

ATSS-DAS

MEMORANDUM FOR Commandant, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002

SUBJECT: Access Agreement for release of Student writing assignment \_\_\_\_\_  
Paper.

1. I, Johannes Haans, submitted a personal experience paper to the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives regarding events and experiences that may be of historical significance to the United States Army and the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

2. I understand the manuscript and attached documents will be accessioned into the historical holdings of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy archives and will belong to the United States Government to be used in any manner deemed in the best interests of the United States Army as determined by the Chief of Military History or his representative. I also understand that I may retain a copy for my own use subject to classification restrictions.

3. I hereby expressly and voluntarily relinquish all rights and interest in the paper to the United States Army with the following caveat/exception:

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4. I understand that the information in this paper may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and therefore, may be releasable to the public contrary to my wishes. I further understand that, within the limits of the law, the United States Army will attempt to honor the restrictions I have requested to be placed on this material.

Date: December 1, 2010 \_\_\_\_\_

Student Printed Name: Haans

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  


Accepted on behalf of the United States Army by:

SGA Printed Name/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

The Backbone of the Army:

Comparison between a Dutch and American Noncommissioned Officer

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Abstract

The Backbone of the Army: what is the meaning and comparison, between two nations, the Dutch and the American? In this personal experience paper, I will compare the role of the noncommissioned officer (NCO) in chronological order, the responsibilities, the chain of command, instructor, and leadership. The NCO always gets the job done; he will communicate with the soldiers, and fulfill the command tasks from the officers.

## The Backbone of the Army: Comparison between a Dutch and American Non-Commissioned Officer

Because of the historical background from the Second World War, the NATO structure, and the history behind the cold war, it is normal that we have the same environment in our armies. After the war the Americans did a lot to build an strong NATO unit in Europe. The benefit we had from the Marshall plan was not only good for our economy but also for our Army. The everyday non commissioned officer's jobs between the two nations are in a large part the same. When you look at the traditional roles: leader, trainer, and guardian of army standards, than we have the same tasks in our Dutch Army. When we are looking at the responsibility in detail, the Dutch Army has some differences. What is the meaning and comparison, between two nations, the Dutch and the American? I will compare the role of the noncommissioned officer (NCO) in chronological order, first, the responsibilities, second the chain of command, at last the NCO as instructor, and leader.

### **The responsibilities**

The first duty of responsibilities is the individual training of soldiers in military occupational specialties (MOS), and in basic soldier skills. The Dutch NCO is also responsible for the unit training. The Command Sergeant Major in our army is responsible for training on a higher level. He will train his unit next to the commander: they are the instructors for the training, and operations. Second, the personal and professional development of soldiers is in the Dutch army the task from the commanding officer. He is dealing with career development, and not the NCO. In addition, the soldier himself is accountable for his own education. The NCO will motivate him and give him guidance. The other difference between our armies is the

administrative accountability for the unit in our Army; this is also the responsibility from the commanding officer. He is dealing with the personal environment and management from the soldiers. All other responsibilities have the same implication, in the Dutch as well in the United States Army:

- Military appearance,
- Physical conditioning and training,
- Physical and mental well-being,
- Supervision, control, motivation, and discipline of subordinates,
- Communication between the individual soldier and the organization,
- Plan and conduct day-to-day unit operations,
- Maintain established standards of performance,
- Maintenance, serviceability, accountability and readiness,
- Appearance and condition of unit billets, facilities and work areas,
- Advise on, support, and implement policy established by the chain of command,
- NCOs take care of their soldiers.

Regarding the responsibilities, in my opinion, we have copied the good things from the United States Army. The ceremonial, traditional role in the Dutch Army is getting more important, when a soldier will pass out in Afghanistan, than the command NCO is the ceremonial leader at the funeral. Every year we are getting more funerals that are military. The respect tribute you can make, you can do it only once! The Americans know how to respect their heroes.

**Chain of command**

The chain of command, in addition is to give information, orders and direction to the soldiers. In addition, the chain is used to inform the commanding officers, and sometimes for advice. It is a two-way direction from top to bottom, or in contrast. The informal chain of command is even more important. The Command Sergeant Major knows what is going on in his unit, and he can give guides to his colleagues and his officers. Sometimes he can inform the commanding officer about conflicts and concerns within the unit. Next to every commanding officer stands a NCO, from top until bottom. We copied this system from the United States in the year 1993 and it is the best thing we ever did.

In the next table is the comparison between the enlisted army rank structures:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>United States Army</b>	<b>Dutch Army</b>
E-9	(Command) Sergeant Major, Sergeant Major of the Army	Staff Warrant Officer Staff Warrant Officer from the Army
E-8	First Sergeant Master Sergeant	Sergeant Major
E-7	Sergeant First Class	Sergeant First Class
E-6	Staff Sergeant	Sergeant
E-5	Sergeant	Sergeant
E-4	Corporal	Corporal
E-3	Private First Class	Soldier First Class
E-2	Private	Soldier Second Class
E-1	Private	Soldier

When we look at the E-9 Command Sergeant Major structure the highest rank is in our Dutch Army the Gold Warrant Officer. He is on the same level, as the Sergeant Major of the Army. The Silver Warrant Officer works on the level of the Brigade, and the Bronze Warrant Officer on the level of Battalion.

