



From the CSM

Some things never change, like what right looks like

By Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas R. Capel
U.S. Army Europe

During my Army career, I've seen a lot of changes. Uniforms have changed. The way we fight and the enemy we're fighting have changed significantly. Just about the entire way we do business in the Army has changed.

This just goes to show how well our Soldiers adapt. But, a few things shouldn't change, like the basics of how we coach, mentor and teach our Soldiers. This is why our senior noncommissioned officers have to step up now.

Unfortunately, our Army has been running at a very high operational tempo for a long time, and some of these basics have been put on the back burner along the way. Our Soldiers are spending much more time training and deploying than they are on what's been called "garrison leadership."

Garrison leadership is simply ensuring good order and discipline, recognizing and taking steps toward risk reduction, taking a good hard look at your Soldiers' and their families' well-being, and providing professional development. The 2010 *Army Health Promotion, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention Report* covers these issues in the chapter titled "The Lost Art of Leadership in Garrison."



Photo by Sgt. Maj. Lisa Hunter

Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas R. Capel speaks with Command Sgt. Maj. László Tóth, the sergeant major of Hungarian Joint Forces Command, at the fifth annual Conference of European Armies for Noncommissioned Officers May 24 in Székesfehérvár, Hungary.

To sum it up, the report states what we know to be true: "The combination of Army transformation coupled with prolonged, recurring combat rotational requirements has resulted in young and mid-level leaders whose only command experience is meeting the demands of the deployment-to-combat-to-redeployment cycle." Our NCOs have emphasized combat, technical and tactical training, and focused on readiness, pre-deployment and reset cycles. All of this doesn't leave time for NCOs to do much else.

This culture shift has created a generation of young NCOs who are incredible warriors — the kind of Soldiers I would want beside me any day on the field of battle. But, because all of their Army experience has been with our Army at war, they are unaccustomed to taking care of Soldiers in a garrison environment. The report backs this up by showing statistics on the rise in Soldier suicides, criminal activities and other risk-taking behaviors.

This is where our senior NCOs come into the picture. Those of you who have 18, 20 or more years in the Army have that seasoned leadership experience. You know what right looks like.

One of our basic missions is to provide for the welfare of our Soldiers. This is something that we have to demonstrate with our actions, not just words.

You have to set and enforce the standards. Counsel your Soldiers regularly, hold accountability formations, do health and welfare inspections of your Soldiers' rooms, and conduct risk assessments when your Soldiers are going on leave.

As noncommissioned officers, we put our Soldiers' needs above our own. Just because they're not in a combat zone doesn't mean they don't need looking after. All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership. We must provide that leadership.

If you're interested in reading the *Army Health Promotion, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention Report*, you can find it at <http://www.army.mil/article/42934/>.

Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas R. Capel is the 16th command sergeant major of U.S. Army Europe. In his 33-year Army career, he has served as an infantryman, drill sergeant, ROTC instructor and division command sergeant major and has deployed five times.