

**Unclassified**

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Personal Experience Paper: My Assignment at  
the Noncommissioned Officers Academy

SGM Stanley Gore, Jr.

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

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## Abstract

My personal experience within the walls of the Noncommissioned Officers Academy (NCOA) does not compare to those of my fellow service men and women who have put their lives on the line deployed in the war against terrorism. I hope to shed light on another facet of Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) service within the walls of our great professional development service schools. NCOA provides a base for the development of our NCO Corps.

The goal of every enlisted Soldier is to acquire the rank of Sergeant Major (SGM). Soldiers come up through the ranks marveling at the professionalism, military appearance, and confidence of Command Sergeants Major (CSM) and SGM at their assigned units; I was one of those Soldiers. I was impressed with the NCO leadership as a young Soldier progressing through the ranks. All Soldiers strive to reach that pinnacle of success. Soldiers look to their supervisors for leadership, mentorship, and training. Throughout my career I enjoyed training and teaching Soldiers. I have not been involved in any deployments dealing with the war on terror. I cannot offer any experiences relating to these efforts; however I chose to write about my assignment at the NCOA. This particular assignment stood out in my mind because it spoke volumes to me about the professionalism of our NCO Corps.

In September of 1999 I received orders assigning me to the Advanced Noncommissioned Officers Course (ANCOC) branch at the NCOA located at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. When I first spoke with my Branch Manager about this assignment I told him that I would accept it without hesitation. I had no idea where Redstone Arsenal or Huntsville, Alabama was at the time and I really didn't care. I saw this assignment as a great opportunity for me to learn from and help teach and train NCOs. I looked forward to the camaraderie and professionalism within the walls of the NCOA. Besides, my other assignment option was Korea. Just kidding, I've completed three tours in Korea and have no qualms about going back, just not anytime soon. Once I figured out where Redstone Arsenal was I decided to depart Atlanta, Georgia in search of Huntsville, Alabama. I was presently surprised when I arrived in Huntsville. Huntsville is not a big bustling city but there are a few good points to note about it. First, a lot of NASA support is located there. Second, it is the home of the United States Army

Materiel Command (AMCOM), and most importantly it is not too far from my hometown...Atlanta.

My first duty assignment at ANCOC was as a Small Group Leader (SGL). I was impressed with the leadership. I expected to be surrounded by some of the top NCOs in my field and I was not disappointed. The NCOA CSM at the time was CSM Harewood. He was a mild-mannered man, very professional, and extremely technical. He loved to repair computers. My first meeting with him was supposed to be a desk-side brief about the NCOA. When I reported to his office for the brief, he had a computer torn apart on his desk. CSM Harewood stopped working on the computer and basically gave me a tour of the NCOA headquarters. He was that type of individual. He would stop whatever he was doing to assist a Soldier. By the same token he demanded nothing less than professionalism and excellence from the NCOs at the NCOA. My First Sergeant was an extremely meticulous man. Very professional, possessed an outstanding military appearance, and paid extreme attention to minor details. 1SG Johnson impressed upon me the importance of paying attention to detail. I gained tons of knowledge from both CSM Harewood and 1SG Johnson during my duty as an ANCOC SGL. At that point in my career I was a Sergeant First Class with about fourteen years of service. I was looking to perform my duties at the highest level that I could. Working with other Sergeants First Class was at times very challenging, although most of the time we had great cohesiveness within the ANCOC branch. We supported each other to ensure success for the SGLs and their classes. Graduates of ANCOC were outstanding NCOs. I learned a great deal from my students and I am sure they acquired some knowledge from me as well. As an SGL I got the opportunity to stand back and watch class after class of Staff Sergeant promotables and Sergeants First Class work together to solve minor problems. In many cases those Senior NCOs accomplished any given task

or mission in minimal time. I was always proud to stand with a class during graduation and see the sense of accomplishment on each of their faces as they crossed that stage to receive their diplomas after eight weeks of training. That was what I looked forward to when I chose that assignment, working with my peers, developing bonds, building friendships, and strengthening our professional development.

