

USASMA Bulletin

The United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Educating Today's Leaders For Tomorrow



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USASMA's Mission

To provides professional military education that develops enlisted leaders to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex world.



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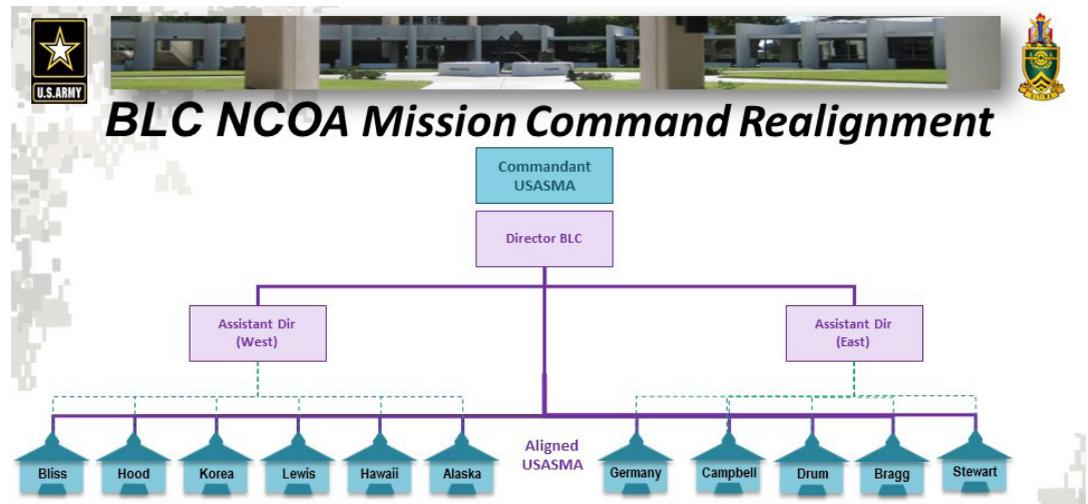
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USASMA to assume mission command of BLC NCOAs



USASMA's Basic Leader Course NCOA Mission Command chain of command structure. The realignment is expected to be completed by October 2017.

By David Crozier Command Communications

In 2010 the commander of Training and Doctrine Command directed that all Forces Command Basic Leader Course Noncommissioned Officer Academies realign under TRADOC to achieve cost efficiencies. That directive led to the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy to establish a plan to be the Mission Command for those academies.

"The Army directed TRADOC to appoint one organization to be the mission command for all of the NCO Academies that only teach BLC and then TRADOC (selected) us," Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Defreese said. "Exactly what that means we are currently working out. I can say that it is not about being in charge of them, it is about what we can help them do, how we can be value-added."

Defreese said looking at the NCO academies which will come under USASMA's mission command each of them are different,

not in what they teach, but different in how they are manned, the facilities they have, the technology in the classroom and how their budgets are managed.

"They are totally different. It is amazing that they all kind of morphed, or grew, into different types of organizations when they are really all the same," he said. "They are all NCO academies, yet they have different staffs; faculty; numbers; some are even in old World War II buildings that should have been torn down years ago."

Defreese said that much of what USASMA having mission command will do is provide each of the academies a voice and a support channel to assist them in obtaining needed funds – a single point of contact for guidance.

"That is what all mission command is," he said. "Mission command is not about being in charge of somebody, it's about being the next higher headquarters that does all of the things that they can't do for themselves. You have to

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From the Commandant

I want to start off by thanking everyone for a very successful 2015. We as an organization accomplished a lot and it was because of the contributions of everyone at USASMA.

In 2015 we did much to advance the curriculum of the Sergeants Major Course and we almost have it where we want it. We are in the final stages of change to the course that will be effective in Class 67 – changes in how we test, the rubrics that will be used to grade either oral examinations or written papers, we are going to a GPA-based system rather than how we are doing it now. We are also updating the nonresident course to ensure it is aligned with the resident course and so we are getting the same college credit for graduating either course.

One of the biggest accomplishments of last year was the creation of the Master Leader Course. This is a course created from scratch, as we had no idea of exactly what it was we needed in it, and in October we ran the first pilot class. We have already learned much from that first class and made changes for the second pilot which graduated February 2. What improve and sustains taken from that class will make the third pilot in March just that much better.

