way," Panetta said. "The question that is at least legitimate to ask is: Is there a way for those future volunteers to shape this that might give them better protection to be able to have some retirement and take it with them?"

Health care is another area that has to be dealt with, the secretary said. In fiscal year 2001, the Defense Department health care bill was $19 billion. It is more than $50 billion now and $60 billion in future years. Among proposals Congress is contemplating is an increase in some TRICARE military health plan premium payments.

"I think those recommendations make sense," Panetta said. "Especially with tight budgets, it does make sense that people contribute a bit more with regards to getting that coverage."

The Defense Department — which is responsible for a large part of the nation's discretionary budget — will do its part to reduce the budget deficit, the secretary said. But while Defense has a role to play, Congress has to deal with the more than two-thirds of the federal budget that represents mandatory spending, Panetta said.

"If you are serious about getting the deficit down, you have to deal with the mandatory side of the budget and taxes," Panetta said.

The Defense Department has a responsibility to look at all aspects of the budget, he said, and officials at the Pentagon are doing that.

The secretary said he believes the budget crunch can represent an opportunity to make the Defense Department a more efficient, effective and agile force that still can deal with the threats of the future.

The department also needs to ask how to provide benefits for troops and their families that will be effective at ensuring the nation always has a strong volunteer force, Panetta said.

"That's a debate and discussion that it's important for the Defense Department to have, the White House to have, the Congress to have and the country to have," he said. "[We] need to have that debate about 'How are we going to do this in a way that maintains the best military in the world?'"

THE HARDEST ROLE

NCOs stand ready to help the families of fallen Soldiers

STORIES BY JONATHAN (JAY) KOESTER

"The Secretary of the Army has asked me to express his deep regret …"

These are the words a noncommissioned officer never wants to say, the beginning of a script no NCO wants to read.

For those senior NCOs chosen for the honor of being a casualty notification officer, the words are the beginning of a script that will break a family's heart. The duty of a CNO isn't easy. But it's a necessary and important one for the U.S. Army.

Sgt. 1st Class Luis Alicea, 704th Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, stands close to the mourning family of Sgt. Vorasack Xaysana during planeside honors April 20. Alicea is the casualty assistance officer for the Xaysana family.

Photo by Spc. Samantha B. Koss

Photo courtesy of Ingrid Barrentine

Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Otis, a casualty assistance officer assigned to Headquarters Company, 5th Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, helps Judah Paci put on his sandal as his mother, Erica, looks on June 23, 2010, at Paci's Steilacoom, Wash., home. Otis became Erica Paci's CAO after the death of her husband, Sgt. Anthony "Tony" Paci, on March 4, 2010, in Afghanistan. "You always hope not to have to do this, but it's an honor," Otis said. "Any case in general would be a privilege because the person gave the ultimate sacrifice."

"There is no more effective way of creating bitter enemies for the Army than by failing to do everything we can possibly do at a time of bereavement," Gen. George C. Marshall says in a quote read early in CNO training. "Nor is there a more effective way of making friends for the Army than by showing we are personally interested in every fatality which occurs."

When a Soldier dies, whether downrange or in-garrison, one of the first things the Army does is activate a team to quickly and respectfully notify the Soldier's family. It is usually a two-person team, composed of one senior NCO or officer and a chaplain.

By regulation, NCOs must hold the rank of sergeant first class or higher to serve as a CNO; officers must be captain or higher. As a sign of respect, CNOs must hold a rank equal to or higher than the Soldier who died.

After the NCOs of a unit are trained, the selection of a CNO is up to the unit's leader, said Debra Rushbrook, chief of the Casualty Assistance Center at Fort Bliss, Texas. There are 34 Army Casualty Assistance Centers, which train NCOs to become CNOs and provide assistance to those NCOs and the families of the fallen.

"They (potential CNOs) have to do an eyeball-to-eyeball with the battalion commander to see that the Soldier is not overweight, didn't just recently come back from deployment, didn't just recently suffer a loss, not pending UCMJ (Uniform Code of Military Justice), all those kinds of things," Rushbrook said.

Master Sgt. Tyrone Elvis Johnson, the maintenance NCOIC of operations in the 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command at Fort Knox, Ky., talked about his experiences notifying the parents of a fallen Soldier.

"That mission is a hard mission, but as a noncommissioned officer, I feel that you owe that parent or that spouse the proper respect. It has to be done. You have to be a strong noncommissioned officer. It's one of the hardest missions in the Army."

MASTER SGT. TYRONE ELVIS JOHNSON

"That mission is a hard mission, but as a noncommissioned officer, I feel that you owe that parent or that spouse the proper respect," Johnson said. "It has to be done. You have to be a strong noncommissioned officer. It's one of the hardest missions in the Army."

Rushbrook said she has heard that sentiment expressed many times.

"The notifiers, pretty much without exception, when they come back, say that's the hardest thing they've ever had to do in their life," Rushbrook said. "I've heard that probably 80 percent of the time. When they come back they say, 'I'd rather be in combat than have to do that again.'"

Most NCOs who serve as CNOs perform the duty only once or twice as part of their normal service. But Sgt. 1st Class Alberto Borjas serves full-time as a casualty notification/casualty assistance officer with the National Guard's 224th Sustainment Brigade based in San Bernadino, Calif. He is part of a team of about 10 Soldiers in the state who do notification and assistance as their full-time duty. They are assisted by the Casualty Assistance Center at Fort Huachuca, Ariz. Borjas has served about 28 families, half of those as a CNO.

"You really don't know how the family is going to react," Borjas said. "You have a chaplain there with you, but you really can't prepare for what's going to happen."

Borjas said he works on memorizing the notification script during the drive to the family's house.

"Sometimes the script can be long and you have these cities in Afghanistan or Iraq that you are trying to figure out how to say properly, or even the Soldier's last name," Borjas said. "You want to make sure that you say it properly."

EMOTIONS

Some NCOs protest the duty, saying they are too emotional and wouldn't be able to do the job without breaking down. But Johnson said emotion and tears can be an important part of the process.

"If you're emotional, that is part of being compassionate," Johnson said. "That lets them know you're human. A lot of people think that because you're in the Army, that you're not a human. But they see you shed a tear or you grieve with them, they know you are compassionate."

It's important to think of the family instead of your own emotions, said Dwight Wilson, a casualty affairs trainer at Fort Bliss.

"I try to get them not to think of themselves, but to think of the family," Wilson said. "The duty they're performing is a service to the family and to the Army. There were a few people who came in during different classes who said they couldn't do it, but by the end of the classes, they realize they can and that it's important."

However, Wilson added, you can't expect a gracious welcome from the family. You are bringing them the worst news imaginable, and you have to roll with whatever reaction you receive. During the class, NCOs are shown a letter a mother wrote to a notification team a year after they arrived at her door.

"It bothers me all these months later that I was unable to treat you with the respect and honor that you deserved for taking on such a horrible and thankless task: our notification," an excerpt from Elisabeth Beard's letter reads. "I remember yelling at my husband not to open the door, and then begging him not to let you inside the house. You were the last person I wanted to see standing on my porch, and I think I conveyed that to you. I would not speak to you or look at you or shake your hand when you offered it. I guess all my good will and courtesy somehow just drained away and bled out of my heart in those few moments as I saw you standing in the doorway. …

"The only thing I can do is make amends for that, if you are willing to give me the chance," the letter continues. "I would be honored if you could visit us again. … I would shake your hand, and thank you for your service to our country."

A negative response to the notification team is natural and expected, which is why the next step in the process — casualty assistance — is done by a different Soldier.

The notifying NCO "goes in and drops this bomb that changes your life," Rushbrook said. "The CNO is nervous, uncomfortable and the bad person. [The family] is not going to have warm, fuzzy feelings about the person who came and brought that news, regardless of how they deliver it. But the casualty assistance officer is the one who comes in behind them and says, 'OK, this terrible thing happened to you, but I'm going to help you.' So they get to be the good person. That's why the notifier isn't used as the CAO."

THE NEXT STEP

The family or spouse usually meets their casualty assistance officer the day after the notification. Though families are often left with bad memories of their meeting with their CNO, they get to know their CAO much better and often stay in touch long after the official duty is finished.

"I still have some family members who, during the holidays, will send emails," Borjas said. "We stay in touch.

It's rewarding. You get to know the family. They kind of bring you in as one of their own."

In addition to the requirements for being a CNO, a CAO must also be released from conflicting duties. Though a CNO's duty is usually finished within a few hours, a CAO must spend much more time, over many months, helping the family. So by regulation, that Soldier cannot be scheduled for deployment or reassignment within six months.

Besides compassion, the largest part of a CAO's job is making sure the family understands and knows how to obtain the many benefits the Army provides. There are many forms that need to be filled out, and the family's CAO keeps a checklist to make sure everything is done.

Which family members of the fallen Soldier receive the service of a CAO and other benefits is decided by forms the Soldier had filled out. The primary next of kin, for instance, is determined by DD Form 93.

Soldiers keeping their paperwork up to date could ease a lot of heartbreak, Borjas said.

"There are a lot of things that go on internally with the families, and sometimes you're caught up in the middle," Borjas said. "You will have families who don't get along. Let's say the wife was supposed to get the benefits, but the father and mother end up getting it.

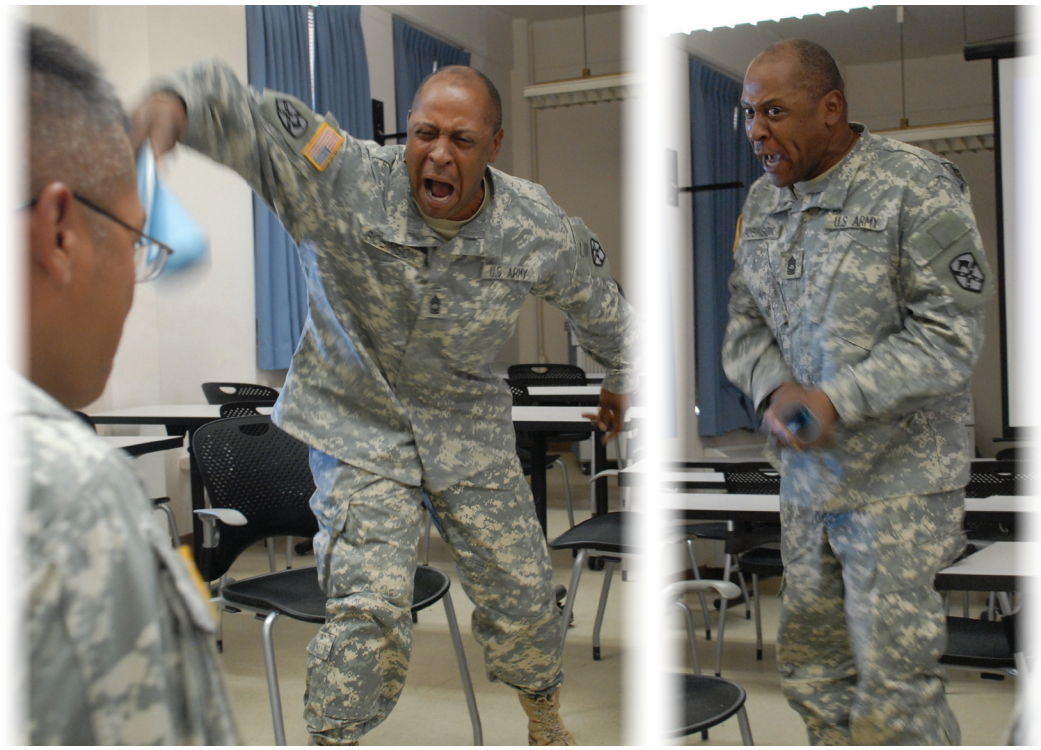
"For the Soldiers — the documents, the DD-93 and the life insurance form — they have to make sure they constantly keep that updated," Borjas said. "Because if something happens to them and the wrong person gets the benefits … I have seen a lot of that."

NCOs serving in this duty are also responsible for helping the family understand their funeral and cemetery options, including any travel arrangements that are needed. The NCO will confirm the family's wishes for military funeral honors and coordinate with the military funeral honors team. Helping a family through the funeral can be one of the most emotional parts of the duty.

"I can't say that it's something that I've gotten used to," Borjas said. "The emotion is always there. There's really no way of getting out of the emotional part. Sometimes I'm at the funeral, and they have posters of the Soldier, they have video of the Soldier, and it hits home. It's tough. It's like losing one of your brothers. It's hard to maintain and keep your composure."

Spending so much time with a grieving family can be overwhelming, Johnson

> "Sometimes I'm at the funeral, and they have posters of the Soldier, they have video of the Soldier, and it hits home. It's tough. It's like losing one of your brothers. It's hard to maintain and keep your composure."
>
> **SGT. 1ST CLASS ALBERTO BORJAS**



During the Fort Bliss training to become casualty notification and casualty assistance officers, NCOs participated in role-playing to practice the duty. In this series of photographs, Master Sgt. Joe Robinson of the 15th Sustainment Brigade plays the role of a father who gets angry at the notification team of Master Sgt. Pete Salas (left) and Sgt. 1st Class Eric Anthony. Salas said the role-playing made him realize you have to be prepared for anything and stay calm. "I know Master Sgt. Robinson, and I still had to stop myself from running," Salas said.
Photos by Jonathan (Jay) Koester

said. But CAOs need to take time for themselves, while remembering they are helping that family. Most important is really believing in the duty.

