

Argumentative Essay

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26 June 2009

Class # 35

Abstract

The NCO has been a part of the U.S. Military since its inception in 1775. Through the centuries, decades and years the NCO has evolved from simply following orders to today's battle focus leader. What are the basic fundamental traits that were passed down that led to the empowerment of the NCO Corps from the beginning to the present day NCO? From researching, planning and executing the NCO has evolved from only following simple orders but leading units to accomplish missions. Are today's NCOs better equipped and trained than the past NCOs? History can teach us that the battlefield has and will continue to change, will the NCO continue to grow and transform with the world or is it destined to be reversible? These are the topics that will be addressed and discussed using history and present day data to argue which is probable.

The development of programs available to enlisted Soldiers during their service and about the evolving role of the NCO has been instrumental to the maturation process. One important evident fact today is the recognition given that sends a strong message is the annual Army theme, "The Year of the NCO". This is one demonstration that the importance of today's leaders understands how valuable the NCO Corp is today. "At Fort Myer Military Community, Command Sgt. Maj. Jefferson Varner III met with four retired NCOs who served at different times in the Army's history. They talked about how the Army has changed the development of programs available to enlisted Soldiers during their service and about the evolving role of the NCO. Robert Armstrong, a retiree who fought in the Korean War and was a part of the occupation of Japan after World War II, Carrol Collins, a veteran of World War II, retired in 1962. During his time in the service, he took advantage of the education programs the Army

offered him. Though not as sophisticated as the modern Army education centers, he said during his 30-month tour in Africa and Italy, he was able to take correspondence courses through the U.S. Armed Forces Institute. He also tried to pick up local languages when the Army didn't specifically train him for the area.”

One of the reasons for continuous maturation is the education system has changed and continues to grow over the past 50 years. "There has to be continuing education from when a Soldier takes his first leadership position. You can learn a lot from experience, but there's a lot of book-learning that needs to be taken in."¹ To state one improvement that has taken place over time that tremendously prepares our NCOs' is pre-deployment and redeployment training. This isn't just infantry tactics that has always been a part of Army NCO doctrine, but the invaluable cultural training. The training from lessons learned during the war as it continuously changes. Also sensitivity training that goes along with the interpersonal skills that it takes to keep to keep Soldiers motivated and focused.

To ensure all education improvements are being captured and channeled to a continuous product for the NCO Corps, leaders have enforced new training standards starting at the highest level of Senior NCOs, that will flow all the way down to the lowest level of NCOES. “The transformation of the NCOES into a more adaptable system of training and education for an emergent military force structured to meet the challenges of the 21st Century began in 2007. This has occasioned a thorough re-examination of what and how we teach.¹ With the entrance of Class 60 of the Sergeants Major Course a new era in class design and instruction begins. In 2009, Faculty Advisors will be designated as Instructor/Writers and will use curriculum adapted from the Intermediate Level Education (ILE) coursework taught at the Command and General Staff

¹ Year of The NCO: Retired NCO's Remembered. Feb 06, Ian Graham, Pentagonam

College (CGSC) in Leavenworth, Kansas. The purpose of this transformation is to bring the NCO and Officer Corps closer together in their education and training as leaders, while promoting a better understanding of the Army's overall operational and strategic concepts. This transformation will use an ethics package concurrent with what is presently taught in ILE. This effort should promote an ongoing development in critical thinking amongst senior NCOs. The emphasis on reading, thinking, debating and deciding will continue to characterize the USASMA approach to ethical decision making. This begins with the Warrior Leader Course and is designed to take soldiers beyond the standardized Basic and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) modules where soldiers are first introduced to Army Values."²

Comparing the history of the NCO is well documented of how the NCO today is a direct product of the lessons learned from the past as demonstrated. Promotions, education and understanding your role on a strategic level wasn't an issue concerning NCOs'. NCOs were nothing more than labor and a lower manager to carry out orders from Officers. "During the Mexican-American War, the United States raised 115,000 troops; 73,000 of these were volunteers. Volunteers were promised 160 acres of land upon completion of their enlistment. They were raised by local areas of particular states and elected their officers and NCOs by popular vote. This often led to a lack of discipline among the troops, but their spirit more than compensated for their lack of discipline. The volunteers, like the Regular Army, hardened in battle and by war's end proved an effective force. The Civil War marked a radical change in American warfare; as the war progressed, organizational and tactical changes led the Army to