I believe that once it becomes a program of record, and we start sending E-7 promotables through MLC before they assume master sergeant or first sergeant duties in an organization, it will have an immediate impact on the Army and that's a big win.

Last year we set up, coordinated, reviewed packets and accepted the first class of fellows into the USASMA Fellowship program with Penn State University. I think that is huge win for the NCO Corps as a whole. I have already got the list for the incoming fellows and it is stacked with super-stars – former 2-star nominative CSMs and some really great talent – to compliment this current class of fellows who will graduate this summer. That's just the start of what will be teaching our future sergeants major.

Another big project for us was the renovation and upgrade of the NCO Heritage and Education Center. This is a place to be proud of as it is the only center of its kind in the Army and it belongs to USASMA. Last year's upgrades were the result of a very motivated deputy commandant, CSM Joe Pritchard, and a team of dedicated volunteers from Class 65 and the Academy. The work continues with the great staff and as history continues to be written, so too will our center capture it.

Today we have many irons in the fire – standing up the Basic Leader Course Mission Command, our Title 10 initiative to fund our civilian instructors in the Sergeants Major Course and the standing up of the Common Core Curriculum Division. With that division we will finally have one organization looking at the entire NCOPDS from BLC to the Sergeants Major Cours SMC. It will ensure NCOPDS is actually progressive and sequential and that we are teaching the right stuff at the right level and is actually preparing the Soldier for the next rank and their next PDS. The primary purpose is to make the best sergeant at each level.

Our Basic Leader Course Mission Command places the active duty, non-center of excellence NCO Academies that teach only the Basic Leader Course under our direction. USASMA will become their support element to help the academies get the resources and help they need. We are going to be their voice and give them a voice to ensure they get the best learning environment for the Soldiers.

All-in-all we have a busy year ahead of us and I know that team USASMA will do its part to ensure it is another successful year. 🍀

Ultima!!



CSM Dennis Defreese
Commandant, USASMA



SSD Links



SSD Help Desk
1-800-275-2872



*"I was bold in the pursuit of knowledge, never fearing to follow truth and reason to whatever results they led."
Thomas Jefferson*

NCO Heritage and Education Center hosts unit tour



Photo by David Crozier, Command Communications

Members of the 212th Military Police Company, 93 Military Police Battalion, pose for a group picture following their recent tour of the NCO Heritage and Education Center. The center (formerly The Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer) has a simple mission: "To collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret historically significant property related to the history of the U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer from 1775 to the present." It is a mission accomplished through more than 2,500 artifacts with about 1/3 of them on display at any time.

**By David Crozier
Command Communications**

The staff of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy's NCO Heritage and Education Center hosted the 212 Military Police Company, 89 Military Police Battalion, recently for a tour of the center and to do a little NCO Professional Development.

Arriving en masse the group was met by Mark Henry, curator; Leigh Smith, history specialist; and Sgt. First Class Skeet Styer, the center's Noncommissioned Officer in Charge. The team split the Soldiers into groups and gave them a guided tour.

"The tour of the NCO Heritage and Education Center is designed to educate young Soldiers coming up through the ranks to get them ready to become NCOs," Smith said. "The history that has evolved our Corps is deep in tradition and customs and we are charged with the mission of telling the NCO story to junior Soldiers, senior leaders and civilians so they can better understand what it means to be a noncommissioned officer."

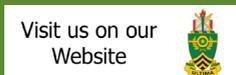
Smith added that the center tours also help them to spread the word about the center's existence and a place they call their own.

"We give all Soldiers, both Active and retired, Reserve and National Guard a reason to come back and visit their museum," he said. "When they leave after a tour they take with them some knowledge which we hope they use to train and educate their troops who will one day become NCOs as well."

A simple question at a promotion board led Sgt. Sonny Bugay, a Motor Sergeant with the 212 MP Company, to check out the center.

"It originally started off with my Soldier attending the promotion board, and Sgt. Maj. John Eastwood, the brigade S3 sergeant major, asked a question, 'Have you been to the NCO Heritage Museum?' Because of that it made me reflect and I have never been there; and my Soldiers have never been there," Bugay said. "So after that promotion board I called my maintainers and I set a date to check out the museum. Which we did and Leigh Smith gave us a tour. It was one of the best

Quick Links



USASMA Digital Library



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USASMA on YouTube



Photo by David Crozier, Command Communications

Leigh Smith, curator at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy NCO Heritage and Education Center, talks to members of the 212th Military Police Company, 93th Military Police Battalion, about the change of responsibility ceremony depicted in the scene beside him during a recent tour of the center. .

tours I have ever had – very educational. It is awesome.”