"You need to have the three C's: care, concern and compassion," Johnson said. "You have to want to take care of the family. You can't take this as: 'Well, I've been tasked to do this.' You have to want to do it. You have to want to take care of the family like you would want someone to take care of your family."

TRAINING

Those serving as CNOs and CAOs attend training at one of 34 Army Casualty Assistance Centers. The training usually lasts about three days and focuses slightly more on casualty assistance than casualty notification. Though notification duty is emotional and difficult, it's simpler than the many programs and forms an assistance officer will need to know and understand.

Master Sgt. Zane Morris, brigade maintenance supervisor with the 15th Sustainment Brigade at Fort Bliss recently went through the training. He said, learning about all the assistance a family will receive in the unfortunate event that they lose a loved one made the thought of performing as a CNO or CAO a little easier.

"At first it didn't seem like something that you would want to do," Morris said. "But as you went through the training and you listened to the videos of the people who did it, you kind of realize that, if you can perform the duty in a professional manner, it's actually going to be an extreme asset to the family and help them a lot. So it makes it easier to deal with, knowing how much of an asset you're providing to the family."

Many of the NCOs who went through a recent training session at Fort Bliss were amazed by the benefits families receive when a Soldier dies — from the immediate tax-free $100,000 "death gratuity" to the ongoing assistance from the Army's Survivor Outreach Services.

"For me, until I took the class, I thought if something happened you got your SGLI (Service members' Group Life Insurance) and that was about it," Morris said. "I didn't realize that the Army provided all of the other monetary items that were more immediate than the SGLI. There were a lot of benefits that I didn't know about. … It would probably be a good class for more people to take, or incorporate it into the noncommissioned officers education system, so that more NCOs could inform their Soldiers."

Those thoughts were echoed by Master Sgt. Pete Salas, operations NCO for the 15th Sustainment Brigade.

"After taking that course, it really put my mind at ease because, the times I've deployed, I was thinking, 'All I'm worth is $250,000?'" Salas said. "But to know that someone is going to be there to take care of my family … my wife. We've been in 22 years … she was glad to know there was more."

To serve as a CNO or CAO, not only do NCOs have to go through the initial training, but they must recertify annually through online training to stay eligible for the duty. The training is important because after the death of a Soldier is not the time to learn on the job, Rushbrook said.

"You only have one time to get it right, with everything we do," Rushbrook said. "For example, with funeral details, we have only one chance to get it right; there are no do-overs. If you make a mistake, the mistake is there forever.

"But if you do it right, if you do a good job, if you take good care of the family, that's also there forever. They'll always remember that you cared, that you took the time, that you helped them through this bad spot in their life."

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NCO, Army help family through difficult time

Master Sgt. Sammy Marquez has lived in Roswell, N.M., most of his life.

You tend to see a lot of the same people around, which can make Marquez's duty as a casualty assistance officer especially hard.

With a population of just under 50,000, Roswell is similar to other small American cities, except for a downtown that stays active on the sales of little green men souvenirs and books about the purported 1947 UFO crash just outside of the city.

Marquez, operations sergeant and NCOIC for the 717th Brigade Support Battalion in the New Mexico National Guard, has served as a casualty notification officer once and as an assistance officer twice. He said he often bumps into the families he has served.

"Each one of them has been different, and they're very emotional because you get involved with the family and you feel their pain and suffering," Marquez said. "It's hard because you get very close to them, and they become your family as well."

Marquez is currently serving as the CAO for the parents of Pfc. Antonio Stiggins, who was killed by an improvised explosive device on April 22 in Numaniyah, Iraq. Stiggins had enlisted in the Army in January 2010 and left on his first deployment in September 2010.

His father, Luke Stiggins, talked about the day he and Antonio's mother, Angel Mayes, found out their son had been killed. Luke and his wife, Debra Stiggins, were at her dad's house at the time.

"Our neighbor called and said that there were two guys in uniform," Luke Stiggins said. "They talked to Debra because I had gone to the store. So she told me I had to go home, but she wouldn't tell me why. When I pulled into the driveway … you know. I knew what they were going to say.

Pfc. Antonio Stiggins

"She (Angel Mayes) lives out in the county, so they didn't have a physical address. They asked, after they had done their notification, if I could give them directions. I said, 'It's easier if we just go.' I called her to let her know we were coming out. I didn't want to tell her why, but pretty much you know when they drive up and step out in uniform."

Once those Soldiers stepped out in uniform, Luke Stiggins said, his voice breaking, "The world changes."

A JOKESTER

Everybody who knew Antonio Stiggins describes him the same way: a comedian, a jokester. No matter how bad things got, Mayes said, her son found a way to joke about it.

"There was never a bad situation for him," Mayes said. "If it was bad, it bounced right off him. He went on, no matter what we threw at him."

Master Sgt. Marquez

Luke Stiggins describes his son as someone who couldn't quite figure out what he wanted out of life — until he found the Army.

In the past, he had talked about being a firefighter or an emergency medical technician. He eventually decided to become an electrical engineer and was only four classes away from getting his bachelor's degree to work in fiber optics. But he wasn't satisfied.

"He was wanting to find a place — I guess is the best way to put it — and he never could find it, until he joined the Army," Luke Stiggins said. "And then that was his niche."

So at the age of 25, he deployed with F Troop, 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment based at Fort Hood, Texas. In November 2010, he made a trip back to Roswell to bury his grandmother.

"He came home during Veterans Day," Luke Stiggins said. "He was so proud. I couldn't get him out of his fatigues. That cover came on, and it had to be straight. He'd stop anywhere he could find a reflection to make sure he was top notch."

ASSISTANCE

The day after the notification team visited Stiggins and Mayes, Marquez arrived to help them through the difficult days ahead.

First was a trip to Dover Air Force Base, Del., to witness the dignified transfer of Antonio Stiggins' remains. There is no viewing or access to the bodies of the fallen Soldiers at Dover. It is not a ceremony, but a way to show respect as the Soldier is transported from the aircraft to the mortuary at Dover. The Army will pay for the primary next of kin to attend

U.S. Air Force photo

A U.S. Army carry team transfers the remains of Pfc. Antonio G. Stiggins on April 25 at Dover Air Force Base, Del. Stiggins' parents, Luke Stiggins and Angel Mayes, traveled to Dover for the dignified transfer of Antonio Stiggins from the aircraft to the base mortuary.

the dignified transfer.

Luke Stiggins said he wanted to bear witness to the transfer.

"I wanted to meet him when he touched soil," Stiggins said. "It's rough. It's hard to see."

Stiggins said Marquez made sure the trip was as smooth as possible.

"The Army does it right," Stiggins said. "I was treated with the utmost respect. Any hiccup that happened — if we had airline delays, ticket foul-ups — we would be getting agitated. Master Sgt. Marquez would take care of it – every detail.

"It was human," Stiggins said. "Not a body sitting there doing a duty. But a human, feeling for you, talking with you, always asking, 'What do you need?'"

Once back in Roswell, Marquez helped the family prepare for Antonio Stiggins' services. The community rallied around the family, as well.

"It kind of changed the atmosphere and the community," Luke Stiggins said. "It surprised me the turnout when he returned."

"We got cards and letters from people all over the country who we do not know," Mayes said. "It's been amazing. I couldn't read them anymore because every time, it was like a knife stuck in me. There were so many. It was just amazing."

Through all the pain, through all the grief, Marquez was by the family's side. He was still there when Antonio Stiggins' personal belongings arrived a month later from Dover.

"I still don't understand a lot of it because I have no idea what I'm going to do with 14 pairs of socks and seven pairs of [uniforms]," Luke Stiggins said. "But I really appreciate the care and concern."

Both Stiggins and Mayes said it would have been difficult to get by without the help Marquez and the Army provided.

"As far as these fine folks (CNOs and CAOs): praise," Stiggins said. "They are special people. It takes a special, special person to fill those shoes, I guarantee you. I don't know how they can go through it. People need to know what these guys do and how well they do it."

Marquez said helping the family of a fallen Soldier is an honor.

"Knowing the Soldier died for our country and for our freedom, that's the most rewarding thing you can do for this Soldier and their family," Marquez said.

"You may not know him, but this guy was your brother in arms, so you try to provide the absolute best service the country can give to the family. That is rewarding."

"We truly feel like he's our hero," Mayes said of Marquez. In the end, though, no amount of assistance can get rid of the pain.

"That was good to get us through that first six weeks or so, which were really rough," Mayes said. "But after all that is done and the activity has settled down, you're still waiting for that phone call from your child that ain't coming. His troop just got home. We're supposed to be at Fort Hood bringing him home, and we're not."

BUILDING

INSTITUTE TEACHES ENGLISH

BRIDGES

BUT ALSO UNDERSTANDING

STORY BY CLIFFORD KYLE JONES

The Defense Language Institute English Language Center takes in service members from all over the world to teach them English, but it does much more than provide language skills — it builds partnerships. More than 120 countries are able to send students to train at the DLIELC's English programs at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

The programs are broken into three broad categories — general English, which gives people with no or limited English skills a basic grasp of the language; specialized English, which is intended to prepare students who already have intermediate English skills for highly specific or technical training at follow-on sites; and instructor development, which allows foreign English language instructors to sharpen their skills training service members in their home countries.

But students aren't just learning how to work with American English; they're learning how to work with Americans.

"One of our primary tasks is to do acculturation — to help the students to understand what it's like to work with Americans, what American culture is like, what the U.S. military culture is like," said Air Force Col. Howard G. Jones III, the DLIELC commander. "So as they progress from here at Lackland Air Force Base to Fort Sill [Okla.], for example, or Naval Air Station Pensacola [Fla.], or Columbus Air Force Base [Miss.] for whatever training they've got, they know what it's like to work with the U.S. military."

And working with the U.S. military, particularly its NCOs, is something that members of foreign militaries are eager to do.

"We get hundreds of NCOs from around the world, and as most of the United States military realize, the meaning of being an NCO in foreign services is different than it is in the United States military services," Jones said. "They're here mostly, in my opinion, because they want to learn what it's like to be a professional along the lines of an American military service member."

Photo by Clifford Kyle Jones

"I've never seen such military discipline as I saw here, and it's really impressive."

— Nataliya Nenova Lazarova, shown above in one of her classes, is a staff sergeant in the Bulgarian army and a student in the DLIELC's Basic American Language Instructor Course, which instructs foreign students how to teach American English.

Other functions of the DLIELC

● **MOBILE TRAINING TEAMS:** In addition to the nearly 1,200 students at the Defense Language Institute English Language Center at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, the institute trains the United States' partners in countries around the world with the DLIELC's mobile training teams. The MTTs consist of about three instructors from the DLIELC, and they typically spend three to six months overseas on assignment. "If I had to say what really attaches me to this place emotionally more than anything, it's those overseas assignments," said Robert Smith, a supervisor for the institute's specialized English branch who has been with the DLIELC about 17 years and spent half of that on overseas assignments. "I mean you get to see the world, it's just amazing. Plus, you go some place and you make a contribution. You can measure the things you've done and be proud of them over a six-month span."

Photo by Clifford Kyle Jones

A case at the Defense Language Institute English Language Center displays currency from around the world donated by DLIELC students.

● **ECHO COMPANY:** One of the DLIELC's roles is to prepare recruits with limited English skills for U.S. Army Basic Combat Training. The E Company students are grouped together, although the American English curriculum they receive is identical to foreign students. "I call it a cornerstone of our program," said Air Force Col. Howard G. Jones III, the DLIELC's commander. "The Echo Company program has been here at the English Language Center for many, many years. Graduates succeed very well in BCT and go on to AIT and continue their Army careers very successfully. I think that's a great tool that the Army has in its toolbox and produces high quality Soldiers."

Nataliya Nenova Lazarova, a staff sergeant in the Bulgarian army, is a student in the Basic American Language Instructor Course, the first level of instructor development at the DLIELC. She is part of a mechanized brigade in Bulgaria that frequently deploys as part of multinational missions. Lazarova, who has a bachelor's degree in English from a Bulgarian university and has almost completed her master's degree in English, is learning how to teach American English to other members of her brigade. But she'll be taking back a lot more than improved language skills. Lazarova says she will take back a new respect for U.S. military discipline.

"I've never seen such military discipline as I saw here, and it's really impressive," she said. She's learned that "discipline in the military is the most important thing. If there is no discipline, you couldn't rely on a soldier next to you in a battle or in a mission. If there is no discipline, there are no results. If there is no discipline, there is no career. And if there is no discipline, there is — nothing."

She said the U.S. standard is much different than her native country's, and even though her interaction with U.S. NCOs has been limited, she has a profound respect for the American military because of what she has seen during her time at the DLIELC program.

"I saw most [U.S. Soldiers] when I was going to lunch or dinner. I saw how strict they are; how quick they listen to commands; how quick they fall in; how quick they react; how, if they receive instructions, they keep silent immediately and they perform it immediately," she said. "I think all those things that I said have one explanation: great discipline. Maybe that's why … American troops all over the world, wherever they have any kinds of representatives, they do the best."

IN THE CLASSROOM

In some ways, that same military discipline is what sets instruction apart at the DLIELC. Lazarova has been in the Bulgarian army for 11 years and has worked as an English instructor in Bulgaria. She considers herself a responsible person, and now, as a student at the DLIELC, has even more appreciation for discipline.

