

A new Army order

Longer tours,
altered career
paths ahead

Service members
spared budget blow

15-year retirement urged
to ease separations

PUNCHING OUT

Enlisted exit
plan reopened
for some MOSs

Defense cuts
hit home

Sergeants' Business . . . as Usual

By CSM James D. Randolph

There are many concerns about how the Army will be reshaped in the coming years and what the impact will be on our Army and our soldiers.

The Army will become much smaller during the next four years. However, I am convinced that it will remain the most elite and effective combat-ready Army the world has ever seen.

As expected, many soldiers and NCOs have questions about how this reshaping will affect them. We all know many good NCOs and soldiers will leave the Army. There are a variety of programs and separation benefits available to cushion the transition to civilian life. For those who remain in uniform, the Army will continue to be a great and challenging career.

As we reshape, more responsibilities will be given to — and increased emphasis will be placed upon — our NCOs. The NCO will play an ever-increasing role in ensuring that we maintain our fighting edge. SMA Richard Kidd has emphasized the roles of NCOs, especially in three areas: maintaining a quality force; conducting tough, realistic training; and developing competent, confident leaders.

The NCO, as the authority figure closest to the troops, will play a prominent role in retaining quality soldiers. Likewise, we must recruit the necessary quality replacements to keep our Army young and strong. As expected, the NCO's greatest role will continue to be training. You must focus on every aspect of your soldiers' development and lead and train by example. As we counsel, mentor and train our soldiers, we must not overlook the personal welfare of our soldiers and their families. This combination will ensure that we maintain a motivated force and that we maintain quality soldiers to become the NCO leaders of tomorrow. Our commanders will expect us to fulfill these roles — and rightly so. After all, this is "sergeants' business."

Many times, NCOs complain that they don't have the time and resources to accomplish critical tasks. To me, such complaints are simply excuses for not being the best possible NCO one can and should be. We owe our commanders results — not excuses. As professionals, we are expected to organize and execute to make maximum use of available time and resources. We must ensure that our soldiers are prepared to fight, lead and win.

The Army works on the principle that there is but one chain of command. The NCO support channel parallels and reinforces it. For the chain of command to work effectively, the NCO support channel must be in place and used by knowledgeable and competent sergeants. It is through the support channel that we pass information, affect coordination and issue orders to accomplish all aspects of our missions.

NCOs must meet their responsibilities head-on; these are not something we can pass off to others. We must use our knowledge, talents and experience to fulfill our responsibilities of training, developing and caring for our soldiers. Success in these endeavors will ensure our Army remains trained and ready.

We must focus on the present and look to the future. We must strive to make the NCO Corps of today even better as we provide the guidance and leadership our quality soldiers deserve. Such efforts today will ensure that the heart and soul of the NCO Corps survives and is prepared to meet any challenge, anywhere, at any time.

Randolph is the Total Army Personnel Command CSM.