After his tour, Bugay got his leadership to take the entire company on a tour of the center.

“I had heard about this place through different sergeants major I know who attended the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy and they told me about it,” 1st Sgt. Steven Palazzo of the 212th MP Company said. “Then Sgt. Bugay brought his family here and now we are here.”

Palazzo said that he believes the Army’s NCO Corps is the best in the world and coming to the center was a great way of showcasing the heritage and history to both the Soldiers and officers of the unit.

“It was excellent. It was a great opportunity to bring Soldiers in here to learn about the customs, heritage and tradition and how our NCO Corps has become what it is from the revolutionary war to the present,” he said. “Watching my Soldiers go through the center reminded me of when I was a young Soldier being taught different customs and traditions and about the ranks, about why we do certain things, to where we have come from today.”

Smith said his goal in conducting tours for Soldiers is to instill pride in NCO’s to preserve their history and to continue the tradition of NCO History.

“I ask the Soldiers at the beginning of each tour what their legacy will be when they leave the Army; what contributions have they given back to the NCO Corps and their Soldiers,” he said. “By the time we get to the end of the tour I hope that a seed has been planted in the Soldiers’ minds as to what their legacy may be. The guidon has to be passed to the next generation and they have to be responsible and record the history of the NCO Corps for all to understand.”

Henry said that the center is not there just for guided tours, but is there for everyone to tour and for military units to conduct NCO-type ceremonies.

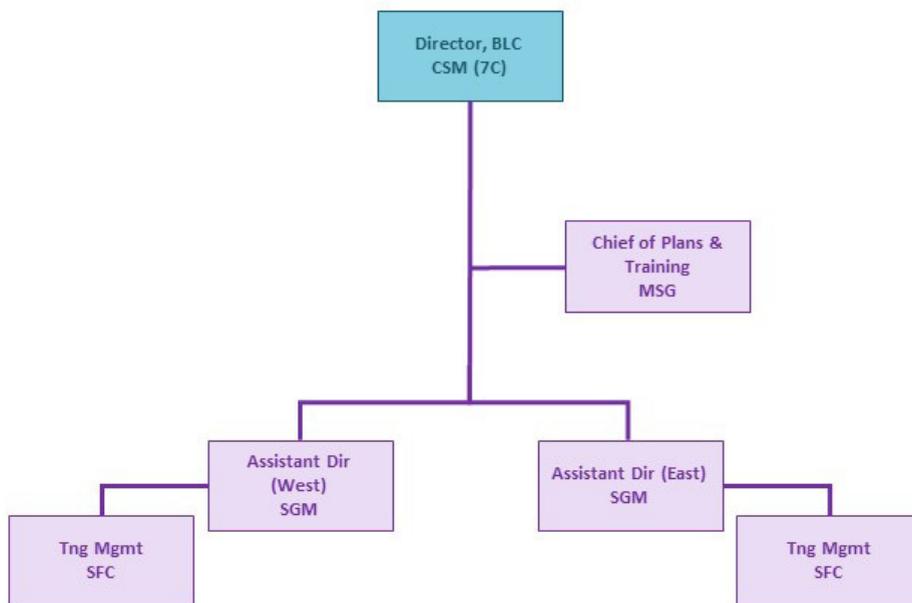
“We are open for all units to conduct NCO induction ceremonies, NCO Professional Development seminars and more,” Henry said. “We have a lecture area where units can hold these ceremonies. Of course we are also available to give guided tours. All we ask is that you call us in advance and set up a date and time as we routinely have units coming in to use the center.”

Henry added that the center recently went through a renovation and upgrade of exhibits and continually adds new displays and changes out old ones to help keep the center fresh.

