

On Leadership: NCO leadership in USARCENT **Command Sgt. Maj. John Fourhman**

Editor's note: This is the third in a series of eight articles on leadership

By their nature, noncommissioned officers are leaders, and the two basic responsibilities of any NCO are accomplishing the mission and the welfare of Soldiers. For the individual NCO that varies from leader to leader and from mission to mission. However, you can group taking care of Soldiers into two categories: training Soldiers and taking care of their professional needs.

Traditionally we talk about individual and crew training as the NCOs primary responsibility – everything from teaching a Soldier how to wear a uniform to the crew and battle drills. Because we are deployed you have to make time and look for opportunities to do individual training.

U.S. Army Central is a little different so everyone also has to learn how they fit into the headquarters. With our push to transform to a Full Spectrum Operations capable headquarters Soldiers have different skills they have to learn and it is the NCOs responsibility to train them.

Most NCOs will have a steep learning curve of their own. In many cases NCOs have come out of the tactical level of the squad, platoon or company, where they were executing missions on the ground, and now must start thinking at an operational level or in some cases a strategic level which can be foreign to them. NCOs really have to get back to the books and do their homework. Leaders should know what is expected of them and their Soldiers.

NCOs need to motivate and mentor Soldiers to accomplish the mission and develop the leaders of tomorrow. It's critical for us to share our knowledge and skills with younger Soldiers. There's an obligation for all NCOs to help those coming up through the ranks to develop professionally.

Training Soldiers is only half of the job. NCOs have a key role in making the mission happen. They really are the backbone of the Army. They are knowledgeable in their mission and in what needs to happen. Education, empowerment and accountability for actions define their role.

Overall I have been impressed with the caliber of the NCOs I have met in USARCENT. Leaders, as we go about our daily missions, continue to do the right thing and take care of Soldiers. Safety is the number one thing NCOs can affect. Know and understand safety practices and communicate the importance to your Soldiers. Leaders need to understand and apply composite risk management practices daily and understand how their actions impact the mission.

NCOs are the standard bearers. I need them out there setting the example. They should know, practice and enforce the standards, not only in their workplace, but everywhere. NCOs and Soldiers should hold their heads up, be proud of who they are and this unit. Pay attention to what is going on around you. Practice customs and courtesies. Give that snappy salute when you pass an officer in the morning. Give the greeting of the day, "Always First," and expect a reply of "Patton's Own."

It's an exciting time to be part of U.S. Army Central.
Patton's Own!