

**U.S. ARMY**  
**MANEUVER CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**  
Fort Benning, Georgia  
**ONE FORCE, ONE FIGHT!**



[www.benning.army.mil](http://www.benning.army.mil)

**CONTACT:** Sue Ulibarri at 706-905-2254; [supunnee.ulibarri.civ@mail.mil](mailto:supunnee.ulibarri.civ@mail.mil)

**PRESS RELEASE: U.S. Army Infantry School's top enlisted leader to retire after long career of 'Lead by example'**

**DATE:** Feb. 19, 2021

**FORT BENNING, Ga.** – Almost 30 years before he became senior enlisted leader at the prestigious U.S. Army Infantry School here, years before he became a drill sergeant or led troops in combat, Command Sgt. Maj. Robert K. "Rob" Fortenberry, then in his teens, went to see a recruiter.

At 18 and still a senior at Lassiter High School in Marietta, Georgia, he was wiry and athletic, on his school's track team, an avid rock climber, and was enrolled in Navy JROTC. And as he neared graduation he was eager to leave behind the strains of a broken home and to set out on his own.

He signed up for the Infantry, and at age 19, entered One-Station Unit Training at Fort Benning. After graduation he was indeed sent to Hawaii and became a rifleman with the 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks.

It was the start of a many-faceted Infantry career. And on Feb. 22, Fortenberry is scheduled to relinquish his Infantry School responsibilities in a ceremony here.

A core principle that's guided him over those decades he sums up as: "'Deeds Not Words.' Lead by example." The phrase "Deeds Not Words" he takes from the motto of one of the units he's served with, the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, part of the 10th Mountain Division.

It's a creed he's sought to live out in every leadership position of his career.

In the course of that career he's been, besides a rifleman, a grenadier, an M249 SAW gunner, member of a 4.2-inch mortar crew, Infantry team leader, Infantry squad leader, sniper instructor, drill sergeant, platoon sergeant, first sergeant, operations sergeant, battalion operations sergeant major, battalion command sergeant major, and brigade command sergeant major, culminating in his being chosen as the Infantry School's command sergeant major, a position he's occupied since 2019.

He's deployed to war zones five times.

He had become a drill sergeant in September 2001, and in 2003 was among 50 drill sergeants the Pentagon ordered to Iraq to train the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps.

The Army sent him again to Iraq, this time as platoon sergeant of a mechanized infantry platoon operating from Bradley Fighting Vehicles, in the 2005-2006 period. Then came two more Iraq

deployments, one as a first sergeant, 2008-2009, then as a battalion command sergeant major, 2015-2016. His fifth deployment was to Afghanistan, 2018-2019, serving in Kandahar as the command sergeant major for Train, Advise, Assist Command-South, or TAAC-South.

He also pursued training that gave him important military qualifications that include – among others – instructor, sniper, sniper instructor, combat life saver, air assault, paratrooper, and Ranger. He also earned the Expert Infantryman Badge. And because of combat service he was awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge.

Throughout his career, he said, he's keyed on one overarching goal: to be the kind of leader who is approachable, who sets the proper example, does it in a way that will inspire others to aspire to the best, and who – above all – holds that "Regardless of your rank, regardless of your position, it is critical to always share in the physical and mental hardship of the Soldiers you lead."

Of all the jobs he's held, the most satisfying was being a drill sergeant, he said.

"The opportunity to shape and mold trainees and watch them succeed and help them to develop into a Soldier, you don't get that opportunity in any other position in the Army, that level of contact, that level of influence, that level of inspiration," said Fortenberry.

The advice he'd give drill sergeants is similar to that he'd offer other leaders.

"It's: Be the leader you want to be led by," he said. "Be inspirational. Hold them to the standard, but show them the way, show them how to achieve."

In late 2018 he learned he was one of a slate of command sergeants major the Infantry School wanted to interview for its senior enlisted leader position.

"The reward of being called an Infantry Soldier, wearing a blue cord and being part of this fraternity that is our Infantry, far exceeds any of the physical or mental hardships that you endure over the life of your career," he said.

Fortenberry will relinquish responsibility as the command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Infantry School to Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher D. Gunn at 2 p.m., Feb. 22. Gunn most recently served as the command sergeant major, U.S. Army Joint Modernization Command, Fort Bliss, Texas.

The change of responsibility ceremony is not open to the media however, will be available via Facebook live at [www.facebook.com/fortbenningmcoe](https://www.facebook.com/fortbenningmcoe).

###

**For more Maneuver Center of Excellence news, visit: [www.benning.army.mil](https://www.benning.army.mil)**

**Find us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/fortbenningmcoe](https://www.facebook.com/fortbenningmcoe)**