"I really like their way," she said, "The way that they build your responsibilities on the next stage — evaluation, performance, and, if there is need, a punishment."

Steve Howard, a supervisor in the DLIELC's Instructor Development Branch, said the discipline required of the institute's students and instructors is one of the reasons English education at the DLIELC is unparalleled anywhere in the world.

"Being a military institute and a government organization, there are a lot of rules and regulations that we have to abide by, which you don't [have] overseas," Howard said. "I like having that structured environment here. It's not sort of 'make it up as you go,' as many overseas programs are. We have tried-and-true methods and regulations to support" the curriculum.

After four years enlisted in the Air Force, Howard finished his master's degree in public administration and, on the advice of one of his professors, began

teaching English as a second language. Over a total of more than 10 years, he did two stints in Saudi Arabia with private organizations teaching English to members of that country's navy and air force. During his stays in Saudi Arabia, he used the American Language Course, which was developed by the DLIELC and serves as its primary course material.

IMMERSED IN ENGLISH

Instruction at the DLIELC is different than most ESL programs. For one, it's intensive. Students spend their mornings and afternoons in class, and much of their evenings in the institute's learning center, which has numerous resources intended to supplement the DLIELC's in-class instruction. Depending on the course, classes can take weeks or months. There are no long breaks for the summer or the holidays, and virtually every week of the year, at least one new class will start and at least one other will graduate. But it's not just the amount of time dedicated to instruction that makes it so intensive.

"English is spoken from day one," Jones said. "So whether students have no proficiency or they arrive with some proficiency, they're exposed to English all the time in an academic setting. And it's their duty — from the time they start class in the morning at 7:30 until they're done in the mid-afternoon and then they go to the learning center or the library to continue those studies — they have English, learning English, as their primary duty. That environment is a lot different from a university setting, for example, where English is an added task or additional kind of study that they might do to boost their proficiency."

All instruction takes place in English, not only because it's the most effective way to learn but also because it would be nearly impossible to include instruction in each of the students' native languages. At any given time, the DLIELC has nearly 1,200 students in its classes. Each class has only six to eight students, but those eight students very well might be from eight countries.

"Here you cannot resort to a second language in order to teach, say, a grammar point or a word or a concept, because all of the students are from so many different countries," Howard said "Overseas in Saudi Arabia, I could resort to Arabic to get across a grammar point or a word.

"One of my first assignments was to pick a book. So I picked a book about PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder. This book gave me a lot of information about the American Soldier, because in the media, in our media, it's manipulated. In my country, or in the Middle East, they always see the American Soldier as an invader to some extent. But I know — even before reading this book, but this book fossilized this in my mind — that the American Soldier is just a human being like us. He has orders to do, and he has problems to face. ... We're just human beings in the end, and we're soldiers."

— Imad K. Othman, shown at right in one of his classes, is a master sergeant in Lebanon's army and a student in the DLIELC's Basic American Language Instructor Course.

"For example, the word 'proud,'" Howard said. "You try as you might to explain what 'proud' means: OK, when you graduate you're father will feel really … and they all say 'happy.' You're like, well, it's kind of like 'happy,' but it's a little more. And so I just gave up, and said 'fachour,' which is 'proud.' And they say, 'Oh, OK, yes, my father will feel "proud."' Teaching overseas, you can do things like that; here you just can't. So it really is a struggle sometimes, but you really get to develop your skills in how to get things across to your students in English."

Lazarova also wondered how instruction would work without being able to resort to her native Bulgarian. Because Lazarova knew that the DLIELC instructors teaching her unit American English while she is studying in San Antonio wouldn't know Bulgarian, she had a hard time understanding how the language skills would be imparted.

"I was puzzled, because when I worked in high school and even at the university, I could ask for an explanation in Bulgarian if I didn't understand something," she said.

Lazarova says she has tried to use every opportunity to expand her linguistic and cultural knowledge, going so far as to squeeze in some learning while her instructors are evaluating her. In this case, while she was taking the Oral Proficiency Interview, which tests a student's oral skills in a conversation with two raters and which Basic American Language Instructor Course students take as part of their instruction, Lazarova asked the raters about the advantages and methods of the DLIELC's English-only instruction and how they teach students abroad when the instructors are not familiar with the students' language.

"Now I realize that the better way is not to do that explanation in Bulgarian, to try to keep it in English all the time," she said. "I really appreciated their opinion because they're so experienced, they have traveled abroad many times and taught different kinds of people all over the world — for example, in Korea, the Mideast, even Afghanistan."

Photo by Clifford Kyle Jones

Discussions with her raters and other instructors are not the only way Lazarova has supplemented her education. She has been particularly interested in using her time in the United States to develop a feel for the culture and how the language is used in the States idiomatically, beyond the rules of American English. As part of their education, many of the students at the DLIELC take part in field trips throughout the United States.

Lazarova visited Washington, D.C., in the first month of her six-month course. And though she had studied American culture and history and knew, for instance, the number of senators and representatives in Congress and how they are elected, she said it was a completely different experience to watch the legislative process in person at the Capitol. Even her graduate work didn't prepare her for everything she would need to know in the United States.

"I have studied British and American culture. … But, you know, they give me a book [and say] 'read the book.' OK, I read it, but you know it's different to see it and to see how actually people behave," Lazarova said. "And why do you think I had problems with American cuisine and American food? The first time I saw a menu, I couldn't understand anything. That's something you have to be in the real environment" to learn.

NEW PERSPECTIVES

Aside from dining out, Lazarova said she hasn't had any "culture shocks" during her visit to America; in fact, her most surprising cultural experience has been realizing how friendly everyone in San Antonio is.

For another student in one of the institute's BALIC classes, Imad K. Othman, a master sergeant in Lebanon's army, it was San Antonio's lack of skyscrapers that was a little jarring. American sights and culture are common in Lebanese media, Othman said, but the view can be limited.

"You're always seeing New York, skyscrapers; Los Angeles, or Malibu, so it was shocking here when I first landed in San Antonio," he said. "I don't see any skyscrapers. Is that America?"

Through the institute's tours and personal trips, Othman has now visited New York City, in addition to Washington, D.C., and several other U.S. cities.

"New York City is like, wow, this is amazing! Skyscrapers everywhere, a lot of crowds, and dealing with people is very different. Here [in San Antonio], you can find someone to say, 'Hi, how you doing?' But up there, they're always in a rush. Here in the United States, it's a massive country, so you find lots of diversity. I think that's one of the best things you can find in a country this big. It's united — it's called the United States — but every single state is different."

San Antonio is home to one amenity of particular interest to Othman. In addition to his army duties, the 6-foot-7 Othman plays basketball on the Lebanese national team. "The first thing I did here was go to see the San Antonio Spurs," he said. "My teammates were jealous. I've

continues on page 41 ➤

LDRSHIP IN SIGHT

NCOs past and present share their perspectives on the Army Values

NCOs: Standard-bearers for **LOYALTY**

Sgt. Maj. of the Army
Raymond F. Chandler III
October 2011

Loyalty, according to our Army Values, means bearing true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other Soldiers. It means you believe and are devoted to something bigger than yourself. It means you will be loyal to those with whom you serve, seniors, peers and subordinates alike.

The NCO Guide says loyalty means standing by your Soldiers' honest mistakes and taking pride in their accomplishments. It means executing a commander's decision without "talking down" about it with peers or subordinates.

These definitions are easy to understand. Most of us have no issues being loyal to those with whom we serve when we are all geared toward the same goal. The definition gets a little hazy, though, when you're faced with a moral dilemma — pinning your loyalty to the unit against your loyalty to the Army, or the loyalty of your subordinates against the loyalty of those you serve.

As seen in recent history, Soldiers can be negatively influenced by ethically bankrupt NCOs, thus directly influencing troops to compromise their values and ethics on the battlefield. Soldiers in this scenario sometimes make a conscious decision to follow their leader, knowing full well the NCO is not living the Army Values, not following our professional military ethic and certainly not in keeping with our oath of enlistment and code of conduct.

What would make Soldiers follow a morally and ethically bankrupt NCO and forgo the loyalty to the Army's mission? The short answer is that Soldiers sometimes have to choose between loyalty to a leader and loyalty to the nation and Constitution. But as professional NCOs, why are we forcing our Soldiers to make this choice? When you fail to follow an Army Value, you are forcing your Soldiers to compromise their values. It is imperative that we, as senior leaders, live all the Army Values and be the ethical standard-bearer our Soldiers need and deserve.

Get involved with your Soldiers and talk about these values. Pull your Soldiers aside, during monthly counseling or in a public forum such as Sergeants Time, and have a frank discussion about loyalty. Talk about proper actions when loyalty is tested. Talk about being loyal to the team and the Army's mission. Only with this dialogue can we truly understand what it means to be loyal and be a professional Soldier.

Chandler is the 14th sergeant major of the Army.

Sgt. Jaclyn Guzman, a member of the U.S. Forces Afghanistan Protective Service Detail, maintains visual surveillance Sept. 13 as shots are fired and explosions erupt from a building in Kabul, Afghanistan.
Photo by Sgt. Catherine Threat

Facing up to DUTY's dilemma

Sgt. Maj. Tommy Z. Fuller
Spring 2006

FM 100-1, *The Profession of Arms*, barely touches the diverse ethical dilemmas our leaders face today when using the word "duty" to describe the Warrior Ethos.

The field manual is on track when it says that the values of integrity and selfless service are part of the concept of duty. However, looking beyond the oversimplifications and glittering generalities of the manual, we see a path of professional ethical behavior strewn with boulders and pitfalls.

The language of today's Army leadership gives us a hint of what to expect. We have all heard the catchphrases: "Do more with less." "Build down." "Smaller but better." The incongruity of these phrases points out the avalanche of ethical dilemmas facing our leadership today.

The "do more with less" mentality grew out of the post-Cold War, bottom-up review. This can-do attitude during a time of drastic force reduction is a serious challenge to leadership ethics. This is particularly true when military leaders fail to point out to higher-ups that their resources aren't sufficient to support the higher-ups' expectations. This phenomenon can occur at every level of command.

For example, the situation may start when a commander is pressured to show a level of unit readiness that can't possibly be maintained under current budget restraints. Without the money to fix broken radios, to buy fuel for tanks and trucks, or to transport Soldiers and equipment, the unit cannot keep its fighting edge.

How hard is it for that commander to tell his boss that the unit isn't fit to fight? With today's "smaller but better" Army fostering a "zero-defect" mentality, such an admission could mean a "two-block" on the commander's Officer Evaluation Report — an admission resulting in professional suicide.

Ultimately, this ethical dilemma offers the commander two choices: He can act according to the value of integrity by telling his boss the truth about his unit's readiness (and suffer the consequences), or he can be an example of selfless service by dedicating more time to the job and pressing his unit in an attempt to achieve the impossible. This is not a question of the commander's motive; he may very well believe he is doing the honorable thing. However, only the former choice is truly one of both integrity and selfless service.

Seen from another perspective, leading the "smaller but better" Army means taking a new approach to showing off the installation. A former sergeant major of the Army once told an audience about the time a senator called him regarding a recent congressional visit to a large Army post. The veteran senator suggested that the next time the Army gave a congressional delegation a base tour, military leaders shouldn't just show the best facilities. It seems that the past commander, in his pride for his installation, had done just that. The resulting impression was that the Army was in no need of money for improvement or infrastructure repair.

The struggle here is again one of integrity versus selfless service. I can't remember ever showing a visiting dignitary the worst area of our organization. Traditionally, we've always put our best foot forward and showed off our most modern facility. It's part of the inspection process ingrained in the military. However, a fresh look at the situation shows how the post commander in the last example might revise his ethical decision-making process to more honestly reflect today's force situation.

Probably the most significant and emotionally charged ethical issue facing our leaders is their ability to remain credible as proponents of the common Soldier and his or her family. Once again, it's not a question of motive, but one of reality versus rhetoric.

Army leaders have taken us through a drastic reduction in force. Now, believing we are close to the end-state number and expecting some stabilization, we are being told to prepare for additional cuts. As a result, Soldiers are wondering about their future in the Army. Furthermore, as funds for quality of life issues dry up, troops ask themselves what benefit or family program is next on the chopping block.

Ultimately, this ethical question of integrity versus self-sacrifice extends to all of us in the military. Do we ask to be treated as we were promised when we joined the military (remember the old motto, "The Army takes care of its own"?), or do we stoically accept that we are inevitably to become a "smaller but better" Army "doing more with less"? It's not an easy question to answer, but one with which we will continue to struggle for years to come.

Fuller was a student in the first nine-month Sergeants Major Course at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas.

A Soldier from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, unloads his Stryker armored fighting vehicle Aug. 12 after a day of fire missions at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif.
Photo by Spc. Ryan Hallock

RESPECT: A value in any branch of service

Sgt. Maj. Oscar Diaz
December 2006

Respect — it is a core value all branches of service share and place great emphasis on. Your attitudes about the worth of people, concepts and other things describe your values. Everything begins there. We will focus on people, who without a doubt, are our greatest resource. My question to you is what must you do and have in order to influence the values of your troops? You must respect your troops and have their respect, which brings up another important question that has been around for ages — is respect earned or demanded?