² The Evolution of Ethics as a Course of Instruction, Within the Non-Commissioned Officer Education System, By CH (MAJ) Mark R. Johnston, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas, December 2008

employ more open battle formations. These changes further enhanced the combat leadership role of the noncommissioned officer. In the post-Civil War era, the Artillery School at Fort Monroe reopened to train both officers and noncommissioned officers. In 1870 the Signal Corps established a school for training officers and noncommissioned officers. Because both the Artillery and the Signal Corps required men to have advanced technical knowledge in order to operate complex equipment and instruments, these schools were the first ones established. Efforts to provide advanced education for noncommissioned officers in other less technical fields, however, failed to attract supporters. It was felt experience and not the classroom was needed to make a good sergeant in the infantry and other fields.”³ Today, selection of enlistment into any branch of the military is quite different. Civilians have to meet stringent qualifications to be considered to become a Soldier, much different than popular vote to be an Officer. Now the selection to become an NCO is started very early as they’re selection to become leaders in the Warrior Leaders Course. NCO ranked is earned by showing the drive to self educate; seek out more difficult positions, and a vast different list of assignments unlike in the early beginnings of the NCO Corps. The opportunity for movement throughout the world and to different type of specialty units gives the NCO today a more robust look at their responsibilities rather than the earlier NCO that may or may not ever get to do anything or go anywhere different in their career. Understanding a lot has to do with the world becoming more advance and technical, however the fact still remains this requires NCOs today to be more educated and disciplined. “The increase of technology which accompanied modernization greatly affected the NCO Corps during the last half of the 19th Century. The number of NCO ranks grew rapidly; each new advent of

^{3, 4} Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer, A Short History of the NCO, NCO Museum Staff Article
Written By L. R. Arms

technology created another pay grade. The Army was forced to compete with industry for technical workers. In 1908 Congress approved a pay bill which rewarded those in technical fields in order to maintain their services. Combat soldiers were not so fortunate. A Master Electrician in the Coast Artillery made \$75-84 per month, while an Infantry Battalion Sergeant Major lived on \$25-34 per month. The Infantry Battalion Sergeant Major made about the same as or less than a Sergeant of the Signal Corps (\$34-43 per month). “⁴ Today all Soldiers, NCOs’ earn the same pay in the same grade for their technical skills. This correlates to unifying the NCO corps in duties and responsibilities. This also allows NCOs’ today to be able cross train and execute other duties and responsibilities with little or any formal training unless there is some very technical modern equipment that needs special training to perform duties.

Initial aspects of what an NCO should be was establish from vision of discipline. “In 1778, during the long, hard winter at Valley Forge, Inspector General Friedrich von Steuben standardized NCO duties and responsibilities in his Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States (printed in 1779). Among other things this work (commonly called the Blue Book) set down the duties and responsibilities for corporals, sergeants, first sergeants, quartermaster sergeants, and sergeants major, which were the NCO ranks of the period, it also emphasized the importance of selecting quality soldiers for NCO positions. (*von Steuben) This work served for 30 Years as the primary regulations for the Army.”⁵ This manual alone has given the foundation that has lead to the birth of the NCO Creed. As the NCO Corp

⁵ Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer, A Short History of the NCO, NCO Museum Staff Article
Written By L. R. Arms

