



This will be my last column for the USASMDC/ARSTRAT Command Corner. Effective June 30th, I will hand over my responsibilities as Command Sergeant Major to Sgt. Maj. Larry Turner.

As a career Airborne Ranger / Light Infantryman, I must admit that I joined USASMDC/ARSTRAT with a bit of trepidation. Twenty-seven years as an in-the-foxhole Soldier had not prepared me for an assignment away from the "tip-of-the-spear." I understood and appreciated what space enablers provided the Warfighter, but I had little understanding of what it took to develop and provide space or missile defense/warning support to the Warfighter.

Three years at USASMDC/ARSTRAT have taught me many valuable lessons. I've learned that serving within the space and missile defense occupation specialties does not equate to a life of leisure – far from it! Our Soldiers routinely deploy to Afghanistan and Iraq, providing support to Combatant Commanders.

We have Soldiers deployed globally; working crew positions; providing missile warning and satellite communications support to our forces. These Soldiers work around-the-clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days-a-year providing communications and missile warning support to the Warfighter. We also have Soldiers providing continuous support, manning our ground based interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.

Our Soldiers maintain the highest level of technical knowledge and capability, while also maintaining the ability to deploy and fight! They're current on warrior tasks and battle drills (e.g. marksman training, physical training, professional military education). In addition to training on individual and collective tasks, USASMDC/ARSTRAT provides our Soldiers adequate time to focus upon professional development.

This year's candidates for Soldier of the Year (SOY) and NCO of the Year (NCOY) are excellent examples of the quality and caliber of our Soldiers. The NCOY and SOY competitions are about Soldiers demonstrating their knowledge, skills and abilities. Each of the NCOs and Soldiers competing has achieved a major milestone. They successfully completed and won at the regional level, and competed for the Command's top honor – NCO and Soldier of the Year.

These Soldiers competed against each other in marksmanship training, in the Army Physical Fitness Test, in Mounted Operations Urban Terrain exercises, in urban orienteering, and finally before a board of senior leaders who truly tested their knowledge. After a grueling week of extremely close competition, one NCO and one Soldier earned the right to be called the USASMDC/ARSTRAT NCO and Soldier of the Year.

The 2010 NCOY and SOY are Staff Sgt. James Harris, Delta Detachment, 1st Space Company, Misawa Air Base, Japan, and Spec. Matthew McLeod, Delta Company, 53rd Signal Battalion, Camp Roberts, Calif.

Having spent most of my career in foxholes and trenches as a light fighter and in special operations, I learned to appreciate the importance of maintaining continual situational awareness, of precisely striking an intended target, and of having reach-back communications capabilities. Three years at USASMDC/ARSTRAT has helped me understand the process of obtaining these capabilities and providing them to the Warfighter.

I want to thank our DoD civilians and contractors who contribute and work tirelessly in our research, development and acquisition areas to develop new systems and find new ways to assist the Warfighter. I now understand that you can't solve the problem of 'looking around the corner or into caves' by just buying it off the shelf. What you do is of enormous consequence to our Warfighters. You have my respect and support in your continuous endeavor.

I also want to thank the Soldiers who work tirelessly to provide space enablers and missile warning to the Warfighter and missile defense to our nation and to the families that support them. Your sacrifice and efforts make a difference. Serving as your Command Sergeant Major has been a privilege and an honor.