When dealing with people and relationships, one should be mindful that respect is earned. In professional or authoritarian positions, (military) respect is demanded, but may not be fully given if not also earned. Passive or aggressive behavior could be evidence of full respect not given to someone who just demands respect. Rank does have its privileges, but when abused, you can rest assured you will not gain the respect of your troops.

If you choose to depend on your rank to gain the respect of those you lead and work with, you will be fighting a losing battle throughout your career.

At the end of the day, we all take off the uniform. At least I hope we do. This is who we really are. Social learning and life's experiences contribute to what we believe to be important. Our parents and upbringing also contribute significantly to how we relate to other people. Those of us with long military careers have also been influenced by our former leaders. Nothing is more encouraging than a young officer acknowledging the importance of being mentored by a respectful, professional, seasoned, enlisted service member.

One common theme among all of the core values of the different branches, in reference to respect, is we are to give it. Not one mentions that we demand respect. The Air Force says, "Respect for others." "Service before self" tells us also that a good leader places the troops ahead of his or her personal comfort. We must always act in the certain knowledge that all people possess a fundamental worth as human beings. The Army says, "Treat people as they should be treated." The Coast Guard: "We value our diverse work force. We treat each other with fairness, dignity, and compassion." The Marine Corps says, "In the Marines, honesty, honor, and respect for oneself and others" are built into the very foundation. The Navy says, "Show respect toward all people without regard to race, religion, or gender; treat each individual with human dignity."

I would like to leave you with one last thought to ponder: Approach determines response. How you approach a person will determine how they respond to you!

Diaz served as the sergeant major of the 305th Press Camp Headquarters at Joint Task Force Guantanamo, Cuba.

SELFLESS SERVICE makes us stronger

Sgt. David Ruiz
Winter 2001

From my experiences and during my career in the Army, I feel one leadership trait stands out above the rest — selfless service. Selfless service is a trait that all leaders must possess. The necessity for it in today's Army is critical. I believe selfless service guides and pushes a noncommissioned officer to the next level, thus causing a leader to place the needs of Soldiers above his or her own.

The Army preaches selflessness as a desired quality of a Soldier. It's having a strong desire to thrive — not self-centered, but selfless.

Selfless ambition is a positive attitude that uses an individual's talent to benefit others. For this NCO, that is a very important issue.

This quality transcends and progresses from the individual Soldier all the way up the NCO support channel, from a four-man fire team through the squad, platoon and company levels, and in turn to a division, corps and our Army.

By not being ego-centered, our Army becomes stronger as a whole when our future leaders experience, understand and live this element of leadership responsibility.

As a leader and Soldier, I realize that NCOs are the backbone and the foundation that will mentor our Army's future leaders.

Soldiers are the most important assets of today's Army. Without outstanding Soldiers, the Army will not meet the expectations that our world requires for the 21st century.

As leaders, we must display positive attitude, set the example, uphold the NCO Creed and live up to our Corps' values.

By understanding and applying selfless service into our way of life, our Army will be more professional, efficient and effective, thereby able to carry out the missions our nation entrusts to us.

Ruiz was assigned to the Combat Support Coordination Team 2 in Taegu, Korea.

Honor is as **HONOR** does

It was dark that winter evening as I drove down Fenwick Road at Fort Monroe, Va. Suddenly, the vehicle in front of me stopped by the curb, letting out a Marine. Even in the dark, he was easily recognizable in his dress blues, including the white belt and white cap.

As he approached the front step of what I presumed was his residence, he raised his right arm and rendered a crisp hand salute. I looked to see if there was someone else there. He was alone, except for the colors of the United States of America proudly waving on the porch.

It struck me how many uniformed personnel duck indoors to avoid the sounding of "Retreat," or the ones that drive through it, pretending not to hear the distinct bugle call. If a thing is expedient — and usually that means someone may be watching — then we do it. On the night mentioned, it was dark, the Marine's ride had pulled away and no one would have been the wiser if he had decided he was "off-duty."

Honor is as honor does. His act, simple and automatic, spoke volumes about his character and took my mind to larger ramifications of the words "character" and "honor."

A few months ago, I heard Chaplain (Lt. Col.) David Reese, the Fort Monroe post chaplain, quote D.L. Moody as saying, "Character is what you are in the dark." It's what you do when no one sees you and when there is little chance of being discovered. The nature of those secret deeds is something that defines our character. A person's visible life eventually manifests those priorities, which resonate in the silent chambers of one's soul. Free are those who have successfully calibrated their acts and deeds with their values, a daunting task to say the least, but one worthy of our best efforts.

These pillars of principle — character and honor — have become cliché military catchphrases. But I feel that their relevance endures because of the enormous impact they have in the course of events. I saw them personified in deed on March 23, 1994. Unlike the Marine whose act of honor was cloaked under the veil of darkness, these were manifest in the bright daylight of a beautiful North Carolina spring afternoon.

As a jumpmaster student at Pope Air Force Base's "Green Ramp," I remember hearing what sounded like a fighter jet's afterburner igniting. In actuality, an Air Force F-16 fighter and a C-130 cargo plane had "bumped" mid-air. The pilots ejected, sending the F-16, now a massive fireball after ricocheting off of a parked plane — careening through scores of paratroopers massed for an airborne operation.

The scene was surreal. Victims, crushed and burned, lay scattered across the tarmac amid burning vehicles. The booms of secondary explosions muffled all other noises. The first to respond were mostly fellow students at the Jumpmaster School, some of whom were trained combat lifesavers. But the training they received never prepared them for the medical emergencies they now faced.

We did what we could; just as Maj. Larry Perino and his fellow Rangers had done with downed Blackhawks nearly six months prior in Mogadishu, Somalia.

I watched a Soldier extinguish flames on a burning Soldier with nothing but his bare bands. I saw another frantically attempting CPR to save a convulsing Soldier. A senior jumpmaster instructor, Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Bennett, cleared out a classroom to set up a burn and triage site. Staff Sgt. Daniel Price epitomized the Warrior Ethos when he threw himself over Spc. Estella Wingfield, shielding her from the blast. She survived, but Price, a husband and father of five, gave his life for the principles that propelled him.

Without regard for personal safety, Soldiers responded to the warrior code that had been instilled in them since their reception into the Army. These patriots reacted to the crisis, just as we all witnessed firefighters, police and ordinary citizens doing on Sept. 11, 2001. Herein was the relevance of words that flow so freely from our lips — words like character, honor, moral courage and selfless service.

Staff Sgt. Glenn Coe
April 2003

Twenty-four paratroopers perished as a result of that incident March 23, 1994; 100 more were injured. However, the core values of our Army and nation, born of small and seemingly insignificant acts of character and honor, emerged "refreshed by the blood of martyrs" and heroes.

Coe was the NCOIC of the Fort Monroe post chaplain's office.

Sgt. Sterling Shearer, a team leader attached to the Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team, walks and talks with an Afghan boy Sept. 12 in the Alisheng district of Laghman province. The PRT, partnered with the security forces assistant team and the Afghan National Police, patrolled through a village to talk to the locals and teach the ANP proper procedures during patrols.
U.S. Air Force photo by Sgt. Ryan Crane

Soldiers assigned to B Troop, 1st Squadron, 38th Cavalry Regiment, 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, brace against flying dirt and debris June 6 following the departure of a UH-60 helicopter at the Weesh border crossing point, Afghanistan.

U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jessica Lockoska

Leadership starts with INTEGRITY

Sgt. Juan Carreon
as told to Dave Melancon
March 2009

Sgt. Juan Carreon believes living by the Army's values and maintaining personal integrity are two hallmarks of a good noncommissioned officer.

"As an NCO, one of the things I will not give up are my personal values," said Carreon, a human resources specialist with V Corps' Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

"We all have family values, but each individual has personal values that we have to stand by and stick by," he said.

During the V Corps Special Troops Battalion NCO induction ceremony at U.S. Army Garrison Heidelberg, Germany, on Feb. 27, 2009, Carreon said his primary goal as an NCO is to mentor other Soldiers. Caring is the first step in that process, he said.

"I mentor Soldiers by showing them I care," he explained. "I show them everything I have learned and encourage them to come to me for anything. I always ask how they are doing."

Those conversations can take place on the personal and professional level, he said.

Carreon said HHC V Corps' first sergeant, 1st Sgt. Renee Baldwin, is his mentor and the example he follows in establishing his own leadership style as an NCO.

"She carries herself with the utmost professionalism," he said. "She cares about Soldiers and their families. She has helped me become an NCO by motivating me and being a mentor."

For her part, Baldwin called Carreon a true professional.

"He is mature and you can see that in his customer service skills," the first sergeant said. "He treats everybody with dignity and respect."

The HHC orderly room staff is constantly busy helping Soldiers take care of personnel matters, and Carreon gives those Soldiers service that is above and beyond, she added.

"He treats every action like the Soldier is standing in front of him," Baldwin said. "He follows up on every action, making sure it is complete."

Carreon has set a high mark for his ultimate career goal. He says he hopes to earn the Army's top enlisted rank — command sergeant major — while continuing to be "a mentor that has a positive effect on peoples' lives."

However, the foundation of any NCO's career is the Army's values, he said.

"We have integrity," he added. "There's courage and always doing the right thing (even) when no one is around."

Faith, **PERSONAL COURAGE** led to escape

As a 25-year-old sergeant first class, Isaac Camacho escaped from a Vietnamese prisoner of war camp where he had been held for 22 months, from 1963 to 1965.

"When you're a POW, you always think to escape, then take the opportunity when it comes. In the meantime, I counted the bars on my cage or drew pictures in the dirt. I sang, weaved bamboo or worked math problems.

"We always had this threat of being killed, especially when one of theirs was killed. So when we (POWs) were together on details, I'd tell the guys, 'Don't forget to pray. We may be here in nowhere land, but someone up there will help us.' I always believed that and knew my chance to escape would come.

"I told this Marine captain about my plans to escape. He wrote me a prayer in real small print and slipped it to me. I prayed that prayer every day. I also knew that once I escaped — if I got caught — it would be my end. So I asked the Lord daily, 'If you help me escape I'll be the best Catholic ever.'

"Well my time came. I'd been lubricating a peg in my cage with soap and water I'd stolen while on details. They'd taken my chains away and put them on two captains who'd just been brought to camp. I felt sorry for them, but this was my opportunity. I knew there was little chance for a rescue attempt because we were in the jungle near the Cambodian border, some 75 to 80 miles northeast of Saigon. It was called the Parrot's Beak area.

"The night I escaped, it was thundering, lightning and raining. I used the trail into the jungle that we used when we were taken to cut wood for the POW mess hall; they'd put a white log for us to sit on there. I slipped into the jungle off that trail and was gone about an hour when I came right back to that same log. I was devastated. I sat thinking, 'Lord, help me now.' After a few minutes, I'm thinking, 'You big dummy, the water — SF (Special Forces) training. The water will lead you to a creek, a creek to a river.' So I followed the water and, shortly thereafter, I was diving into the river.

"By the time daylight came, I was about three miles away from the camp. I paddled down river all that time and was tired. I reached up, grabbed a branch and rested for a while. I knew the current was going south, so I skirted it until the sun came up. Then I took a bearing of southeast through the jungle for the rest of my first day.

"On the second day, I saw the sky for the first time through an open area in the jungle. I was hoping to see a plane so I could signal with a piece of mirror I'd brought along. But it seemed I always heard the planes when I was in the thick of the jungle.

"I thought I was about to buy the farm on day three. I'd been without food and water all this time. It was cloudy and, when the sun came out, I reoriented myself and realized I was going in the wrong direction. Exhausted, no food or water, and now I'm going the wrong way. But I didn't quit. I went back into the jungle for cover and to look for food.

"Later I saw an L20 observation aircraft with US Army letters. I darted out to see his direction. It led me to a highway. This was the first man-made object I'd seen in a long while. It boosted my morale 100 percent. I started running as fast as I could. It really brought me back to life. I skirted this highway until I came to a rubber plantation. I checked it out and saw bunkers and a Vietnamese flag. How was I going to get into this camp without getting shot? Then I saw a Red Cross vehicle. I stopped the driver and spoke with him. He spoke only French. Suddenly, I find I'm speaking French with him. (Camacho had learned some of the language during French survival training).

Sgt. Maj. Isaac Camacho
as told to Sgt. Maj. Brenda L. Hester
Summer 1993

"I had this club I'd made and I'm thinking, 'If he tries anything it's going to be him, not me.' When you're trying to survive, you must think that way. Anyway, at this point I didn't feel weak anymore. When we drove into the gate, the guards locked and loaded their weapons. They took me to the village chief, who spoke English. The guy kept saying, 'You don't look like an American,' so I had to tell him about my captivity and escape. Then this Special Forces medic pulls up, looks at me, and says, 'Ike, is that you?'

"They took me for first aid, food, a shower and my uniform. At the hospital, I asked to see a priest. I wanted to thank God for giving me courage, direction and strength to get back to U.S. hands.

"I now know that I'd have never survived or escaped if I hadn't kept myself physically fit, mentally alert and spiritually focused — even while in captivity. Resisting threats and sometimes beating the enemy at their own game boosted my morale and spirit. The smallest victory gave me new life.

"The war was never over for me, even while I was in my cage. I was determined to always fight back. I was only able to do that by exercising those principles."

Camacho retired from the active Army in 1975 as a sergeant major, and from the Army Reserve as a captain 10 years later.