continued to evolve over the century, politics, social economics, and the world had good and bad effects on the NCO Corps. After several Wars and Battles in U.S. history, the NCO was still look upon as a doer not as a valuable asset as an Officer in the big strategic scope of the leaders. “In 1973, the Army (and the noncommissioned officer corps) was in turmoil. Of the post-Vietnam developments in American military policy, the most influential in shaping the Army was the advent of the Modern Volunteer Army. With the inception of the Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course, many young sergeants were not the skilled trainers of the past and were only trained to perform a specific job; squad leaders in Vietnam. The noncommissioned officer system was under development and the army was rewriting its Field Manual 22-100, Leadership, to set a road map for leaders to follow.”⁶ Just prior to the Vietnam full war the position of Sergeant Major of the Army was given birth in 1966. Strengthening the values of the NCO Corp was a priority knowing at this time the value that the Corp brought to the last well publicized war that was viewed globally. The Vietnam War is the war that gave the NCO Corp the most attention of the importance of educating and preparing NCOs for pre and post war to sustain a viable force. After the Vietnam War it was brought to the fore front the neglect to the NCO Corps by the product of competence and loyalty given back in return to the U.S. Army from the Corps. Next was the improved infrastructure that still continues today for the NCO Corps to continue growing in the right direction.

“During an address at the 2008 Association of the United States Army Annual Meeting and Exposition, Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George W. Casey said the noncommissioned officer corps is what keeps the Army together. “As I travel around the Army and I look at what we've accomplished over the past seven years at war, it's clearer and clearer to me that it is our

⁶ ARMYSTUDYGUIDE.COM, History of the NCO Creed, Posted Friday, October 7, 2005

noncommissioned officer corps that is providing the glue that's not only holding this force together at a difficult time, but enabling us to accomplish the near impossible every day," he said. "And that's why next year we will celebrate their contributions to our Army.""⁷ This not only gave a long overdue credit to the NCO Corps but solidifies that the NCO Corps is truly today the backbone of the U.S. Army. During the time of over the decades this statement wouldn't be made at any level due to the outlook of what was perceive to be the leadership of the Army.

History has showed how the NCO has become more and more involved with the execution of missions as the evolution of U.S. Doctrine of warfare, and the changing of the battlefield has evolved to what it is today. Without the NCO the U.S. military would find it extremely difficult to function on today's battlefield. With the presence and capability it possess there is no doubt that the NCO has become better trained and tested as a valuable part of the U.S. Army than ever before in the U.S. Army history.

Comparing the early NCO duties and responsibilities to today's NCOs' responsibilities is quite a disparity. Detailing what is expected of a NCO today versus an early NCOs' duties and responsibilities has tremendously changed. Comparisons of NCO positions in different generations produce different results of Soldiers, reasons are as follows; promotions, education, mentoring, and training. Much has to do with the times of the state of the world and the evolution of mankind. As we continue to grow as a species of intellect the more we will grow together as a

⁷ Chief says NCO Corps glue holding the Army together, Oct 08, By C. Todd Lopez, WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Oct. 8, 2008) , <http://www.army.mil/-news/2008/10/08/13141-chief-says-nco-corps-glue-holding-army-together/>

combined force that will continue to incorporate its NCOs that has over time proven that NCOs are a proving source of dependability, planners, and executioners that can get the job done with little or no guidance at all. The NCOs today are no doubt a better Soldier today due to the previous reasons written about; however we are a Corps that has evolved from past lessons, and education from around the world including other Armies and battles.

The NCO Corps is rapidly changing how Commanders and leaders plan and approach mission due to the fact of knowing the skill sets that the NCO Corp bring to the fight. Each day the NCO Corp accomplish more and more with less and less. With the current state of the world, the instability of the global economy the NCO Corps is here to stay and will continue to make its mark around the world as a Professional Warfighter.

References:

¹ Year of The NCO: Retired NCO's Remembered. Feb 06, Ian Graham, Pentagon, <http://www.army.mil/-news/2009/02/06/16535-year-of-the-nco-retired-nco-remember/>

² The Evolution of Ethics as a Course of Instruction, Within the Non-Commissioned Officer Education System, By CH (MAJ) Mark R. Johnston, United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas, December 2008, <http://www.usafa.edu/isme/ISME09/Johnston09.html>

³, ⁴, ⁵ Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer, A Short History of the NCO, NCO Museum Staff Article Written By L. R. Arms, <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/csi/arms/arms.asp>

⁶ ARMYSTUDYGUIDE.COM, History of the NCO Creed, Posted Friday, October 7, 2005, http://www.armystudyguide.com/content/army_board_study_guide_topics/nco_history/history-of-the-nco-creed.shtml