



Commandant's NOTE

MAJOR GENERAL KENNETH C. LEUER Chief of Infantry

THE NCO ACADEMY

Throughout our history, the quality and the training of noncommissioned officers have always been a priority of commanders. In his 1779 Revolutionary War Drill Manual, Baron Frederick Wilhelm von Steuben advised regimental commandants to be careful in selecting their NCOs. He said that "the order and discipline of a regiment depends so much upon *their* behavior" that the only ones chosen for "this trust" should be "those who by their merit and good conduct are entitled to it."

He went on to say, "Honesty, sobriety, and a remarkable attention to every point of duty, with a neatness in their dress, are indispensable requisites; a spirit to command respect and obedience from the men, an expertness in performing every part of the exercise, and an ability to teach it, are absolutely necessary. . . ."

Baron von Steuben knew that in order to train the Continental Army, he would first have to train a small core of NCOs to understand his goals and standards. He would then charge those NCOs, upon their return to their parent units, with the responsibility for teaching those same goals and standards.

These principles are the same as those on which our present NCO academies operate—the NCO education system of today still concentrates on training the trainer.

The NCO Academy at Fort Benning—the Home of the Infantry—conducts a Primary Leadership Development Course (PI.DC) as well as a Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course (BNCOC) and an Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course (ANCOC) for the entire 11-series military occupational specialty. In addition, the Infantry Center is the proponent for all 11B training throughout the Army. This summer the Drill Sergeant School will also become a part of the Fort Benning NCO Academy.

Fort Benning's NCO Academy is a live-in school for all students from PI.DC to ANCOC. The dramatic increase in academic averages clearly validates the decision to make it so. Through these courses, the academy ensures that U.S. Army Infantry NCOs are among the best-trained soldiers in the world.

We believe that technical competence and the ability to train others are the two most important things we teach at the NCO Academy. As but one example, our BNCOC recently added a five-day "tactical leadership course" that takes the students through day and night squad live fire training, a demanding test of both leadership and technical competence.

A sergeant's responsibility to "Be, Know, Do" cannot be taken lightly. He must be the resident expert for Army regulations and field manuals and he must always remember that he is the primary role model for young soldiers. In his professional bearing, his physical condition, his personal conduct, and his military knowledge, he must set high standards and lead by example. If he accepts anything less from his soldiers than the high standards he has set for himself, he automatically establishes those as new and lower standards, an indication of failure on his part.

An NCO has the traditional duty of instructing soldiers in drill and ceremonies and the proper wear of the uniform. Toward that end, I have directed our NCO Academy to reinstate this training into its courses, because it builds discipline, confidence, pride, and esprit de corps. As part of this training the academy has now returned to marching soldiers to their classes and training areas, and the soldiers are evaluated on their attention to detail.

In recent months, the academy has introduced an intensified physical conditioning program based on the Master Fitness Concept, and the results speak for themselves: In a recent ANCOC class, 103 soldiers

out of 178 scored 250 or above on their Army Physical Fitness Tests.

Each class runs a five-mile "challenge" run to a standard of 8:30 per mile—plus or minus 15 seconds per mile. For roughly 35 percent of the soldiers in a recent PLDC class, this was their first attempt ever at running five miles, and they were especially proud when they had completed the run.

In all the courses at the academy, one underlying theme dominates: task, conditions, and standards. These are the watchwords that govern each student's life and, hopefully, they will become ingrained into his way of thinking.

The standards for all the classes are high, but they are fair. We apply them equally across the board. For us, the concept of "Total Army" applies—the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve. Equally important to us is the one-infantry concept. No matter what an NCO's background may be—airborne, mechanized, or light—our standards remain constant and he must meet them. There is no "quota" on the number of graduates; the soldiers who graduate meet the standards.

The performance-oriented approach to training used at the academy has revealed a weakness in our students' military backgrounds—a lack of training to standard in common task skills. A number of the soldiers who attend the academy are not qualified or prepared in many basic skills. The NCO education system is not designed to take over training that should be done in the units.

We recently reviewed all of our NCO programs of instruction not only to look at this problem but also to ensure that our NCO training is integrated horizontally and vertically. If training is horizontally integrated, for instance, the NCOES will not have to spend training time teaching lower skill level tasks the students should already know. Diagnostic testing of lower skill level tasks identifies the students who have

not mastered them. A system of retraining and retesting by their peers and cadre after duty hours and on weekends helps to bring those soldiers who need additional training to the expected level of proficiency.

When training is vertically integrated—that is, when the NCO education system is made compatible with the officer education system—an infantry platoon leader and an infantry platoon sergeant can link up in a platoon anywhere in the world and will talk the same language.

Another strength of the academy is that the programs of instruction for all classes are dynamic documents, constantly being reviewed and changed to reflect the latest in doctrine and technology. Most recently, for example, Field Manual 25-100, Training the Force, was added to all training management instruction, and it gives the young leaders of our Army the latest in training philosophy and techniques.

Instruction will be further improved in the near future when a former schoolhouse on post has been renovated to provide small-group classrooms. The facility is scheduled to open this summer.

The decision by the Training and Doctrine Command to place the NCO academies directly under the highest ranking NCO on each post has also proved to be a wise one. Here at Fort Benning, the Infantry Center command sergeant major plays a key role in shaping the Army's leadership for years to come.

Without a doubt, the NCO corps today is strong. Sergeants are performing their traditional duties and are the role models that our young soldiers need and deserve. There are, of course, a number of reasons for the strong NCO corps we enjoy. I believe our NCO academies make a major contribution.

The motto of the Fort Benning NCO Academy exemplifies my feelings as to what every NCO must do to keep professionalism within the corps and the Army—"Maintain the Standards."