NCO Stories

A selection of Valor

MEDAL OF HONOR

Sergeant is first living Marine to receive highest award for actions in Afghanistan

By Karen Parrish
American Forces Press Service

At a White House ceremony Sept. 15, President Barack Obama draped the pale blue ribbon suspending the Medal of Honor around the neck of Marine Corps Sgt. Dakota L. Meyer, the first living Marine to receive the award for actions in Iraq or Afghanistan.

"It's been said that where there is a brave man, in the thickest of the fight, there is the post of honor," Obama said. "Today we pay tribute to an American who placed himself in the thick of the fight again, and again, and again."

Obama said Meyer, who is now 23 and was just 21 that day in Afghanistan, is "one of the most down-to-earth guys you will ever meet."

When the president's staff called the young Marine so the commander in chief could officially notify him of the medal, Obama said Meyer was at work on his new civilian job at a construction site.

"He felt he couldn't take the call right then because, he said, 'If I don't work, I don't get paid,'" Obama said.

"So we arranged to make sure he got the call during his lunch break," the president added.

Obama then turned to the events of Sept. 8, 2009, the day Meyer earned the medal as a corporal serving with Marine Embedded Training Team 2-8, Regional Corps Advisory Command 3-7, in Kunar province, Afghanistan.

Just before dawn, a patrol of Afghan forces and their American trainers, on foot and making their way through a narrow valley, was planning to meet with a group of village elders, the president said.

"Suddenly, all over the valley, the lights go out — and that's when it happens," Obama said.

About a mile away, Meyer and Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Juan Rodriguez-Chavez could hear the ambush over the radio.

Gunfire poured from houses, the hillsides, and even the local school, Obama said.

Soon, the patrol was pinned down, taking ferocious fire from three sides. "Men were being wounded and killed, and four Americans — Dakota's friends — were surrounded," he said.

After asking four times to go closer to the fight to help, and hearing each time that it was too dangerous, the two Marines got inside a nearby humvee and headed into the fight, Rodriguez-Chavez at the wheel and Meyer manning the gun turret.

"They were defying orders, but they

were doing what they thought was right," the president said.

On two solo trips into the ambush area, Meyer repeatedly got out of the humvee to help Afghan troops, many of them wounded, get inside the vehicle and back to safety.

"A third time they went back, insurgents running right up to the front of the humvee, Dakota fighting them off," Obama said.

This time, the men drove right up to the line of fire, and helped a group of wounded Americans battle their way to safety.

They then headed back on the fourth trip with Meyer wounded in the arm and the vehicle riddled with bullets and shrapnel, the president said.

"Dakota later confessed, 'I didn't think I was going to die, I knew I was.' But still, they pushed on, finding the wounded [and] delivering them to safety," Obama said.

On the fifth trip, the two Marines drove through fire "that seemed to come from every window, every doorway, every alley," he said.

Finally, the two reached the four Americans who had been surrounded.

"Dakota jumped out and he ran toward them, drawing all those enemy guns toward himself, bullets kicking up the dirt all around him," Obama said.

Meyer and others who had joined him picked up the fallen Marines and, "through all those bullets, all the smoke, all the chaos, carried them out one by one — because as Dakota says, that's what you do for a brother," Obama said.

"Dakota says he'll accept this medal in their name," the president said. "So today, we remember the husband who loved the outdoors, Lt. Michael Johnson; the husband and father they called 'Gunny J,' Gunnery Sgt. Edwin Johnson; the determined Marine who fought to get on that team, Staff Sgt. Aaron Kenefick; the medic who gave his life tending to his teammates, Hospitalman 3rd Class James Layton; and a Soldier wounded in that battle who was never recovered: Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Westbrook."

Obama said while he knows Meyer has thought of himself as a failure because some of his teammates didn't come home, "as your commander in chief, and on behalf of everyone here today and all Americans, I want you to know it's quite the opposite."

"Because of your honor, 36 men are alive today," the president said. "Because of your courage, four fallen American heroes came home, and in the words of James Layton's mom, [their families] could lay their sons to rest with dignity."

Top: President Barack Obama presents the Medal of Honor to Marine Corps Sgt. Dakota Meyer on Sept. 15 during a ceremony in the East Room of the White House.
U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Jimmy D. Shea

Bottom: Sgt. Dakota Meyer in a humvee when he was assigned to Embedded Training Team 2-8 advising the Afghan National Army in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan.
Courtesy photo

Meyer's father, Mike, grandparents, and more than a hundred friends and family members attended the ceremony.

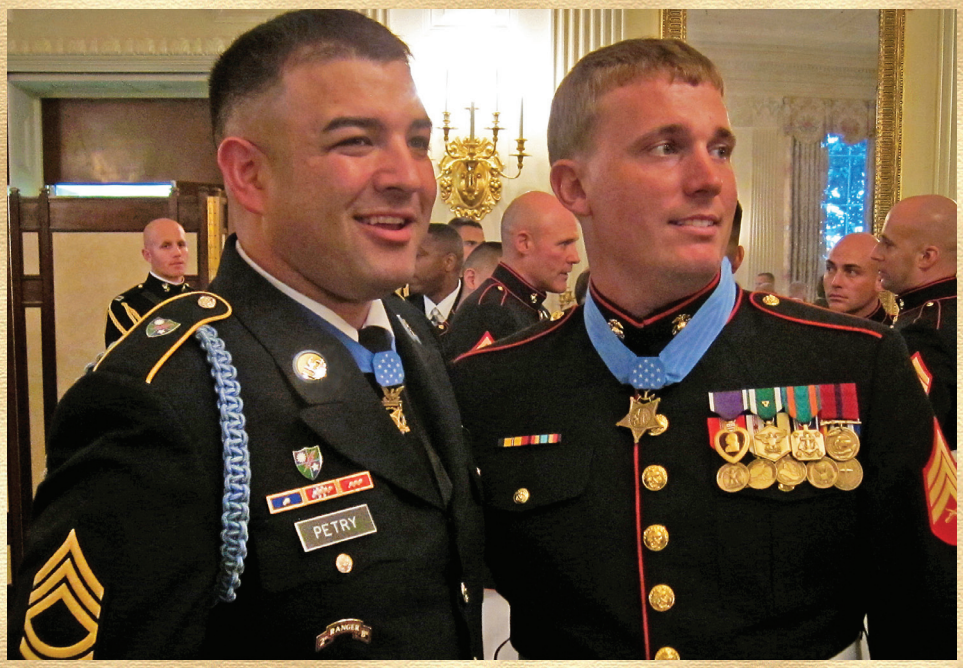
Because of Meyer's humble example, children all across America will know that "no matter who you are or where you come from, you can do great things as a citizen and a member of the American family," the president said.

Obama then asked Rodriguez-Chavez, now a gunnery sergeant, and all those present at the ceremony who served with Meyer, to stand "and accept the thanks of a grateful nation."

Meyer joined in the applause.

Just before the reading of the citation and the medal presentation, Obama said, "Every member of our team is as important as the other. That's a lesson that we all have to remember, as citizens and as a nation, as we meet the tests of our time here at home and around the world. To our Marines, to all our men and women in uniform, to our fellow Americans, let us always be faithful."

Meyer, who has left the active Marine Corps and is a sergeant in the inactive reserve, is the 298th Marine ever to have received the medal. The nation's highest military honor, the Medal of Honor is awarded for risk of life in combat beyond the call of duty.



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Jimmy D. Shea

Medal of Honor recipients Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Arthur Petry, left, and Marine Corps Sgt. Dakota Meyer, right, stand side-by-side after Meyer recieved his medal from President Obama.

Meyer is the third living service member to receive the Medal of Honor for actions during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, following Army Staff Sgt. Salvatore A. Giunta, who received the medal Nov. 16, 2010, and Army Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry, who accepted the award July 12.

Citation to Award the Medal of Honor

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving with Marine Embedded Training Team 2-8, Regional Corps Advisory Command 3-7, in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, on 8 September 2009. Corporal Meyer maintained security at a patrol rally point while other members of his team moved on foot with two platoons of Afghan National Army and Border Police into the village of Ganjgal for a pre-dawn meeting with village elders. Moving into the village, the patrol was ambushed by more than 50 enemy fighters firing rocket propelled grenades, mortars, and machine guns from houses and fortified positions on the slopes above. Hearing over the radio that four U.S. team members were cut off, Corporal Meyer seized the initiative. With a fellow Marine driving, Corporal Meyer took the exposed gunner's position in a gun-truck as they drove down the steeply terraced terrain in a daring attempt to disrupt the enemy attack and locate the trapped U.S. team. Disregarding intense enemy fire now concentrated on their lone vehicle, Corporal Meyer killed a number of enemy fighters with the mounted machine guns and his rifle, some at near point blank range, as he and his driver made three solo trips into the ambush area. During the first two trips, he and his driver evacuated two dozen Afghan soldiers, many of whom were wounded. When one machine gun became inoperable, he directed a return to the rally point to switch to another gun-truck for a third trip into the ambush area where his accurate fire directly supported the remaining U.S. personnel and Afghan soldiers fighting their way out of the ambush. Despite a shrapnel wound to his arm, Corporal Meyer made two more trips into the ambush area in a third gun-truck accompanied by four other Afghan vehicles to recover more wounded Afghan soldiers and search for the missing U.S. team members. Still under heavy enemy fire, he dismounted the vehicle on the fifth trip and moved on foot to locate and recover the bodies of his team members. Corporal Meyer's daring initiative and bold fighting spirit throughout the 6-hour battle significantly disrupted the enemy's attack and inspired the members of the combined force to fight on. His unwavering courage and steadfast devotion to his U.S. and Afghan comrades in the face of almost certain death reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

Sergeant reflects on a fateful day

By Spc. Fabian Ortega
U.S. Army Europe

During a routine mission making the rounds of Iraqi National Police checkpoints in Baghdad, a 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment convoy was halted when it found its path blocked by three improvised explosive devices.

It's been years since the incident, however, Staff Sgt. Clifford Neighbors, then with the 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, remembers it vividly. His actions that day in August 2006 would earn him a Bronze Star and an Army Commendation Medal with "V" device for valor, which he attributes to his team and a former platoon sergeant.

After securing the area and waiting for explosive ordnance disposal experts to clear the route, Neighbors said he and the interpreter riding in his truck got out of the vehicle.

"As I walked [toward the opposite side] to check for damage, shots rang out," he said.

Neighbors and the interpreter were struck by sniper fire, he said. The staff sergeant's arm, lungs and heart were pierced. The interpreter was shot in the chest.

EOD personnel brought the interpreter to the truck, where Neighbors tended to the man's injuries in spite of his own wounds. "I reassured him everything would be OK, and I gave him first aid," Neighbors said.

The interpreter later died at a combat support hospital nearby.

The staff sergeant said he reflects on those events every day.

"It's one of the first things I think about," he said.

He said his decision to render first aid while sustaining a life-threatening injury was not heroic — it was his duty as a Soldier.

"I am glad that someone thought that my actions were worthy of a medal, but I'm just a guy who was just doing his job over there and trying to survive," he said.

The 15-year Army veteran said the advice he received as a young infantryman from a platoon sergeant injured in the invasion of Panama guided his decisions in the truck that day.

"He told me the only way he survived was by staying calm," Neighbors said.

Neighbors said he remained composed, even after he noticed a bullet hole in the center of his chest with blood pouring out.

"Some of the people who were part of my team told me they could not have stayed so calm," he said. "I really did not know the extent of the injury at the time. I just knew it hurt."

Neighbors said he believes the actions of his fellow National Police Training Team members ultimately saved his life that day.

"Those 10 men on my team, they're heroes," he said.

The team made the decision to evacuate the site and rush him and the interpreter to the nearest hospital rather than wait for a helicopter to airlift them back, Neighbors said.

The bond formed with his team during the deployment remains strong, he added, noting that he writes to his fellow Soldiers regularly while he's on leave.

"It's a bond that will probably never be broken. You've experienced the good, bad and the in-between with these men and women," he said.

He called the bond forged through combat different than a bond formed with others who have never served.

"We entrust our lives to each other, because it's just you and them," he said. "That's all you have and that's the difference."

Courtesy photo

Staff Sgt. Clifford Neighbors on duty May 8, 2006, in Samarra, Iraq, three months before an incident after which he earned a Bronze Star and an Army Commendation Medal with "V" device. Neighbors served with the 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, in Baghdad.

Amputee earns title of 'SERGEANT AIRBORNE'

By Cheryl Rodewig
Army News Service

Like thousands before him, Sgt. Joel Dulashanti donned the black hat of an Airborne instructor for the first time Aug. 22, signifying his completion of a detailed certification process with 1st Battalion (Airborne), 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, at Fort Benning, Ga.

Unlike those before him, however, he met the standard with a prosthetic leg, a partial knee replacement and the aftermath of several internal injuries received during an ambush in Afghanistan. With his wounds, he could have taken a medical discharge from the Army. But the NCO chose to stay in — and remain Airborne all the way.

"It's still brand new," he said, "But it feels good to actually have my hat."

Dulashanti's determination in the face of adversity, evident during his own training, will be instrumental in instructing Airborne students, said Command Sgt. Maj. Chip Mezzaline, battalion command sergeant major. More than 17,000 students come through the battalion each year.

