



CSM Column
March 2009

From 23-26 March, USASMDC/ARSTRAT will host the annual Senior Enlisted Leaders Training Conference (SELTC) at Vandenberg, AFB in southern California. The purpose of the conference is to provide a forum for professional growth by interacting with Senior Leaders, sharing experiences, exchanging ideas, and discussing lessons learned.

Conference participants will be platoon sergeants and above and will be focusing upon the "Year of the NCO" initiatives. The conference will provide a forum for former SMDC Command Sergeants Major, USSTRATCOM Command Senior Enlisted Leader, selected Nominative Command Sergeants Major/ Command Chief Master Sergeants, National Guard Bureau, and Alaska/California/Colorado State National Guard Command Sergeants Major to promote a free exchange of ideas, insights and lessons learned.

The conference agenda contains briefings, orientations, panels and breakout groups, designed to provide an update on our command's priorities and objectives as well as updates on key topics of interest to the NCO community.

To help kickoff this important event, LTG Kevin T. Campbell will speak during our opening ceremony. LTG Campbell will also induct this year's Sergeant Audie Murphy Club members; SFC Samuel Jackson - HHC, USASMDC/ARSTRAT (G-3 Plans), SSG Benjamin Sharp - C Det/2, 1st Space Co, 1st Space Bn, SSG Randolph Brown - HHC, 1st Space Brigade, SSG Christopher Barber - C Det, 1st Space Co, 1st Space Bn, and SSG Mark Bagwell - HHC, 1st Space Bn.

By the time the conference ends on 26 March, the Senior Enlisted Leaders will have discussed major mission areas within the command, received briefings on the Air Defense Artillery Branch, the Signal Corps Branch, and the Military Police Branch, and will have toured the GMD Operations Center and the JFCC Space Operations Center at Vandenberg AFB.

Last month I talked about 2009 being the "Year of the NCO." The SELTC definitely meets the stated purposes of Education, Leadership Development and Pride in Service.

The Year of the NCO is in full swing as we enter the third month. Sub-theme messages include:

- NCO Strong: Strength Like No Other
- NCO Strength: Forging Tomorrow's Leaders Today
- NCOs: The Strength of the Army
- Noncommissioned Officers: A National Asset
- NCOs: Leading the Way
- Strength, Competence, Professionalism

The Year of the NCO web page is updated on a continual basis, and I urge each of you to take the time to visit <http://www4.army.mil/yearofthenco/home.html> at least once each month. While there, take the time to read the BLOG posts and to review some of the linked articles. If you visited in February, you had the opportunity to read a Time article about the Army's last NCO Draftee, an interesting story about CSM Jeffrey Mellinger, Army Material Command, who was drafted in 1972.

You'll also find an excellent short discussion by CSM Leon Caffie, Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Reserve, on the contributions of Reserve Army NCOs and the fact that they must balance multiple priorities between their civilian and military roles.

Finally, I'll close by touching on the topic of suicides within the Army. According to the Army Suicide Prevention Program, "since the beginning of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), the Army has lost over 580 Soldiers to suicide, an equivalent of an entire infantry battalion task force." The loss of so many members of the Army Family to the preventable act of suicide is simply heart breaking.

I urge all of our Leaders, Soldiers and Civilians to take to heart the lessons learned during this month's suicide prevention training. Take the time to educate yourself on what you can do to prevent this needless loss of life. As the program teaches, "NEVER LET YOUR BUDDY FIGHT ALONE...it's your responsibility to get help for a fellow Soldier."

SECURE THE HIGH GROUND!