The Noncommissioned Officer Heritage & Education Center (formerly The Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer) has a simple mission: To collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret historically significant property related to the history of the U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer from 1775 to the present. It is a mission accomplished through more than 2,500 artifacts with about 1/3 of them on display at any time. The center is located at SSG Simms St., Bldg 11331, on East Fort Bliss (formerly Biggs Field) and is open weekdays from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. For more information or to schedule a unit tour, NCO PD or NCO Induction ceremony, call 915-744-8646. Information can also be found on their website at http://usasma.armylive.dodlive.mil/?page_id=419. 🇺🇸



BLC NCOA Mission Command Structure



Once the BLC Mission Command Directorate is fully established it will consist of a Director, two assistant directors and two training management NCOs. The Director will also have a Chief of Plans and Training NCO.

figure out what it is you are able to do to help your subordinate unit that they are unable to do for themselves. You don't want to duplicate what they can do, you want to figure out what it is you are going to be able to help them with to be a better unit, with better outcomes. In this case to be a better academy, with better infrastructure if that's what they need, and to ensure the classrooms are updated to comply with the enterprise classroom set up."

The academies that will come under USASMA are only the active duty academies that only teach the Basic Leader Course – Fort Drum, Fort Stewart, Fort Campbell, Fort Bragg, Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, Fort Lewis, U.S. Army Alaska NCO Academy, 25th Infantry Division NCO Academy in Hawaii, 7th Army NCO Academy in Germany, and 8th Army NCO Academy in Korea.

"Just the active duty academies that only teach BLC. So the ones at the Centers of Excellence like Fort Benning, Fort Sill, and Fort Leonard Wood, those won't fall under us; it is just those ones at FORSCOM posts and the ones overseas," Defreese said.

Currently no academies have officially come under USASMA's mission command because USASMA has not fully established the BLC Mission Command Directorate. To get things rolling, Defreese chose Sgt. Maj. Hector J. Font, former command sergeant major of 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, to be the interim director that will establish not only the directorate, but much of the network and memorandums of understanding and agreements between units and installations.

"We have to look at the basic stuff which are the programs of instruction and what we already do now, to funding, UCMJ, administration, assessing and making the Memorandums of Agreement and Understanding between units and installations," Font said. "We have to determine what are we responsible for and what they are responsible for – something as simple as an appeal, if they get dropped out of the course and they want to appeal, what that process is, does it go to the post, come to us or go to higher headquarters. We have to work through all of that now. It may be a long effort and we are just trying to hit it as we go, but hopefully the intent it as some point that we can get it all worked out with the assistance of the academy, TRADOC, and big Army and get all of that into a working environment."

Font said the main focus for him, besides getting in the personnel that will make up the directorate, and establishing and equipping the office, is to reach out to the academies themselves and make initial contacts.

"The biggest thing is starting to reach out to the academies and getting the word out. I will be talking to the different units and academies, letting them see our face, talking to the leadership and getting them to understand what we are doing so we are not stepping on each other's toes," he said. "I think the biggest thing is us just getting out there so they can see who we are and what we are trying to do; let folks know we are not their enemies; we are there to assist them. We don't want to become a hindrance, we want to become an enabler and we want to get a working



BLC NCOA Mission Command Realignment Complete



This chart shows the academies that will come under USASMA which are only the active duty academies that only teach the Basic Leader Course – Fort Drum, Fort Stewart, Fort Campbell, Fort Bragg, Fort Hood, Fort Bliss, Fort Lewis, U.S. Army Alaska NCO Academy, 25th Infantry Division NCO Academy in Hawaii, 7th Army NCO Academy in Germany, and 8th Army NCO Academy in Korea.

relationship as quickly as we can.”

One focus for Font will be to establish minimum standards for BLC Academies.

“We already have some standards in place as far as curricula and programs of instruction. We need to establish how we do business across the board,” he said. “It may be as simple as somebody has a no-go on a test, what are the procedures for that. It should be the same for all academies. The goal is that no matter what academy you go to the standards are the same, the administrative procedures are the same and so on.”

USASMA wants to establish standards on facilities and equipment as well.

“The goal will be to have a minimum standard and part of that is we will redo what the QAO office does with the assistance of the TRADOC QAO office,” Defreese said. “We want to add some organization inspection items so we are not just looking at the academic stuff, but we are looking at the barracks, the infrastructure, all of the other things that weren’t historically done in QAO inspections or accreditations.”

Besides giving the academies a one-stop support system, Defreese said that having the academies come under USASMA will also help ensure fairness in the new NCOER rating system for the commandants.