"He's had a traumatic injury and had the resilience to stay on active duty and serve as an instructor in a position that's high-risk," Mezzaline said. "It's in his character — something you can't teach. It's something inside him that's going to drive him to be successful in whatever it is he's doing. I don't think 'can't' is in his vocabulary. Him being a Sergeant Airborne — a Black Hat — at the Basic Airborne Course will inspire numerous students coming through here."

Mezzaline said Dulashanti completed the instructor certification program at a level "above the standard." He was trained on the lateral-drift apparatus, mock towers, the 250-foot tower, swing-landing trainer and spin harness. He also memorized a block of instruction for the mock-tower exit.

"He's a paratrooper," Mezzaline said. "He comes from the 82nd Airborne Division. That Airborne career he probably thought was cut short. But this is a new life for him here at the Airborne School. I predict within the next year he'll be a jumpmaster — probably a senior-rated jumpmaster — and he'll be doing door checks, exiting students at 1,250 feet above Fryer Drop Zone. With his level of motivation, he'll probably move on to that next mark and be a centurion, which is 100 exits out of an aircraft. The sky's the limit for Sgt. Dulashanti here at the 507th."

Dulashanti said he wants to do everything he can while stationed at Fort Benning, including becoming a jumpmaster and centurion. In the Army for six years, he arrived at the battalion in May. The same month, four years prior, he was deployed as a sniper attached to the 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division. He remembers the details of his deployment vividly.

"We were chasing two guys — they were on a moped together, and we were in humvees," he said. "They took off in the field, and the sniper team went out. It was about 110 degrees outside, over 6,000 feet above sea level and with no humidity. All you could smell was the earth and burnt grass. All of a sudden, as we were walking in this knee-high grass, I started to smell body odor, so I stopped and turned to my right — in the direction of the odor. They began to engage in contact.

"They had AK-47s, and they were lying in the prone about 10 meters away," he continued. "I took two rounds to my right knee. As I was coming out of the sun, I was shot through my left knee. As I was falling, the next round that came through went under my arm, through my rib cage and, since I was parallel to the ground, it traversed my entire abdomen down to my pelvis. That round was the worst. We returned fire, and those guys were finished."

Two platoons donated plasma to him before he was evacuated to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. It took him eight months there to become comfortable walking again.

"The recovery process started off slow, (but) I accelerated fast," he said. "Most of the stuff can be replaced. I have

Sgt. Joel Dulashanti reaches for a harness strap during training at Eubanks Field at Fort Benning, Ga.
Photo by Cheryl Rodewig

a partial knee replacement on my left side. I have an above-the-knee amputation on my right side. I'm missing half of my stomach and 90 percent of my intestines and gall bladder, and half of my abdominal wall is gone."

He chose to stay in the Army in part for the fellow Soldiers recuperating alongside him in the hospital.

"I had to set that example for the rest of the Army, just based on the fact they couldn't do it, and they wanted to," he said. "Maybe in the future somebody else will have an easier time getting to do stuff like this because I've done it already."

Since then, Dulashanti has completed the Warrior Leader Course and the Advanced Leaders Course, among others. But his goal was to be part of Fort Benning's Airborne battalion.

"Mentally, I knew I could exit an aircraft, and I knew I was able to instruct people on how to exit an aircraft and to land on the ground properly," he said. "When I called about the job, the only question was 'Can you jump out of planes?' Even though I hadn't done it, the answer was 'yes, without a doubt.' I knew I wouldn't be a safety hazard, so the answer was 'yes.'"

"It was pretty intense," Dulashanti said of the studying it took to pass the certification program. But other instructors helped him along the way.

He said there are some things he does better than Soldiers without amputations, but other things he struggles to do at all.

"I have to kind of be on my A-game all the time," he said. "But at the same time, I do have limitations. So I have to make sure I take care of myself to prevent injury."

His "limitations" aren't something he tells every class of students about, but occasionally he mentions them or they find out.

"Sometimes people ask me why I have a limp," he said. "I tell them I don't have a leg, so it's not really a limp."

His advice to other wounded warriors is simple: Choose whether to have a positive outlook.

"Make up your mind," he said. "Everybody has to go through their own coping mechanisms. Sometimes you're in a denial state; when you come out of that denial state, then deal with what it is you have to deal with. Seek counseling if you have to. I never gave negativity an opportunity to invade my mind. There was only one route for me in the first place."

FULL-SPECTRUM BRAINPOWER

The new dimension of readiness

By Andrew S. Korim

Soldier! You don't think! You do and die!"

Back in the spring of 1945, that's what draftees of 2nd Platoon, B Company, 213rd Infantry Replacement Training Battalion, at Camp Blanding, Fla., heard their platoon sergeant, Tech. Sgt. Hernandez, bellow in response to the explanation of "I thought ..." after a serious error in the execution of a task. Hernandez, a seasoned leader from the early days of the Pacific Campaign of World War II, was charged with training us for combat in Japan.

The personal, memorable lesson I learned from Sgt. Hernandez that day occurred when my mind failed me, and my arms inserted a defused training mortar shell in the mortar tube wrong end first. After I was corrected, Sgt. Hernandez ordered me to double-time around the training area for 10 minutes with my rifle (an 11-pound M1) extended over my head.

The pain in my arms and legs remains etched in my memory 66 years later. The lesson learned: Keep your mind focused on what you are doing. In those days, words similar to those of Lord Alfred Tennyson were drilled into the Soldier's mind with frequent chanting while on a march: "Ours is not to reason why. Ours is but to do and die."

In contrast, though not as rhythmic, the variable demands of the operational environment confronting NCOs today dictate a focus on reasoning and judicious discretion:

- Ours is to think critically, logically, analytically and creatively to gain pre-emptive or counteractive advantage over forthcoming events — whatever the mission and whatever the context may be.
- Ours is to apply knowledge, lessons learned, proficiencies and common sense to dominate, exploit or neutralize the challenges that come with perplexity, adversity and uncertainty.
- Ours is to continually gauge, size up and weigh the ebb and flow of the unique dynamics of each encounter to determine the optimal opportunity to execute decisive action.
- Ours is to reason how to achieve mission success, for those before us never settled for less.
- Ours, more than "theirs," is to be predisposed to a regimen of continuous learning to grow brainpower capabilities commensurate with the demands of full-spectrum operations.

How to achieve these NCO brainpower efficiencies becomes the issue.

Back in the 1940s and 1950s, typically the only source of education for noncommissioned officers was through basic training, occupational specialty schooling, field experience and the correspondence courses of the U.S. Armed Forces Institute. While in Japan during the spring of 1950 just before to North Korea's invasion of South Korea, the College Level Examination Program test was administered to those of us interested in attending college upon completion of our enlistments. Without doubt, a huge number of NCOs abandoned a career in the Army to take advantage of the educational opportunities made available to veterans under the GI Bill.

Though not comparable to commissioned officers' education and development, today's NCOs have many more opportunities to elevate their level of educational attainment beyond high school through the military's educational infrastructure and tuition assistance programs at civilian colleges.

With the Internet and technology like smartphones and tablets, the classroom can go to the NCO anywhere in the world instead of the NCO going to the classroom. The Internet offers NCOs deployed in remote locations the opportunity to reinforce ongoing experiential learning, Structured Self-Development and college coursework. With the culture of learning evolving within the NCO Corps, an NCO without an associate degree will soon become an obsolete leader. Indeed, obsolescence is not consistent with efficiency, success or survival.

Though self-development has historically been an off-duty,

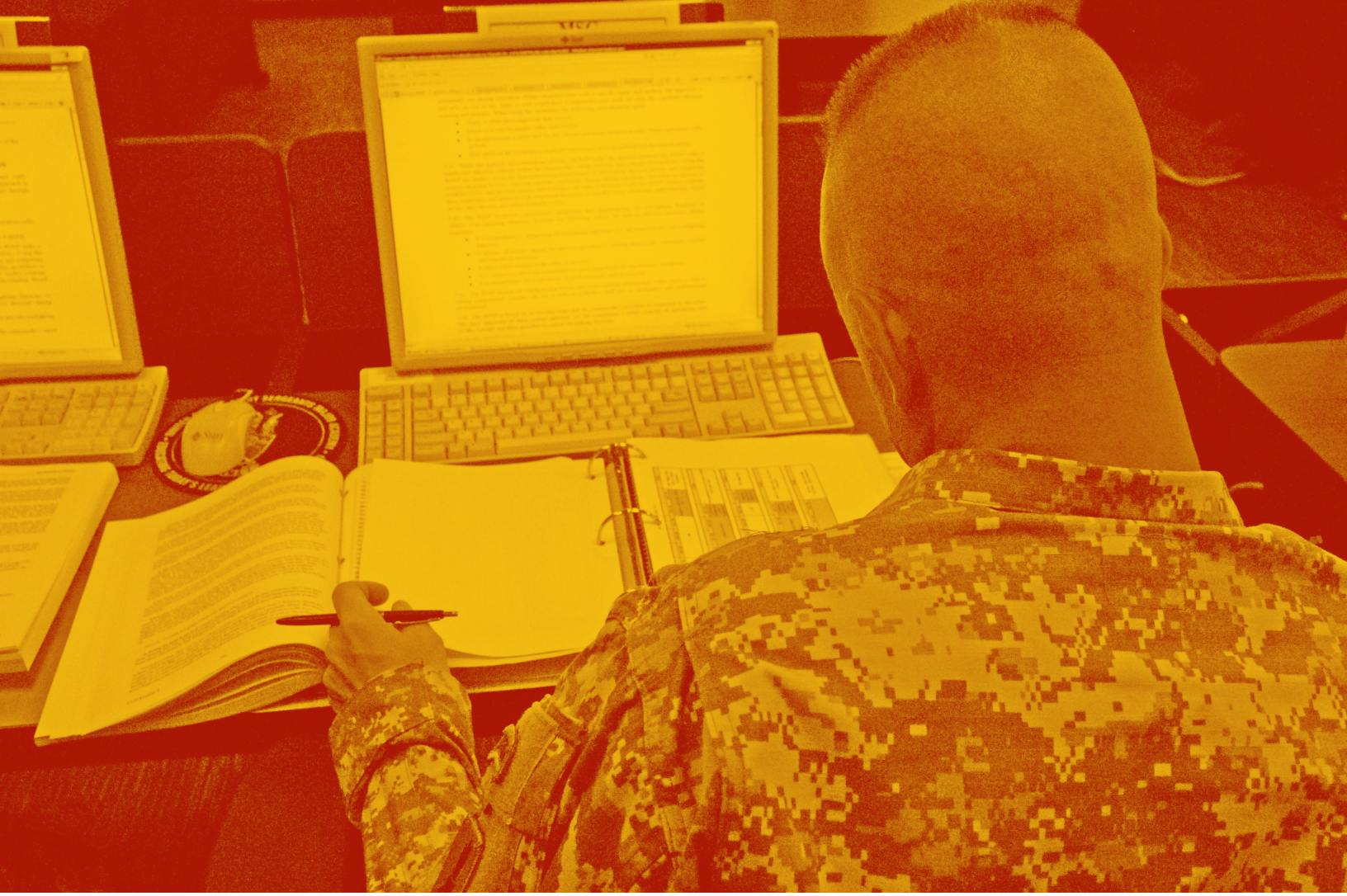


Photo illustration by Spc. David M. Gafford

personal educational activity, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III significantly departed from this practice recently with a charge to all leaders: Dedicate time in the weekly schedule for individual Soldiers to work on their SSD courses. This departure from the past is another building block in the culture of learning that is evolving within the NCO Corps.

A predictable conclusion is that, in the coming decades, the NCO will be doing the heavy thinking that, in the past, was the turf of the educated officer corps. Building the NCO Corps' intellectual muscle and immunity to brain freeze will become *the* issue of the second decade of the 21st century.

In what should be viewed as a heads-up for the NCO Corps, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. David M. Bruner, offered an insightful perspective on brainpower and the distinctive roles of training and education in the Summer 2009 issue of *The NCO Journal*:

- "Leading requires a lot of brain power, a lot of will power and a lot of training and education."
- "The only factor that enables us to adapt, that is to pick and choose which habitual mental process to follow and which to override, is education. Training and drills enable us to react. Education enables us to adapt."
- "We as an NCO Corps must recognize that an adaptable leader's most important tool is his mind. PT is conducted every morning to keep in physical shape. We must exercise our minds as well."

These insights show the contrast in the roles of training and education, which are often erroneously treated as synonymous. Each maximize the utility of contrasting functions of the mind, namely the programmable automatic sensory reflex function, the training domain in which you act without thinking, and the intellectually demanding thoughtful discretionary function, the educational domain in which you think before acting.

To enhance understanding of the value of education as the expanded source of discretionary capabilities in NCO leader development, TRADOC clarifies the distinction between the role of education and the role of training in the report *Serving a Nation at War: A Campaign Quality Army with Joint and Expeditionary Capabilities*, prepared by TRADOC's Futures Center in 2004:

- "Just as training must reflect the hard certainties of the conflict before us, individual Soldier and leader education must address its uncertainties."
- "The need to teach Soldiers and leaders how to think rather than what to think has never been clearer. To defeat adaptive enemies, we must out-think them in order to out-fight them."

As Soldiers move from private first class up the NCO hierarchy, their span of responsibility and control over Soldiers and military assets naturally increases, as does the amount of brainpower needed to function effectively, efficiently and with the precision, confidence and authority of a leader.