After several months as an ANCOC SGL a vacancy was available for a Senior SGL position at the Basic Noncommissioned Officers Course (BNCOC) branch. I interviewed for the job and got it. That duty position proved to be just as rewarding as my position at ANCOC, and in some ways more rewarding. As the Senior SGL at the BNCOC Branch I was responsible for four SGLs in the rank of Staff Sergeant. Those were some of the most squared-away junior NCOs I had ever come across in my military career. I would give those SGLs their missions and they would execute them to the letter with no deficiencies. I could not have asked for a better group of NCOs. They were professional and extremely competent in their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). Whenever I observed the SGLs interacting with their students, who were Staff Sergeants themselves, the SGLs were always well-received and respected. My job was too easy, all I had to do was ensure that the SGLs had the training materials and resources they needed and they drove on. That was the extra gravy for me on top of my duty at ANCOC; to see those Staff Sergeants receive instructions, move out, and achieve immediate results. Now at the BNCOC graduations I was more proud of those NCOs, to see the level of professionalism that our junior NCOs were exhibiting blew me away. That was an extraordinary time for me. The BNCOC First Sergeant's last name was also Johnson. We referred to both 1SGs as Johnson and Johnson. The BNCOC 1SG Johnson was a micro-manager. I and the other Senior SGL understood his type of leadership and we continued to do the things we needed to do to ensure the success of the

SGLs and their classes. 1SG Johnson was very professional, maintained a very good military appearance, and was considerably knowledgeable in his MOS. He did not always have the students' best interest in mind when it came to issues that were detrimental to the class's course of studies.

1SG Johnson was one of those First Sergeants that just didn't want to ruffle the CSM's feathers. Well I grew up differently in the Army and if I felt there was a good enough reason to disagree with you then that is just what I did, I disagreed with the CSM on several occasions and 1SG did not like that, but I saved BNCOC a lot of heartache numerous times without any thanks from 1SG Johnson. I try to take something positive from every superior I have worked for in my career. 1SG Johnson was a very professional man. We have spoken a few times in the recent past, we are now both SGMs competing for the few positions we have Army-wide. BNCOC really was an eye opener for me. I saw outstanding junior NCOs in my field which made me feel good about the future of our CMF and the Army. I have witnessed several of their promotions to Sergeant First Class. Several of them congratulated me on my promotion to SGM as well. Witnessing your Soldiers' promotions is a gratifying and proud moment; I know I was just as excited as that Soldier standing on stage getting promoted. A feeling of accomplishment has remained with me when I think about the NCOA, especially at the BNCOC branch. 1SG, my peer, the SGLs, and the students bestowed some great and memorable moments that are forever committed to my memory. I treasure those times spent at BNCOC when an SGL needed to come and talk to me about issues, whether they were work-related or personal issues I kept those moments sacred.

My final duties with the NCOA were spent back at the ANCOC branch. A vacancy became available for the Senior SGL position at ANCOC and I was given that position. That was a

whole new ball game. Now I was in charge of those Sergeants First Class that I worked with before I went to BNCOC. I had to pick up an entirely new and different method to motivate those NCOs to move to action when I needed them to. For the most part I didn't have too many problems, but of course from time to time I got that look or expression as if to say, "You are a Sergeant First Class just like me." ANCOC was the pinnacle of the NCOA; that was where you looked to try and find that future 1SG or even SGM.

In conclusion I chose to write about my experience at the NCOA because that particular assignment stood out in my mind as one that was the cornerstone of NCO service. If I may, I would like to equate it to service here at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA). USASMA is the pinnacle of NCO professional development. I think back on my time at the NCOA and I can only think of the professionalism, caring, selfless service, dedication to duty, and each and every one of the Army values being what sticks out foremost in my mind. As I thought about the leadership there during my tenure I can say that those leaders played a key role in my success today. We always reminded our NCOs to take one sentence from the NCO Creed and remember it, "My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind, accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers." In addition to that quote from the NCO Creed, I told my NCOs to think about three words I used as part of my philosophy on leadership, "Emulate, Translate, and Motivate...find someone that inspires you and emulate them. Then take that which you decide to emulate (those attributes you find admirable) and translate them into attributes that fit your personality. Once you have done that then you must motivate your Soldiers."

## Reference Page Citations

No references used.