“With the new NCOER rating system having only 24 percent getting ‘top block,’ it allows for more fairness in ensuring (the

commandants) have a fair chance of getting one of those top blocks,” Defreese said. “Because right now they are getting senior rated by a general at their post and they are competing against the other brigade CSMs that belong to that mission commander, corps commander, or whatever it is, and it is unlikely that they are going to get one of those top blocks. Now they will just compete against all of the other commandants. This will allow more of them to have a fair shot at it.”

USASMA has until October of 2017 to bring each of the academies under the BLC Mission Command directorate, Defreese said. The current plan is to work on getting all of the stateside academies done first and then work on the overseas and OCONUS organizations.

“I believe the biggest thing they need to know and the message we are trying to send out is we are here to assist you, make it better, have one common goal that we can be one entity, make it easier for them to get help with issues, and get some guidance and structure,” Font said. “That’s why we are here; to make it easier for them and not (be) caught in the middle between TRADOC and the unit they are working in – FORSCOM or whatever – but to be of assistance. To make it easier and be a liaison between USASMA and them.” 🇺🇸

New deputy ready to “Dive In”



Photo by David Crozier, Command Communications

Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey R. Huggins (center right) joins Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Defreese, USASMA commandant, in giving the command brief to the Malawi Defence Force delegation on January 26. Huggins is the third enlisted deputy commandant at USASMA and comes to the academy from an assignment as the Joint Multi-national Training Command and 7th US Army Command Sergeant Major.

By David Crozier, Command Communications

As an airborne Ranger and an Infantry sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey R. Huggins said he was ready to “Dive In” and “Give Back” when he was selected to be the deputy commandant of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, a 1-star nominative billet.

“Unlike other assignments for non-nominative positions, I had to interview and compete for (this) job. So when I got told that I was on the slate for this I set up an interview with the commandant,” Huggins said. “I was excited about the idea of being able to give back to the Army.”

Huggins said giving back is something he has told his Soldiers his entire career.

“When you are in ground pounding/airborne or whatever type of unit, that is your common core job, but then you have to give back to the Army,” he said. “You are going to have to be a drill sergeant, recruiter, ROTC, something. It is an opportunity to take what we trained you to do and then teach that next generation to do it whether officer or enlisted. So this is another one of those hey it’s time to go back and give back to the next generation of sergeants majors that are going to be coming out of here.”

Huggins said he knew about some of the changes that were being contemplated for the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System and was excited for the opportunity to come to USASMA and help be a part of that change.

“It is great coming into a job like this being able to support the changes that I know are coming, and having been a comman-

dant and done those other roles, I know we needed to update our systems,” he said. “It is nice to be at USASMA. This is where we can actually make that impact, change, and brief those recommendations to the highest levels. So it is a good solid position to be in when you are talking about our Army.”

Huggins is excited about the changes that have already taken place particularly when it comes to STEP – select, train, educate and promote.

“Where it is going is where I think it should have been in the first place. When I joined the Army we had to validate each rank we held through the SQT (Skills Qualification Test) system. You would study your SQT manuals and then go take tests and validate that you could actually perform the duties that you were required to do,” Huggins said. “Somewhere later on that changed. So as time rolled on, our system started to change and we had different requirements. We started promoting without the background and the requisite training and we started seeing the Army change. You couldn’t really trust rank that you saw on somebody’s uniform to mean that they were an expert in whatever their field was because we were promoting you ahead of the training piece. The understanding that our senior officials in the Army now have is we select you, you have potential to serve higher based on your performance; we are going to train you; through your peers, the programs and the systems we are going to educate you; and then we are going to promote you. That lends value and credibility back to the rank.”

Huggins said he is excited to see all of the things USASMA is doing to make NCOPDS better.

“We are in flux and we are bringing in a lot of new folks. We are going to stand up the Basic Leader Course Mission Command team; we’re running the pilot for Master Leader Course; the Directorate of Training is doing a massive review of what I call cradle to grave of the NCOPDS and making it all sequential; and we are rewriting programs of instruction,” Huggins said. “So the idea behind common core and giving us the requirement to build and shape that throughout the development process and educational systems is a big deal. The teams that are here doing all of that are doing a great job.”

Taking a look at curriculum and program of instruction for the Sergeants Major Course, Huggins said it was somewhat surprising.