To maximize individual NCO performance and the readiness capabilities of the NCO Corps, the accelerated and continuous

development of critical thinking, reasoning and discretionary deliberative capacities becomes a dominant priority.

Getting an education or acquiring functional brainpower assets is a cumulative learning process. This process consists of blending experiential learning, self-study and formal instruction with a focus on building an expansive bank of diverse knowledge, talents and know-how. The ingredients to accomplish this come from personal life experiences that include routine social interaction, curiosity about the dimensions of reality, work experiences, lessons learned from extraordinary occurrences and the study of the intellectual disciplines.

Parallel with and integral to building one's resource bank is developing one's proficiency in communication. This includes vocabulary mastery, orderly thought construction, reading comprehension, effective written and oral presentation, information management, precision in verbalization, and navigation of Internet resources. The capability to understand and exchange courtesies, intentions and commands in strategic foreign languages was advantageous to an NCO in the multinational environment of World War II, the Korean War and even more so in the contemporary multinational operational environment of Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the process of acquiring an education, reasoning and deliberative capabilities such as speculating, deducing, inferring, hypothesizing, imputing, analyzing, synthesizing, concluding, deciding and conceptualizing become a top priority for the NCO. Also developed are key functional mental transactions such as anticipation, correlation, inquisition, formulation, imagination, verification, evaluation, assimilation and introspection.

To be of prime value to the NCO as a leader of 21st-century warriors, education must be shaped to produce applied intellect. Specifically, learning must be consciously focused on acquiring performance capabilities essential to the efficient execution of the roles, responsibilities and duties of an NCO. Leader education has the burden to develop one's finesse in traversing the maze of problematic, destabilizing and unanticipated dimensions of each mission. Among the brain-powered navigational tools needed in such unchartered terrain are talents to continuously clarify, exploit, reconcile, mitigate, degrade and neutralize contingencies (often audaciously) as appropriate within the parameters of the rules of war.

In a world where continuous conflict, instability and strife are the harsh reality, and peace is an abstraction, the NCO's compelling obligation is full-spectrum operational readiness with brainpower being the catalytic asset that converts manpower, firepower and cyberpower into on-point customized modules of land power. In fact, had today's opportunities for an NCO to acquire a college education been available to me in 1950s, "U.S. Army Retired" would follow my name.

Andrew S. Korim, whose Army service spanned from 1945 to 1952, was a sergeant in the 181st Military Intelligence Detachment (Counterintelligence Corps), attached to the 1st Marine Division in Korea. Throughout his career, he was a major proponent of community colleges and NCO education. Now in his 80s, he is retired and lives in Sarver, Pa.

➤ **FROM THE CSM continued from page 5**

civilian, wait until you see the enlightenment that can manifest itself in your youth when you invest in them the same time, determination and effort you did in-theater. If you are, or aspire to be, a commander or noncommissioned officer in this institution, the true reward of service in our Army is bringing out in our youth their potential. Don't get me wrong — this can and will be challenging and frustrating at times. But again, there is no greater reward. If you wanted to be a leader in this Army, you said, in effect, you wanted to be responsible for human life. If you thought otherwise, you thought wrong.

We are confronted with a convergence of two realities. We find our missions in two operational theaters either winding down, being scaled back or being handed off to the indigenous population, and we are confronted with a huge national debt that requires business as some have known it to change dramatically. Though there are challenges associated with both realities, there are opportunities as well.

There are things we've done throughout the Army's history that have stood us well in the past, prepared us for future conflict and will continue to do so in the more distant future. In-ranks inspections, in-quarters inspections, police call, etc., have instilled in us not only a sense of accountability, ownership, attention to detail and situational awareness but also an understanding of why pre-combat checks and inspections, though mundane, are critical to our success in combat. There are those things we've had to do to forecast training requirements, resource those requirements, and facilitate the training that have made us noncommissioned officers the envy of many nations' armies around the world.

Yes, the operations in a garrison environment can tax one's patience and, yes, there will be more folks competing for the same resources. However, there are ample opportunities to tax, test and build on the capacity of our youth, and they are infinitely more gratifying than what you have previously done.

Finally, while we are confronted with huge challenges, fiscally and contextually, this does not mean "end of mission." The mission does not end in the U.S. Army: We support and defend the Constitution, and that mission is enduring. The command is "change of mission." The challenge is a fundamentally different fiscal reality — a reality that many in our Army do not have much familiarity with because of wartime spending and force generation. But our youth, many of whom volunteered for service well after our sustained period of conflict began, have the strength and fortitude to live — and thrive — in this new reality.

If you share this perspective and commit to invest in our youth so that they may learn, develop and grow in this new reality, then thank you for your continued service. This is serious business and the American people deserve a serious, determined effort — one that will require unequivocal commitment from every Soldier and every Army civilian. The command has been given — and it is "change of mission."

Ciotola is the command sergeant major of the U.S. Installation Management Command at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Desiree N. Palacios

International military students receive an assignment from instructor Andrea Gjorevski during a general English class at the Defense Language Institute English Language Center at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

➤ **DLIELC continued from page 29**

watched the NBA since I was 5, but being in the arena was something totally different. We miss a lot on TV, so being in the arena was: oof, big time."

Othman has had several perspective-changing experiences during his time in the United States. He had never taught before, but after presentations in his classes and other public assignments arranged by the institute, he thinks he's uncovered a real knack for it; now, he's eager to get back to Lebanon and begin his new teaching career in his army.

During his time at the institute, he's developed relationships with other students and now counts among his friends soldiers from Japan, Africa, the Middle East, Korea, Cambodia and a host of other countries. A trip to an elementary school in San Antonio led to one of his most touching experiences, when the children he spoke to wrote to him months later and remembered everything he told them about himself and his country. And Othman has learned something about American Soldiers.

"When I first came here, one of my first assignments was to pick a book. So I picked a book about PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder," he said. "This book gave me a lot of information about the American Soldier, because in the media, in our media, it's manipulated. In my country, or in the Middle East, they always see the American Soldier as an invader to some extent. But I know — even before reading this book, but this book fossilized this in my mind — that the American Soldier is just a human being like us. He has orders to do, and he has problems to face. And when he comes back home, he has a mother, children, a wife to take care of. It gave me a lot of an idea about the American Soldier as a human. I'm not seeing him as an enemy. Maybe because it's politics, but in the end we are not politicians. We're just human beings in the end, and we're soldiers."

Robert Smith, a supervisor for one of the DLIELC's branches, thinks that sort of insight is one of the most important goals of the work done at the institute. He spent four years enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and then 18 in the U.S. Army. Since retiring, he has spent the past 17 years working for the DLIELC, almost half of that time overseas. He recently took on a supervisory role in the institute's Specialized English Branch, which prepares students with some English skills to move onto Sspecialized military training at follow-on sites across the United States.

"Their learning English and then coming here for training or getting training from military forces overseas builds a level of cooperation that, as far as I'm concerned, does more to maintain peace than almost anything else we do," Smith said. "We're teaching them to cooperate with us, but it doesn't just work like that. Once they have a language in common, English, they can cooperate with other countries where we've also trained soldiers. So it gives them a linguistics bridge that didn't exist before. I really think we're a major contributor to world peace."

To contact Clifford Kyle Jones, email clifford.k.jones.ctr@mail.mil.

Civil affairs NCO fosters relationships to help build district's government

By Air Force Capt. David Tomiyama
Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team

Though he had been in Afghanistan for only a few weeks, 1st Sgt. Thomas Walsh, the NCO in charge of civil affairs for the Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan, already had made months' worth of progress in connecting the people of the province's Terezayi district to their government.

Walsh built working relationships with the district governor and his staff, held key leader engagements with village elders, explored project options in the district and helped to plan several community meetings. It's all in a day's work, the 28-year Army reservist said.

"Civil affairs is about cultivating relationships, listening to the Afghans, understanding their culture and value system, and working with the district governor in any way I can," he said. "I work day to day with the district governor, building up his credibility and supporting his vision for Terezayi. We all win when the district wins."

Terezayi is close to the Pakistan border, six miles from the provincial capital of Khost, and one of the largest districts in Khost province. Terezayi residents often feel disconnected from their government, one of the many challenges Walsh said he faces daily.

"Terezayi has its shortcomings in areas that the people feel should be addressed," he said. "They often feel like the 'country bumpkins' compared to the city folks in Khost."

Other challenges in Terezayi include divisions among villages in the district. The civil war took its toll on their relationships and made them competitive in regard to the money spent on reconstruction and development projects, Walsh said.

But Walsh said he believes he has made great strides in helping the elders take control of their villages and secure their areas.

"I know I've made a difference with the village elders. They're not listening to negative influences, and they've given me their personal word there's no improvised explosive devices on their roads or in their areas," Walsh said. "At one of the villages where I kept my word and brought a [provincial reconstruction team] engineer to check out potential projects, the village elder was so grateful, he wanted me to stay overnight. I told him I needed to be with my security detail, but he assured me I'd be safe in their village — that they would be my security."

Walsh's work as a one-man civil affairs team at Combat Outpost Terezayi has not gone unnoticed. Capt. Dan Leard, commander of "Able" Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Duke, has nothing but praise for Walsh.

"I've had four [civil affairs] detachments out here during my rotation," Leard said. "In the last 10 days, 1st Sgt. Walsh has cultivated a relationship with the district governor and 16 village elders. The trust and bonds he's built has blown away anything the previous [civil affairs] teams did in months. His … abilities are exceptional."

U.S. Air Force photo by Capt. David Tomiyama

First Sgt. Thomas Walsh, the Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team civil affairs NCO in charge, addresses an audience during a young men's shura July 9 at the Terezayi District Center. More than 100 young males attended the 90-minute shura, the second of its kind in Terezayi.

NCO on leave uses weapons-handling, combatives skills to foil bank robbery

By C. Todd Lopez
Army News Service

When Staff Sgt. Eddie Peoples went to the bank in Sarasota, Fla., May 31, he expected to walk out with a cashier's check. Instead he was caught up in a bank robbery that ended with the robber in cuffs and Peoples the hero.

Peoples, who is assigned to the 386th Movement Control Team, 14th Transportation Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, out of Vicenza, Italy, was visiting family members in Florida. It was while on leave and conducting business in a Bank of America branch in Sarasota with his sons Ikaika and Kioni in tow that Peoples ran into bank robber Matthew Rogers.

"A gunman came into the bank, demanded money — brandishing a large caliber handgun, I thought at first — [and] basically putting a lot of people in jeopardy," Peoples said.

A surveillance video shows Peoples' initial reaction to the gunman. While his two boys hid under chairs in the bank's lobby, Peoples dragged two larger chairs in front of them, putting some protection between his children and the gunman.

Moments later, 34-year-old Rogers left the bank for his vehicle. Peoples followed him out the door.

"Outside, I knew that it would just be me and him," Peoples said, saying that inside the bank, any confrontation with Rogers might end in bystanders getting hurt. "That was my main concern ... my children and the innocent bystanders."

Outside, Rogers ran to his vehicle, and Peoples got into his own vehicle. Some quick jockeying in the parking lot allowed Peoples to block Rogers' escape.

"Basically I just backed out, made a big huge U-turn and put my vehicle directly behind him," Peoples said. "It seemed like forever, but I know it was probably for only about 30 seconds."

Frustrated, Rogers got out of his own vehicle, and Peoples was able to temporarily pin Rogers between the two vehicles for a moment.

"He shouted at me, raised his weapon and came around the vehicle in order to keep me there," Peoples said. "I fully expected to take at least two shots through the window."

Fortunately for Peoples, Rogers didn't shoot at him. But he did try unsuccessfully to get inside his rental vehicle through the rear door.

"I knew at that point I was in a bad situation, and I had to get out and face this guy," Peoples said. He put his vehicle in park and opened his driver-side door.

Photo courtesy Sarasota Sheriff's Office

Sarasota, Fla., Sheriff Tom Knight presents a certificate to Staff Sgt. Eddie Peoples for his role in apprehending a bank robber.

"I was greeted with a handgun in my face," he said. "But since I was so close to him, it was easy to take the gun away. I basically did a wrist lock, pulled it back, intending to use that weapon as a blunt weapon to hit him with."

It was then Peoples realized the "gun" was too light to be real and too light even to be used as a blunt weapon. So instead, Peoples grabbed the criminal and slammed him to the ground. Taking the weapon from Rogers and putting him on the ground are reflexes Peoples said he learned in the Army.

"I've gone through combatives. I've gone through weapon handling. I've gone through the proper way to discharge a weapon, the proper way to take a weapon. I'm pretty well-versed in taking care of people like this. I owe that to the Army."

Peoples said that after putting Rogers to the ground, Peoples identified himself as a Soldier.

"He didn't want any more after that," Peoples said. "He basically cowered on the ground and the police showed up."

Peoples said he had been concerned that Rogers, after leaving the bank, would continue to be a threat to civilians outside — especially if there was a chase with police. He knew there was a risk to himself for getting involved, but it was something he said as a Soldier he was prepared to accept.

"I knew the risk the moment this bank robber stepped out the door, and I accepted that risk." As a Soldier, Peoples said, "we accept these risks all the time."

