

The Army tradition of the unit colors and uncasing ceremony

Flags are almost as old as civilization itself. Imperial Egypt as well as the armies of Babylon, Chaldea, and Assyria followed the colors of their kings. The Old Testament frequently mentions banners and standards. From the earliest times, warriors used a banner or other symbol to identify specific units and to serve as a rallying point for troops. By the end of the Revolution, Americans followed the British practice of carrying two different flags during combat, the National flag and a battle or Army "Color".

Even before the War of 1812, in addition to the flag of the United States, each American regiment carried a silk flag or "Colors." The first Army Color was of blue incorporating the design of an eagle (somewhat similar to that in the coat of arms adopted for the United States) and the name of the regiment. Carrying the United States flag and the regimental Colors in combat and during unit formations was a place of high honor.

That National Color of the Army was carried until 1841 when it became known as the regimental color. From that blue flag evolved the eagle on regimental and battalion flags and, finally,

on Major Army Command flags. Battle honors were often painted directly on National and Regimental colors until the 20th century when battle streamers were adopted.

For major U.S. Army commands today, the flag is four feet four inches at the hoist by five feet six inches on the fly. The field of the flag is national flag blue with the U.S. Coat of Arms, minus its crest, centered. Above the USCOA is the shoulder sleeve insignia of the command in proper colors. Below it is a scroll inscribed with the title of the command. The fringe is yellow.

Today, the Colors, with battle streamers attached, join their units in formations during ceremonies to signify their history in past campaigns and the presence of the commander and his headquarters. When a unit or the headquarters of a unit undergoes a permanent change of station, the Colors are "cased", literally furled and placed inside a canvas case, to signify that the command has ceased operations at that location. The Colors are then "uncased" at the new location to signify that the command is operational at its new station.

Uncasing continued from page 1

Borja, saying he listens, is here to make a difference, and is a man of great leadership who has a lot to teach SMDC Soldiers.

Borja comes to the command after serving as the command sergeant major for the 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y. Borja thanked the Redstone community for welcoming him and for embracing the military community in general. "I recently heard the song 'Find Out Who Your Friends Are,' and it made me think of Huntsville ... this area really knows that the military is a friend."

Borja also reminded all employees and guests that the work of SMDC is "all about the warrior — no matter who you are, where you came from, or what your position is ... we're all working for the Soldier."

The two events were very appropriate to put together in a combined ceremony due to their significance and tradition.

"It's fitting that on the day we welcome our new command sergeant major to the command, that we also uncase our colors in Alabama," Campbell said. "Historically, the senior noncommissioned officer in an Army unit is entrusted with safeguarding the unit's colors. In a few moments, the CSM will take his rightful place by the colors, as we uncase them for the first time in Alabama."

Borja and Campbell uncased the colors together as the ceremony continued. The SMDC/ARSTRAT Color Guard from Colorado Springs, Colo., assisted. The symbolic uncasing and unfurling of the command flag signifies the command headquarters' relocation.

"When you look at our colors you can see a bit of our past and our future," said Campbell. "The crest's background of red, white and blue is our nation's colors, and the eagle is our nation's symbol. The sphere symbolizes the global reach of the command, and the flash represents strike capability and quick response."

"This year marks the command's 50th anniversary," said Campbell. "I can think of no better way to move ahead with the next 50 years than to have SMDC/ARSTRAT permanently stationed on Redstone Arsenal and associated with this community. Not just this community — OUR community."

Campbell continued by saying that while securing the high ground is

always an important mission for our command, his main goal was to be known as a values-based organization, bringing Army values to our Soldiers and into our everyday lives. This goal naturally comes back to the warfighter.

"Our mission continues to mature, but the priority remains the same — the warfighter is our number one customer," Campbell said.

After the ceremonies, attendees welcomed the commanding general and congratulated leadership at a reception with cake and punch in the Bob Jones Audi-

torium lobby. Campbell and Borja cut the cake, decorated with the SMDC/ARSTRAT 50th anniversary logo, along with the assistance of the SMDC/ARSTRAT Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Sgt. Patrick J. Mann and the SMDC/ARSTRAT Soldier of the Year Sgt. Martin A. Jensen.

Following the ceremony and reception, the Huntsville/Madison County Chamber of Commerce hosted a welcome luncheon for the command at the Von Braun Center. Campbell was the featured speaker.



Photos by Joe Ramirez

From left, SMDC/ARSTRAT Soldier of the Year Sgt. Martin A. Jensen, Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph C. Borja, Lt. Gen. Kevin T. Campbell and SMDC/ARSTRAT Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Sgt. Patrick J. Mann cut the cake, decorated with the SMDC/ARSTRAT 50th anniversary logo.



Huntsville Mayor Loretta Spencer welcomes Borja and his wife Nguyet to the community during a receiving line which followed the ceremony. More than 200 members of the community attended the ceremony.

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By Marco M

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