“This is kind of a shock to the system because it isn’t my Sergeants Major Academy; it wasn’t what I was used to – open book tests go away, the multiple choice go away,” he said. “There is a lot more academic rigor involved in it. I think what this course does is it is going to produce a leader that has got a better educational experience. A lot of folks talk about the old course as a take a knee course. It was still challenging because of the research papers and the writing, but I think the program right now has helped align the current batch of sergeants major for those jobs that are out there. They are going to need that level of education for them.”

Another “shock to the system,” Huggins said, was coming back to Fort Bliss and El Paso and seeing all that has changed here since he graduated Class 55 in 2005.

“When I was a student here we would walk out in the morning and we would face left and we would run into the desert. We had little tombstone markers out at some of the intersections so



Photo by David Crozier, Command Communications

Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey R. Huggins and his family are quickly reacquainting themselves with Fort Bliss and El Paso. Above the Huggins family enjoys the USASMA bus tour of Holiday Lights this past December at the Fred Loya Home in El Paso, Texas. Pictured with Huggins are (l-r) his wife Penny, and daughters Emma and Ellie. They have two other daughters Jacqueline and Isla.

you could try to remember your way,” he said. “Now we are in the smaller part of post and you’ve got this entire division that is here and it is quite a change. El Paso sort of looks like it grew up. It is very comfortable to live here. You definitely aren’t wanting for anything unless you need the beach. It’s a great place.”

As for being at USASMA and his philosophy, or work ethic, Huggins said it’s straight forward.

“Excited to be here. I have had a chance to splash in all of the puddles and now it is time to start doing deeper dives and getting into the weeds on some of the programs that we have to adjust or modify,” he said. “I am a team player, I will charge everybody to do the best at where they are, regardless of what your job is, be value-added, work hard when it is time to work hard. I like to work hard and play hard, but we need everybody to pitch in and be part of the process. I can’t use dead weight, I can’t use folks that are retired on government duty; everybody needs to be productive here. That’s all I am really looking for.” 🇺🇸

Photo by David Crozier, Command Communications

Left: Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey R. Huggins officiates the appointment of Sgt. Maj. Todd A. Crofoot, a Class 65 graduate, to command sergeant major in ceremonies December 21 in the Academy’s headquarters foyer.





In Briefs

A quick look at what's happening at USASMA

Master Leader Course hits another milestone

The Master Leader Course hit another milestone February 2 when 32 students graduated from the second pilot course at the Utah Training Center at Camp Williams.

The following is an excerpt of an information paper written by 1SG Tammy Sower, a graduate of USASMA Class 64 ("Always Ready"), and one of the first 32 Soldiers selected for Pilot #1. She was also one of the facilitators for the Operational Trial #1 conducted at Camp Williams 640th Regional Training Institute, Utah in January 2016.

"In January 2016, we held Operational Trial #1 at the 640th RTI located at Camp Williams, UT. Based on the lessons learned from Pilot #1, the developers adjusted the lessons, cut the hours down from 108 to 98 hours, and rearranged the Modules. MLC for Operational Trial #1 focused on the following: Module 1: Communications (including effective listening, public speaking, military briefings, and English writing); Module 2: Management (including fundamentals, organizational and training of management); Module 3: Unified Land Operations (including decisive actions, Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment and Joint Operation Process Planning); and Module 4: Leadership (including Mission Command, and War-fighting Functions)."

Officials said that these soldiers, along with the 32 students who graduate the first pilot course held at the USASMA in October, are putting the course through its paces and providing valuable feedback that will result in the first senior level NCO course that prepares sergeants first class for the rigors of being a master sergeant or first sergeant. The desired outcome is an operational leader that has the talent, ability and confidence in himself or herself to be a creative and critical thinker, to not just worry about beans and bullets, but to actually be able to think on line with that company commander or that field

grade officer on the staff, said Sgt. Maj. Bo Gentry the Curriculum Development and Education Division sergeant major.

The course consists of 98 hours of instruction broken down into three modules - Foundation, Leadership and Army Profession, and Army and Joint Operations.

The next pilot class will be held at Fort Knox at the 83rd U.S. Army Reserve Readiness Training Center with a class start of 16 March.

Soldiers Guide now available for order/download

The latest edition of **TC 7-21.13 Soldier's Guide** is now available for download at <https://armypubs.us.army.mil/doctrine/index.html>.