NCO delivers morale boost with air drops of care packages to remote areas

By Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown
10th Combat Aviation Brigade

Photo by Sgt. Amanda Jo Brown

Soldiers from B Company, 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, a reserve unit serving with 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Phoenix, prepare to drop supplies and care packages Aug. 25 near an isolated forward operating base in Afghanistan.

Many deployed Soldiers sacrifice common comforts to accomplish their units' missions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Some reside in remote areas, work with no running water, consume only prepackaged meals, receive mail infrequently and have no electricity.

Sgt. Paul Roberts, a CH-47 Chinook helicopter door gunner with B Company, 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, a Reserve unit serving with 10th Combat Aviation Brigade, Task Force Phoenix, at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, made it his personal mission to provide care packages for Soldiers located in these remote areas.

"I was an infantry Soldier when I first entered the Army in 1989, so I know firsthand how difficult it can be living under these conditions," Roberts said. "I took it upon myself to go to all the units at Bagram asking for anything they could donate to help these Soldiers."

Roberts said he understands how important receiving mail is for the morale of deployed Soldiers.

"We fly all over Afghanistan and see the living conditions [of] some of our fellow Soldiers … which are extremely rough," Roberts said. "Whenever we fly [into remote locations], we always do our best to give them whatever we can."

Roberts and his crew make quick supply drops to many areas that do not have common amenities. During these scheduled flights, Roberts and his crew quickly unload the supplies, as well as care packages for the Soldiers. The supplies are often delivered quickly without landing, and only in rare circumstances does the crew get to interact with the Soldiers they help.

"[On one occasion], instead of just dropping off the load and immediately taking off, we landed. This is something we do not do very often," Roberts said. "One of the Soldiers assigned there walked over to our bird and looked in. We gave him the first of a long line of donated boxes. It took about one minute, and we had about 30 Soldiers running to our bird to get the rest. It felt like Christmas in July to us."

The leadership within Roberts' unit supports his endeavors and has noticed the positive effect it has had on Soldiers.

"I believe that Sgt. Roberts' efforts have improved the morale of our [unit]," said 1st Sgt. Todd Carter, the first sergeant of D Company, 7th Battalion. "Every Soldier knows what it is like to receive a package from home. Getting the opportunity to help Soldiers in austere conditions makes us feel good."

Carter said he is immensely impressed by Roberts' drive to help other Soldiers.

"I have never witnessed one Soldier support [so many] other Soldiers in the way that Sgt. Roberts has. He is the epitome of selfless service," Carter said.

Carter added that the experience is rewarding for his Soldiers when they see the joy they can bring to others.

"It is great to see the smiling faces at [remote bases] when we arrive," Carter said. "It's like Santa coming in a big green Chinook."

"My goal is to boost their morale," Roberts said. "I just want to let them know that other Soldiers and civilians care about them."

Always mission ready: NCO's efforts aid company's readiness, efficiency

By Sgt. Kandi Huggins
1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st ID

After 14 years of service and three deployments serving as an infantryman and cavalry scout, Sgt. Reginald Alexander is in Iraq for a second time. This time he's keeping troops informed in support of Operation New Dawn.

During his first deployment to Iraq from 2004 to 2005, Alexander's unit was tasked to conduct combat patrols in Baghdad, he said. During his second deployment, Alexander has a different mission, as the company intelligence support team NCO in charge within G Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, at Contingency Operating Site Warrior, Iraq.

"Before, it was more hands-on, and I was more exposed to the Iraqi population," Alexander said. "We were responsible for keeping the district free of violent extremist groups … and provided security for the first democratic elections in Iraq."

Alexander said he spent 11 years in the National Guard as a scout and infantryman, but decided to go active duty for stability and to encounter new challenges.

As the company intelligence support team NCOIC, Alexander works with Soldiers and interpreters to provide intelligence reports to other Soldiers before they leave Contingency Operating Site Warrior for missions and engagements.

"As the COIST NCOIC, I follow attack trends, map the safest routes and plan alternate routes based on the current threat levels our [intelligence] has noted," Alexander said. "My job is pertinent because it gives the Soldiers situational awareness of threat levels; enemy tactics, techniques and procedures; and an idea of what they need to look for when they are out in-sector."

"He is definitely an asset," said Staff Sgt. Eric Harleston, the operations NCOIC of G Company. "Operations would be hurt without him. He sets up everything before the guys roll out. All they have to do is get in their vehicles and accomplish their mission."

Harleston said since working with Alexander the past two years, his professional respect for him continues to increase.

"He works hard," Harleston said. "He always leads by example. He is never the type of leader to just dictate and tell his Soldiers to do this or do that. He goes out there with his Soldiers and helps them, or learns what their job is to understand how it better helps him be more of an asset to their growth and development."

Photo by Sgt. Kandi Huggins

Sgt. Reginald Alexander conducts a mission brief Aug. 24 prior to Soldiers leaving Contingency Operating Site Warrior, Iraq, for a mission.

Though Alexander spends most of his time at COS Warrior, Harleston said he goes out on missions from time to time, which aids his understanding of what his briefings can do for the unit.

"It's a good thing for him to go out because he is better able to visualize the terrain and area," Harleston said. "When you see it firsthand, it's different. With him going out on missions, he is able to … determine different things that will allow our operations to run effectively and efficiently."

Alexander said that even though it is a new experience and challenge, his time as COIST NCOIC has been rewarding because no personnel have been casualties of enemy action while he has been doing his job.

He is grateful his experiences and prior deployments allow him to provide leadership and expertise to his fellow Soldiers. He said he looks forward to taking that experience with him as he progresses in his career in the Army.

Photo Journal

Sgt. 1st Class Brian Lancey, a platoon sergeant attached to the Laghman Provincial Reconstruction Team, ejects a round from a bolt action M24 rifle Sept. 3 at the off-base firing range near Forward Operating Base Mehtar Lam, Afghanistan. Team members traveled to the range to practice with crew-served, primary and secondary weapons, as well as M203 grenade launchers and M24 sniper rifles.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Ryan Crane

Photo Journal

▲ **Staff Sgt. Jon McCutcheon, a flight engineer of a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter with 2nd Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment, Texas National Guard, takes aim as he prepares to release water from a "Bambi Bucket" Sept. 6 over a blaze near Bastrop, Texas. Response crews launched out of the Austin Army Aviation Facility to fight wildfires threatening homes and property in central Texas.**
Photo by Staff Sgt. Malcolm McClendon

► **Staff Sgt. Gregorio Florez and Pfc. Dakoda Woodall, members of C Company, 3rd Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, Task Force 228, 172nd Infantry Brigade, administer an IV to Air Force Staff Sgt. Seth Pena, a joint terminal attack controller, who became dehydrated during a mission outside Forward Operating Base Tillman Sept. 7. Task Force 228 was on a joint mission with the Afghan Border Patrol and the Afghan National Army in the mountains near the Pakistan border.**
Photo by Spc. Ken Scar

◀ **Sgt. Andrew Wall secures his sector of fire during a patrol Sept. 2 in Qalat City, Afghanistan. Wall is a member of Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul's security force and is deployed from the Massachusetts National Guard.**
Photo by Senior Airman Grovert Fuentes-Contreras

▶ **Sgt. Timothy Comtois of the New Hampshire Army National Guard watches out for the safety of airmen from the 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont Air National Guard, as they load a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Aug. 31 in Cholchester, Vt., with food for people affected by the remnants of Hurricane Irene.**
Photo by Spc. Nathan Rivard

◀ **First Sgt. Daniel Reilly of B Company, 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts Army National Guard, received the Order of Saint Maurice medal Aug. 29 at Forward Operating Base Gardez, Paktia province, Afghanistan.**
Photo by Senior Airman Wesley Farnsworth

Roll Call
OF THE FALLEN

Operation Enduring Freedom

Spc. Koran P. Contreras, 21, Lawndale, Calif., Sept. 8, 2011

◆

Pfc. Douglas L. Cordo, 20, Kingston, N.Y., Aug. 19, 2011

◆

2nd Lt. Joe L. Cunningham, 27, Kingston, Okla., Aug. 13, 2011

◆

Sgt. Devin J. Daniels, 22, Kuna, Idaho, Aug. 25, 2011

◆

Pfc. Jesse W. Dietrich, 20, Venus, Texas, Aug. 25, 2011

◆

Sgt. Edward J. Frank II, 26, Yonkers, N.Y., Aug. 11, 2011

◆

Spc. Jameel T. Freeman, 26, Baltimore, Md., Aug. 11, 2011

◆

Spc. Douglas J. Green, 23, Sterling, Va., Aug. 28, 2011

◆

Sgt. Matthew A. Harmon, 29, Bagley, Minn., Aug. 14, 2011

◆

Spc. Christopher D. Horton, 26, Collinsville, Okla., Sept. 9, 2011

◆

Sgt. Bret D. Isenhower, 26, Lamar, Okla., Sept. 9, 2011

◆

Spc. Dennis James Jr., 21, Deltona, Fla., Aug. 31, 2011

◆

Pfc. Douglas J. Jeffries Jr., 20, Springville, Calif., Sept. 8, 2011

◆

Spc. Dennis G. Jensen, 21, Vermillion, S.D., Aug. 16, 2011

◆

Staff Sgt. Jeremy A. Katzenberger, 26, Weatherby Lake, Mo., June 14, 2011

◆

Spc. Patrick L. Lay II, 21, Fletcher, N.C., Aug. 11, 2011

◆

1st Lt. Damon T. Leehan, 30, Edmond, Okla., Aug. 14, 2011

◆

Pfc. Rueben J. Lopez, 27, Williams, Calif., Aug. 11, 2011

◆

Pfc. Christophe J. Marquis, 40, Tampa, Fla., Sept. 4, 2011

◆

Spc. Jordan M. Morris, 23, Stillwater, Okla., Aug. 11, 2011

◆

Pfc. Brandon S. Mullins, 21, Owensboro, Ky., Aug. 25, 2011

◆

Pfc. Alberto L. Obod Jr., 26, Orlando, Fla., Aug. 28, 2011

◆

Pfc. Tony J. Potter Jr., 20, Okmulgee, Okla., Sept. 9, 2011

◆

Master Sgt. Charles L. Price III, 40, Milam, Texas, Aug. 12, 2011

◆

Sgt. Colby L. Richmond, 28, Providence, N.C., Aug. 25, 2011

◆

Spc. Michael C. Roberts, 23, Watauga, Texas, Aug. 27, 2011

◆

Spc. Christopher J. Scott, 21, Tyrone, N.Y., Sept. 3, 2011

◆

Spc. Joshua M. Seals, 21, Porter, Okla., Aug. 16, 2011

◆

Spc. Kevin R. Shumaker, 24, Livermore, Calif., Aug. 31, 2011

◆

1st Lt. Timothy J. Steele, 25, Duxbury, Mass., Aug. 23, 2011

◆

Sgt. Andrew R. Tobin, 24, Jacksonville, Ill., Aug. 24, 2011

You are not forgotten

Editor's note: This is a continuation of a list that was started in the October 2003 issue of The NCO Journal and contains those names released by the Department of Defense between Aug. 13, 2011 and Sept. 12, 2011.

Take 5

Go Ahead, Get Belted!

Lap belt

- Keep the belt low and snug across your lap
- Be sure the belt is flat, not twisted
- Sit straight and upright

Shoulder Belt

- Keep the belt snug over the shoulder
- Never wear the belt in front of the face or neck or under your arm

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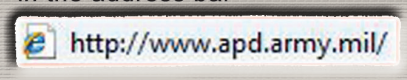

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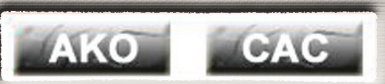

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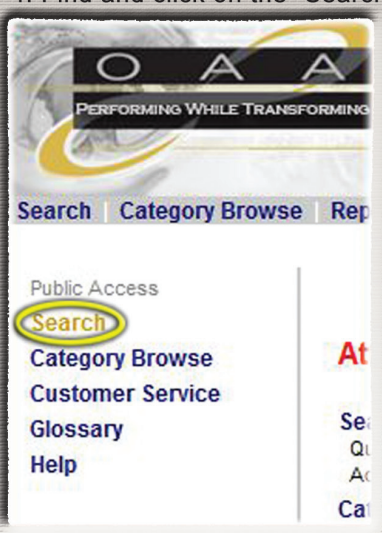

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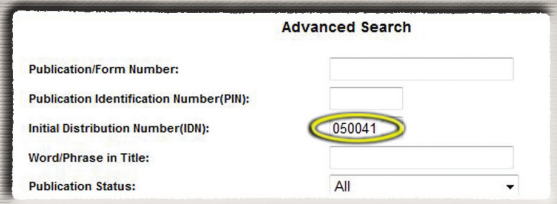

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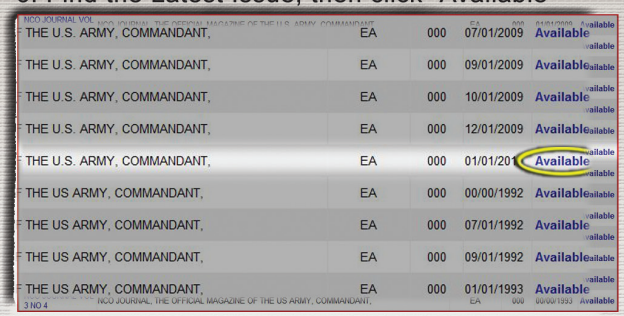

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