### **NCO as leader and instructor**

Leadership in our army as in the United States Army requires respect, leadership competencies, and a good relationship between the workers and the leader. Leadership skills are getting better with years of experience. Respect you have to earn by being a good example, a professional and instructor. To be a good example, it is a good thing that you participate with the tasks you give your soldiers. A good example is the PT in the morning: If you go with them, then they can see that what you expect from them, you will do it also. Another case in point is to be there when they fulfill their jobs. You can give them guidance, and directions how to be a professional. Tell them what they are doing well, and tell them when they do it wrong. Be the professional they expect you to be. Talk with them about their problems and responsibilities.

Leadership competencies are in my opinion the ability to communicate, to prepare, to execute, to evaluate, and to socialize. When you are able to implement these competencies into your daily work as an NCO then you are getting the job done. Communication and social skills are important to inform your soldiers and colleagues. It is not only speaking but also listening. The better you listen to your people, the better you can solve their problems. The preparation skills are important because you need to plan your training for your troops, the better you are prepared, the easier the execution will be. When you are planning, you have to think on the sub tasks and timetables, so you can divide all the things you have to do and give them to your soldiers. The execution of your task is the most important. You have to analyze the current

situation and give guidelines so you can stick to your plan. When you cannot stick to your plan, do not be afraid to change it, but inform everyone. Your evaluation skills are important so that you do not make a mistake twice. When you are able to admit your own mistake, it will make you a better leader.

Relationships can be formal and informal. It is all about taking care of your soldiers. You have to think about their safety, private problems, cultural background, and their environment. In addition, you have to trust them, and give them freedom and responsibility in their work. Do not tell them what they have to do, but let your soldiers tell you what they think they can do. Modern leadership in my opinion it is all about giving them a little bit of freedom and trust. Have confidence in your leadership skills and earn their respect after that you get your soldiers admiration. You do not have to be soft, although be fair and consequential.

As an Instructor, you need to give lessons to your soldiers on how they have to do their job. You can do this during classes or trainings in a formal way such as lessons, but you can give them also instruction when they do their work. In my Army career, I followed many courses and was an instructor for many years. I will tell you my experiences during my twenty-five years in the Dutch Army as an instructor. To be a good instructor in the Dutch Army the effort you make is immense, but the students deserve a good quality lesson. Based on my experience, you need a didactic structure, use of a Dutch Army instructor's guide, and your personal presentation.

The didactic structure is the configuration how you will work and achieve your topics for the lecture. The structure needs an introduction, a main body, and a closure. In the introduction, you should give the information what to expect from the lecture. In every lesson, follow the chronological instructors' manual steps; get their attention, introduce the main topic, what is the

aim of the lesson, explain why you are given the lecture, how students can use it, give students the possibility to ask questions, and verify if they got the opening information. You will give the real session in the main body. You can do this in several didactic shapes. You can give your instruction, by giving a presentation on the topic or you will lead by example. You can give them an assignment such as reading, doing, or discussing. Another didactic shape is the education learning conversation; it is a two-way learning system. Students must listen and answer questions to handle the learning topic. The closure needs a summary, the topics, an evaluation from the process, possibility to ask questions, and a product evaluation.

The use of a Dutch Army instructor's guide we recommend in the Dutch Army. We deal with teaching, according to the instructors' guide. This handbook has sixty-seven steps to conduct the lessons in the best way. The guide will give you all the information you need to prepare for your lesson and which didactic shape you can choose. By example, when the teacher gives a monologue lecture, then he is the active person, the student is only listening. It is better that the student has the active role. Topics that you have to know are educated by learning vis-à-vis, actions, skills, and drills you are learning by doing it. Before your action becomes a drill or a skill, you must practice the action, until it is an automatic procedure.

The personal presentation is how you perform in class. Clarity, pronunciation, articulation, and motivation are very important. A good instructor prepares his lesson; you must make a plan regarding the session you are instructing to your students. Instructing preparation is 30% of the quality, of your teaching. The student has to be active in the classroom, by choosing the best didactic shape. My favorite is educational learning conversation. It is the best process to learn from each other.

## **Conclusion**

“The Backbone of the Army” comparison, between the two nations, the Dutch and the American are almost the same. The responsibilities, the chain of command, leadership, and instructor experiences, we got them from the United States and the small disparities are the cultural and environmental background. I covered what it takes to be a successful instructor. The lesson needs a didactic structure, because without it you are running like a blind chicken. The Dutch Army deals with teaching according to the instructors guide it will help you to give your education the best way. My personal presentation deals how I am as a teacher and what I did to be a successful instructor. You need many skills to be a good instructor, the efforts you have to make are immense, but the students deserve a proper lesson. The Dutch Army is a reflection of our society, and sometimes we need to work on values and army traditions. We cannot tell our politicians and officers what to do, but the NCO always gets the job done; he will communicate with the soldiers, and fulfill the command tasks from the officers and politicians.