This training circular is meant to be a reference for subjects in which all Soldiers must maintain proficiency, regardless of rank, component, or military occupational specialty (MOS). It condenses information from Army Doctrine Publications (ADPs), Army Doctrine Reference Publications (ADRP), Field Manuals (FMs), Training Circulars (TCs), Army Regulations (ARs), and other Army publication sources. It addresses general subjects and is not all-inclusive or intended as a stand-alone document. This guide offers Soldiers a ready reference on many subjects. The Soldier's Guide describes the Army Values, Army Ethic, the fundamental obligations of a Soldier and the basics of leadership.

The principal audience for TC 7-21.13 is all Soldiers of the Army Profession, but primarily those from ranks of PVT thru SPC.

SSD Registration issues

Soldiers having Structured Self-Development registration issues should not contact the course manager at USASMA. The course manager cannot enroll Soldiers into any level of SSD. For issues with the Army Learning Management System (ALMS) website soldiers should call 1-800-275-2872.

For Blackboard issues call 1-915-744-2370. To search for the current SSD ALARACT or MILPER messages please go to <https://www.hrc.army.mil/Search.aspx?CurrentTab=MilperSearch>.

The points of contact (POCs) for issues with NCOPDS reservations are as follows:

1. AC Soldiers - **Through your chain of command** contact AHRC at usarmy.knox.hrc.epmd-NCOES-SSD@mail.mil.
 2. AGR, IRR and IMA Soldiers - **Through your chain of command** contact AHRC at usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.epmd-NCOES-Reserve-Schools@mail.mil.
 3. USAR soldiers - **Through your training NCO and chain of command**, contact the MSC quota source manager who will contact Mrs. Melissa Watts at Melissa.p.watts.ctr@mail.mil.
 4. ARNG soldiers - **Through your chain of command** contact the state quota managers appointed by the state or Mr. James Vail at james.a.vail.ctr@mail.mil.
- The POC for issues with course updates on ERBs is usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.epmd-ncoes-operations@mail.mil.

Next Class of Fellows selected

The next group of sergeants major have been selected to become members of the USASMA Fellowship program. They will begin their advanced schooling in August to obtain their Masters of Education in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education through Penn State University. The first class of fellows is slated to graduate this summer and will begin teaching in the Sergeants Major Course beginning with Class 67.

The intent of the program is to meet the Army's objective of developing agile, adaptive and innovative leaders who thrive in conditions of uncertainty and chaos, the fellowship is not something nice to do, it is something we must do to prepare our sergeants major instructors/educators to be much more effective in the classroom.

Thoughts on the Basics of Direct Leadership at the Platoon and Squad level



By 1st Sgt. Mark Grover, Sgt. 1st Class David Chadburn, Sgt. 1st Class Mattheu Lee and Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Rogers

While serving as members of Soldier/NCO of the Month and promotion boards, my platoon sergeants and I noticed a knowledge gap regarding what a noncommissioned officer is and does. Questions such as, “How often should a team leader inspect his Soldiers’ rooms?” received a wide range of answers, although most of the answers seemed to be “weekly.” Focused questions regarding Physical Readiness Training, Troop Leading Procedures, Mission Command and even daily duties of the NCO seemed to yield a variety of responses. It was obvious that the answers were either incorrect or memorized. My platoon sergeants and I discussed the results of the board, then began to scrutinize our infantry troop (part of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, “Dragoons”).

While discussing our knowledge gaps and shortfalls with our squad and team leaders, we identified a need to begin a series of Leader Professional Development classes that target basic duties and responsibilities, a series with a strong theme. We decided to focus on, “What are the powers of the NCO and how does the responsibility inherent in those powers impact the NCO?” It is all well and good to give orders and “be in charge,” but what are the consequences of poor performance? Does one NCO’s lack of performance have a real impact on the rest of the corps? Begin-

ning with a discussion of Physical Readiness Training (PRT), this series will address specific duties and then expand on how those responsibilities play out in our daily lives.

We begin with a caveat: Though a deep knowledge and understanding of publications and TTPs — as well as general competence — is the minimum expected from our NCOs, we also acknowledge that training happens at different paces in different places. Any NCO worth his or her stripes can quote the Army’s definition of the purpose of leadership: “The process of providing purpose, direction and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.” TC 7-22.7 lists 11 duties of NCOs on page 5-4. There is myriad guidance between the Training Circulars and ADP 6-22. This paper seeks to provide an easy reference for some of the points made. It is not reasonable to expect every staff sergeant to have read and understood every applicable publication, but it is certainly reasonable to expect leaders to provide classes and training on relevant publications.

What is it an NCO should do?

“Lead” is an overly simplistic answer, and so is “train.” We all know that NCOs lead physical training in the morning, but we seldom take the time to analyze that responsibility. Physical Training (PT) requires that NCOs both lead and train. The following is a discussion on what “leading” and “training” mean with regard to PT. We argue that daily PT sessions require both lead-

ing and training in strict accordance with ADP and ADRP 7-0, complete with rehearsals, trainer certification and After-Action Reviews (AARs). Anything less is a missed training opportunity and a failed (though not career-ending) leadership moment.

Officers do not lead the conduct of PT. They prioritize it, block off time on the training calendar, provide a direction and a vision, but do not lead PT. NCOs should treat PT like every other training event and apply the eight-step training model or Troop Leading Procedures (TLPs).[1] More importantly, however, is that we seldom observe squad or team leaders conduct regular TLPs for physical training. The conduct of physical training is often taken for granted, although an exceptional unit will have a PT calendar posted and discussed at weekly training meetings. Regardless of published calendars, NCOs who lead PT often do not lead to the training standard, even though they know, or certainly should know, the standards.

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In our experience, very few NCOs use TLPs for PT. Why do so few team and squad leaders routinely apply the TLP to a daily training event? In a word, assumptions. We incorrectly make a number of assumptions about both our own and our subordinates' abilities and knowledge. It is easy to assume that our Soldiers, team leaders and squad leaders are thoroughly proficient on the PRT's conditioning drill, although a simple test of their knowledge will most likely show they do not even know those drills in sequence, or that they may not be able to name each of the 10 drills at all. Though there is a strong argument to be made that many of our leaders have also failed to embrace FM 7-22's guidance, the core of the problem remains that leaders make incorrect assumptions regarding their abilities.

Fixing incorrect assumptions is not a simple task. First, leaders must acknowledge they have made incorrect assumptions. Second, they must agree that correcting their assumptions is a valid and meaningful task. Next, there must be a leader with the commitment and knowledge who can provide the training necessary to correct the deficiency. It does not take much to assume that every company-sized element in the Army has quite a few knowledgeable and committed leaders – and it is certain that the vast majority of leaders often correct improper assumptions.

There are four basic assumptions regarding physical training that are all too often incorrect. This list should not be seen to be exclusive, nor should it be seen to be demeaning. We experience these assumptions in an excellent troop; there are no reasons to believe our experiences are unique or display gross incompetence. Solving problems is at the heart of the NCO Corps; identifying problems is our first step. These are common misconceptions regarding the PRT that we have found in our troop.

1. Soldiers are entirely familiar with and capable of performing PRT to standard.
2. PRT is not a good enough program to produce highly fit and ready Soldiers.
3. The individual leader can create a better physical fitness program than PRT.
4. Checking the block is good enough to accomplish the intent of PRT.

Looking at these assumptions individually, we can see a number of embarrassing fallacies. Looking closer and replacing PRT with any other form of training, we may even begin to see a pattern emerging. These assumptions are not necessarily unique to how we look at PRT. As we examine these assumptions, we may find that they apply equally to other training events. We encourage reading this list twice, thinking closely about other training events the second time.

1. “Soldiers are entirely familiar with and capable of performing PRT to standard”

As pointed out earlier, no, they are not. Again, this is an easy metric to test. FM 7-22 is a straight-forward manual, although it seems that we are hard-pressed to find many leaders who have taken the time to read through this important publication. It is unrealistic to expect our Soldiers to be familiar with and capable of performing PRT to standard if our leaders do not have a solid understanding of the PRT manual. It is always the responsibility of the NCO Corps to train Soldiers, and training requires a deep understanding of the subject material. We are comfortable accepting a long learning curve in our own troop as our NCOs begin to master the fundamentals of PRT. Unfamiliarity should not be the defining hindrance to the incorporation of PRT. Rather it should be the goad we use to improve ourselves and our units. For classes and online instruction, www.atn.army.mil offers a complete training program for leaders.

2. “PRT is not a good enough program to produce highly fit and ready Soldiers”

“Soldiers trained through PRT demonstrate the mobility to apply strength and endurance to the performance of basic military skills such as marching, speed running, jumping, vaulting, climbing, crawling, combatives and water survival,” according to FM

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